



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

Introduction to the Physician Assistant/Associate (PA) Program

Taz Qadri

Pre-Professional Advising Office

Office of the Vice President for Instruction



About the Pre-Professional Advising Office

- Our office advises all UGA students interested in healthcare careers. First advising appointment should be after your first semester is completed.
 - Medicine, dentistry, optometry, allied-health (PA, PT, OT, AA), and nursing.
- We are located in 130 Memorial Hall
 - **Website:** ppao.uga.edu
 - **Email:** premed@uga.edu
 - **Phone:** 706-542-0444
- Visit our website:
 - 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.



Meet our Staff!

- **Amanda Spohn (Coordinator)**
 - aspohn@uga.edu
- **Michele Johnson (Pre-Medical Advisor – Juniors, Seniors, and Alumni)** - If you have 75 credit hours or more, you should schedule an appointment with Michele Johnson.
 - mtjohnso@uga.edu
- **Jennifer Letchuk (Pre-Medical Advisor – Freshman, and Sophomores)** - If you have less than 75 credit hours, you should schedule an appointment with Jennifer Letchuk.
 - jletchuk@uga.edu
- **Casey Ellis (Pre-Allied Health [PT, OT, etc.] and Nursing)**
 - cme18@uga.edu
- **Taz Qadri (Pre-Physician Associate and Veterinary)**
 - tqadri@uga.edu
- **Lise Kalla (Pre-Dental, and Optometry Advisor)**
 - lkalla@uga.edu



What can I do right now to prepare?

- Join the Pre-Health Listserv
- Look over the Event Calendar
- Attend a PA Orientation.
- **Focus on your classes and GPA.** Especially your hard sciences such as Biology, Chemistry and Physics
- Build relationships with faculty.
- Think about what you want to and need to be involved in during your time as an undergraduate. Remember that schools want to see depth of commitment and substantial involvement in the community.
 - Volunteering, Shadowing, & Direct Patient Care
 - Research
 - Start early, but don't overwhelm yourself or spread yourself too thin.



What matters for PA?

- Science GPA
- Admission Requirements
- Entrance Exam
- Letters of Recommendations
- Volunteering, Shadowing, & Direct Patient Care
- Research
- Understanding of diversity and inclusion



What should I major in?

- Major does not matter!
- Challenge yourself, take a full-load (15/16+ hours per semester), and pursue things that interest you.
- Overall GPA vs. Science GPA vs. BCP GPA for PA.
 - Average overall GPA of 3.6
 - Average science GPA of 3.5
 - CASPA BCP (biology, chemistry, and physics GPA of 3.5



UGA Degree Options Aligned with the Pre-PA Track

Franklin College of Arts & Sciences

Undergraduate Advising Office

askfranklin@uga.edu

biology@uga.edu

franklin.uga.edu

- Focused, science-intensive majors with advising support for Pre-PA

College of Public Health

Undergraduate Advising Office

cphadm@uga.edu

publichealth.uga.edu

- Health-focused programs that complement clinical and public health interests

College of Agricultural & Environmental Sciences

Undergraduate Advising Office

pam.cummings@uga.edu

ugacaes@uga.edu

caes.uga.edu

- Wide array of solid science majors; supports Pre-PA prerequisite needs

College of Veterinary Medicine

Undergraduate Advising Office

ahwatson@uga.edu

biph@uga.edu

vet.uga.edu/education/undergraduate-programs/b-s-in-biomedical-physiology

- Deep understanding of physiology, supporting PA program readiness

UGA Degree Options Aligned with the Pre-PA Track - continued

College of Family and Consumer Sciences

Undergraduate Advising Office

bev@uga.edu

<https://www.fcs.uga.edu/>

- Focused on preparing students for careers that involve improving the lives of individuals, families, and communities.

Mary Frances Early College of Education

Undergraduate Advising Office

kiness@uga.edu

coe.uga.edu/academics/concentrations/exercise-science

- Health-focused programs that complement clinical and public health interests

GPA & Class Requirements

- Requirements vary by health profession, but a strong academic record is expected.
- Grade trends matter!
 - Did you improve a lot?
 - Are you withdrawing from a lot of classes?
 - Did you take courses at your home institution?
 - Did you complete any BCP classes as A/P?

Matriculant Averages (Overall & Science & BCP)				
Medical	3.7	3.7		
Dental	3.6	3.5		
Optometry	3.5	3.5		
Physician Assistant	3.6	3.5	3.5	
Physical Therapy	3.5	3.5		
Occupational Therapy	3.5	3.4		
Nursing	3.4	3.4		



Admission Requirements

Required courses vary between health professional tracks, but also within them. Students should always check with individual schools about their requirements.

(Don't forget to see if they accept AP!)

Typical PA Pre-Requisites

Biology – (1107/L, 1108/L)

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

Anatomy & Physiology – (CBIO 2200/L & CBIO 2210/L)

Microbiology – (MIBO 2500/L, MIBO 3500/L or 3510L)

Psychology – PSYC 1101 & PSYC 3230

***Suggested recommended classes:** these will differ between schools: Genetics, Abnormal Psych., Medical Terminology etc.



Entrance Exams

Which exam do I take?

Medical	MCAT
Dental	DAT
Optometry	OAT
Physician Assistant	GRE/PA-CAT
Physical Therapy	GRE
Occupational Therapy	GRE
Nursing	TEAS, HESI, or GRE

When do I take the exam?

- Check with your advisor. Many of these have important pre-requisite courses!

How do I study for the exam?

- Personal preference. While commercial prep courses do exist for these exams, they are often expensive and do not guarantee success.
- Take multiple practice exams!
- Use the Resource Library located in the Pre-Professional Office

Can I take the exam multiple times?

- Be sure you go into the exam fully prepared! Don't take one "just to see what it's like."
- While it is possible to retake exams this is not advisable under most circumstances. Discuss this with your pre-health advisor!



Letters of Evaluation

Letters should come from people who know you! They will need to describe you as an individual—behavior, character traits, maturity-level, etc.

What kind of letters?	
Physician Assistant	(3-5) 1 professor (any faculty), 1 PA, 1 other (clinical reference highly preferred)
Physical Therapy	(2-4) 1 hard science, 1 PT, 1 other
Occupational Therapy	(3-5) 1 hard science, 1 OT, 1 other
Nursing	(2-3) 1 academic and 1 other

NOTE: UGA does not issue any committee letters. Admissions decisions are not impacted by the lack of a committee letter if your home institution does not provide this service.



Shadowing

- Shadowing involves observing professionals providing care to patients.
 - Exposure to “professional-patient” interaction
 - Experience reality of working in healthcare—not always about healing or curing!
- Hour requirements and expectations vary.
 - ~100 is a common goal for PA.
 - Variety is great to have and is required for the PA track.
- Start with family/friend connections and start **early**.
 - Connect with campus clubs, they can point you in right direction.
 - Connect with your Pre-PA advisor for resources.
- Do not engage in activity that could be considered practice of medicine!
 - Especially important for medical mission trips and abroad experiences.



Volunteering

- Volunteering involves doing good works and a willingness to support the community.
 - You want to be a health professional to help people? Well, how have you so far?
- Volunteer experiences must be in underserved organizations in both medical clinics and non-medical organizations.
- No minimum hours, simply show consistent level of commitment.
 - Find something where you're helping regularly, not just one-offs.
 - Follow your passion!
 - Gaining a breadth of experiences than obsessing over the specific number of hours is better
- Keep record of experiences.
 - Dates, location, who you worked with, what you did, etc.
 - You will not be able to simply upload a resume to the application.
 - Download the Pre-Professional Planner to your phone.



Volunteer Opportunities in Athens (or nearby)

■ Hospitals/Clinics:

- Piedmont Athens Regional Medical Center
- St. Mary's Health Care System
- Mercy Health Center
- Athens Nurses Clinic
- Athens Neighborhood Health Center

■ Hospices:

- St. Mary's Hospice
- Presbyterian Village
- Athena Healthcare & Hospice
- Hospice Advantage
- Pruitt Health

■ Many, many more. Follow your interests!

■ Non-medical:

- Thomas Lay After-school Program
- Summer camps (Camp Hardgrove, Camp Twin Lakes, Camp Kudzu, Camp Kesem, etc.)
- Action Ministries of Athens
- Boys & Girls Club of Athens
- Athens-Area Humane Society

■ Clinical work experiences:

- Medical Scribing
- Medical Assistant
- Phlebotomist



Direct Patient Care Hours

- PA schools expect students to have substantial experience with patients.
 - ~1000 hours to be a competitive applicant
 - Must be “hands-on;” actively administering care to patients
 - Usually have to be certified to get this kind of experience (MA, CNA, EMT, etc.)
 - Gaining a breadth of experiences than obsessing over the specific number of hours is better

PAEA 2023-2024 data:

*average student had over 2000 direct patient care hours.



Undergraduate Research

Research experience is not explicitly required for admission into any health professional schools, but it is very beneficial to have on an application. If you are going to pursue undergraduate research, it is best if you can join a lab for at least a year.

Research should be translational (human related) if possible.

How can I get involved?

- Off campus programs (Ex. internships, etc.)
- Research for course credit – CURO vs. Departmental credit (or both)
- Volunteer in a lab
- Paid research assistant opportunities

REMEMBER: Advisors are unable to “pair” students with faculty.
This is a pro-active process. Think of it like a job hunt.

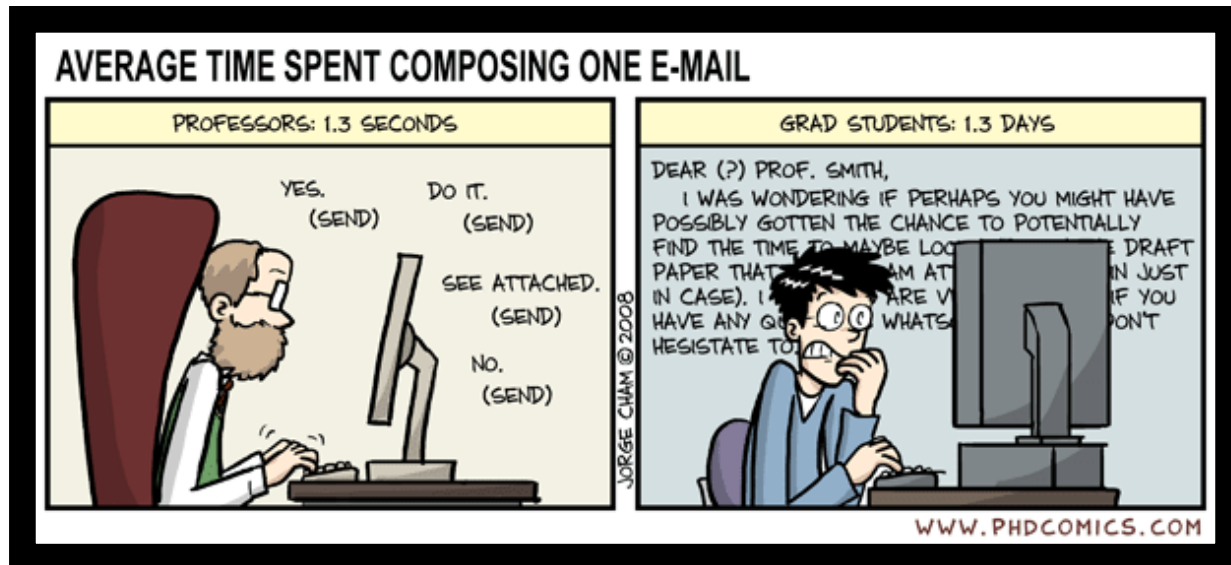


Finding Research at UGA

It is not common for open research positions to be advertised. Most students find research opportunities by emailing faculty and asking to join their lab.

How do I ask?

- A professional e-mail is VERY important!
- Expect to advocate for yourself.
- Be prepared to e-mail between 30 to 40 faculty members.
- Review Center for Undergraduate Research (CURO)



Pre-Professional Student Ambassadors (PPSA)

- PPSAs connect students to campus resources, provide peer mentorship, professional development opportunities, and support/guidance.
- Connect with an ambassador who can help you navigate your path at UGA!
 - 15-minute drop-in [Zoom meetings](#) start in September
- View the [PPSA bios!](#)



Subscribe to the PPSA
Peer Mentor Calendar!



Major Takeaways

- Major in what you're interested in but and do well in your science pre-requisite courses. PA schools value applicants with a variety of experiences and perspectives.
- Start getting involved early and stay committed.
 - Be well organized, know how to manage your time and outside influences
 - Have a genuine desire to help and care for people
 - Show a particular passion for something and commit.
- Utilize the Pre-Professional Advising Office!
 - Join the Pre-Health Listserv
 - Meet with a Pre-Health Advisor
 - Review our website (ppao.uga.edu)
 - Connect with our PPSA Ambassadors



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PPAO Events



PPSA Peer Mentor



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Questions?

Pre-Professional Advising Office

Website: ppao.uga.edu

Email: tqadri@uga.edu

Phone: 706-542-0444

To make an appointment with a Pre-PA Advisor, please visit the website.

