



UNIVERSITY OF
GEORGIA

Pre-Health Advising Office

Physician Assistant/Associate Applicant Orientation

(for students planning to apply to PA Schools)

Taz Qadri

Pre-PA and Pre-Veterinary Advisor

Office of the Vice-President for Instruction



Meet our Staff!

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About the Pre-Health Advising Office

- Our office advises all UGA students interested in healthcare careers.
 - Medicine, dentistry, optometry, allied-health (PA, PT, OT, AA), and nursing.
- We are located in 130 Memorial Hall
 - **Website:** prehealth.uga.edu
 - **Email:** pemed@uga.edu
 - **Phone:** 706-542-0444
- Visit our website:
 - ppao.uga.edu
 - To join our Pre-Health UGA listserv
 - To check out our Pre-Health Event Calendar for upcoming meetings/workshops/events.
 - To make an appointment with a Pre-Health Advisor.



Upcoming Pre-Health Events

Upcoming Events Calendar:

<https://prehealth.uga.edu/resources/>

This is a great tool to review weekly to see all the great workshops and meetings scheduled for our allied health clubs.

It is updated regularly.



Important Upcoming Application Dates

For the 2023-2024 application cycle:

- CASPA (PA Schools)
 - April : Application opens



Orientation Overview

- Application and Timeline
- Components of Application
 - Academic History
 - Academic Transcripts and GPA
 - GRE
 - Supporting Information
 - Shadowing/Patient Care Experiences
 - Activities
 - Personal Statement/Essay
 - Letters of Evaluation
- Where should I apply?
- Interviews
- Should I take a Gap-Year?
- What if I am not competitive?



Allied Health Schools in Georgia

■ PA Schools

- Augusta University (Augusta)
- Emory University (Atlanta)
- Mercer University (Atlanta)
- Morehouse School of Medicine (Atlanta)
- Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine (PCOM) (Suwanee)
- South University (Savannah)
- Brenau University (Gainesville)
- South College (Atlanta Campus)
- Agnes Scott (Decatur, Ga)
- Berry College (Rome, Ga)





Application

- **Centralized Application Services**
 - CASPA (for PA school)
- CASPA application has a Walkthrough PowerPoint manual—download it!
 - Pre-PA club also typically holds a meeting all about application services at the end of the term. Be on the lookout for announcements about these!
- Submit your application as early as possible!
 - Takes approximately 1-2 months to be verified



Supplemental Applications

- Most schools you apply to will also require that you submit a *supplemental application*.
 - This is typically an application to the institution's graduate school
 - May also include short answer/essay questions and associated fees
 - Usually linked through the CAS system, if the school participates in that service
- All portions of the supplemental application must be submitted in order for your application to be considered complete
- Avoid repeating content from CAS essay in any potential supplemental essays/responses.





PA Application Timeline

Institution	Application Period	Matriculation Date
Augusta University	July – October	May
Emory University	April – October	August
Mercer University	November – March	January
PCOM	April - December	June
South University	April – August	January
PCOM	April - December	June
South College	April – March	Sept/Oct
Brenau University	April - August	January
Agnes Scott	April - December	October
Berry College	April – August	August



Primary Components of Application

1. Academic History

- Overall GPA vs. Science/Prerequisite GPA
- Transcripts

2. Exam Performance (GRE) (CASPer) (PA-CAT)

3. Activities/Experiences

- Shadowing (Exposure to “provider-patient” interaction)
- Volunteering (Commitment to helping others and community involvement)
- Leadership (Extracurricular engagement)
- Research

4. Personal Statement and/or Essay(s)

5. Letters of Evaluation





Academic History

- Overall GPA vs. Science/Prerequisite GPA
 - Biology, Chemistry, Physics (BCP)
 - ~3.4-3.6 GPA is average for accepted applicants
- Trends
 - Did you challenge yourself?
 - Did you improve over time?
 - Did you take your science courses at UGA?
 - Do you have only 1-2 withdrawals?
- Transcripts:
 - Submit an official transcript from **every** institution you attended
 - Request transcripts early as they can take several weeks to send and process
 - Refer to the application instructions regarding where to send transcripts and how to enter coursework



PA School Admission Requirements

- Always double-check with schools you are interested in!
 - Requirements can change year-to-year

General PA School Requirements	
Biology	BIOL 1107/L and BIOL 1108/L
General Chemistry	CHEM 1211/L and CHEM 1212/L
Organic Chemistry	CHEM 2211/L
Microbiology	MIBO2500/L, or MIBO3500/MIBO3510L
Anatomy and Physiology	CBIO2200/L and CBIO2210/L
Psychology	PSYC1101 and/or PSYC3230
Misc. Recommended	STAT2000, BCMB3100, GENE 3200



Is AP credit accepted?

- The policies regarding acceptance of AP credit vary greatly amongst allied health programs in the state.
- For **PA** programs in state:
 - While many programs will accept AP credit, some do not so it is important to confirm with programs of interest
 - For example, Agnes Scott list explicitly on their website that they do **NOT** accept AP credit
 - All other PA programs in Georgia **DO** accept AP credit as long as the credits appear on your college transcript; however, it is recommended to confirm out of state program policies regarding AP credit
- Important to check with individual schools you hope to apply to.





GRE

- Take the GRE no later than mid-March of the year you plan to apply
 - Offered regularly; however, it will take a couple of weeks to receive your official score report and have that sent to programs of interest.
 - Registration is rolling and can be completed via the University Testing Center on campus.
- Courses you need before the exam:
 - No specific coursework is required pre-GRE since the “General Test” is required
- GRE scores range from 260-340
 - Try to score at least 300 (50th percentile) as a composite (combined) score
 - ~150 for quantitative, ~150 for verbal, ~4.0 writing
- You can study for the GRE on your own or take a GRE prep-course
 - Key is to make a study plan and take practice tests!





Supporting Information: Activities & Experiences

- Applicants use the Supporting Information/Experiences section to provide detailed information about:
 - **Observation Hours:** Time spent officially following and observing a PA at work .
 - **Patient Care Experience (for PA):** Experiences in which you are directly responsible for a patient's care. For example, performing procedures, directing a course of treatment, actively working on patients as a MA, paramedic, EMT, CNA, phlebotomist, etc.
 - **Employment:** Paid work done outside of the health care field; for example, a retail or restaurant job.
 - **Extracurricular Activities:** Includes research, club memberships, sports, etc. through a college or university.
 - **Research:** Research projects done in addition to classroom work; research generally should NOT appear as credit on a school transcript but may be acceptable for some programs (refer to instructions for specific application).
 - **Volunteer:** Volunteer work done outside of the health care field; for example, working for Habitat for Humanity, tutoring students, participating in or working for a fundraiser walk or blood drive, etc.
- Anything you add is fair game for an interview!
 - Include activities in which you were actively engaged.
 - Highlight specific qualities (e.g. leadership, teamwork, compassion, etc.).
 - Try to avoid including things in which you are a passive participant.





Observation Hours and Patient Care Experience

- Keeping track of experiences
 - It is recommended to use our Pre-Professional app.
 - You may also want to make note of memorable experiences to draw from later for interview/essay prompts
- Verifying Experiences
 - Generally, application services will request the contact information of your supervisor for observation hours and direct patient care experiences.
 - They will then contact this individual (usually via email) to electronically verify your experiences
 - Good practice to follow up with providers before application opens to let them know this email is coming!
 - It is also recommended to have documentation in case a school requests a signed documentation of hours.





Supporting Information: Personal Statement/Essay

Personal Statement

- Your chance to inform committee about yourself beyond transcript.
 - Pay close attention to number of characters (not words) that you can submit
 - DO NOT exceed maximum length
 - Triple-check for grammar and spelling errors!
- Need to answer these questions:
 - *Why do you want to be a PA?*
 - *Why do I want to pursue a PA education?*
 - *Why have you selected this field of healthcare?*
 - *What motivates you to learn more this field?*
 - *What do you want schools to know about you that hasn't been disclosed in other sections of the application?*
 - *Explain a defining moment that helped steer you toward a career in this field*
 - *COVID essay included now*

Essay Prompt(s)

- For PA applications (and potentially supplemental applications) you will be given an essay prompt
 - Typically limed to ~1 page (5,000 characters including spaces)
 - 2019-2020 prompt: *Describe a meaningful experience in your life. Reflect on how that experience influenced your personal growth, such as your attitudes or perceptions*
- Start early! Give yourself at least two months to work on your statement.
 - Have several people read it (letter-writers, advisor, etc.)
 - UGA resources: Honors College, Career Center





Supporting Information: Letters of Recommendation

- Most PA programs require **three letters**:
 - 1 healthcare provider (PA)
 - 1 professor (preferably in major or in prerequisite course)
 - 1 direct patient care supervisor

You can upload up to 5 letters of recommendation.

- Additional letter(s) from another academic professional, healthcare provider, supervisor, or someone who knows you well enough to speak positively on your behalf.
- Letters should come from people who know you!
 - Will need to describe you as an individual—behavior, character traits, maturity-level, etc.



How should I ask for Letters of Evaluation?

- Ask early! January-March of year you plan to apply.
 - Keep in mind, though, that letters cannot be submitted until the application cycle officially opens
- Email about meeting in person, then ask for letter during meeting.
- Always ask whether they can write you a positive letter!
- Provide the following to your letter-writers:
 - Resume or CV
 - Draft of personal statement (if needed for application)
 - Information about the programs you're applying to and your goals
 - [Guidelines for Letter-Writers handout](#) (provided by Pre-Health Advising Office)



How should my Letters be submitted?

- PA programs that participate in the CAS system will have evaluators submit electronically.
 - Student will be asked to provide contact information for recommender
 - Recommender will then receive an email regarding how to submit recommendation form and corresponding letter
- Work with letter-writer to ensure they have received the information via email and work to make submission as easy as possible.
- Always waive your right to view your letters of evaluation!



Where should I apply?

- Recommend applying to several schools.
 - Admissions are very fickle. Many variables affect likelihood of interview.
 - There are no true “back-up” schools.
- Consider applying to private out-of-state schools.
 - State institutions are very particular about residency, private schools are not.
- Use the ***PAEA Program Directory***
 - Overview and admissions data for accredited programs
 - Review necessary application materials



Background Check

- Report anything you think might be an issue.
 - Honor Code violations
 - Legal issues (misdemeanors, felonies, etc.)
- Not reporting is considered the same as lying.
- If you have had a violation expunged, be sure to pull record and verify.
- If something happens *after* you apply or are accepted, you must report.
- Bottom-line, try to keep your nose clean!



Interviews

- Interview season begins as early as August/September and will continue into the Spring.
- An invitation to interview typically means your “numbers” are good.
- Interviewers are trying to find out who you are.
 - No right/wrong answers—more about how you answer and interpersonal communication skills.
- Tips:
 - Know your application inside and out.
 - Dress conservatively (no tattoos, minimal jewelry, beards trimmed, comfy shoes)
 - Interview begins the minute you step on campus
 - Send thank-you notes within 1-weeks of interview (email or hand-written)
- Career Center conducts mock interviews
 - Schedule early! Try for Spring/Early Fall.
- Pre-Health Advising Office conducts MMI interviews (CASPer style)



Gap Year

- Why take a Gap Year?
 - I didn't get in.
 - I am not ready to apply.
 - I need a break from school.
- Work on weak spots in your application.
 - Complete post-bac or Master's program
 - Retake GRE
 - Increase clinical involvement and experience
- Key to Gap Year is planning.
 - Try to stay busy and do things that allow you to grow and cultivate new skills



What if I am not competitive?

- It's *okay* not to get in the first time! Plenty of people have to reapply.
 - Especially true for PA school!
- Take a Gap Year to work on becoming more competitive.
 - Take additional courses or complete a graduate degree
 - Re-take the GRE
 - Continue obtaining direct patient care hours and learn a variety of medical procedures.
- Consider another career in healthcare
 - Nursing, Physical Therapist, Occupational Therapist, Genetic Counseling, etc.
 - Consider talking with a career consultant further about other career paths that may be best-suited to your strengths



Fee Assistance Programs

▪ PA School

- CASPA offers a [fee assistance program](#) to assist students applying to PA school.
 - Covers only initial application fee
- Granted on a first-come, first-served basis
- Apply for fee assistance when application opens in April.



Major Takeaways

- Plan out each step in advance!
- Submit your application as early as you can (but don't rush it)!
- Always have a Plan B!
- Utilize the Pre-Health Advising Office!
 - Join the Pre-Health listserv
 - Meet with Pre-Health Advisor
 - Review our website





Questions?

Pre-Health Advising Office

Website: prehealth.uga.edu

Email: tqadri@uga.edu

Phone: 706-542-0444

To make an appointment with Pre-Health Advisor, please visit website or log onto to SAGE.

