



Department of Physician Assistant Studies
Learning. Caring. Serving. Leading.

Physician Assistant (PA) Education Facts

The Department of Physician Assistant Studies at Elon University has been granted Accreditation-Provisional by the Accreditation Review Commission on Education. Accreditation-Provisional is an accreditation status. The status indicates that the plans and resource allocation for the proposed program appear to demonstrate the program's ability to meet the ARC-PA Standard, if fully implemented as planned.

The American Medical Association, the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American College of Surgeons, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of Physicians, the Association of Physician Assistant Programs and the American Academy of Physician Assistants cooperate with the ARC-PA to establish, maintain and promote appropriate *Standards* of quality for entry-level education of physician assistants.

The typical PA program is 111 weeks, while medical education averages 155 weeks. Similar to allopathic and osteopathic medical education, PA education is competency based.

Graduates must meet objectives in the various areas of medical knowledge, as well as behavioral and clinical learning objectives necessary to develop the core competencies PAs share with our physician colleagues.

Prerequisites to PA Programs include chemistry, anatomy, physiology, and additional courses in biological sciences, behavioral and social sciences and mathematics. Most also require prior health care experience.

Physician assistant education is based on the medical model with an intense curriculum composed of didactic and clinical components. MDs, DOs, PhDs, PharmDs, PAs, NPs and other professionals provide instruction during the didactic and clinical phases of instruction.

The didactic component of education provides a broad grounding in the basic sciences, clinical sciences and professional preparation. This includes anatomy, physiology, pathophysiology, medical interviewing, patient-centered communication skill, physical diagnosis, clinical laboratory sciences, pharmacology, behavioral sciences and medical ethics.

The clinical component averages over 2,000 hours of supervised practice in adult primary care, inpatient medicine, women's health, pediatrics, general surgery, emergency medicine and elective clinical experiences.

Only graduates of accredited programs are eligible to sit for the Physician Assistant National Certifying Exam. To maintain certification, PAs must log a minimum of 100 hours of continuing medical education (CME) every two years and take a written examination every six years.

Physician assistants work in collaborative practice with physicians in all medical and surgical subspecialties and settings. According to the AAPA 2010 census report, PAs practice in primary care (31.0 percent), general surgery and surgical subspecialties (26.0 percent), medical and pediatric subspecialties (11.0 percent), emergency medicine (11.0 percent), and other areas of medicine.

State medical and PA practice acts and regulations generally allow physicians broad delegatory authority for PA practice, which permits flexible, customized team practice. Physicians may delegate to PAs those medical duties that are within the physician's scope of practice and the PA's training and experience, allowing for optimized patient care.