

Pre-PA Quick Facts



Pre-Health Advising
Pre-Professional Advising Office
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

You should prepare for a career as a Physician Associate by building credentials in scholarship, leadership, humanitarian/community service, and shadowing in the various settings of the profession. PA schools also greatly value **direct patient care experience** often requiring a substantial number of hours for acceptance. There is **no “best” major** for pre-PA. Instead, you are encouraged to pursue a major you are genuinely interested in as that will help you excel. Remember to consult a pre-health advisor about your individual plan!

CASPA (Centralized Application Service)

To apply to most PA programs, you will utilize the CASPA application service. Official transcripts, GRE scores, a personal statement, and letters of recommendation are all submitted to CASPA. If you are applying to a program that does not use CASPA, you will need to provide them with all that information separately.

CASPA opens each year in late April, but programs differ in terms of their application deadlines. Most deadlines are in the fall for a summer start; however, some may have spring deadlines for a winter start. You are responsible for checking the application deadlines for the programs to which they hope to apply. Regardless of deadline, you are encouraged to submit your application as early as possible.

Required Courses & GPA Expectations

DISCLAIMER: This is not a definitive list of the classes you will need for every school. Always check with the individual schools to see their specific requirements regarding coursework and AP/IB credit.

❖ Do grade trends matter?

If you wish to enter a PA program, you will need to have both a strong science and strong overall GPA. Admissions committees also look for trends on transcripts—so all is not lost if you stumble in your first semester or two, but then show substantial improvement each subsequent year. However, they will also notice negative trends such as if you consistently withdraw from or perform poorly in hard science courses or if you take many courses away from UGA. While an instance or two is not a deal-breaker, a pattern of behavior should be avoided. You must demonstrate the ability to handle difficult scientific content.

GRE

Most PA schools require that applicants take the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). The GRE consists of three sections: Quantitative, Verbal, and Essay section. There are no specific courses that you need to take prior to the GRE, but you should plan to dedicate roughly four to eight weeks to exam preparation. While you can opt for a commercial prep course for the GRE, self-study is often sufficient.

Students usually sit for the exam in their junior or senior year depending on their application timeline. Generally, it is recommended that you take the GRE in January- March as you head into the application cycle that summer. The GRE is offered via University Testing Services on a regular basis. Many schools are requesting the **CASPer test** and the **PA-CAT**. Speak with the Pre-PA advisor for more information.

Average Matriculant Numbers

- **Overall GPA:** 3.50
- **Science GPA:** 3.50
- **GRE:** ~310 combined score & ~4.0 writing (scores above the 50th percentile)

General Information

- Master's Degree
- Most programs are 2-3 years
- Eight institutions in Georgia:
 - Augusta University
 - Emory University
 - GA-PCOM
 - Mercer University
 - Morehouse
 - South College
 - South University
 - Brenau University

Typical PA Pre-Requisites

Biology (BIOL 1107/L & 1108/L)

Chemistry (CHEM 1211/L, 1212/L & CHEM 2211/L)

Organic Chemistry (CHEM 2211/L)

Anatomy and Physiology (CBIO2200/L & CBIO2210/L)

Psychology (PSYC1101)

Statistics (STAT 2000, or BIOS 2010 or BIOS 3000)

Microbiology (MIBO2500/L or MIBO 3500 & MIBO 3500L/3510L)

Recommended: Biochemistry, Organic Chem 2, Medical Terminology, Ethics and Abnormal Psychology.

Direct Patient Care

Students interested in becoming physician assistants must spend a significant amount of time working or volunteering in clinical settings where they are able to **administer care to patients**. It is not enough to volunteer in a hospital or clinic doing clerical work; experience must be “hands-on” and can include activities such as taking vitals, drawing blood, bathing or helping transport patients, administering treatment, etc. It is common for students to get certified as medical assistants, nursing assistants, EMTs or phlebotomists to build up these hours. Certification is not always required, but it can be very helpful for finding a position and can also be included on the PA application. You should always be appropriately trained and certified when administering medical care.

Competitive applicants to PA school generally have **over 1000 hours of experience**. While programs will commonly list minimum hours that are lower, they do not normally matriculate students who only have the minimum. As a result, it is not unusual for pre-PA students to take a gap year to focus on direct patient care experience.

❖ Shadowing vs. Direct Patient Care Hours

Shadowing is a passive activity which does not count towards direct patient care; it is the act of observing the interactions between PAs and patients. While PA programs do require significantly more direct patient care hours, shadowing is often still required or recommended. The value of shadowing a PA lies in gaining knowledge of the profession, and building a rapport with a PA who can then write a strong letter of recommendation. While some schools may not specify the number of shadowing hours required, you should expect to have a little over 100 hours between at least two different settings.

Undergraduate Research & Volunteering

While there are many benefits to getting involved in **undergraduate research**, it is not required for admission into most PA schools. Therefore, if you are not interested in research, you would be better served dedicating that time to other activities such as direct patient care, volunteering, or shadowing. If you are interested in research, then you should plan to dedicate at least a year to a specific project or research lab.

Volunteering is an important part of the application that you should not neglect. PA schools want to see depth of commitment and substantial involvement and leadership in the community. They are looking for students who not only demonstrate that they can perform well in rigorous courses, but also those who are compassionate, enjoy working with people and are dedicated to serving the community. Volunteering can be done in a clinical setting such as a hospital or hospice, but it can also be done with organizations such as Habitat for Humanity, the Humane Society, or anything else that you are passionate about.

Letters of Evaluation

Most PA schools require two to three letters of evaluation. Requirements can vary between schools, and it is your responsibility to ensure that you have collected the correct letters for your program of interest. Generally, programs expect you to provide one letter from a PA, one from a science faculty member, and one other of your choosing. This can come from another PA, a physician, a research mentor, volunteer coordinator, employer, etc. While you should select what you believe will be the most compelling letter, it is often best if that letter can speak to your work with patients.

Georgia PA Program Application Dates

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