

Physician Assistant Studies

<http://www.med.UND.edu/physician-assistant/>

FACULTY: Johnson (Medical Director), Holmes, Kauffman, McHugo (Department Chair), Metzger, Sieg, and Solberg.

Degree Granted: Master of Physician Assistant Studies (M.P.A.S.)

The Department of Physician Assistant Studies offers a Master of Physician Assistant Studies (MPAS) degree. This 24-month graduate program is accredited by the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for Physician Assistants, Inc. (ARC-PA). A minimum of a baccalaureate degree earned in the U.S. is required. Graduates are eligible to take the national certification exam administered by the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants, Inc. (NCCPA). Additional information and application materials can be found at: <http://www.med.UND.edu/physician-assistant>

Details pertaining to admission requirements, degree requirements, and courses offered can be found in the Degree section.

Master of Physician Assistant Studies (M.P.A.S.)

Mission Statement and Program Goals

The primary mission of the University of North Dakota Department of Physician Assistant Studies is to prepare selected students to become competent physician assistants working collaboratively with physician supervision, emphasizing primary care in rural and/or underserved communities within North Dakota as well as regionally, nationally and globally.

With this mission, the goal is to improve access to health care, help alleviate shortages of primary care providers and deliver quality, affordable and comprehensive health care to the people of rural and/or underserved populations.

The Program's approach to education is based on the philosophy that students are highly motivated and bring with them unique personal and professional experiences. While the faculty and preceptor serve as catalysts, **learning is the responsibility of the student**. The interdisciplinary teaching approach integrates clinical skill and knowledge utilizing multiple techniques to facilitate learning. The goal is preparation of the student as a primary care provider in a variety of settings, utilizing a problem-oriented approach to logical thinking and sound judgment.

Furthermore, the Program faculty believes that physician assistants are accountable and responsible for the quality of their practice and for life-long learning to assure their ability to continually improve the care they deliver.

Also central to the Program's mission is the Preceptor/PA Student Team development. A unique characteristic of the UND PA Program is the partnering of the student with a primary care preceptor throughout the entire clinical portion of the Program. This team approach forms the foundation and models the physician and physician assistant relationship inherent in a primary care PA's clinical practice. By completing the majority of clinical experiences in the office of a practicing primary care provider, students are assured experiences with common primary care conditions in a clinical practice setting. It is under the guidance and supervision of the preceptor in an individualized teaching relationship that the student gains clinical competencies and accomplishes role integration. This is closely monitored and augmented by the Program faculty.

Program Goals

1. Provide a comprehensive academic and clinical educational experience for students and achieve first time PANCE scores at or above the national average and aggregate scores at 100%.
2. Provide the academic and student support to make it possible for every entering student to graduate.

3. Prepare graduates to evaluate clinical data and research and make evidence based decisions to provide safe quality care for all patients.
4. Prepare graduates to meet primary care workforce needs.
5. Prepare graduates to improve access to medical care in North Dakota.

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Admission Requirements

Applicants who are seeking admission to School of Graduate Studies must meet all of the minimum general School of Graduate Studies admission requirements identified in the graduate catalog. In addition, the prospective student must fulfill the requirements for admission to the graduate program in the Department of Physician Assistant Studies.

Admission to the Physician Assistant Program within the School of Medicine and Health Sciences at the University of North Dakota is a competitive selection process. Each applicant is reviewed individually and evaluated on their own merits. For complete requirements, please see our website for the most current information regarding prerequisites and application instructions at <http://www.med.UND.edu/physician-assistant/>.

Entry Point 1

Licensed/Certified Health Care Professional with minimum of 3 years experience (Non-regional applicants are readily accepted although preference is given to applicants from ND and surrounding states.)

Entry Point 2

Science-based educational background and minimum of 500 (1000 preferred) hours of direct patient care (Designated for applicants from ND and surrounding states. Applicants from outside the region will not be considered.)

Academic Requirements

All applicants must obtain a four-year bachelor's degree or graduate degree from a regionally accredited college or university within the U.S. (regional accreditation by MSA, NASC, NCA, NEASC-CHE, SACS-CC, or WACS,Sr.) before the application deadline. Health-related or science-based degrees are preferred. A minimum GPA of 3.0 or higher (on a 4.0 scale) is required in undergraduate work, or more recent transcripts showing improvement.

Prerequisite courses must meet the following criteria: semester-based, grade of B or higher (3.0 or higher on a 4.0 scale) with the exception of those denoted with an asterisk (*), and completed within the United States at a regionally accredited institution. For those courses below not indicating a specific academic level, higher-level coursework is preferable.

Prerequisite Coursework

All prerequisite coursework must be completed before the application deadline. Please make sure courses meet the standards below.

- **Human Anatomy**—3 credits, 200 level or higher, and lab preferred.
- **Human Physiology**—3 credits, 200 level or higher within 10 years of the application deadline, and lab preferred. *Note: If a combined course such as Human Anatomy and Physiology, 2 full semesters are required and must be within 10 years of application deadline.*
- **Comprehensive Pharmacology** (must cover all body systems)—3 credits, 200 level or higher within 5 years of the application deadline.
- **Microbiology**—preferably medical based with a lab.
- **Medical Terminology**
- **Statistics**—preferably statistics for psychology, sociology, or biology.
- **Psychology** (Entry Point 2 Applicants Only)
- **Organic Chemistry/Biochemistry*** (Entry Point 2 Applicants Only)—Two semesters, 300 level or higher, and labs preferred. *Combinations may include (OChem I + OChem II) or (OChem + BioChem). *Grade of C or higher is acceptable only for courses in OChem and BioChem.*

Recommended Coursework

- **Technical Writing**
- **Genetics**

Note: The University of North Dakota Physician Assistant Program does not accept transfer students from other PA programs. Advanced standing and transfer of credits is not allowed. CLEP (College Level Examination Programs) or "test out" courses are not accepted.

Additional coursework beyond the minimum academic preparation requirements will strengthen an application, especially if the additional courses are highly correlated with medicine.

Health Care Requirements

Health care experience must be completed within the United States and be related to direct (hands-on) human patient care showing commitment to a career in medicine. Experience should involve assessment and treatment relating to Western (allopathic) medicine and medical professional judgment. Hours accrued in a student/learner role are not acceptable. This ensures foundational knowledge and skills needed for successful completion of this program.

Entry Point 1:

Current professional licensure, registration, or certification in a clinical healthcare field is required with evidence of continued medical education throughout professional employment.

A **minimum of three years** recent full-time clinical healthcare experience in one's field of professional certification/licensure. Health care experience must include direct patient contact and high levels of responsibility involving complex critical thinking and decision making skills.

Licensed/certified health care professional disciplines which qualify for Entry Point 1 include, but are not limited to:

Registered nurse, respiratory therapist, physical therapist, radiologic technologist and paramedic.

Clinical healthcare experiences which lack high level direct patient care and decision making responsibilities do not qualify to apply for this entry point, although these disciplines are certainly valuable to the practice of medicine. Examples of disciplines ineligible for Entry Point 1 include: Administrative assistant, hospital/clinic receptionist, phlebotomist, hospital chaplain, personal trainer, medical assistant, social worker, CNA, EMT, LPN, dental hygienist and massage therapist.

Entry Point 2:

500 hours (1000 preferred) health care experience involving assessment and treatment related to direct (**hands-on**) **human patient care**. Ideally, this experience should be over a period of months or years showing commitment to a career in medicine.

Health care experiences in the following disciplines which would qualify for Entry Point 2 include, but are not limited to:

Certified medical assistant, certified nursing assistant, physical therapist assistant, emergency medical technician, and phlebotomist.

Although all health care disciplines are certainly valuable to the practice of medicine, clinical healthcare experiences which lack high level direct patient care and decision making responsibilities do not prepare students for successful completion of the accelerated program or the professional board exam. Examples of disciplines ineligible for Entry Point 2 include: Administrative assistant, ACLS/CPR instructor, hospital chaplain, non-clinical research assistant, pharmaceutical/medical supply representative, receptionist or other clerical position, student intern, veterinarian, etc.

Preceptor Requirements

All clinical sites and preceptors must be reviewed, evaluated, and approved for educational suitability by the program.

Entry Point 1:

Entry Point 1 applicants will apply as a team with a licensed physician (MD or DO) or physician assistant who is willing to serve as the primary clinical

preceptor to the student during the clinical portion of the program. Medical practice must be in primary care/family medicine in a clinical setting. Preference is given to clinical sites in rural (<25,000 population) and/or underserved populations.

Completion of the preceptor profile form is required.

Entry Point 2:

Entry Point 2 applicants will be placed within a designated site to complete clinical rotations. Sites will be located in North Dakota and the surrounding area. Flexibility is expected as clinical sites may require relocation and adaptability. Entry Point 2 applicants may suggest a site in their home community upon acceptance into the program, however, those sites are NOT guaranteed.

Additional Requirements

1. Completed applications to CASPA and the UND School of Graduate Studies along with all supporting materials as explained at <http://www.med.und.edu/physician-assistant/how-to-apply.cfm>.
2. If applying under Entry Point 1 admission criteria, an arrangement (established with a complete Preceptor Profile as explained above) with a licensed physician (MD or DO) or physician assistant who is willing to serve as the primary clinical preceptor to the student during the clinical portion of the program. Medical practice must be in primary care/family medicine in a clinical setting. **Preference is given to clinical sites in rural (<25,000 population) and/or underserved populations.**
3. Completion of a successful interview.
4. Satisfy the School of Graduate Studies' English Language Proficiency requirements as published in the graduate catalog.
5. The Physician Assistant Program of the University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences (UNDSMHS) has a responsibility to society to graduate the best possible future Physician Assistants. All graduates of the Program must have knowledge, skills, and capacities to function in a wide variety of clinical situations and to render a wide spectrum of patient care. All applicants must be able to meet the program's academic and technical standards as indicated on the program website. Please review our website's Academic and Technical Standards (<http://www.med.und.edu/physician-assistant/standards.cfm>) for matriculation, promotion, and graduation.
6. Prior to matriculation, students will be required to complete a health screening and a criminal background check. The health screening process is conducted by Student Health Services. Cost of the criminal background check and health screening are the responsibility of the student. If a student declines to undergo criminal background check and health screening or if findings of a grievous nature are revealed, the offer of admission may be revoked.

Admission Preference

North Dakota residents as well as residents from the surrounding states of Montana, Minnesota, and South Dakota are given admissions preference, although well-qualified out of state applicants are also readily accepted. Applicants from rural and/or underserved communities are also awarded preference. For Entry Point 1 applicants, preference is given to clinical sites in rural (<25,000 population) and/or underserved populations. For Entry Point 2 applicants, preference is evaluated based on a combination of residence, employment, and volunteer experience in rural and/or underserved communities.

Degree Requirements

Students seeking the Master of Physician Assistant Studies degree at the University of North Dakota must satisfy all general requirements set forth by the School of Graduate Studies as well as particular requirements set forth by the Physician Assistant Program.

1. Successful completion of all courses in core curriculum.
2. Completion of a written scholarly project approved by the academic advisor.
3. Written comprehensive final examination.

Required Courses:

PA 507	Medical Human Anatomy & Radiology I	3
PA 508	Medical Human Anatomy & Radiology II	3
PA 510	Human Physiology & Pathophysiology I	4
PA 511	Human Physiology & Pathophysiology II	4
PA 516	EKG Interpretation	1
PA 517	Pharmacology I	2
PA 518	Pharmacology II	2
PA 521	Diagnostic Studies I	2
PA 522	Diagnostic Studies II	2
PA 523	Diagnostic Studies III	2
PA 525	Scholarly Project Development	3
PA 540	Primary Care I - Didactic	4
PA 541	Primary Care I Clinical	6
PA 550	Primary Care II - Didactic	6
PA 551	Primary Care II - Clinical	9
PA 560	Primary Care III - Didactic	7
PA 561	Primary Care III - Clinical	8
PA 566	Professional Issues & Role Development I	2
PA 567	Professional Issues & Role Development II	1
PA 568	Professional Issues & Role Development III	1
PA 569	Professional Issues & Role Development IV	1
PA 580	Specialty Clerkship	6
PA 581	Emergency Department Clerkship	4
PA 582	General Surgery Clerkship	4
PA 995	Scholarly Project	3
Total Credits		90

Courses

PA 507. Medical Human Anatomy & Radiology I. 3 Credits.

This online course is a review of the basic principles of anatomy in preparation for the clinical phase of the PA program. The students will be introduced to components of radiologic diagnostic studies such as x-ray, CT scans and other forms of imaging. Prerequisite: Admission to Master of Physician Assistant Studies Program. SS.

PA 508. Medical Human Anatomy & Radiology II. 3 Credits.

Continuation of PA 507. This online course is a continued review of the basic principles of anatomy in preparation for the clinical phase of the PA program. The students will review radiologic diagnostic studies such as x-ray, CT scans and other forms of imaging. Prerequisite: Admission to Master of Physician Assistant Studies Program. F.

PA 510. Human Physiology & Pathophysiology I. 4 Credits.

This system-based online course focuses on the physiologic and pathophysiologic functions of the human body from the cellular level, to organ systems, with emphasis on genetics. This course lays the foundation for understanding the underlying principles of human disease processes across the lifespan. Prerequisite: Admission to Master of Physician Assistant Studies Program. SS.

PA 511. Human Physiology & Pathophysiology II. 4 Credits.

Continuation of PA 510. This system-based online course focuses on the physiologic and pathophysiologic functions of the human body from the cellular level, to organ systems. This course lays the foundation for understanding the underlying principles of human disease processes across the lifespan. Prerequisites: Admission to Master of Physician Assistant Studies Program and PA 510. F.

PA 516. EKG Interpretation. 1 Credit.

This online course focuses on the principles and practical application of electrocardiography for the PA. Prerequisite: Admission to Master of Physician Assistant Studies Program. S.

PA 517. Pharmacology I. 2 Credits.

This online system-based course focuses on the pharmacokinetic, pharmacodynamic, and pharmacogenetic concepts of the major drug classes across the lifespan. Federal regulations governing drug development, drug schedules, drug safety and legislation are included. In addition, drug interactions and contraindications and calculation of mathematical equivalents utilized in prescribing medications are reviewed. Prerequisite: Admission to Master of Physician Assistant Studies Program. SS.

PA 518. Pharmacology II. 2 Credits.

Continuation of PA 517. This online system-based course focuses on the pharmacokinetic, pharmacodynamic, and pharmacogenetic concepts of the major drug classes across the lifespan. In addition, drug interactions and contraindications and complementary and over the counter medications are discussed. Prerequisites: Admission to Master of Physician Assistant Studies Program and PA 517. F.

PA 521. Diagnostic Studies I. 2 Credits.

This online course focuses on laboratory, radiologic, and other diagnostic studies and acceptable values across the lifespan. Components encompass areas of radiology, hematology, chemistry, urinalysis, immunology, and microbiology. Emphasis will include routine and preventative studies for systems consistent with concurrent primary care course content. Prerequisite: Admission to Master of Physician Assistant Studies Program. S.

PA 522. Diagnostic Studies II. 2 Credits.

Continuation of PA 521. This online course focuses on laboratory, radiologic, and other diagnostic studies in relation to disease processes across the lifespan using a system-based approach. Components encompass areas of radiology, hematology, chemistry, immunology, genetic and molecular testing and microbiology. Emphasis will include systems such as cardiology, respiratory, endocrinology, gastroenterology and musculoskeletal consistent with concurrent primary care course content. Prerequisites: Admission to Master of Physician Assistant Studies Program and successful completion of PA 521. SS.

PA 523. Diagnostic Studies III. 2 Credits.

Continuation of PA 522. This online course focuses on laboratory, radiologic and other diagnostic studies in relation to disease processes across the lifespan using a system-based approach. Components encompass areas of radiology, hematology, chemistry, urinalysis, and microbiology. Emphasis will include systems such as neurology, reproduction, and renal consistent with concurrent primary care course content. Prerequisites: Admission to Master of Physician Assistant Studies Program and successful completion of PA 522. F.

PA 525. Scholarly Project Development. 3 Credits.

This online course provides a brief review of statistical principles as applied in medical literature with specific focus on research methods. Implementing principles of evidence-based medicine; students will learn to critically appraise the value and significance of medical research to determine application in clinical practice. Aspects of population health will also be discussed as students select a topic and complete a project proposal for the scholarly project. Prerequisite: Enrollment in the Physician Assistant Program. F.

PA 540. Primary Care I - Didactic. 4 Credits.

This didactic course is held on the UND campus. Focus is on instruction in patient assessment including communication strategies for interviewing and eliciting a medical history, techniques for performing a basic physical examination, and accurate documentation of patient data. Normal and abnormal findings involving patients across the lifespan are also presented. Instruction in preventive health, behavioral science psychological development is also emphasized. Clinical skill labs are utilized to instruct physical examination skills. Prerequisite: Admission to Master of Physician Assistant Studies Program. S.

PA 541. Primary Care I Clinical. 5 Credits.

This supervised clinical practical experience in a primary care setting allows students to apply communication strategies for interviewing and eliciting a medical history, techniques for performing a basic physical examination, and accurate documentation of patient data. Normal and abnormal findings involving patients across the lifespan are also evaluated with a preceptor in the clinical setting. Prerequisites: Admission to Master of Physician Assistant Studies Program. S.

PA 550. Primary Care II - Didactic. 6 Credits.

This didactic course is held on the UND campus. Focus is on the problem solving process for the diagnosis and management of acute and chronic medical conditions across the life span. Emphasis is placed on analyzing symptoms of disease and formulating differential diagnoses using a system-based approach. Systems such as cardiology, respiratory, endocrinology and musculoskeletal are included. Pharmacology and pharmacotherapeutics used to treat acute and chronic conditions in system-based areas are also emphasized. Clinical skill labs include skin suturing, casting and splinting and sterile technique. Prerequisites: Admission to Master of Physician Assistant Studies Program. S.

PA 551. Primary Care II - Clinical. 9 Credits.

This supervised clinical practice experience in a primary care setting allows students to focus on analyzing symptoms of disease, formulating differential diagnoses and treatment plans for patients across the life span. This clinical phase also includes a required supervised practicum in an urgent care setting. Prerequisites: Admission to Master of Physician Assistant Studies Program and successful completion of PA 550. SS.

PA 560. Primary Care III - Didactic. 7 Credits.

This didactic course is held on the UND campus. Focus is on the problem solving process for the diagnosis and management of acute and chronic medical conditions across the life span. Emphasis is placed on analyzing symptoms of disease and formulating differential diagnoses using a system-based approach. Systems such as neurology, reproduction, renal and behavioral science are included. Pharmacology and pharmacotherapeutics used to treat acute and chronic conditions in system-based areas are also emphasized. Further emphasis is placed on managing patients with multiple co-morbidities in emergency, clinical, and surgical settings. Simulation and skill labs are utilized to further enhance critical thinking and medical decision making for treatment of patients across the life span. Prerequisites: Admission to Master of Physician Assistant Studies Program and successful completion of PA 551. F.

PA 561. Primary Care III - Clinical. 9 Credits.

This supervised clinical practice experience in a primary care setting allows students to continue focusing and developing differential diagnoses and treatment plans for patients with complex medical disease across the life span. This clinical phase also includes a required supervised hospitalist practicum in an inpatient hospital setting. Prerequisite: Admission to Master of Physician Assistant Studies Program. Prerequisite or Corequisite: PA 560. F.

PA 566. Professional Issues & Role Development I. 2 Credits.

This online course discusses role definition and historical development for the physician assistant within the health care industry. The importance of professionalism as an expression of positive values and ideals demonstrating a high level of responsibility, ethical practice and sensitivity to a diverse patient population is also discussed. Prerequisite: Admission to Master of Physician Assistant Studies Program. S.

PA 567. Professional Issues & Role Development II. 1 Credit.

Continuation of PA 566. This online course discusses further levels of professionalism with respect to adherence to legal and regulatory requirements, health care delivery systems and health policy, including rural and underserved populations. Cultural diversity and inclusion principles are also discussed. Prerequisites: Admission to Master of Physician Assistant Studies Program and successful completion of PA 566. SS.

PA 568. Professional Issues & Role Development III. 1 Credit.

Continuation of PA 567. This online course discusses additional aspects of professionalism including accountability to patients, society and the profession, commitment to excellence and ongoing professional development. The importance of intellectual honesty and appropriate conduct will also be discussed. This course will also assist in preparing the student for clinical employment by stressing the importance of the interview, contract negotiations, privileges, certification, licensure and maintenance. Prerequisites: Admission to Master of Physician Assistant Studies Program and successful completion of PA 567. F.

PA 569. Professional Issues & Role Development IV. 1 Credit.

Continuation of PA 568. This online course introduces the PA student to quality of care and reimbursement methods. Students will further understand the importance of patient safety and risk management as well as develop a response to medical ethics. Comprehensive role development will also prepare the student for entry level practice. Prerequisites: Admission to Master of Physician Assistant Studies Program and successful completion of PA 568. S.

PA 580. Specialty Clerkship. 5-6 Credits.

This supervised clinical practical experience is designed to expose the student to different disciplines of medicine to fulfill program requirements as determined by UND faculty advisor, community preceptor and PA student and as necessary for adequate entry level PA practice. One credit of PA 580 may be substituted for one of the required 6 credits. Prerequisite: Admission to Master of Physician Assistant Studies Program. S.

PA 581. Emergency Department Clerkship. 4 Credits.

This required supervised clinical practical experience focuses on analyzing symptoms and formulating differential diagnoses of emergent and traumatic condition across the life span. This clerkship is intended to provide the student with hands-on experience in the care of patients with urgent and emergent conditions. Prerequisite: Admission to Master of Physician Assistant Studies Program. S.

PA 582. General Surgery Clerkship. 4 Credits.

This required supervised clinical practical experience focuses on analyzing symptoms and formulating differential diagnoses of patients requiring surgical interventions. This clerkship is intended to provide the student with hands-on experience in the care of patients with surgical conditions. Emphasis is placed on the role of the PA in a surgical setting to enhance skills in sterile techniques, surgical assisting, suturing, documentation and pre-post-operative patient care. Prerequisite: Admission to Master of Physician Assistant Studies Program. S.

PA 588. International Clerkship. 1 Credit.

Course content elective - This course offers students clinical time in another country to become acquainted with problems in: health care delivery, mother and childcare, malnutrition, basic sanitation and preventative health care measures. One credit of PA 588 may be substituted for one of the credits required in PA 580. Prerequisites: Admission to Master of Physician Assistant Studies Program and approval from the Director of the Physician Assistant Program. On demand.

PA 589. Readings in Physician Assistant Studies. 1-2 Credits.

Course content elective - Selected review and reading of current professional literature in areas pertaining to the practice of a Physician Assistant. In collaboration with the faculty member, reading selection and method of evaluation are determined. Prerequisites: Admission to Master of Physician Assistant Studies Program and approval from the Director of the Physician Assistant Program. Repeatable to 6 credits. On demand.

PA 599. Special Topics in Physician Assistant Studies. 1-2 Credits.

Course content elective - A series of clinically relevant lectures, discussions, and/or supervised practice clinical experiences developed around the practice of a Physician Assistant. Prerequisites: Admission to Master of Physician Assistant Studies Program and approval from the Director of the Physician Assistant Program. Repeatable to 6 credits. On demand.

PA 990. Continuing Enrollment in Physician Assistant Studies. 1-6 Credits.

Course content elective - This course provides additional time, if needed to complete required components of the Masters in Physician Assistant Studies. Repeatable to 12 credits maximum. Prerequisites: Admission to Master of Physician Assistant Studies Program and approval from the Director of the Physician Assistant Program. Repeatable to 12 credits. S/U grading. On demand.

PA 995. Scholarly Project. 3 Credits.

This online course allows the student to complete the scholarly project. Continued review and critique of the literature related to the topic area are required to formulate and write the final product. Students will also work with their advisor to objectively evaluate the scholarly project outcome. Prerequisite: Enrollment in the Physician Assistant Studies Program and completion of PA 525. S.

PA 996. Continuing Enrollment. 1-12 Credits.

Repeatable. S/U grading.