



University of
Pittsburgh

School of Health and
Rehabilitation Sciences

Physician Assistant Studies
Class of 2024
Student Handbook

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Introduction

Welcome to the University of Pittsburgh Physician Assistant (PA) Studies Program.

This handbook includes policies and procedures detailing our responsibilities to you and your responsibilities to the program and the PA profession. These policies and procedures will remain in effect for the duration of your time as a student in the PA Studies Program.

This Handbook is reviewed annually (last 12/16/2022) and is published by the University of Pittsburgh PA Studies Program. The program reserves the right to revise its contents at any time, and any changes will apply to all current students. The faculty reserves the right to revise the curriculum and the schedule of required courses. You are responsible for reading and understanding the content within this handbook. If you have any questions or concerns about the content, you are genuinely welcome to discuss the matter with the Program Director.

This handbook supplements the current School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences (SHRS) Graduate Student Handbook (<https://www.shrs.pitt.edu/current-students/student-handbooks>) and the University of Pittsburgh Graduate and Professional Studies Catalog for the Pittsburgh Campus (<https://catalog.upp.pitt.edu/index.php>).

On behalf of the PA Studies faculty and staff, please accept our best wishes for your success as a student and future colleague.

Sincerely,

David Beck, EdD, MPAS, PA-C, DFAAPA
He/Him/His

Associate Dean for Interprofessional Studies, SHRS | Chair, Department of PA Studies | Director and Associate Professor, PA Studies Program

University of Pittsburgh Mission

The University of Pittsburgh, founded in 1787, is one of the oldest institutions of higher education in the United States. As one of the nation's distinguished comprehensive universities, the resources of the University constitute an invaluable asset for the intellectual, economic, and social enrichment of Pennsylvania, while the international prestige of the University enhances the image of Pennsylvania throughout the world.

The University's mission is to:

- Provide high-quality undergraduate programs in the arts and sciences and professional fields, with emphasis upon those of special benefit to the citizens of Pennsylvania;
- Offer superior graduate programs in the arts and sciences and the professions that respond to the needs of Pennsylvania, as well as to the broader needs of the nation and the world;
- Engage in research, artistic, and scholarly activities that advance learning through the extension of the frontiers of knowledge and creative endeavor;
- Cooperate with industrial and governmental institutions to transfer knowledge in science, technology, and health care;
- Offer continuing education programs adapted to the personal enrichment, professional upgrading, and career advancement interest and needs of adult Pennsylvanians; and
- Make available to local communities and public agencies the expertise of the University in ways that are consistent with the primary teaching and research functions and contribute to social, intellectual, and economic development in the Commonwealth, the nation, and the world.

The trustees, faculty, staff, students, and administration of the University are dedicated to accomplishing this mission to which they pledge their individual and collective efforts, determined that the University shall continue to be counted among the prominent institutions of higher education throughout the world.

This mission statement was approved by the University's Board of Trustees on February 16, 1995 and is unchanged to date.

Program Mission

The mission of the Physician Assistant Program is to develop highly qualified Physician Assistants who will serve as collaborative leaders in patient care, professional service, and advocacy for all populations.

Program Vision

The vision for PA Studies at the University of Pittsburgh is to develop the next generation of leaders who will advance health care and the Physician Assistant profession through our nationally-recognized and academically-rigorous educational and research efforts.

Program History and Plan of Study

The PA Studies Program is housed within the Department of Physician Assistant Studies in the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences (SHRS) of the University of Pittsburgh. SHRS is one of the six Schools of the Health Sciences of the University of Pittsburgh. All of the above are committed to your education so you will acquire the academic and technical skills required to become outstanding PAs.

The program received “Accreditation – Provisional” status from the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA) in Fall 2009, and the first class was admitted in January of 2010. In March 2012, the program accreditation status was changed to “Accreditation – Continued,” and in March 2018 this was extended through March 2028. The goals and objectives of the program are guided by the criteria set forth in the *Accreditation Standards for Physician Assistant Education* established by the ARC-PA.

The program follows a rigorous, 24-month curriculum, with all graduates receiving a Master of Science degree. The didactic and clinical phases of curriculum are designed to enable the student to acquire proficiency in the competencies of the physician assistant profession. The didactic phase of our curriculum provides a 12-month comprehensive background in the basic and medical sciences which includes courses in human anatomy, medical physiology, pathophysiology, and genetics. Clinical coursework includes: history taking and physical examination, clinical medicine, pharmacology, diagnostic and therapeutic procedures used in medicine, and patient education and counseling. Course content is presented through traditional lecture, integrated instruction, case discussions and hands on skills labs. The curriculum is presented by practicing medical and surgical physician assistants, physicians and other health care providers who have the expertise in their respective specialty. The rigor of the 12-month clinical phase of the program matches the intensity of the didactic curriculum and is strengthened by the relationship that exists between the university and UPMC, the academic health center. The clinical year includes experiences in family practice, internal medicine, pediatrics, women’s health, emergency medicine, general surgery, and behavioral health. Each student is also given the opportunity to choose two electives in one or two medical or surgical specialty areas.

Student Professional Standards

The Class of 2011, the inaugural class of our program, established the following standards for themselves and future students:

“We, as students of the University of Pittsburgh Physician Assistant Studies Program and as professionals, vow:

To act as strong advocates for our patients’ well-being while empowering them with the knowledge to better manage their health.

To uphold the integrity of the University and Physician Assistant profession with our conduct and ethical approach to medical decision making.

To deliver healthcare services without regard to sex, age, race, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, or socio-economic and political status.

To demonstrate professionalism in the academic and clinical setting.

To practice empathy and compassion with patients and their families.

To encourage partnership among students, educators, patients, healthcare community.

To build a foundation based on the principles of beneficence, respect for autonomy, nonmaleficence, and justice.

To ensure integrated, well managed, and effective care of our patients.

To dedicate ourselves to lifelong learning in order to provide quality evidence-based patient care.

To promote the profession by engaging with the community, strengthening interprofessional relations and instilling patient trust.

To pursue leadership roles not only in our own profession, but in all aspect of medicine and society.

When faced with a challenge we will not stray from our virtues nor partake in any activity that will bring discredit or dishonor to ourselves, the University, or the profession.

We commit to embody these core values that will be upheld throughout our professional careers.”

Physician Assistant Student Society (PASS)

The purpose of the PA Student Society shall be:

1. To serve as the certified organization for the students of the University of Pittsburgh Physician Assistant Studies program.
2. To promote academic achievement and clinical excellence within the Program
3. To guide the incoming class in becoming successful students, community members and clinicians
4. To aid the faculty with continuing development of the Program through feedback and open communication
5. To serve the Pittsburgh community through volunteer activities and involvement
6. To promote the physician assistant as a member of the health care delivery team at the local, national, and international levels.

The students elect officers each February to fill the following positions:

- President
- Vice President
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Social Media and Web Chairs (2)
- Interprofessional Affairs/Primary Care Progress Chairs (2)
- Diversity Chair
- Service Chair
- Fundraising Chair

The internal and external responsibilities of each office position are outlined in the constitution of the society.

Program Technical Standards

Technical standards refer to the physical, cognitive, and behavioral abilities required for satisfactory completion of curriculum. These essential abilities include motor, sensory, communicative, intellectual, behavioral, and social criteria. These are common among PA programs. All candidates must possess the necessary intellectual ability and skills in observation, communication, motor, and behavior to enter and successfully complete the program. These standards are adopted from the report of the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) (1979) Special Advisory Panel on Technical Standards for Medical School Admissions, the *Professional Development Conference for Medical School Admissions Officers* (AAMC, 2007), and "Developing Educationally Effective and Legally Sound Access and Diversity Policies" (Yell, Plotner, & Shriner, 2013).

Program graduates must acquire the competencies which cover a broad knowledge base in the biomedical, clinical, and behavioral sciences, as well as the skills essential to practice in a primary care setting. Students must possess the physical and mental potential for becoming trained PAs. Graduates must have the knowledge, skills, and ability to function in a variety of clinical settings in order to provide quality patient care.

Observation

- Candidates must be able to observe visual presentations in the classroom, laboratory, and patient bedside.
- Candidates must be able to observe patients closely and at a distance to observe the patient's condition and complete a patient exam.
- Candidates must be able to immediately comprehend and respond to auditory instructions or requests.

Communication

- Candidates must be able to speak, hear and observe patients to obtain pertinent information.
- Candidates must be able to communicate in a clear and effective manner with patients and their families both orally and in writing, using appropriate grammar, spelling, and vocabulary.
- Candidates must possess the skills of sensitivity and confidentiality in patient communication. They must abide by the HIPAA policy.
- Candidates must be able to communicate with the health care team effectively and efficiently.

Motor Skills

- Candidates must be able to elicit information on patient exam by palpation, auscultation, and percussion as well as carry out diagnostic maneuvers.
- Candidates must be able to examine and treat patients with coordination of muscular movements, equilibrium, and sensation.
- Candidates must be able to manipulate equipment and instruments for basic laboratory tests and procedures such as airway management, suturing, needle placement & IV, stethoscope & ophthalmoscope, tongue blades, gynecologic speculum and scalpel.
- Candidates must be able to transport themselves from room to room and location to location in an efficient manner to see patients.
- Candidates must have the physical stamina to complete both the didactic and clinical portions of the training program which includes sitting, standing, and moving from classroom to laboratory to hospital.

Intellectual Ability

- Candidates must possess problem solving ability, a skill demanded of physician assistants.
- Candidates must be able to collect, measure, organize, prioritize, analyze and assimilate data in a limited time frame. Information presented in lecture must be successfully applied in the clinical setting by the candidate.
- Candidates must be able to read and understand the medical literature and use this knowledge in problem solving and patient care.

Behavior

- Candidates must be able to use their intellectual ability and exercise good judgment in completing their responsibilities for the diagnosis and treatment of patients.
- Candidates must have the capacity to respond to emergencies in a calm and reasoned manner.
- Candidates must be able to develop rapport with patients and their families and their colleagues.
- Candidates must be able to handle the physical, mental and emotional stress while functioning effectively.

- Candidates must demonstrate compassion, motivation, integrity, flexibility and a consciousness of social values.
- Candidates must be willing and able to effectively interact with a diverse population.
- Candidates must be able to accept criticism and modify behavior and practice as needed.
- Candidates must work cooperatively preserving relationships with other members of the health care team.
- Candidates must understand and apply ethical standards in practice.
- Candidates must demonstrate resilience at a level necessary to deliver sound patient care in all settings and to interact with interdisciplinary health care teams.

Competencies for Entry Level Practice

Organized below by domain and consistent with the [Core Competencies for New Physician Assistant Graduates](#) established by the Physician Assistant Education Association, at the completion of the PA Studies Program, graduates are able to:

Patient-Centered Practice Knowledge

Competency 1: Gather clinical information, formulate differential diagnoses, order and interpret laboratory and imaging, perform necessary core duty procedures, and diagnose, prevent, treat and manage illness among acute, chronic, and emerging disease states

Competency 2: Integrate into practice appropriate literature to make evidence-based decisions on patient care

Society and Population Health

Competency 3: Integrate into practice the cultural norms, needs, influences, and socioeconomic, environmental, physiological and other population-level determinants affecting the health of the individual and community being served

Competency 4: Integrate into practice the interventions that diminish health disparities involving race or ethnicity, sex, sexual identity, age, disability, socioeconomic status, and geographic location involving the individual patient and the community being served

Competency 5: Integrate into practice basic principles of public health including epidemiology, disease prevention, surveillance, reporting and intervention. Provide appropriate referrals involving the public health system to ensure patient advocacy and in the maintenance of population health

Health Literacy and Communication

Competency 6: Communicate effectively and respectfully with patients, families, and other health care professionals

Interprofessional Collaborative Practice and Leadership

Competency 7: Coordinate care to optimize the health of patients and populations.

Professional and Legal Aspects of Health Care

Competency 8: Provide standard-of-care practice while demonstrating respect for the dignity and privacy of patients

Competency 9: Incorporate a personal wellness plan to prevent impairment and burnout

Competency 10: Demonstrate professional accountability

Health Care Finance and Systems

Competency 11: Differentiate the types of health care systems and health insurance coverage, including Medicare, Medicaid, and the Children's Health Insurance Program.

Competency 12: Practice health care informed by an understanding of the financial implications to patients, organizations, and society.

Competency 13: Recognize personal limitations and incorporate a quality improvement process designed to maximize patient safety, prevention of medical errors, and incorporation of risk management.

Didactic Year

Course & Lecture Objectives: Students are responsible for all course learning outcomes/individual lecture objectives and in class material. Students are required to complete the assigned readings when listed so that in class time is most productive. Case-based learning is used throughout the curriculum as a means of facilitating the attributes and skills essential to clinical decision-making and lifelong learning.

Academic Advising

Students are randomly assigned to an academic advisor upon admission to the program. Students must meet with their advisor at least once per term. It is the student's responsibility to meet with their advisor at the first sign of any academic difficulty or if there are any issues that may be interfering with academic or professional performance. Referrals to other instructional or support services, either internal or external to the university, may be advised.

Program principal faculty (those who do not hold "adjunct" status in their title, the Program Director and the Medical Director do not participate as health care providers for students in the program. Students are prohibited from consulting or asking for medical advice from principal faculty, adjunct faculty, guest lecturers, Program Director, or Medical Director. All students are and will be referred to student health on main campus or to their primary care provider.

Program Evaluations and Surveys

The program encourages each student to complete all course surveys, instructor surveys, and program surveys. The PA Studies program also asks that all students complete a survey for selected guest instructors. The ARC-PA also requires that each program survey their students regarding faculty and courses for ongoing accreditation purposes. This is a responsibility that should be taken seriously. Constructive suggestions are beneficial and aid the faculty in designing course materials for successful student learning.

General Program Policies

- As a member of the University of Pittsburgh Community, you are responsible for all University, SHRS, and PA Program Studies requirements and policies.
- This handbook outlines specific policies and procedures that deal with the expectations and professional conduct of our graduate PA students.
- Program policies, guidelines, and expectations may be modified or implemented at any time. Students will be provided with advanced notice of any changes, when possible prior to their implementation.
- These policies apply to all courses offered by the Physician Assistant Program, and will not necessarily be restated in each individual class syllabus.

1.0 Attendance Policy

The PA Studies Program faculty believes that significant learning occurs in the physical and virtual classroom and your attendance is strongly recommended, as it is vital to the educational process. Attendance is reflective of commitment, acquisition of knowledge and professionalism. In the program, it is expected that all students will assume responsibility for meeting all academic and clinical obligations with punctuality. Students remain responsible for all the work in the courses in which they are registered. The following items refer to the Didactic Year; refer to the Clinical Year Handbook for its policies.

1.01 Regular class hours are 8:00 AM -5:00 PM M-F. There will be evening and weekend classes. Students will be given as much notice as possible for any evening or weekend classes.

1.02a Synchronous class sessions will be held at the discretion of each course instructor and may occur face-to-face or virtually dependent on lecturer availability. Login details will be provided within each course module or via email. Sessions may be recorded at the discretion of the instructor.

1.02b Attendance at synchronous live sessions is required. If you are unable to attend a synchronous live session, it is the responsibility of the learner to obtain the missed material from a classmate. Any assignments presented during class should be completed without any extension. If an assignment was to be completed within the synchronous class time, an alternative assignment may not be available, and the points may not be available for make-up.

1.03 Students must arrive at all educational and clinical sessions on time and with the necessary lab instruments, texts, attire, and other materials as designated by the instructor, or may otherwise be excluded from participation in the activity. Make up competencies for lack of preparation may not be offered.

1.04 Employment is not an acceptable excuse for class absence, missed or late assignments, or poor performance.

1.05 In case of tardiness, it is the student's responsibility to call the Department of PA Studies at 412-624-6743 or email pittpa@shrs.pitt.edu as soon as the tardiness is known with an anticipated time of return to program activities. Anticipated tardiness should also be communicated to the class instructor as soon as possible via pitt.edu email with an anticipated arrival time. Recurrent tardiness may be referred to the professionalism board. It is the student's responsibility to also contact course directors and instructors with a proposed plan to completed missed class work.

1.06 The program recognizes there are personal activities and obligations that may not be available outside of the Monday-Friday 8am-5pm time frame covered by the didactic education. Students will be permitted up to 5 "Program Time Off (PTO)" Days to be used throughout the year. Students may request to use a PTO in the case of illness, medical appointments, travel, or other obligations.

Students may use up to two consecutive days (including Friday-Monday). Requests for additional consecutive days must be submitted in writing via the Correspondence Policy outlined in 14.0 to pittpa@shrs.pitt.edu and copy their advisor(s) on the email.

The following absences are not included in the five-day PTO limit but must still follow the appropriate guidance to complete missed work

- Religious and cultural holidays and observances
- Mandatory court appearances
- Bereavement

1.07 To schedule a PTO day, complete the PTO request Qualtrics form (https://pitt.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9uhsSGxchk9B9J4) no later than the first missed instruction of the day being requested. You are not required to provide a reason for your absence unless you are claiming an exception as outlined in 1.06. PTO days may be taken in whole days only.

1.08 Any foreseeable absence should be notified to instructors with sufficient notice of absence via University email as outlined in the 14.0 Correspondence Policy and 1.07 claiming a PTO day. The student may present a plan to the instructor to make up any missed work to request an alternative assessment plan. If the plan is reasonable and feasible (based upon content, staff availability, etc), the instructor will approve the make-up plan or will resend to the student for adjustment. Not all activities are possible to make up at an alternative time, so advanced notice will assist in the determination of available opportunities for the learner to meet the required program competencies.

1.09 If a student's performance is below the at-risk threshold of an 80% in a course, they will not be permitted to use any PTO days that would conflict with that course's instruction and attendance at all synchronous sessions will be required. Exceptions are available for excused absences outlined in 1.06.

2.0 Dress Policy

The PA Studies Residential Program places a high value on maintaining a professional appearance that reflects general hygiene and a strong professional identity. Therefore, any time you are representing the department and/or university, you will be held to these standards. This policy was developed in careful consideration of the Program's professional mission, professional impression, cultural sensitivity, infection control, and safety. Professional appearance helps to build trust and confidence in both patients and fellow health care providers.

Students are expected to always present a positive image when present within or when representing the University of Pittsburgh's School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences. This includes synchronous sessions, clinical experiences, and any other activities.

In order to support the development of a professional wardrobe for clinical rotations, the program will require business casual dress days as announced on the student schedule. These will occur once weekly in term 2 and twice weekly in term 3. Program faculty, an advisor, or the professionalism board may provide feedback on an individual's professional dress choices only to explain how that specific outfit or article of clothing may hinder an individual's ability to perform patient care activities in certain settings - such as performing a physical exam or procedure. If the student feels the feedback is inappropriate, please refer to 5.0 Policy on Resolving Concerns, Conflicts, and Other Matter

The program recognizes the perception of professional dress is subjective and feedback is not intended to discuss an individual's body but is to be inclusive of the safety and functionality of the

working PA in a healthcare setting. Additional specific situations, such as within an operating room or within a behavioral health unit, will be discussed throughout the curriculum.

General Standards

- Personal hygiene, hair, facial hair, fingernails, and jewelry should be in line with patient safety and the ability to safely perform job duties
- Clothing should be clean, neat, and appropriately fitting
- Clothing should be avoided anything which provokes, alarms, offends, or disparages those whom students are serving or others with whom they interact

Standards of Professional Appearance

Live Class Sessions

Encompasses clothing that is comfortable at work, yet appropriate for a business environment. Acceptable attire includes hijabs, yarmulkes, sarees, skirts, dresses, capris, slacks, khakis, blouses, turtlenecks, sweaters, golf-shirts, shirts with a finished collar or neckline, or any other business casual attire that is also consistent with an individual's cultural or religious beliefs. Individual labs/courses may have specific dress code requests based on activities. Please refer to individual syllabi for complete guidelines. Our Program's mission to promote an inclusive learning environment includes our recognition that the above list does not detail each possible type of business casual attire that is consistent with an individual's cultural or religious beliefs. If you have specific questions or requests, please discuss them with the faculty.

Lab Coats

- Unless instructed otherwise by preceptor or faculty, lab coats must be worn during:
- Real or simulated patient encounters
- Competency assessments/examinations
- At other times if instructed by faculty
- Lab coats must be clean, ironed, and fit properly
- The sleeves of lab coats should not be rolled up
- Lab coats must be short jackets (long jackets are traditionally worn by attending physicians, resident physicians, certified physician assistants, and other certified advance practice providers)

Scrubs

- Unless instructed otherwise by faculty, scrubs must be worn during anatomy lab experiences
- Both scrub tops and bottoms must be worn
- Closed-toe shoes should also be worn

Identification

- All students must wear photo ID badges, identifying them as physician assistant students, and lab coats during real or simulated patient encounters. ID badges may also be required for some guest lecture sessions.
- All students must wear photo ID badges, identifying them as a physician assistant student, in all clinical settings.
- If an individual clinical site requires its own ID, the student must wear both.

Other Considerations

Each clinical site may have additional dress code guidelines.

If a student has a personal objection to this dress policy, they should present it to the Program Director for consideration. The Program recognizes clinical site dress codes may be less inclusive than Program guidelines and any issues should be discussed with the Director of Clinical Education.

3.0 Professional Development Policy

3.01 Students' professional behavior is continuously monitored throughout the program.

3.02 PA students may not take the responsibility or the place of qualified staff or faculty. PA students must not have access to records or other confidential information of other PA students.

3.03 Professional Development includes adherence to this policy and all others.

3.04 In order to respect the learning environment of classmates and faculty, use of electronic communication devices is limited to emergencies. Audible pagers and cellular phones must be turned to vibrate during classes and lab sessions.

3.05 Use of personal devices for non-instructional reasons during class time is inappropriate.

3.06 Students enrolled in the program must be committed to working collegially with other members of the class, faculty, staff, division, department, school, and university. Students must maintain respect for their fellow classmates, faculty and staff. The physician assistant student must not participate in or conceal any activity (blog posts) that will bring discredit or dishonor to fellow classmates, faculty, staff, administration or the University of Pittsburgh. They should report illegal or unethical conduct by a fellow classmate(s) to the appropriate University authorities. If a student is found to be responsible for such egregious acts, he/she may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including program dismissal.

3.07 All program related injuries, i.e. needle sticks, cuts, falls, etc. must be reported within 24 hours, in writing, on the incident report form provided by the program.

3.08 Assessment of Professional Development

During the didactic year, students will have a formal Professional Development evaluation once per semester.

Faculty are here to help students succeed. Personal feedback and support are key elements in helping students to recognize areas of strength and of weaknesses. Technical skills must be integrated with interpersonal professional behavior for students to succeed as physician assistants.

Students need to demonstrate competency in technical skills as observed and evaluated throughout the didactic year. These skills are evaluated by means of examinations and competencies. Students also need to demonstrate social and behavioral skills. These skills are evaluated by means of the Professional Development Evaluation.

1. Program faculty are continually evaluating the growth and development of student's professionalism in the following areas: time management, communication, department, motivation, work ethic, and respect and may report any concerns to the student advisor.
2. If a professionalism concern is presented to the advisor, the student will be asked to meet with the advisor.
3. If a professionalism concern continues to occur or if the concern is of high importance, the student may be referred to the professionalism board for a review and discussion of the behavior/action.
 - a. The professionalism board is comprised of no less than 3 and no more than 5 faculty and staff representing all programs of the department. The student may have their advisor present at the review if desired. The student will be asked to meet with the board to review any incident violating a professionalism criterion. The purpose of this board is not to be punitive in nature but to support the learning and growth of professional behaviors within the program in support of Program Graduation Competencies 8-10. The board will provide feedback on the perception of the incident and brainstorm ways to improve the situation in the future. At the completion of the review, a form reviewing the meeting content will be completed, signed, and dated by the student, advisor, and chairperson of the review committee.
4. If problem areas are identified, and remain unresolved, the student will be required to meet with the Program Director to discuss specific steps for improvement. Such steps may include, but are not limited to, referral to appropriate resources, developing a contract regarding behavioral modification, on-going advisory meetings, and other means of assisting the student to improve problem areas.

The Professionalism Board may choose to present reoccurring learning opportunities to the class in a workshop added to the didactic schedule if there is a need to address the larger cohort. The workshops will be scheduled with as much advanced notice as possible and will be required attendance.

3.09 Preceptor Evaluation forms used during clinical year include professionalism assessments.

3.10 Appropriate online student conduct is a University priority. Students are required to observe the same University standards of courtesy and interpersonal respect that govern face-to-face classroom behavior, including appropriate tone and language when engaged in all forms of communication with students and instructors. This includes synchronous and asynchronous course elements, such as emails, discussions, and live sessions.

During live sessions, students should:

- Find a quiet, private space without distractions
- Dress professionally
- Be visible with a camera (without others or pets in frame when possible)
- Remain visible throughout the session when possible
- Be fully engaged with instructor and peers

Please review the University of Pittsburgh's Student Code of Conduct for additional information
http://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Revisions_for_2019_August_15__2019___Published.pdf

4.0 Advising Policy

Each student is assigned a faculty advisor. Students will be contacted to set up required meetings with their advisor at least once per semester. Students are free to set up additional appointments with their advisor, especially when they feel they are having academic or professional challenges. In addition to the faculty advisor, students are always welcome to schedule a meeting with individual course instructors, the Director of Curriculum, Program Director or Department Chair.

Staff and faculty will provide timely access and/or referral of students to services addressing personal issues which may impact their progress in the Physician Assistant Studies Program.

All Program Staff, Instructional Faculty, Principal Faculty, the Medical Director, and the Program Director will receive orientation and regular updates on the proper practices for such referrals, including but not limited to medical and mental health issues, financial aid, disability resources and services, and career development.

5.0 Policy on Resolving Concerns, Conflicts, and Other Matters

5.01 If a student has an issue or a concern with a faculty or staff member, or with another student, they should first speak directly to that faculty or staff member, or other student. This includes questions about courses and grades: See the course instructor first.

If a student has a question about a course or grade, they should first speak to the lead instructor for the course. If it is not resolved, they should then speak to the Director of Curriculum and/or Director of Clinical Education.

5.02 If the student does not feel an issue was fully or appropriately addressed after speaking to the recommended contact person (s), the student should then bring the concern to the Program Director.

5.03 If the student still feels that the matter is not resolved or is looking to appeal a grade, the next point of contact is SHRS Ombudsperson Kellie Beach (kbeach@pitt.edu).

The ombudsperson provides provide guidance in managing conflicts/problems and provide information about institutional policies and university grievance procedures that may be related to your conflicts/grievances. More information about this role can be found at:

<https://www.shrs.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/library/documents/students/2017/Ombudsperson%20description%20for%20website.pdf>

5.04 Students who wish to bring a complaint regarding the Physician Assistant Studie Program's compliance with the ARC-PA *Standards* should submit a complaint in writing to the Department Chair. The written complaint must be signed by the student(s). The Department Chair will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 3 business days and will meet with the student or respond to the complaint in writing within 3 weeks of receipt of the complaint. The student will be informed of the Chair's response to the complaint, the steps being taken to address the complaint, or the steps being taken to investigate it. Any investigation will be time limited.

If the student is dissatisfied with the response to the complaint, a written appeal may be made to the SHRS Associate Dean for Graduate Studies or the SHRS Dean; the appeal must be made within 3 weeks of the Chair's response. The Associate Dean's/Dean's response to the complaint will be communicated to the student within 3 weeks of the appeal. The Associate Dean's/Dean's decision is final.

The Chair/Dean will maintain a written record of a complaint, including the nature of the complaint, the steps taken to resolve the complaint, the final decision, and any external actions initiated by the student. This record will be confidential and will be held for 8 years.

University Policies

The University of Pittsburgh has several policies and procedures in place to protect students, faculty, and staff. These policies include:

- CS 20 Sexual Misconduct (<https://www.policy.pitt.edu/cs-20-sexual-misconduct-formerly-06-05-01>)
- Nondiscrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy (<https://www.diversity.pitt.edu/notice-nondiscrimination-and-anti-harassment-policy->

[statement#:~:text=The%20University%20of%20Pittsburgh%2C%20as.identity%20and%20expression%20in%20its\)](#)

- CS 07 Nondiscrimination, Equal Opportunity, and Affirmative Action Policy (<https://www.policy.pitt.edu/cs-07-nondiscrimination-equal-opportunity-and-affirmative-action-formerly-07-01-03>)
- CS 02 Consensual Relationships (<https://www.policy.pitt.edu/cs-02-consensual-relationships-formerly-07-14-01>)
- Notice of Nondiscrimination (<https://www.facultyhandbook.pitt.edu/notice-nondiscrimination>)

If you believe you have experienced or witnessed a violation of these policies, please contact the Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

6.0 Assessment Policy and Procedures

6.01 All personal belongings must be left outside the testing environment

6.02 Baseball caps or hats of any type are not permitted during exams.

6.03 Cell phones and other electronic communication devices, including smart watches, must remain outside of the testing environment for the duration of the examination.

6.04 If a student has an extenuating circumstance that would necessitate access to their cell phone, they must notify the instructor prior to the beginning of the exam and arrangements will be made.

6.05 Use of phones, calculators, tape recorders, or other electronic devices are not permitted during exams unless otherwise indicated by the course instructor or proctor.

6.05a Please note that you will be REQUIRED to have two devices for all remotely administered exams/quizzes. One device with a camera to be connected to a Synchronous Zoom Meeting (mobile device, tablet etc. with a Camera) and the other device (does not need camera) to take the quiz. More details will be provided by course instructors.

6.06 Students should leave the room after completion of their exam. Students will not be permitted to return to the room until all students have completed the examination.

6.07 Restroom breaks are strongly discouraged during exams.

6.08 No food will be permitted unless medical necessity prescribed by the student's health care provider.

6.09 Student questions during the exam must be limited to those of a technical nature regarding the examination itself, such as errors in spelling or numbering, missing pages, etc. Students are not permitted to ask questions regarding the meaning or intent of any questions on the examination.

6.10 The time limit for the exam will be announced at the beginning of the examination session. It is the responsibility of the student to keep track of the remaining time. Proctors will not update students on the time remaining.

6.11 All test answers must be legible and easily interpretable or will otherwise be marked incorrect.

6.12 For computerized answer sheets, only the answer recorded on the computerized sheet will be considered.

6.13 Points may be deducted for illegible writing and/or misspellings at the instructor's discretion.

6.14 Late arrivals

6.14a Exams will begin promptly at the scheduled time. Students are expected to arrive before this.

6.14b Students arriving late for an exam will not be given additional time to complete the exam.

6.14c Students who anticipate a late arrival for an exam must notify the course instructor or program staff as soon as possible.

6.15 Exam review and grade posting

6.15a Completed exams will not be made widely available for student viewing.

6.15b Students may individually discuss exam performance, by appointment, with the course instructor. This must be scheduled within two weeks of the exam.

6.15c Students are not permitted to copy, photocopy or duplicate exam questions or answers in any way.

6.15d Grades may only be released by program faculty.

6.15e Grades will be posted by course instructors after analysis and review of class performance.

6.15f Students are not to ask instructors about the release of grades or their individual grades. All instructors post grades as soon as possible after each assessment.

6.16 Missed exams

6.16a Notification of absence for an exam must be given to the instructor prior to the scheduled exam.

6.16b Absence from an exam does not automatically grant the student the right to make up the exam. Students should notify the instructor as soon as an exam is anticipated to be missed with a proposed make up plan including date, time, and proposed location of the exam. The instructor will determine if the proposed plan is feasible and inform the student.

6.16c Determination of whether an absence is excused or unexcused is at the discretion of the course instructor. Unexcused absence will result in a 10% deduction from the exam grade.

6.17 Physician Assistant Clinical Knowledge Rating and Assessment Tool (PACKRAT): Students are required to take the PACKRAT during of each phase of the curriculum. This test allows students to compare their medical knowledge to a national peer group. Students may also use the results of this examination to identify any deficiencies in task performance or system specialty.

6.18 Students utilizing accommodations, as granted by Disability Resource Services (DRS), may be asked to schedule their exams directly with the DRS depending on the availability of the department to accommodate the requests with the Murdoch building. Students are responsible for initiating a discussion with their instructor regarding their accommodation to determine the feasibility of completing assessments within the current space. If the accommodation is possible within the Murdoch space, students are responsible to request a testing space, extended testing time, or other spatial requests by emailing pittpa@shrs.pitt.edu with the date, time, and requested location of the assessment.

7.0 Grading Policy

The letter grade system for graduate courses in the physician assistant program is as follows:

Grade	Percent	Quality Points
A+	97 to 100	4.00
A	94 to 96.9	4.00 Superior attainment
A-	90 to 93.9	3.75
B+	87 to 89.9	3.25
B	84 to 86.9	3.00 Adequate graduate-level attainment
B-	80 to 83.9	2.75
C+	77 to 79.9	2.25
C	74 to 76.9	2.00 Minimal graduate-level attainment
C-	70 to 73.9	1.75
D+	67 to 69.9	1.25
D	64 to 66.9	1.00
D-	60 to 63.9	0.75
F	Less than 59.9	0.00 Failure

7.1 Grading for the Clinical Year is as follows: (see clinical year handbook):

H: Honors

S: Satisfactory (Pass)

U: Unsatisfactory (Non-pass)

7.2 Other Grades:

Upon completion of a course, one of the grades listed below may appear on the student's transcript. None of these carry quality points.

G grade: Signifies unfinished course work due to extenuating circumstances. Students are required to complete course requirements no later than one year after the term in which the course was taken. After the deadline has passed, the G grade will remain on the record and the student will be required to reregister for the course if it is needed to fulfill requirements for graduation.

I grade: Signifies incomplete course work due to nature of the course, clinical work, or incomplete research work in individual guidance courses or seminars.

W grade: Signifies that the student withdrew from the course.

R grade: Signifies that a student has resigned from the University.

7.3 Extra-credit opportunities will be assigned by the course instructor only. Students are not permitted to request extra credit from a course instructor for participation in an extracurricular event. Student may not request a grade to be rounded or adjusted by the instructor at the end of the term.

8.0 Academic Remediation and Deceleration Policy and Procedures

Advancement through the Program is based on the demonstration of the student's ability to master the content, skills, and professional behaviors consistent with program expectations. These expectations are delineated in the Student Handbook, the "Competencies for Physician Assistants" and in course and lecture objectives. It is the responsibility of this Physician Assistant Program to assure the student's competency of the content within each course, and to facilitate student progress through the curriculum.

Remediation is a process by which students review areas of weakness as identified through student assessment. The goal of the remediation process is to assist the student to assess their approach, understanding, knowledge and application on an assignment, exam, course, or procedure. If completed satisfactorily and demonstrates competency, the student may continue in the Program.

Successful completion of the remediation assignment may not result in a change of the original grade received for the assessment, and any decision to change a course grade is at the course instructor's discretion. All remediations must be completed prior to the end of the term in which the remediation occurs in order to receive a final grade.

In addition to the specific course instructor's recognition, each student is also accountable for recognizing when they are not grasping the material. Once the concern by the student or instructor has been identified, a meeting with the lead instructor of the course is scheduled. At this meeting, strategies will be developed in a way that will enable the student to successfully grasp/retain the

content. Each remediation plan will consist of an assessment of student learning needs, determining why they feel they are not grasping the material as well as having a counselor (if warranted) meet with students to determine if test anxiety or other stressors are interfering with their performance, as well as to assist students in studying effectively. Implementation of a faculty-facilitated remediation plan will then be established to enable the student to focus on their individual learning styles, and develop strategies (cases scenarios) to improve critical thinking, clinical application of course content as well as improving test taking skills when indicated.

Remediation Procedure

As part of the Program's commitment to the remediation process the following objectives, as is indicated by individual needs, will be met:

- Establishment of clearly specified goals and objectives for the remediation process.
- Provision of a high degree of structure.
- Use of a variety of approaches and methods in remedial instruction.
- Application of sound cognitive theory in the design and delivery of remediation.
- Provision of a highly coordinated remediation program.
- Use of formative evaluation to guide remediation development and improvement.
- Provision of a counseling component integrated into the structure of remediation when indicated.
- Provision of tutoring performed by well-trained tutors.
- Assurance of consistency between exit standards for remediation.
- Use of learning communities in remediation where indicated.
- Use of supplemental instruction, (clinical scenarios, videos) to support the remediation process when necessary.
- Integration of critical thinking into the remediation process.

8.01 A student who receives less than 74% on an assignment, competency or exam will be required to contact the course instructor within 72 hours of the grade being posted to discuss remediation. The instructor will notify the student's advisor of the meeting and remediation process and result.

The student and instructor will assess time management, study skills, individual strengths and weaknesses and circumstances that may be interfering with the student's performance.

The student and instructor will develop a plan of remediation that may include but is not limited to:

- Repeating the assignment or of a similar one developed by the instructor.
- Researching and documenting from an approved resource the correct answers to missed exam questions.
- Extra reading or writing assignments.
- Another process agreed upon by the student and instructor.
- Referral to University, private academic, or professional resources as necessary.

8.02 Student progress will be monitored with enough frequency to ensure that deficiencies in students' knowledge, skills and professionalism are identified in a timely fashion. Once identified, students with deficiencies will be required to enter the program's remediation process. Students will

meet with course directors and/or the remediation team to identify the nature and underlying causes of the problems. Opportunities for remediation will be identified and the program will work with students to their fullest ability. Remedial actions may include but not be limited to referral for tutoring, time management, study skills enhancement, test taking strategies, and/or personal counseling.

8.03 The successful completion of remediation will be determined by the primary instructor with consultation with the remediation team as indicated according to the specific content assessed. Remediations must be completed prior to the end of the term in which the remediation occurred. Failure to complete remediation to faculty satisfaction may result in an "I" grade.

8.04 Deceleration

Students must receive a grade of C or better in all courses required by their program curriculum. Students who receive a grade below a C in a required course must repeat that course and attain a grade of C or better to graduate. Students may not progress through the curriculum with an I, G, W, or R grade in any prerequisite course. (Note: University regulations state that a student may repeat any course in which a grade of B- or lower is received if an authorization to repeat the course is given by the student's advisor/faculty.)

Each course in the program is offered only once during the academic year. Achieving a grade less than a "C" will require that the student remediate their knowledge in the course material to a level of competence to be determined by the course instructor. The student should be aware that in some cases, remediation could require deceleration (in which the student remains matriculated but joins an upcoming cohort when the course is offered again).

Students will not be permitted to register for a course until they attain a C or better in its prerequisites.

Failure to receive an acceptable grade after the second opportunity to complete a required course may result in the student being dismissed from the program and SHRS.

9.0 Academic Probation Policy

Graduate students must have a 3.000 cumulative GPA to be eligible to graduate. Graduate students who have completed at least 9 credits and whose cumulative GPA falls below a 3.000 will be placed on academic probation and will receive written notification of this status. At this point it is the student's responsibility to meet with their advisor. In order to be removed from academic probation, the student will need to achieve a cumulative GPA of 3.000 within their next two terms of study. Failure to do so may subject the student to immediate dismissal from the program at the discretion of the Department Chair in collaboration with the Associate Dean of graduate studies.

Students who fail to demonstrate progress toward meeting graduation requirements in a timely manner may be placed on academic probation or recommended for dismissal from the program by the department chair, in collaboration with the Associate Dean of graduate studies. SHRS reserves the right to terminate a student at any time for academic or other reasons. Dismissal from the program is at the discretion of the SHRS Dean.

Only course work completed within the Physician Assistant curriculum will be calculated in the cumulative GPA.

Students must have a cumulative GPA of 3.000 in order to begin clinical rotations.

10.0 Withdrawal and Dismissal

Withdrawal

After the add/drop period has ended, students may withdraw from a course that they no longer wish to attend by completing a Monitored Withdrawal Request form in the office of the school offering the course. Students must process the Monitored Withdrawal Request form within the first nine weeks of the term in the fall and spring. Because summer sessions vary in length, students should check the University's Academic Calendar for those deadlines.

Students should check with the school offering the course for the last day to submit a Monitored Withdrawal Request form. The grade W will appear on the student's grade report and transcript. There is no financial adjustment to student's tuition or fee obligations involved in withdrawing from courses, but withdrawing may jeopardize satisfactory academic progress, financial aid, and assistantships or fellowships.

The form must be signed by the instructor of the course and be returned to the Director of Student Services, Registrar, 4024 Forbes Tower within the first nine weeks of the term in the fall and spring. Monitored Withdrawal forms can be found on the SHRS Website under current students/forms.

Resigning from the University for a Specific Term

- If students decide to drop all of their courses after the add/drop period has ended and before 60 percent of the term or session has been completed, they must resign from the University for that term. Official resignation from the University requires students to contact the Student Appeals Office. Students have several options. They may resign in person, by mail, or by calling 412-624-7585, where students may leave a message 24 hours a day, including weekends and holidays. An R grade will appear on the student's academic transcript. Tuition is prorated from the date of the student's notification to the Student Appeals Office of the student's desire to resign, unless 60 percent of the term has been completed, in which case there is no refund.
- After the 60 percent point of the term or session has passed, students who wish to terminate their registration may process a withdrawal from all classes only with the permission of their academic Dean. If the reason for withdrawal is medical or psychological in nature, the academic Dean may consult with the director of the Student Health Service prior to making a determination. There is no financial adjustment associated with this procedure, which results in the assignment of W grades for the courses. Please visit the Student Payment center resignation page on the University of Pittsburgh website for more information.

Dismissal

Graduate students who have completed at least 9 credits and whose cumulative GPA falls below a 3.000 will be placed on academic probation and/or suspension and will receive written notification of this status. At this point it is the student's responsibility to meet with his or her advisor.

To be removed from academic probation, the student will need to achieve a cumulative GPA of 3.000 within his or her next two terms of study. Failure to do so may subject the student to recommendation for immediate dismissal from the program by the Department Chair, in collaboration with the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies.

Students who fail to demonstrate progress toward meeting graduation requirements in a timely manner may be placed on academic probation or recommended for dismissal from the program by the Department Chair, in collaboration with the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies. SHRS reserves the right to terminate a student at any time for academic or other reasons.

Dismissal from the program is at the discretion of the SHRS Dean. Notwithstanding the foregoing, in the event it is not mathematically possible for a student to remediate their cumulative program GPA within their next two terms of study the student may be immediately dismissed.

A student may appeal their dismissal with the University of Pittsburgh Provost office.

11.0 Graduation Requirements

Candidates for the degree of Master of Science from the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences must, in addition to completing all course and other degree requirements, have a minimum GPA of 3.000. **Only course work completed within the PA Studies curriculum will determine the cumulative GPA.**

All students must be registered for at least 1 credit during the term in which they plan to graduate. An Application for Graduation must be filed in the SHRS Office of Student Services at the time of registration for the term/session in which the student expects to graduate. No student will be graduated with an existing F, G, or I grade in a required course. No student will be graduated who has not resolved all financial obligations with the University. Graduation caps, gowns, and hoods may be purchased from The Book Center.

Students who complete the program in six consecutive semesters will graduate in December. Students will only be awarded diplomas on the dates specified by the University each semester.

Each student must complete the program within five calendar years of their first day of class in their first term.

11.01 Full Graduate Student Status

To maintain full graduate status, the student must achieve a minimum GPA of 3.000 (based on 4.000) in their graduate study. Students whose GPA drops below a 3.000 while in the program will be placed on academic probation.

11.02 Minimum Academic Standard

All required and prerequisite coursework must be taken for a grade, when letter grade option is available, unless approved by the Department Chair/Program Director.

Students must receive a grade of C or better in all courses required by their program curriculum. Students who receive a grade below a C in a required course must repeat that course and attain a grade of C or better to graduate. (Note: University regulations state that a student may repeat any course in which a grade of B- or lower is received **if an authorization to repeat the course is given by the student's advisor/faculty.**)

Each course in the program is offered only once during the academic year. Achieving a grade less than a "C" will require that the student remediate his/her knowledge in the course material to a level of competence to be determined by the course instructor (see policy on remediation 13.0). The student should be aware that in some cases, remediation could require taking a leave of absence from the Program until the course is offered again.

Students will not be permitted to register for a course until they attain a C or better in its prerequisites.

Failure to receive an acceptable grade after the second opportunity to complete a required course may result in the student being dismissed from the program and SHRS. (Refer to SHRS Graduate Student Handbook for more information.)

11.03 Service Requirements

The Pitt PAS program strives to be a contributing member of both the university community, and the community at-large. As a result, the program expects students in the cohort to participate in service activities outside of the curriculum. All students, during their didactic year are expected to participate in 4 hours of community service per semester (Spring, Summer, and Fall semesters). Service hours will be accounted for in the Professional Development meetings with advisors that occur during the didactic year semesters. Service opportunities will be provided or accessed as much as possible during the didactic year by the faculty, and any service opportunities outside of these events are to be approved and a number of hours established by any of the primary faculty in the program prior to the event or service task. Because the basis of service is time and effort, this does not include donation of money or goods to an organization or event.

PA Student Society officers and PASPDI officers will receive 2 hours of service time for each semester in which they serve. Student volunteers for interview day will receive 2 hours of service for their time.

Proof of attendance may include, but is not limited to, accessing faculty at the event itself, signature from a supervisor or group leader at the event, sign-in provided at a larger event, and photographs taken at the event itself indicating the location and the student's presence at the event.

11.04 Interprofessional Education Activities Requirement

The Pitt PA Studies Program strives to educate students to practice individualized health care in inter-professional teams. As a result, the Program expects students in each cohort to

participate in inter-professional education activities. These activities will be integrated into course curriculum throughout the didactic and clinical year. These activities are a requirement for successful Program completion. Inter-professional education activity opportunities will be provided or accessed as much as possible by the faculty.

Proof of attendance may include, but is not limited to, accessing faculty at the event itself, signature from a supervisor or group leader at the event, sign-in provided at a larger event, and photographs taken at the event itself indicating the location and the student's presence at the event.

12.0 Academic Integrity Policy

12.01 Students have the responsibility to be honest and to conduct themselves in an ethical manner while pursuing academic studies. Students have the right to be treated by faculty in a fair and conscientious manner in accordance with the ethical standards generally recognized within the academic community (as well as those recognized within the profession). Should a student be accused of a breach of academic integrity or have questions regarding faculty responsibilities, procedural safeguards including provisions of due process have been designed to protect student rights. These may be found in SHRS Guidelines on Academic Integrity: Student and Faculty Obligations and Hearing Procedures. See <https://www.shrs.pitt.edu/academicpolicies/> for additional information.

12.02 Student Obligations

A student has an obligation to exhibit honesty and to respect the ethical standards of the profession in carrying out their academic assignments. Without limiting the application of this principle, a student may be found to have violated this obligation if they:

- Refer during an academic evaluation to materials or sources, or employs devices, not authorized by the faculty member.
- Provide assistance during an academic evaluation to another person in a manner not authorized by the faculty member.
- Receive assistance during an academic evaluation from another person in a manner not authorized by the faculty member.
- Engage in unauthorized possession, buying, selling, obtaining, or use of a copy of any materials intended to be used as an instrument of academic evaluation in advance of its administration.
- Act as a substitute for another person in any academic evaluation process.
- Utilize a substitute in any academic evaluation proceeding.
- Practice any deceit in an academic evaluation/assessment.
- Depend on the aid of others in a manner expressly prohibited by the faculty member, in the research, preparation, creation, writing, performing, or publication of work to be submitted for academic credit or evaluation.
- Provide aid to another person, knowing such aid is expressly prohibited by the faculty member, in the research, preparation, creation, writing, performing, or publication of work to be submitted for academic credit or evaluation.
- Present as one's own, for academic evaluation, the ideas, representations, or words of another person or persons without customary and proper acknowledgment of sources.
- Submit the work of another person in a manner which represents the work to be one's own.
- Knowingly permit one's work to be submitted by another person without the faculty member's authorization.
- Attempt to influence or change one's academic evaluation or record for reasons other than achievement or merit.
- Indulge, during a class (or examination) session in which one is a student, in conduct which is so disruptive as to infringe upon the rights of the faculty member or fellow students.

- Fail to cooperate, if called upon, in the investigation or disposition of any allegation of dishonesty pertaining to a fellow student.
- Violate the canons of ethics of the student's professional discipline.

12.0 Documents and Deadline Policies

13.01 The program uses EXXAT to monitor requirements. This must be purchased by the student prior to matriculation into the PA program.

Renewals of all requirements must be completed on time in order to remain current with no lapse of coverage. Detailed guidelines for each requirement can be found on the EXXAT Required Document dashboard. The required documents are subject to change based on the current Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Recommendation as well as input from our clinical partners. Students will be notified of any changes.

It is the sole responsibility for each student to remain current with all requirements with no lapse of coverage (even one day) throughout the length of the Program. **Any lapse in coverage will result in the student no longer being permitted to participate in coursework until they are back in compliance.**

Requirements:

Pre-Matriculation	
	PAS Residential Health Appraisal Form
	Required Vaccinations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hepatitis B • MMR • Varicella • Tdap • TB – 1 step • Flu Shot • COVID-19*
	FBI Fingerprinting Clearance
	Universal-Drug Screen
	Pennsylvania Child Protection Clearances
	Universal-Background Check
<i>* Exemptions may be granted with student attestation</i>	
During Didactic Year – Prior to Start of Clinical Year	
	Clinical Year Orientation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HIPAA Training • Blood Borne Pathogen Training • Mandated Reporter Training • Crisis Training • <i>Sexual Misconduct and Title IX Training</i>
	American Heart Association CPR/BLS Certification

	American Heart Association ACLS Certification
	FBI Fingerprinting Clearance
	Universal-Drug Screen
	Pennsylvania Child Protection Clearances
	Universal-Background Check
	Required Vaccinations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hepatitis B • MMR • Varicella • Tdap • TB – 2 step • Flu Shot • COVID-19*
	<i>* Exemptions may be granted with student attestation</i>
Maintain Throughout Program	
	Health Insurance

13.02 Students may also be required to provide site-specific documentation while in the clinical phase of the program (e.g. confidentiality agreements, security forms, interviews, etc.)

13.03 It is the sole responsibility for each student to remain current with all requirements with no lapse of coverage (even one day) throughout the length of the program. Any lapse in coverage will result in a deduction of 10% from the student's grade for each component of any assessments (exams, quizzes, competencies, assignments, etc.) that occur while the student is out of compliance. Being out of compliance may also restrict a student from participating in simulation activities.

13.04 Liability Insurance Coverage: Students must carry professional student liability insurance coverage while participating in clinical education. This coverage is provided by the SHRS group insurance plan and the cost will be automatically included in the student's tuition bill each fall term.

13.05 EXXAT STEPS ACCOUNT: Students must obtain an account prior to the start of the Program.

13.06 ACLS CERTIFICATION: Students must successfully complete Advanced Cardiac Life Support during the fall semester of the didactic year, regardless of current certification status prior to entering the clinical year and must maintain a valid ACLS provider card throughout the clinical phase. ACLS certification prerequisite HEALTH CARE PROVIDER BLS must be obtained through American Heart Association.

14.0 Correspondence Policy

14.01 The primary mechanisms of communication with students will be email and announcements via the Canvas learning management system. Students are expected check their University-provided email account and Canvas dashboard at least every 24 hours to remain up-to-date on program information.

14.02 Students are required to use the University e-mail address for all communication and must only email program faculty and staff via “pitt” e-mail addresses that end in @pitt.edu. Program Faculty and staff will not respond to e-mails from non-Pitt accounts.

14.03 All communications between students and instructors, staff, guests, and preceptors are expected to be courteous and professional in nature. Students should carefully review their correspondence before sending to ensure tone, verbiage, and other aspects meet these expectations as written communication carries a higher risk of misinterpretation than a face-to-face interaction. It is encouraged the student requests a face-to-face meeting if the topic may be misinterpreted to avoid unnecessary conflict. Communications found to be in violation of this policy will be referred to the professionalism board for review and intervention.

14.04 Students are expected also maintain a current name, address, phone number, and emergency contact with the program. Any changes to this information must also be submitted in a timely manner.

15.0 Social Media Policy

15.01 PA Studies students are expected to not provide any content to a social media site (blog, feed, online forum, or any other site or service that permits users to share info with others) that contains any information (favorable or non-favorable) that may be associated or identified with a clinical site, patient, or preceptor.

15.02 PA Studies students must not transmit any material (by uploading, posting, email or otherwise) regarding the program, department, school, university, profession, fellow students, faculty, staff, simulated patients, clinical sites, patients, or preceptors, that is or may be perceived as disruptive, threatening, profane, abusive, harassing, tortuous, libelous, embarrassing, defamatory, obscene, privacy-invading, hateful, racially-insensitive, or otherwise objectionable as determined by the program, division, department, school, or university.

Disciplinary action may include, but is not limited to, completion of remediation, disruption of progress through the program, negative impact on course grade(s), and/or dismissal.

15.03 PA Studies students may not create, post, share, or otherwise transmit any material or run or assist in the operations of any site appearing to represent the program, department, school, or university. PA Studies students may also not preset themselves as a medical professional with the ability to provide medical services without the supervising of a licensed and practicing healthcare provider.

16.0 Policy for Student Employment While Enrolled

16.01 Acceptance into the Physician Assistant Studies Program at the University of Pittsburgh requires a full-time commitment. It is an intense and rigorous program that can be demanding, so student decisions regarding employment while enrolled must be carefully made and consider that work commitments are not acceptable excuses for poor performance or missing program obligations.

16.02 Students must not be required to work for the Physician Assistant Studies Program.

16.03 Students must not substitute for or function as:

a) instructional faculty (individuals providing instruction or supervision during the didactic and/or clinical phases of the program, regardless of length of time of instruction, faculty status or rank; *Standards of Accreditation*, ARC-PA, 2019) and

b) clinical or administrative staff (individuals providing administrative, secretarial, or clerical help to the program; *Standards of Accreditation*, ARC-PA, 2019).

17.0 Policy on Faculty as Health Care Providers

17.01 The principal faculty, program director, and medical director must not participate as health care providers for students in the program, except in an emergency situation.

17.02 For any non-emergency care or the answer to personal health questions:

- Schedule an appointment with the University Student Health Service (SHS) at 412-383-1800
- If more immediate care is required, the SHS offers walk-in hours Monday - Friday from 1 – 3 p.m
- Nurse Triage is also available for minor illnesses, every Monday – Friday, 9:00am – 12:00pm and 1:00pm – 4:00pm
- For more information visit <https://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/shs/>
- Contact your primary care provider
- Seek care at an urgent care center or emergency department

18.0 Policy on Student Mistreatment

The University of Pittsburgh Physician Assistant Studies Program is committed to ensuring professional, respectful, and positive learning environments for all students. If you feel that you have experienced mistreatment, please contact the Physician Assistant Studies Program Director or Director of Clinical Education by email or by phone at 412-624-6743.

Students who have experienced or witnessed mistreatment are encouraged to complete a Professionalism and Mistreatment Reporting Form, which can be found at <https://www.shrs.pitt.edu/PAProgram/students>.

The purpose of this Professionalism and Mistreatment Reporting Form is to enable a confidential reporting mechanism for learners and faculty to identify any mistreatment or unprofessional conduct they have experienced within any of the learning environments of the Physician Assistant Studies program. This form should be used for reporting incidents only and should not be used for emergencies.

All forms will be reviewed within 72 hours of submission and will be triaged according to level of urgency.

All individuals who submit this form will receive a summary of the conclusion of the investigation, should they choose to provide their email address.

Examples of mistreatment, as identified by the Association of American Medical Colleges, include but are not limited to:

- Public humiliation
- Being threatened with harm
- Being physically harmed
- Being required to perform personal services
- Being subjected to unwanted sexual advances
- Being asked to exchange sexual favors for grades or other rewards
- Sexual harassment
- Being denied opportunities based on gender identity, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, etc.
- Being subjected to offensive comments
- Receiving lower evaluations or grades for factors other than performance

19.0 Department Space Usage Policy

Physician Assistant Studies students are free to access, outside of Departmental instructional activities and other events, the following spaces in the Murdoch Building:

- Main Classroom
- Skills Laboratory
- Student Kitchen
- Quiet Study lounge (this space is intended to be a quiet and focused learning environment for Physician Assistant Studies students)

When using the above spaces, students should always leave spaces as they were found, keeping in mind that program staff and faculty are actively preparing these rooms for labs and instruction.

Students may not access, unless instructed or with prior approval:

- Patient exam rooms
- Patient dressing rooms
- Department of Physician Assistant Studies office space
- Any other space other than those listed above

20.0 Policy on Providing and Soliciting Clinical Sites or Preceptors

Clinical site affiliations are established by the signing of an approved affiliation agreement between the University of Pittsburgh Physician Assistant Studies Program Director and the responsible party at the clinical affiliation site. Prior to the signing of the affiliation agreement the proposed clinical site is vetted by the Director of Clinical Education and the Program Director. An affiliation agreement must be executed with the proposed affiliate and the required verification of the proposed clinical preceptor's and other associated medical provider credentials must be completed prior to utilization of the site for a clinical rotation, either required or elective.

Students must not be required to provide or solicit clinical sites or preceptors. Students are not permitted to contact preceptors individually to solicit sites or placements of any kind. This correspondence will only be done by the Program.

21.0 Student Records and Confidential Information Policy

Student academic records must be readily accessible to authorized program personnel and must include documentation:

- a) That the student has met published admission criteria,
- b) That the student has met institution and program health screening and immunization requirements,
- c) Of student performance while enrolled,
- d) Of remediation efforts and outcomes (if applicable),
- e) Of summaries of any formal academic/behavioral disciplinary action taken against a student, and
- f) That the student has met requirements for program completion.

Students and other unauthorized persons must not have access to the academic records or other confidential information of other students or faculty.

Student health records are confidential and must not be accessible to or reviewed by program, principal or instructional faculty or staff except for immunization and screening results, which may be maintained and released with written permission from the student.

22.0 Immunization, Health Screening, and Travel Health

PA Studies Hybrid Student Health Appraisal Form is provided to students at the University of Pittsburgh PA Studies Hybrid Program prior to matriculation and must be completed and uploaded into the designated health and immunization record management system of the verification service through the online portal. Student compliance with the Program's immunization policy (see below) will be reported to the Program by the designated health and immunization record management verification. Students will be expected to update their immunization record and demonstrate compliance as required during their tenure in the Program. Students who do not have an approved immunization record on file with the designated health and immunization record management system of the verification service will not be permitted to participate in coursework. Student compliance with the Program's immunization policy will be documented by the Program and becomes a part of the student's permanent record.

In addition to immunization clearance, all students are required to have the PA Studies Hybrid Student Health Appraisal Form completed and signed by a physician or other licensed healthcare provider. The form will also be uploaded into the designated health and immunization record management system of the verification service and compliance with this requirement will be reported to the Program and documented in their permanent record. Further, students are required to maintain copies of their health history form and immunizations as the student may be required to produce these records by request of their assigned clinical placement.

Students must complete the Mandatory Immunization Form and submit to the verification service's designated health and immunization record management system upon matriculation, in addition to the above procedures.

These requirements are also reviewed (and updated, if applicable) annually for consistency with current scientific and clinical recommendations from federal (e.g., ACIP) and local health authorities as well as recommendations from a leading association of college health experts (e.g., AHCA).

Students must meet additional requirements to support their health and safety as well as comply with clearance requirements set forth by affiliated training sites (e.g., clinics, hospitals, rehabilitation centers, clinical research facilities, etc.) or students will not be permitted to participate in or complete coursework.

The student is responsible for all costs related to immunizations, physical examination, drug screens, and criminal background checks.

The following Immunizations or positive titers are required for all PA students as recommended by the CDC's guideline for [health care professionals](#). All students, regardless of age, are required to submit documentation showing:

- **Diphtheria/Tetanus and Pertussis:** Documentation of one dose of diphtheria/tetanus and pertussis within the last ten years.
- **Rubella:** Vaccination with the live rubella virus or a positive rubella antibody titer (copy of laboratory report).
- **Rubeola (Measles):** Vaccination with live attenuated rubeola or a positive rubeola antibody. NOTE: All students born after December 31, 1956, must show proof of either two doses of vaccine administered on or after their first birthday (at least 30 days apart), or serologic proof

of immunity (a copy of the laboratory report), or laboratory confirmation of disease and/or evidence of immunity.

- **Mumps:** Vaccination with live attenuated mumps, only available after 1967, or laboratory confirmation of disease and/or evidence of immunity.
- **Hepatitis B:** All PA students must show documentation of a complete series of three Hepatitis B vaccinations or show serologic proof of immunity to Hepatitis B.
- **Varicella (Chicken Pox):** Proof of varicella vaccination, a positive titer confirming immunity or evidence of prior infection, or validated history of disease.
- **Tuberculin Skin Test (PPD):** A student must provide documentation that they have not been exposed to tuberculosis (by purified protein derivative skin test or QuantiFERON blood test). If positive, the student must provide documentation of a chest x-ray.
- **Meningococcal** vaccine(s)
- Yearly **Influenza** vaccination (required on a yearly basis)
- **University of Pittsburgh required vaccinations:**
 - o **COVID:** (<https://www.coronavirus.pitt.edu/covid-19-vaccines/vaccine-requirement#:~:text=Effective%20December%206%2C%202021%2C%20new,is%20not%20written%20in%20English.>)
Effective December 6, 2021, the University of Pittsburgh requires all Pitt affiliates on all campuses to be vaccinated against COVID-19 or have an approved exemption. This includes:
 - Faculty (including full-time, part-time, and adjunct)
 - Staff (including full-time, part-time, and temporary)
 - Students (including graduate, professional and undergraduate)
 - Postdocs

To be fully vaccinated an individual must have completed a primary COVID-19 series of vaccine doses as authorized or approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) or World Health Organization (WHO). If added vaccine doses are later designated a part of any vaccine sequence by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), FDA or WHO, each student, staff and faculty member must be compliant with that change.

The most successful and sustainable approach to keeping our community healthy and safe is one that utilizes vaccination as a condition of studying or working on our campuses. By enforcing this requirement now, we will be able to maintain a high immunization rate on our campuses, while continuing to support our students and research, as well as protect our workforce, with minimal disruption to our programs, activities, or operations.

Failure to upload proof of vaccination or have an approved exemption on file will result in the following:

- Students enrolled in classes but fail to provide proof or obtain an exemption will be disenrolled.
- Faculty, students, and staff will be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the University's disciplinary guidelines, including loss of access to electronic resources and other disciplinary actions up to and including termination of employment.

Exemptions:

A student may be granted exemptions from immunization for the following reasons:

- **Medical**
A medical exemption from immunization is granted based on a written statement from a physician, or his designee, that the immunization may be detrimental to the health of the student.
- **Religion**
A religious exemption from immunization may be granted based on a student's written objection to the immunization on religious grounds or on the basis of a strong moral or ethical conviction similar to a religious belief.

However, if an outbreak of Measles, Mumps, Rubella, Chicken Pox, Meningitis or COVID-19 occurs, the State Health Department, Program, and/or SCPE may exclude students from classes/SCPE who do not provide proof of immunity to these diseases.

[CLICK HERE](#) to download the Immunization Exemption form. Please note these are the only vaccination exemptions you may file. You may not add additional vaccinations to this form for vaccine exemption approval from the University.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

Exemptions accepted by the University related to vaccination requirements do not transfer or otherwise apply to clinical placements. Each student must also comply with the vaccination requirements for all clinical sites to which such student is assigned, and students are hereby advised that many clinical sites will not accept or approve exemptions to their vaccination requirements for students. Questions about vaccination requirements for clinical placement sites should be directed to the Director of Clinical Education. Students not complying with clinical rotation site requirements regarding vaccinations for health care workers may have their graduations delayed and/or may not be able to complete the program. In addition to delays in graduation, students may face a professionalism review. Student participation in Supervised Clinical Practice Experience (SPCE) is required to complete the Program and the University must satisfy certain requirements imposed by training sites as a condition of student participation. Additionally, prior to being permitted to begin or continue rotations at off-campus training sites, students may be required to:

- Provide a medical history including immunity to infectious diseases by documented history of infectious diseases (e.g., Measles, Mumps, Rubella, Varicella, Influenza, COVID-19, Hepatitis B) or vaccination including titers for certain agents
- Have a negative two-step PPD, or QuantiFERON gold, and/or chest x-ray (if indicated)
- Complete a physical examination
- Complete all required immunizations/vaccinations or positive titers (see below for a complete list)
- Obtain and pass a N95 fit test
- Submit to criminal background checks with disclosure to site of any convictions consistent with their criteria
- Submit to drug screens with disclosure to site of any positive findings for drugs that are taken without medical supervision
- Provide evidence of and always maintain personal medical insurance coverage while at off-campus training sites
- Provide BLS, ACLS, and any other clinical training certifications as required by site
- Be responsible for transportation to SCPEs
- Provide or create an NPI number

Depending on the requirements of the affiliation agreement between the SCPE site and the University, the documentation requested may be coordinated by or at the training site or facilitated by

the University using campus-based programs or by an external agency. In all cases, the student is responsible for ensuring the requirements have been satisfied. Students without completed Health Appraisal forms and all other requirements will not be permitted to participate in courses, assignments, or clinical rotations. This delay may disrupt the student's curriculum timeline and force them to sit out of the program's didactic curriculum until the following year or delay the completion of their clinical rotations. Students not complying with clinical rotation vaccination policies may have their graduation delayed and, in some cases, may not be able to complete the curriculum. In addition to delays in graduation, students may face a professionalism review. University approved vaccination exemptions may not be accepted at clinical sites, each clinical site determines their exemptions independently and the process is outside the control of the Program.

Though the Program does not currently offer any elective international curricular components, this policy is established in anticipation of student requests and potential change to this practice. Should this change occur, students who rotate at international clinical sites will need to follow the current CDC requirements for the country where they plan to travel. Students need to either consult the [University of Pittsburgh, University Center for International Studies, Global Experiences Office](#), or a personal provider for evaluation and provide documentation of compliance with CDC recommendations for international travel.

Successfully complete and submit the following requirements by or before their due dates listed on EXXAT. Upon receipt of the student's deposit, specific instructions regarding completion of the student's initial health appraisal form, background checks, clearances, drug screening and additional credentialing requirements will be sent to the student via email from EXXAT (EXXAT is a third-party secure website that manages your documentation and clinical site placements). Please note that some of these requirements are completed annually, so the student should keep this in mind when scheduling the above items. The student should receive an EXXAT email invitation after their deposit has been processed and they will need to pay an activation fee and set up an account. Please remember it may take at least 4-6 weeks to complete these requirements. If the requirements are not completed by the deadlines listed on EXXAT, the student will forfeit their seat.

23.0 Drug Screen Policy

This policy applies to all University of Pittsburgh Physician Assistant Studies Program conditionally accepted applicants and enrolled PA students. A urine drug screen (UDS) is required of each conditionally accepted applicant prior to full admission, and at least annually thereafter for every continuing student. Conditionally accepted applicants who have an adverse finding on a UDS report may be denied full admission/matriculation, and current students will be disciplined in accordance with established University/PA Program policy. As a prerequisite to participating in patient care, students may be required to undergo one or more random urine drug screens. Such randomized testing is necessary to adhere to our clinical affiliates' requirements. When required by clinical facilities, students must complete urine drug screening prior to the onset of the given clinical experience. Students are financially responsible for services related to urine drug screening. Depending on the specific clinical site requirements, this may need to be repeated annually or more frequently. Urine drug screening results that limit the Program's ability to secure clinical experiences may result in a student being unable to complete the program on time or be recommended for graduation. Acceptance into and successful completion of the University of Pittsburgh PA Studies Hybrid Program does not imply or guarantee that the student will be able to obtain state licensure upon graduation. The PA Program is committed to accepting and educating students who meet established standards for professionalism, are of high moral character, and are suitable candidates for professional certification or licensure.

URINE DRUG SCREEN (UDS)

Definitions: Adverse Finding: A term describing a UDS report of anything other than “clear” or “no findings” or other similar language used by the approved vendor that issued the UDS report.

Conditional Acceptance: A term describing an applicant’s status when basic review criteria have been met at the time an admission offer is extended but prior to full admission to an academic program.

Full Admission: A term indicating that a student has met all program admission requirements and has been cleared of any Adverse Findings that would prevent eligibility for enrollment.

Matriculated: A term describing students enrolled in a University program as degree candidates.

Positive Result: Under this policy, is any instance in which a drug screening report shows a positive test for one or more of the drugs listed under “Scope of the UDS.”

Prospective Students: Will be notified through the admissions web page that if accepted, they will be required to complete a UDS, and authorize release of the results to appropriate academic and/or clinical personnel.

Conditionally Accepted Applicants:

The UDS is not to be used as a component of the application, interview, or decision-making process regarding conditional acceptance to a designated program. It is a mandatory component of the post-conditional acceptance matriculation process.

- Students accepted for admission will be notified that matriculation is contingent upon the evaluation and acceptable outcome of all required UDS.
- Any conditionally accepted applicant who fails to complete the above will not be allowed to begin classes and may jeopardize full admission status to the PA program.

Enrolled PA Students:

- Once admitted, students will be notified via e-mail of the deadline for completion.
- The PA program will provide students with instructions on obtaining an authorized drug screen.
- At a minimum, complete a UDS during the didactic phase, in preparation for entry into the clinical phase. (Or more frequently if required by clinical rotation sites or by the PA Program).
- Any student who fails to adhere to the UDS deadline will be suspended from all classes until the UDS is completed. All exams and assessments missed while on suspension will be recorded with a grade of “0” or “Fail” as this is not an excused absence from the program.
- Failure of the UDS may preclude participation in any further clinical rotations. As a result, the student may not be able to complete the education program's requirements, may not be eligible for federal, or state credentialing required for practice, and may be recommended dismissed from the Program. Decisions are subject to right of appeal.
- All information will be retained until an appeal, if any, has concluded and determination regarding continued participation has been made.
- Results of all drug screens shall be privileged and confidential, will be maintained in a secure place and shall not be released or otherwise disclosed to any person or agency, other than (1) individuals involved in PA program’s admissions and student services; (2) persons who have a legitimate need to know, as determined by the Program director; (3) upon direction of

a court order; (4) any affiliated entity providing clinical training; or, (5) with the written consent of the student.

- Should the vendor report a diluted screening specimen thereby precluding an accurate drug screen test, the enrolled student or conditionally accepted applicant will be required to complete and successfully pass a new drug screen test. The cost of the second test will be at the enrolled student's / conditionally accepted applicant's expense.

Costs:

- The costs associated with the UDS for conditionally accepted applicants, didactic, and clinical phase students are the applicant/student's responsibility.
- If an additional UDS is requested or required, the costs are the student's responsibility.

Period of Validity:

- The program will generally honor the Urine Drug Screen for one year, but a UDS may be necessary more frequently, depending on class or rotation site requirements. Any student with a break in enrollment may be required to complete a UDS before they can re-enroll in any courses.

Scope of the UDS:

The drug screen panel will consist of:

1. Marijuana (THC, Cannabinoids)
2. Cocaine
3. Amphetamines
4. Phencyclidine
5. Opiates
6. Benzodiazepines
7. Barbiturates
8. Propoxyphene
9. Methadone
10. Methaqualone

Initial Positive Results:

- Students with a positive drug screen will have an opportunity to consult with a Medical Review Officer (MRO) provided by the vendor, to verify whether there is a valid medical explanation for the screening results. If, after review by the vendor's MRO, there is a valid medical explanation for the screening results, the vendor will notify the University of a "clear" test. If, after review by the MRO, there is not a valid medical explanation for the positive screen then the test results will stand.
- Any appeal right of a positive UDS rests solely between the student/accepted applicant, the Medical Review Officer, and the vendor.

Procedure for Review of Positive UDS:

- A "positive result" under this policy is any instance in which a drug screening report shows a positive test for one or more of the drugs listed above under "Scope of the UDS."

Conditionally Accepted Applicants:

- The Director of Clinical Education will review all UDS reports and notify the Program Director of any positive results.

- Conditionally accepted applicants with a positive drug screen may have their conditional offer rescinded by the PA program Director and will not be allowed to matriculate. They may choose to reapply to the Program but must complete a new CASPA application during the next admission cycle.

Enrolled Students:

- o Results of all student urine drug screens will be provided by the approved vendor to the Director of Clinical Education.
- o In the event that a student fails a drug screen, the PA Program Director will be notified, and the student may be removed from the clinical rotation or classroom.
- o A repeated UDS may be requested at the student’s expense. Due to the mandate to comply with health system policies, and the serious implications of a “non-negative” test, disciplinary actions against students may be imposed without the customary mechanisms of warning and probation. Students may not continue coursework (clinical or non-clinical) immediately after a “nonnegative” UDS is received.
- o The Director of Clinical Education and the Program Director will review each referred non-negative UDS to determine the potential impact that any adverse findings might have on the enrolled PA student’s educational program of study and will determine the course of action regarding the student’s continued participation in the program. If it is determined that the student may be unable to complete the educational requirements of the PA program, they will be recommended for dismissal from the program, pending the outcome of an appeal, should such right be invoked.
- o Any student who fails the drug screen will be notified of their right to appeal to the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies at SHRS, within 7 days after “non-negative” UDS was received. All information will be retained until an appeal, if any, has concluded and determination regarding continued participation in the program has been made.
- o The appeal must be made in writing and should include any supporting documentation the student wishes to submit. The Associate Dean for Graduate Studies will consider the request for an appeal and decide on it within seven days of receipt of it.
- o Students claiming inaccuracies in their UDS will be referred to the vendor and/or authorized laboratory completing the screen.

Falsification of Information:

- o Falsification of information submitted as part of the application process or on the UDS can result in a recommendation of immediate removal of the applicant from the conditionally accepted list or dismissal of an enrolled student from the MS degree program.

Confidentiality of Records:

- o The University maintains UDS reports and all records pertaining to the results in confidence unless release is otherwise required by law.
- o Information about the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is available at: [FERPA](#)
- o Release of information reported on the UDS may be released to future employers, licensing boards and clinical sites with signed release from the student for employment credentialing, licensure, and site placement.

Record Keeping:

UDS reports and all records pertaining to the results will be maintained in the conditionally accepted applicant’s file or enrolled student’s academic file in the PA Program for the minimum timeframe listed below, unless otherwise required by law:

- o Enrolled Students – Five (5) years after graduation.

- o Conditionally Accepted Applicants – Two (2) years from date of application (provided no anticipated legal action)

24.0 Exposure to Infectious and Environmental Hazards

Prevention

The Program is committed to providing a safe environment for learning and working. Safety and high-quality work are a shared responsibility among students, staff, and faculty.

- Staff and faculty, including Supervised Clinical Practice Experience preceptors, are responsible to understand the hazards, ensure that hazards are mitigated, make sure that graduate students are qualified, competent, and properly trained, and make sure that the students perform work safely and with high quality.
- Students are responsible for following procedures and trainings put in place to ensure a safe work environment and to communicate expeditiously with the staff or faculty about safety issues and questions.
- All Program personnel must work closely with the University of Pittsburgh Environmental Health and Safety to ensure that activities are pursued in a safe manner, this includes:
 - o Prior to didactic instruction occurring on campus in the Anatomy Lab or Clinical Skills Lab spaces, PA students and faculty undergo training on:
 - Bloodborne pathogens and chemical hygiene/formaldehyde awareness provided by the University of Pittsburgh Department of Environmental Health and Safety ([EH&S Live Training | Environmental Health and Safety | University of Pittsburgh](#)).
 - Proper lab etiquette, dress, and safe performance of procedures (to include, but not limited to, injections, suturing, and scalpel use) provided by the faculty who teach the courses that use this space.
 - o For all locations where Supervised Clinical Practice Experience instruction occurs, the University has established the following security and personal safety measures for PA students and faculty:
 - Affiliation agreements with placement sites, signed by representatives of the University, specify that the placement site is responsible for documenting and notifying University of appropriate security and personal safety measures for University students and faculty in all locations where instruction occurs, including but not limited to, instruction on occupational health and safety, harassment prevention, conflict resolution, and other program policies and manuals.
 - o Prior to SCPE instruction at any clinical site, PA students and faculty undergo training specific to the site.
 - o All PA staff and faculty are also provided orientation to campus services and resources, including those related to security and personal safety as well as access to the associated website from the Office of Human Resources.
 - o All PA students, staff, and faculty are to stay updated on environmental health and safety policies, trainings, reporting mechanisms, and procedures in case of concerns for security and personal safety via the website of the Department of Environmental Health & Safety ([Home | Environmental Health and Safety | University of Pittsburgh](#)).
- Further safety training may be required for work at certain SCPE sites or campus learning spaces. The student and the faculty member responsible for this instruction will discuss the necessary training requirements and instructions prior to the commencement of the work by the student.

Procedures for Care and Treatment after Exposure:

- If a student sustains an injury or exposure, the student must:
 - Be responsible for initiating care and recommended follow up after injury or exposure to possible infectious pathogens.
 - Report the incident immediately to the instructor/preceptor.
 - Personally complete the University and clinical site forms for any infection exposures, needlesticks, injuries, patient mishaps, etc. included in the supplemental materials section at the end of the handbook.
 - If non-emergency medical attention is needed and the student is close to the University's Pittsburgh Campus, the student may utilize the Student Health Services office for the evaluation.
 - Student Health Services
Nordenberg Hall-Wellness Center
119 University Place
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
Phone: 412-383-1800
Hours of Operation:
Monday, Wednesday 8:30a - 9:00p Eastern
Tuesday, Thursday & Friday 8:30a-5:00p Eastern
 - Utilize UPMC Presbyterian Emergency Department, 412-647-3333, during hours that Student Health is closed or if emergency medical attention is needed.
 - If the student is at a distant site for didactic or SCPE instruction:
 - Contact Student Health or UPMC Presbyterian ED to determine appropriate treatment steps.
 - If occurs during clinical rotations, the student must also notify the Physician Assistant Studies Program Director of Clinical Education via Pitt email (as soon as soon as the above steps are completed). The Director of Clinical Education will then report the incident to the Program Director. Per University policy, the incident must be reported to the Program Director by the next business day, if possible.

Financial Responsibility:

- Any expenses occurring from any injury or exposure during any educational activity will be the financial responsibility of the student, to be paid directly by the student or any applicable insurance policy that the student owns, according to plan coverage.
- Students are required to carry personal health insurance.
- All Program prospective and enrolled students, staff, and faculty, as well as interested others and the general public, are provided access to this Policies and Procedure Manual via the Program website.
- All Program prospective and enrolled students, staff, and faculty do and will continue to receive an orientation to the Program policies and procedures when joining the Program and in the event of any revisions to any policies.
- The Policies and Procedures Manual will be reviewed on an at-least-annual basis to ensure the Policies and Procedures are being upheld and remain agreeable to the members of the Program.
- Regarding consistent application of Program policies and practices, Policy 24.0, found in the Physician Assistant Studies Program Student Handbook, states:
 - "...Program policies and practices must be consistently applied to all student, staff, and faculty groups as stated in each policy and practice.

25.0 Policy on Policies

Program policies apply to all students, staff, principal faculty, and the program director regardless of location. Certain program policies may be superseded by those at clinical sites.

Program policies and practices must be made readily available and consistently applied to all students.

Guidelines on Academic Integrity

SHRS has developed a set of principles that apply all students. Students desiring information about an academic unit's specific procedures and the makeup of its Academic Integrity Hearing Board may obtain a copy of the procedures and other necessary information from the SHRS Website:

<https://www.shrs.pitt.edu/academicpolicies>.

A student desiring information about an academic unit's specific procedures and the makeup of its Academic Integrity Hearing Board may obtain a copy of the procedures and other necessary information from the Office of the Dean, either in the academic unit in which they are registered or in the academic unit in which a particular course is taught. Additional information or guidance may be obtained from the Office of the Provost. Copies of this document and guidelines for academic units should be distributed by the deans to all instructional staff in each academic unit. "Academic unit" is used to refer to a college, academic unit, or regional campus.

Disability Resources and Services

The Office of Disability Resources and Services (DRS, 140 William Pitt Union, (412) 648-7890 or 412-624-3346 Fax, and 412-536-5568 VP, provides a broad range of support services and resources to assist students with disabilities such as visual impairment, auditory impairment, mobility impairment and hidden disabilities (learning disabilities, psychological disabilities). Services include, but are not limited to: tape recorded textbooks, sign language interpreters, adaptive computer technology, Braille copy, non-standard exam arrangements and personal counseling. DRS can also assist students with accessible on-campus housing and transportation. Students interested in registering for services should contact DRS to schedule an appointment with the Coordinator and be prepared, if requested, to provide appropriate documentation of this disability. Students with disabilities who require special testing, accommodations or other classroom instruction modifications should notify their Department Chair, the instructor, and DRS no later than the fourth week of the term. Students may be asked to provide documentation of their disability to determine the appropriateness of accommodations. Please see the website listed here: <http://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/drswelcome>.

Approvals for academic accommodation must be renewed and provided to the program for each term of study.

Professional Organizations/Professional Contacts

- National Commission Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA): <http://www.nccpa.net>
- Physician Assistant Education Association (PAEA): <http://www.paeaonline.org>
- Pennsylvania Society of Physician Assistants (PSPA): <https://pspa.net/>
- Pennsylvania State Medical Board Regulations for PAs and Osteopathic Regulations for PAs: <http://www.pacode.com/secure/data/049/049toc.html>
- American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA) <http://www.aapa.org/>

AAPA Student Resource Websites

- <https://www.aapa.org/career-central/career-resources/?tag=pa-student>
- <http://www.healthcareers.com/aapa/>
- <http://www.facebook.com/AAPAstudents>
- http://www.facebook.com/AAPAstudents#!/AAPAstudents?v=app_7146470109

University Policy and Procedures

University Policies and Procedures: <http://www.shrs.pitt.edu/academicpolicies/>

Policies, Procedures & Handbooks Site » <http://www.cfo.pitt.edu/policies/>

SHRS Guidelines on Academic Integrity » <http://www.shrs.pitt.edu/academicpolicies/>

SHRS Academic Integrity Officers are:

1. Kevin Conley, PhD, ATC (Undergraduate)
2. G. Kelley Fitzgerald, PhD (Graduate)

Computing Ethics and Guidelines » <http://www.shrs.pitt.edu/current-students/academic-policies>

Non-Discrimination, Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action » <http://www.shrs.pitt.edu/current-students/academic-policies>

Sexual Harassment » <http://www.shrs.pitt.edu/current-students/academic-policies>

Student Code of Conduct » <http://www.shrs.pitt.edu/current-students/academic-policies>

University Student Resources

University Counseling Center:

Nordenberg Hall
119 University Place
412-648-7930
<http://www.counseling.pitt.edu>

Career Development >> <http://www.careers.pitt.edu/>

Financial Aid >> <https://oafa.pitt.edu/financialaid/>

Libraries >> <http://www.pitt.edu/taxonomy/term/765>

Student Health >> <http://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/shshome>

Crisis and Emergency Services>> <https://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/cc/crisisemergency/>

Email, grades, blackboard, schedules >> <https://my.pitt.edu>

Travel Grants >> <http://www.shrs.pitt.edu/student.aspx?id=291>

Tuition Rates >> <http://www.ir.pitt.edu/tuition/index.php>

Graduate Catalog >> <https://catalog.upp.pitt.edu/content.php?catoid=73&navoid=6370>

Emergency Phone Numbers

Student Health Services: 412-383-1800

Environmental Health & Safety: 412-624-9505

UPMC Presbyterian Hospital Emergency Department: 412-647-3334

University Counseling Center: 412-648-7930 <http://www.counseling.pitt.edu>

Pitt Police: 412-324-2121

Faculty and Staff Contact Information

University of Pittsburgh
 School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences
 Department of Physician Assistant Studies
 3420 Forbes Avenue, Second Floor
 Pittsburgh, PA 15260

PHONE: 412-624-6743

www.shrs.pitt.edu/PAProgram

Name	Position	Campus Address	Phone	Email
David Beck EdD, MPAS, PA-C, DFAAPA He/Him	Department Chair, Associate Dean for Interprofessional Education, Program Director, Associate Professor	241 Murdoch	412-624- 6717	dbeck@pitt.edu
Susan Graff, MS, PA-C She/Her	Associate Program Director, Assistant Professor	235 Murdoch	412-624- 6743	Sgg16@pitt.edu
Martin Johns MD He/Him	Medical Director	212 Murdoch	412-624- 6743	mjohns@pitt.edu
Antionette Wilson, MMS, PA-C She/her	Director of Curriculum, Assistant Professor.	242 Murdoch	412-383- 0703	amw280@pitt.edu
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Acknowledgement and Signature

University of Pittsburgh Physician Assistant Studies Program Student Handbook

This Handbook is published by University of Pittsburgh Physician Assistant Studies program, which reserves the right to revise the contents at any time. Any changes apply to all current students. The faculty reserves the right to revise the curriculum and the schedule of required courses. You are responsible for reading and understanding this handbook. If anything in this handbook is unclear, please discuss the matter with the Program Director.

I, _____, have received and have read the School of Health & Rehabilitation Sciences Physician Assistant Studies Program Student Handbook and the Orientation Presentation for the Class of 2023. I agree to abide by all policies found therein. If I fail to uphold this agreement, I am aware that I may be disciplined in accordance with Program, School, and University policies and procedures.

Student Signature

Date