

## Master of Physician Assistant Studies (MPAS) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ):

### What are the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio Educational Objectives and Goals of the MPAS Program?

#### **Educational Objectives:**

- Educate physician assistants who are qualified by academic and clinical training to provide patient care services with the appropriate supervision of a licensed physician.
- Provide a course of professional study that will provide graduates with appropriate knowledge of physical and mental function and disease and the skills to accurately and reliably perform the range of health care procedures and duties customarily ascribed to the physician assistant.
- Furnish instruction that stresses the role of the physician assistant in health maintenance and preventive medicine while considering the social, economic, environmental, cultural, and ethical aspects of the people served.
- Develop the intellectual, ethical, and professional attitudes and behaviors that generate trust and respect from the patient population served by the physician assistant.
- Provide educational and clinical experiences that promote understanding of the interdependence of health professionals and that foster the utilization of the interdisciplinary team approach to the delivery of primary health care.
- Provide didactic and clinical educational experiences in order to prepare physician assistants with the knowledge, technical capabilities, and judgment necessary to perform in a highly professional and skilled capacity.
- Provide educational experiences that stimulate active learning in the science and art of medicine and foster an appreciation for “lifelong” learning as a practicing professional.
- Foster development of skills and processes to meet the unique needs of South Texas. These needs include, but are not limited to understanding the languages and cultural diversity of groups found in the region.
- Instill a desire and prepare students to enter primary care careers in rural or urban medically underserved areas.
- Develop a service orientation to the community, profession, and those whose need is greatest.
- Become the Physician Assistant Program of choice for South Texas citizens.

#### **Educational Goals:**

- Recruit a diverse student body that is representative of our region.
- Produce a high student completion and graduation rate.
- Maintain a high first-taker PANCE (certification exam) pass rate.
- Foster graduate employment in South Texas, particularly in underserved areas and populations.
- Facilitate graduate employment in primary care.

### Is the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio MPAS program accredited?

- Yes. The Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA) has granted to the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio Physician Assistant Studies Program. Accreditation-Continued is an accreditation status granted when a currently accredited program is in compliance with the ARC-PA Standards. You can learn more about accreditation at [www.arc-pa.org](http://www.arc-pa.org).

### When does the Physician Assistant program begin?

- Orientation for new students is typically the first week of July and classes start the following week.

### How many applicants do you accept a year?

- Forty-five candidates are accepted once a year.

### Do you interview candidates for your program and what is the format?

- Yes. A multiple mini-interview is conducted for the most competitive applicants to the MPAS program. Typically about 140 invited students are interviewed each year. Interview dates typically take place in October, November, December, and January. The class size is anticipated to be 45 students.

### What characteristics would make me a competitive candidate for admission?

- We look for well-rounded individuals. A history of academic success, service to the community and/or to others, health care experience, Physician Assistant shadowing, strong motivation to be a PA, excellent critical thinking skills and interpersonal skills are examples of characteristics of what we look for in applicants.

### How important is a candidates' GPA in getting an interview and how do I make myself more competitive?

- A minimum Overall GPA and Overall Science GPA of a 3.0 on a 4.0 scale are required for eligibility of review. All required courses must be passed with a grade of "C" or better. As with other universities or colleges, higher GPA's make a more competitive candidate. The goal is for candidates to be competitive and academically prepared to successfully handle the demands of the MPAS program curriculum.
- However, the admissions committee does not base its decision solely on grade point averages. It evaluates the application packet holistically. Therefore, the quality and quantity of academic preparation, strong letters of recommendation, GRE, health-care related experience, Physician Assistant shadowing experience, community service activities, leadership evidence, and awards are all a part of the holistic evaluation process.

### When must prerequisites be completed?

- All prerequisites must be completed by the application deadline of September 1<sup>st</sup> with a grade of C or better. No prerequisites can be "in progress" after the application deadline. No exceptions.

### Does it matter when prerequisite courses were taken? For example, do you accept courses taken over 10 years ago?

- We do not have an expiration date for our prerequisite courses. However, students are responsible for being prepared for the MPAS academic curriculum.

### Does it matter if I take my prerequisite courses at a two-year college instead of a four-year university?

- The GPA is calculated the same way, whether it was taken at a community college or a four-year university. No preference is given to courses taken at either institution. We understand the cost of education and want you to have as many options as possible in obtaining the prerequisite courses required for our programs. Please note that some required courses may not be offered at two-year colleges due to the academic level of the curriculum.

### What course can I take if my institution does not offer courses in "Human Anatomy" and "Human Physiology?"

- If a combined Human Anatomy & Physiology course is taken, applicants must complete both Anatomy & Physiology I and Anatomy & Physiology II with the appropriate laboratories. Neither Anatomy & Physiology I or II, alone, satisfies the Anatomy and Physiology requirements.
- For the Human Anatomy Lecture & Laboratory (4 semester credit hours) requirement - Acceptable courses include: Comparative, Vertebrate, Mammalian, Animal, or Systems Anatomy.
- For the Human Physiology Lecture (3 semester credit hours) requirement – Acceptable courses include: Comparative, Vertebrate, Mammalian, Animal, or Systems Physiology.

### Do you accept CLEP or AP courses for prerequisites?

- We accept this type of credit as long as your courses have been recognized by your undergraduate institution and the credit is recorded on your college/university transcript.

### Can I have courses in progress when I apply?

- Yes, you may have courses in-progress until May of the year of program entry as long as they are not required prerequisites. Your non-prerequisite coursework such as a missing course to complete your bachelor's degree (for example) is allowed to be in-progress at the time of your application. The completion of your bachelor's degree is required by May of the year of program entry.

### Is it beneficial to have health care experience prior to applying to the PA program?

- Yes, a minimum of 500 hours of hands-on patient health care experience is required. (See the pre-admission health care experience section below.)

### Pre-Admission Health Care Experience:

- Direct hands-on patient health care experience is required. In order to be competitive, an applicant should have a minimum of 500 hours of hands-on patient health care experience. Applicants must demonstrate evidence of completion of the 500 hours of *professional or volunteer* hands-on patient health care experience prior to submitting the CASPA application. Examples of hands-on patient care experience include, but are not limited to: Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), Paramedic, Nurse, Medical Assistant, Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), Emergency Room (ER) Tech, Physical Therapy Assistant (PTA), Phlebotomist, Clinical Research Assistant, etc.
- Student training experiences including medical student, nursing student, EMT student, student athletic trainer, or other health care student training, for example, are not accepted as clinical hours (direct hands-on health care experience) but will count as "other health care experience" on your CASPA application. Experiences such as "shadowing" laboratory testing with no patient contact, non-clinical research, life guard, or clerical work are not accepted as direct hands-on patient health care experience.

### Is it beneficial to have Physician Assistant Shadowing experience prior to the application to the PA program?

- Yes, a minimum of 100 hours of hands-on shadowing experience with a certified Physician Assistant is required. (See the Pre-Admission Physician Assistant Shadowing Experiences section below.)

### Pre-Admission Physician Assistant Shadowing Experience:

- We require applicants to observe and/or shadow a certified Physician Assistant to become informed of the role of the PA, although the experience does not count as direct hands-on patient health care experience for your Pre-Admission Health Care Experience requirement. Applicants must demonstrate evidence of completion of the 100 hours of observation/shadowing a certified Physician Assistant prior to submitting the CASPA application.

### How do I obtain Physician Assistant shadowing hours?

- Take a HIPAA class so that you can tell prospective practitioners that you are HIPAA compliant.
- Volunteer to work in any capacity in an office or emergency room where PA's are employed. In the course of your volunteer work, you might become acquainted with a PA who may be willing to let you shadow - separate from your volunteer time.
- Approach smaller practices or rural practices where they might be more amenable to having someone shadow.
- If you are affiliated with the military, try to find a military PA to shadow. PA's are on staff at all military medical facilities.
- Contact your local, regional or state PA chapter for insight and guidance. Ask to attend one of their meetings and personally seek out a PA to shadow.

### Does it matter what my undergraduate degree is in?

- The subject matter your undergraduate studies do not play a role in the admissions process. We encourage students to pursue an academic degree which is of their interest.

### What are the steps to apply?

- The MPAS program requires two separate applications. The first step is to complete the Central Application Service for Physician Assistants (CASPA) online application and submit all documents, materials, and requirements. The second step is to complete the Physician Assistant Studies (PAS) Supplemental Application and load the document onto your CASPA online application. The final step is to submit your online payment of the \$60.00 non-refundable [supplemental application fee](#) or at <https://commerce.cashnet.com/uthscsasf>.
- All applications, materials, documents, and payments must be completed by the September 1, 2015 deadline. No exceptions. For full instructions please see the Application and Admissions Requirements Checklist and the CASPA instructions and FAQ section.

### When does the application cycle open and close?

- The application period opens in April 22<sup>nd</sup>, but please review CASPA's website at <https://portal.caspaonline.org/> for full deadline details.
- The application period closes on September 1<sup>st</sup>, but please review CASPA's website at <https://portal.caspaonline.org/> for full deadline details.
- We encourage all applicants to plan accordingly and APPLY EARLY in the application cycle, but to ensure a quality application review the CASPA's "Before Applying" section for instructions on the CASPA website above.

### How do I strengthen my application?

- Get to know as much as you can about the Physician Assistant profession. Visit PA websites at: [www.aapa.org](http://www.aapa.org), [www.aapa.org/saaapa](http://www.aapa.org/saaapa) or [www.tapa.org](http://www.tapa.org).
- Review our website and become familiar with our program. Be able to tell us how you would be a good match for our program.
- Take additional science courses in college and earn high marks in all the classes.
- Learn a second language, if you already know a second language, improve your language skills. Consider learning medical Spanish.
- Get hands-on health care experience: volunteer or work as a nurse's aide; take an Emergency Medical Technology (EMT) course; shadow Physician Assistants to learn more about the profession and develop a concept of how they practice.
- For additional resources, please see the "Additional Physician Assistant Resources" section below.

### How does the program calculate GPA for admission requirements?

- We calculate two GPA's - your *Overall GPA* of every college/university course ever taken and your *Overall Science GPA* (which includes all science coursework in your GPA calculation).

### If I re-take a course, how does this affect my GPA?

- If an applicant re-takes a science course, both the low score and the high score are used in calculating the overall science GPA.
- If an applicant re-takes any other course (a non-science course) both the low score and high score are used in calculating the overall GPA. Usually re-taking one or two courses makes little difference in the overall GPA calculation.
- We encourage all students to know where they stand regarding their GPA for planning and goal-setting purposes. Please utilize the unofficial GPA calculator tool on our website (coming soon) to assist you with your projected GPA calculations. All official GPA calculations will take place after you have officially applied to the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio Physician Assistant Studies program.

### Is the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) required?

- Yes. The Graduate Record Examination is required as part of the application. There is no minimum GRE score required for admission. Scores from the GRE must be received by the September 1<sup>st</sup> application deadline. Applicants may choose to submit scores from a previous examination if it was taken within the past five years. Please note that all PA applications are assessed from a holistic evaluation, not just by your standardized score.

### In order for my GRE scores to be sent to the Physician Assistant Studies Program at UT Health Science Center at San Antonio, what is the GRE code?

- The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio institutional GRE code is 7552.

### If I am re-applying, what do I need to do?

- Students will be required to send in all new materials, transcripts, CASPA application, supplemental application, etc. Records of past applicants are not kept on file at UT Health Science Center at San Antonio.

### Is the program a full-time program or can it be taken part-time?

- The program is a full-time program. There are no part-time options.

### Where do I send my application materials?

- Send ALL application materials, including transcripts, to CASPA. Please see the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio [Admissions Requirement Checklist](#) for full instructions.

### What is included in the supplemental application?

- The supplemental application and full instructions can be found at Physician Assistant Studies (PAS) Supplemental Application.
- A Petition for Course Review should be sent with this application ONLY if needed. Even if you are petitioning a course, you do not send your transcripts to the registrar.

### Where else can I get tips on applying?

- We hold Physician Assistant Studies [Open House Workshops](#) typically from March - July. Questions will be answered at these workshops and tips on how to apply and strengthen your application will be shared.
- Videos of the workshops are typically posted online after the event at <http://uthscsa.edu/shp/welcome.asp> if you are unable to attend in person. To attend a workshop, you must RSVP in advance. The event is free and recommended for prospective applicants who are within two years applying.
- Please note that the Physician Assistant Studies Department does an annual review of the required admission requirements. Be sure to check our website for updated requirements information and plan accordingly for the application cycle which you anticipate applying for. We recommend annual attendance to the Open House Workshop event in case there are changes in the application process from year to year.

### Can I work while going to the MPAS program?

- The Physician Assistant Studies program is a full-time endeavor. Although employment should not impact the coursework or class attendance, we recommend that students plan accordingly with their time-management skills, financial management, study time, and personal balance to ensure academic success.

### How can I find out if the prerequisite courses I took at my college/university meet the required prerequisites?

- Please refer to the [Prerequisite Equivalency Chart for Physician Assistant Studies](#) for additional information. If you have additional questions for a course, it is best to email us at [SHPwelcome@uthscsa.edu](mailto:SHPwelcome@uthscsa.edu) and include: Name, contact information, program of interest, prerequisite you have a question regarding, course name, number, institution and credit hours (semester).
- If you have additional needs, please contact the School of Health Professions Office of Admissions and Special Programs and make an appointment to have an advisor evaluate your course work. See contact information below.

### I noticed on the Admission Requirements Checklist MPAS program that prerequisite hour requirements are listed in semester credit hours. What if I attended an institution which awarded college credit in quarter hours instead of semester credit hours?

- Semester credit hours and quarter hours are not the same equivalent credit hours. Please refer to the quarter hour to semester hour equivalency chart below. If your quarter hours do not equate to the required semester credit hours, you will be missing the prerequisite requirement hours.

<b>Quarter Hour to Semester Hour Equivalency Chart</b>	
<b>Quarter Hours</b>	<b>Semester Credit Hours Equivalent</b>
1	0.67
2	1.33
3	2.0
4	2.67
5	3.33
6	4.0
7	4.67
8	5.33
9	6.0
10	6.67

### **How many applications are received and how competitive is acceptance?**

- UT Health Science Center at San Antonio receives a large volume of completed applications annually. Total numbers of applications varies per year. See the chart below for the entering 2014 MPAS class statistics. Applicants are welcome regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, veteran status, or disability.

### **What are the average statistics of admitted students?**

- Although it varies per year, please see the entering 2015 MPAS class statistics below.

Number of Applicants in 2015	1266
Class Size	45
Average Number of PA Shadowing Hours	289
Average Direct Patient Care Hours	3011
Average Other Health Care Experience Hours	2218
Average Number of Community Service Hours	549
Average Overall GPA	3.43 (Range: 3.04 – 4.0)
Average Science GPA	3.39 (Range: 3.03 – 4.0)
Average Age of Incoming Class	26.8 years (Range: 21 – 46)

### **How can I ensure a successful application submission?**

- Please plan early and accordingly for the CASPA and UT Health Science Center San Antonio listed application deadlines and document submissions.
- It is recommended that students apply and finalize their CASPA application before they submit their PAS Supplemental Application and online supplemental application fee.
- Please ensure enough delivery time for any mailed items before the deadline. Account for non-business days, holidays, make sure you have the correct address for mailing transcripts to CASPA.

### **If I have questions about the application process, who should I contact?**

- The first step for advice about the application process is the School of Health Professions Admissions Office at 210-567-6220; Toll-free 1-866-802-6288; Fax 210-567-6230; or email at [SHPwelcome@uthscsa.edu](mailto:SHPwelcome@uthscsa.edu). The program also offers Open House application workshops. Please visit the [Open House Workshop](#) page on the School of Health Professions Admissions website to look for these workshops.

### Where can I get additional information?

- School of Health Professions Office of Admissions and Special Programs: [shpwelcome@uthscsa.edu](mailto:shpwelcome@uthscsa.edu) or 210-567-6220/Toll-free 1-866-802-6288
- Additional information about the Physician Assistant Studies program: [pastudies@uthscsa.edu](mailto:pastudies@uthscsa.edu) or 210-567-4240
- Additional information regarding application procedures contact the: UT Health Science Center at San Antonio Registrar's Office: [registrars@uthscsa.edu](mailto:registrars@uthscsa.edu) or 210-567-2621

### Additional Physician Assistant Resources:

- Physician Assistant Education Association: [www.paeaonline.org](http://www.paeaonline.org)
- American Academy of Physician Assistants: [www.aapa.org](http://www.aapa.org)
- Student Academy of AAPA (SAAAPA): [www.aapa.org/saaapa/](http://www.aapa.org/saaapa/)
- Texas Academy of Physician Assistants: [www.tapa.org](http://www.tapa.org)
- AAPA Videos: [www.youtube.com/user/aapavideo](http://www.youtube.com/user/aapavideo)