

W UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

UW Career & Internship Center

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Pre-PA Planning Guide

Explore

Motivation for medicine/personal characteristics

A qualified applicant to PA school must have not only a general understanding of the profession, but also a demonstrated interest in and awareness of medical and social issues. Prospective applicants should be prepared to answer the question, “Why do you want to be a physician assistant?” with a response beyond “I want to help people.”

Experience

Desirable qualifications are a well rounded academic background, a knowledge of and exposure to the needs of individuals and society, and an awareness of current health care delivery systems. Diversity and cross-cultural competency are critical. Further, motivation for physician assistant careers can be measured in part by the candidate’s exposure to health-care environments.

Choosing a Major

While a bachelor’s degree is necessary to be a competitive applicant to PTAschool, **PA schools do not give preference to any particular major.** You should be considering majors that align your interests, passions, and abilities. Your departmental adviser, in partnership with your pre-health adviser, can help ensure you take the appropriate pre-requisite courses for PA school as part of your coursework.

Prepare

An excellent PA school applicant will have a strong grade point average, both overall and in the pre-requisite coursework. Additionally, a strong applicant will have a competitive GRE score. Beyond grades and test scores, PA schools will look for ample time spent shadowing a licensed physician’s assistant, experience volunteering in a clinical setting, and both research and leadership experiences. Clinical experience requirements can range from 250 –2,000 hours.

Prerequisite courses vary widely by PA school; you should review the admissions information for each of your desired schools to be sure you are meeting all coursework and other requirements. Common prerequisite and recommended courses are listed below:

Common Prerequisites

- Gen Chem I / II
- Gen Biol I / II
- Human anatomy w/ lab (1 course)
- Physiology w/ lab (1 course)
- Microbiology w/ lab (1 course)
- Statistics (1 course)
- Psychology (1 course)

UW Course

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|--------------------------------------|
| CHEM 142/152/162 |
| BIOL 180/200/220 |
| (no UW equivalent offered currently) |
| BIOL 118/119 |
| MICROM 301/302 or 442/443 |
| Any intro statistics course |
| PSYCH 101 |

Commonly Recommended Courses

- Organic chemistry (1 course)
- Biochemistry
- College Algebra
- Genetics

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| CHEM 223 or 237 |
| BIOC 405/406 |
| MATH 111 |
| GENOM 361 or 371 |

Other Important Activities

Freshman Year

- Meet with your general adviser
- Consider taking GEN ST 297, "Pre-Health 101"
- Consider joining a pre-health RSO
- Begin establishing relationships with faculty for future letters of recommendation
- Identify summer volunteer, research, and/or leadership opportunities related to medical field
- Review pre-health website

Sophomore Year

- Meet with your general adviser
- Check in with a pre-health career coach
- Continue involvement with pre-health or other RSO
- Pursue meaningful clinical experiences (paid, volunteer and/or research)
- Begin researching PA schools on paeaonline.org and other professional sites

Junior Year

- Meet with your departmental adviser
- Meet with a pre-health career coach to strategize coursework, GRE, and application(s) timing
- Consider taking GEN ST 297, "Pre-Health Application Class" in winter or spring quarter
- Seek leadership position(s) in RSO or other activity
- Continue meaningful clinical experiences
- Finalize list of 10-15 PA schools
- Familiarize yourself with application to PA schools (CASPA)
- Request recommendation letters

Spring quarter:

- Take GRE by mid-February or earlier
- Apply to PA schools beginning mid-April

Senior Year

- Meet with your departmental adviser
- Meet with a pre-health career coach to prepare secondary application materials if necessary
- Prepare for campus visits and interviews
- Receive acceptances!
- Notify schools you will not be attending
- Complete UG coursework and graduate!
- Apply for financial aid as early as possible