

Physician Assistant

Academic Requirements

To practice as a physician assistant, you must graduate from [an accredited PA program](#), pass [the national certification exam](#) and [obtain a license](#) in the state in which you wish to practice. You cannot bypass any of those steps and must complete them in order.

It is important to carefully review the prerequisite course requirements of all programs because they may vary, in some cases greatly. In general, requirements may include a completed bachelor's degree, science and non-science prerequisites courses, minimum GPAs, health care experience and standardized exams.

Courses may include but are not limited to:

- ▶ Anatomy
- ▶ Biochemistry
- ▶ Biology
- ▶ Chemistry
- ▶ Genetics
- ▶ Microbiology or bacteriology
- ▶ Organic chemistry
- ▶ Physics
- ▶ Physiology
- Calculus
- College-level algebra
- English composition
- Humanities
- Literature
- Medical terminology
- Psychology
- Sociology
- Speech
- Statistics
- Technical writing

The number of accredited PA programs has increased from 196 in 2015 to 210 in 2016 and over 90% of programs offer a master's degree. The remainder of PA programs offer either a bachelor's degree, associate's degree or certificate of completion, all of which are acceptable to qualify for the certification exam, licensing and eventual practice. Starting in 2020, all PA programs will be required to offer a master's degree upon completion of and graduation from a PA program.

The Physician Assistant Education Association provides [a list of PA programs](#). The list is updated in May each year and can be used to search for programs and to compare admissions criteria.

The [Central Application Service for Physician Assistants](#) (CASPA) makes it easy to apply to multiple PA programs using a single application, one set of transcripts, one set of letters of recommendation and one personal statement. The [CASPA Facebook page](#) provides additional information about the application cycle and the process of applying.