



**Shenandoah University PA Program
Admissions Guidelines
2023-2024 Cycle
Class of 2026**

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Shenandoah University

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT STUDIES

Introduction

This Admission Guidelines document is designed to provide both the potential and matriculated student with information about the educational program leading to a Master of Science in Physician Assistant (PA) Studies. It should be viewed as an adjunct to Shenandoah University's [Graduate Catalog](#) which contains specific information regarding the university and related policies.

The information herein is subject to periodic revision, and these changes will be relayed to students in a timely manner. It is ultimately the student's responsibility to be aware of all degree requirements and to work closely with a faculty advisor to ensure these requirements are fulfilled.

Overview of the Profession and Program

PAs are medical professionals who diagnose illness, develop and manage treatment plans, prescribe medications, and often serve as a patient's principal healthcare provider. With thousands of hours of medical training, PAs are versatile and collaborative. PAs exercise autonomy in decision-making and provide a wide range of diagnostic and therapeutic services including prescribing medication. The role of the PA includes provision of primary and specialty care in medical and surgical practices located in a variety of settings and geographic locations. PAs practice in every state and in every medical setting and specialty, improving healthcare access and quality.

The Shenandoah University Physician Assistant (SUPA) program is a graduate entry-level professional course of study enabling individuals who hold baccalaureate degrees to become PAs. The program is designed to prepare graduates for practice and the team approach to the delivery of healthcare. The program integrates graduate-level critical thinking and analysis, problem solving, scientific inquiry, self-directed learning and the effective use of modern technology for professional practice that includes elements of research, leadership, education and continued enhancement of the PA profession.

Purpose and Goals

The purpose of the PA program is to graduate competent professionals who are well prepared for the demands of modern professional practice in a rapidly changing health-care environment. The curriculum goals are based upon the [AAPA/PAEA/NCCPA/ARC-PA](#) "Competencies for the Physician Assistant" document, standards for educational programs contained in the "[Accreditation Standards for Physician Assistant Education](#)," the Program's Mission Statement, and the needs of the PA profession. In the PA program curriculum, knowledge, skills and attitudes are considered to be critical elements of professional practice and are addressed in the following curricular goals.

The program has three large overarching goals:

1. Maintain first time pass rate on PANCE above the national average.
2. Seventy-five percent of graduates will have permanent employment within four months of graduation.
3. The percentage of new graduates who practice in primary care will be above the national average.

Mission Statement

Transforming Healthcare Through Innovative Education

Core Values

- **Promoting Excellence** in education that extends learning beyond the classroom, develops research skills, and results in high-quality patient care
- **Cultivating Leadership** through professional values and engagement in the healthcare system
- **Sparking Curiosity** that fosters the skills needed to meet the demands of the evolving healthcare landscape
- **Supporting Advocacy** that empowers those in need
- **Integrating Service** into actions for the betterment of our communities
- **Upholding Respect** for the rights, dignity, well-being, and integrity of all individuals

Curriculum Design

The curriculum design, offered in didactic and experiential components, is based upon the concepts of adult-centered learning and professional education, which focus on mastery of knowledge, skills and attitudes required by the graduate to practice effectively as a PA. The didactic curriculum offers multiple modalities for learning, which include self-directed study, recitation, lecture, integrated clinical cases and laboratory experiences. These modalities assist students in developing the necessary skills to be self-directed life-long learners and effectively apply what they learn in the clinical setting. The clinical curriculum provides core primary care and other learning experiences where students apply knowledge and skills in a variety of patient care settings under the supervision and mentoring of licensed health care providers.

Program Delivery Model

The Shenandoah University PA program is offered on a full-time basis only at two sites, Winchester and at Scholar Plaza, Loudoun County. The length of the program is eight semesters (30 months). The delivery model is designed to prepare students for a rapidly changing healthcare environment where simple memorization of facts and figures is insufficient for effective clinical practice. Delivery of content includes face-to-face, asynchronous online, and video-teleconferencing. Learning is accomplished through a combination of independent study and preparation, lecture and discussions, small-group case-based exercises, and practical application. Interprofessional learning opportunities are integrated throughout the curriculum. The program as a whole is delivered in person, and students are expected to be available to attend all courses in person at their designated location. As adult learners, it is expected that students will actively engage in independent study, inquiry and clinical rotations outside the classroom to augment learning and to maximize effectiveness of classroom and laboratory contact time.

Since the SUPA program uses computer technology in the delivery of the curriculum, all PA students must be computer literate. The Shenandoah University PA program uses a technology program, which provides a laptop computer, an iPad, and technology support to each student. Participation in this program is mandatory.

Students are expected to adjust their non-curricular demands in order to complete the degree requirements. Employment is not recommended while attending the Shenandoah University PA program.

Early Assurance Program

High school students interested in applying to Shenandoah's Early Assurance Program should review the information and requirements provided online at the [Physician Assistant Early Assurance Pathway](#) site.

Shenandoah University (SU) Articulation Agreement

An [articulation agreement](#) between SU's undergraduate College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) and our graduate School of Health Professions (SHP) provides a pathway to the Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies for any currently full-time enrolled SU student earning a baccalaureate degree from the university. A reserved number of seats is set aside for those students who meet all the same admission requirements as regular applicants.

Dual Physician Assistant Studies/Master of Public Health (PA/MPH) Program

Students who pursue a dual PA/MPH graduate program of study will obtain a more holistic, global, and epidemiological perspective on the health care system overall. This can better prepare them for preventative medicine and international work while saving both time and money in concurrently completing this program with fifteen credits of overlapping coursework. Details regarding the dual degree program can be found at this link: <https://www.su.edu/health/pa-mph-dual-degree/>

Admission Requirements

To be considered for the Physician Assistant program, applicants must:

1. Submit all application materials to the Central Application Service for Physician Assistants ([CASPA](#)) at <https://caspa.liasoncas.com/> including official transcripts from ALL institutions of higher education attended.
2. Preference will be given to candidates who can demonstrate an alignment with the mission and core values of the program. This alignment is assessed in the SUPA admission process including review of application and interview.
3. The application also includes a supplemental essay to address this alignment directly. Candidates will be asked to choose three of the Shenandoah University PA Program's Core Values and, in a total of 500 words or less, explain how they have demonstrated those three core values in action.

Note: Healthcare experience is strongly recommended to develop a robust understanding of the PA profession and current healthcare landscape, however, healthcare experience, patient care experience and PA shadowing are not required for admission.

Academic Requirements

To be considered for regular admission, applicants must have:

- a. A Baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution is required to be completed prior to matriculation to the program. Applicants from all academic disciplines are welcome to apply, provided they meet the prerequisite course requirements.
- b. Submit all application materials to the Central Application Service for Physician Assistants (CASPA) at <https://caspa.liasoncas.com/> including official transcripts for all institutions of higher education attended and three recommendations.
- c. Minimum 3.0 cumulative undergraduate, overall science, and SUPA Program prerequisite Grade Point Averages (GPAs).

- d. GPA requirements are assessed at the time of application for review; any outstanding coursework that is not included in GPA upon application will be reviewed before matriculation. If a GPA falls below the minimum after application and before matriculation, a seat offer will be revoked.

An applicant with a cumulative undergraduate or overall science GPA less than 3.0 but greater than 2.80 and who has completed a minimum of 15 semester hours of relevant graduate work with a 3.0 or better GPA, may be considered. See FAQs posted on the SUPA website for the definition of relevant graduate work.

Note: Average GPAs for students admitted to the SUPA Program have been over 3.5 for the past several years.

Applicants must complete the following prerequisite coursework (documented via official transcripts)

Required Prerequisites

The courses below are *required* to be successfully completed prior to matriculation:

Course	Courses	Minimum credit (Semester)	Minimum credit (Quarter)
Human A&P with Lab	2	8	10-12
General or Introduction to Chemistry	1	3	4
General Biology (or Biochemistry)	1	3	4
Microbiology with Lab	1	4	5
Introduction to Psychology*	1	3	4
Statistics	1	3	4

*For students who have received advanced placement (AP) credits for Introduction to Psychology, an additional psychology course is required. Please review the suggested psychology courses listed below in "Recommended Coursework".

Recommended Coursework

The courses below are *recommended* to better prepare for the Shenandoah University Physician Assistant curriculum; they are not evaluated to determine competitiveness of an application:

Medical Terminology	1	3	4
Biochemistry or Organic Chemistry	1	3	4
Developmental, Child, or Abnormal Psychology	1	3	4

Important Notes

- A grade of “C” or above is required for all prerequisite courses, however, it is strongly recommended that prerequisites be completed with a grade of A or B. Grades of “C-” or below are not accepted for prerequisite courses.
- No more than TWO prerequisites can be outstanding at the time of application.
- It is recommended that all prerequisite coursework be completed within 5 years of matriculation; the program will not accept any prerequisite coursework taken 10 years before the time of matriculation.
- The program requires that Human Anatomy & Physiology courses are taken at the same institution. If they are not, an additional audit and internal review will be required after application submission to ensure comprehensive coverage of topics. Human Anatomy and Human Physiology may be completed as two individual courses or by taking a combined Human Anatomy & Physiology I and Human Anatomy & Physiology II course sequence over two terms. Comparative anatomy, vertebrate anatomy, functional anatomy, animal physiology, anatomy and physiology designed for specific disciplines, or fundamentals of anatomy and physiology courses are not counted toward the A&P requirement.
- Prerequisites must be completed at a college or university in the United States. Courses completed at Canadian institutions will be evaluated on an individual basis.
- It is recommended that prerequisite coursework be taken in-person, however online coursework is accepted.
- Neither Advanced Placement credit (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), or College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) credits are accepted to fulfill the prerequisite course requirements. For students who have received advanced placement (AP) credits for Introduction to Psychology, an additional psychology course is required from the courses listed under the “Recommended Coursework”, as these subjects will have the most relevance to the program curriculum.
- The program will accept “P” or related grades as satisfying any of the program’s academic prerequisites for courses taken during the following COVID-impacted timeframe: Spring Semester 2020 - Spring Semester 2021. Grades reported as Failing (F) or as Incomplete (I) will not be considered as fulfilling prerequisites.
- In some cases, work experience specific to the science course older than 10 years may substitute for repeating the course. Upload a formal request, a supervisor letter, and a resume to your CASPA application for review. We are unable to review these requests in advance of application to SU.
- A medical terminology proficiency exam will be administered during summer orientation. Failure to meet the minimum benchmark will require a formal remediation plan to be completed during the first summer semester.
- The program does not offer academic credit for experiential learning/work experience.

All applicants are asked to read and adhere to the [CASPA Admissions Code of Cooperation](#) available on the CASPA website.

Application Process & Timeline

The SUPA Program processes an individual's verified CASPA application once it is received and considered **complete** by the program. An applicant's file must meet the following requirements:

1. All three references received by CASPA. One reference must be provided from an academic source (e.g. professor, academic advisor), and one from an employer/supervisor. The third reference may be any source that can speak to the applicant's suitability for the profession.
2. Plan for completing any outstanding prerequisites is documented in the "planned" section at the bottom part of the CASPA electronic transcript to include term, institute name, and course details. Outstanding prerequisite courses must be documented in this section for the application to be processed.

International Students

1. Prerequisites must be completed at a college or university in the United States.
2. Applicants must submit an independent course-to-course evaluation by the World Education Services international education organization (www.wes.org) or equivalent for foreign transcripts. If you have studied outside the US, you will need to have your transcripts evaluated for US equivalency using a service such as www.wes.org or www.ece.org. Follow CASPA's instructions to determine how to report coursework completed through study abroad. The program will add this coursework to your CASPA-calculated GPA to attain your overall cumulative, science, and prerequisite GPAs.
3. To satisfy English language proficiency requirements for regular admission to the School of Health Professions - Non-Native English Speaker (NNES) students must achieve one of the following: (test must be taken within two years of submission).
 - 83+ on Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)
 - 53+ on Pearson Test of English (PTE)
 - 55+ (on pre-July 2019) or 105+ Duolingo English Test (DET)
 - At least 48 credit hours with a cumulative GPA of 2.5 in a post-secondary institution where English is the language of instruction
 - 6.5+ on the International English Language Testing System (IELTS)

Note: Please refer to SU's Evidence of [English Language Proficiency link](#) for international graduate students.

Application Review

The application review will include evaluation of the following to estimate the candidate's aptitude and preparation for graduate studies in alignment with SUPA core values.

1. Cumulative overall grade point average (GPA) as calculated by CASPA
2. Overall science GPA as calculated by CASPA
3. SUPA Program Prerequisite GPA
4. Number of outstanding prerequisites and proper documentation of plan for completion
5. References
6. Narrative and supplemental essays submitted via CASPA

Note: It is the applicant's responsibility to check CASPA and our current website to make sure all requirements and documents are received in a timely manner in order to meet SUPA's deadline.

Interviews

After application review, the candidates selected are invited to participate in an interview to assess alignment with SUPA's mission and core values. This interview also provides an opportunity to determine if the SUPA program is the best fit for the candidate's graduate studies.

There are sixty seats available in the program each year. In order to increase chances of acceptance, early application is strongly encouraged. Candidates are not permitted to select their interview date.

Admissions Timeline

CASPA opens	April 28, 2023
Application completed and e-submitted to CASPA	August 1, 2023
Verified application and all supporting materials due	September 1, 2023
Interview top candidates	July 28, August 25, & September 22, 2023
Deposit due	Two weeks after admissions email is received
Classes start	July 2024

Mandatory orientation for the Class of 2026 will take place in person June 2024 before the start of the first summer semester at a date communicated upon seat offer.

Admission Decisions

The program requires a non-refundable \$500 advanced tuition deposit to secure seat placement, which is applied toward the first semester's tuition payment.

The admissions committee will recommend one of the following decisions based upon the program internal scoring model:

- a. **Full Admission:** Offered to candidates with all prerequisites complete along with a conferred bachelor's degree. Those with outstanding requirements will be recommended for provisional admission status.
- b. **Provisional Admission:** Candidates with a bachelor's degree and/or prerequisite courses "in progress" may be admitted as long as these requirements are fulfilled and official documentation received no later than by May 31st or the candidate's admission offer will be withdrawn.
- c. **Alternate Status:** Applicants selected as alternate candidates will be notified of their final admission status by mid-June. Those not admitted from the list must reapply if they wish to be considered in a subsequent cycle. Rank or position on the list will not be disclosed to candidates due to its dynamic nature (See FAQs).
- c. **Denial:** Applicants not selected for admission status will be notified.

Advanced Placement/Transfer and Credit for Experiential Learning

The Division of PA Studies will consider requests for up to 15 semester hours (or equivalent quarter hours) of transfer credit into the curriculum. In order to be considered, courses must be graduate-level and have been successfully completed with a grade of "B" or better at an accredited institution of higher learning within the

past five years. Courses will be considered for transfer only if they are directly applicable to the established PA program curriculum, as determined by the faculty and approved by the Program Director after thorough review of all appropriate documents (application, transcripts, recommendations and personal request) in the first semester. Competency on the subject material will be assessed in accordance with the course requirements prior to acceptance of transfer credit.

If the request for transfer of credits is from another PA educational program, it must be from another graduate-level accredited program in which the student is in good standing, and with the specific recommendation of the program director, dean or other appropriate official. The faculty will determine satisfaction of program course prerequisites for transfer students from other PA programs on a case-by-case basis. Transfer candidates must apply to Shenandoah University through CASPA.

Technical Standards

[Technical standards](#) for admission establish the expectations and abilities considered essential for students admitted to the program in order to achieve the level of competency required for graduation and clinical practice. Candidates should review these standards before initiating an application.

Deferment Policy

The SUPA program does not honor requests for deferment of admission during the period between formal acceptance and matriculation except in extreme circumstances that are determined on an individual basis.

Other Requirements

Applicants admitted to the program must provide evidence of good health and up-to-date immunizations prior to matriculation. Prior to beginning coursework, students are required to authorize and submit to a criminal background check, including sex offenses and crimes against minors. A history of a conviction at the felony level may prevent the student from placement for clinical training and thereby ability to satisfy graduation requirements. Students must also submit to drug testing required by clinical practice sites or the program. Non-compliance with the criminal background checks and/or drug testing policies may be cause for dismissal from the program. In addition, students are required to maintain health insurance and liability insurance coverage. Further information will be reviewed in detail at orientation. **Admitted students are required to attend all orientation sessions scheduled by the program.**

Falsification of any portion of the application process, including the CASPA application, will be cause for immediate withdrawal of the admission offer or dismissal from the PA Program.

Program Administration and Support

Accreditation Status & NCCPA Pass Rate

The Physician Assistant program is accredited by the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant, Inc. (ARC-PA). Graduates of accredited programs are eligible to take the national certifying examination offered by the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA). Most states require certification in order to practice.

As of March 1, 2023, the aggregate five-year first-time taker pass rate of Shenandoah University Physician Assistant program graduates (Classes 2018–2022) is 93 percent while the national pass rate for the past five years is 94 percent. Additional information regarding SUPA Program's graduate performance on the national certification (PANCE) examination is found on our [Accreditation & Outcomes](#) website page.

Non-Discrimination Policy

Shenandoah University values the unique and diverse perspectives of individuals and communities locally and globally and seeks to foster mutual understanding in an inviting community where individuals are welcome and respected. The university does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, age, physical or mental disability, genetic information, veteran's status or on any other basis protected under applicable law.

Cost & Financial Aid

Tuition and fees are set annually. For the 2023-24 academic year it is estimated that tuition, fees, and other program-related expenses will total around \$99,448. This amount includes books (including e-texts), medical equipment, software, and supplies. Additional details are provided on the program website under the "[costs and financial aid](#)" tab. This cost does not include additional responsibilities for living expenses, travel to and from clinical rotations, and costs associated with temporary housing while on assigned clinical rotations.

Note: The Shenandoah University Board of Trustees reviews and approves the university budget on an annual basis. This document includes the most up to date figures at the time of publication. Tuition increases may be implemented.

Financial aid for graduate students is available primarily through student loans and private sources. Virginia residents may be eligible for the Virginia Tuition Assistance Grant (VTAG).

Through the generosity of alumni, community friends and foundations, the SUPA program is able to provide several scholarships each year. Additional information regarding SU as well as private and professional association scholarships will be provided in fall of entering year. Candidates interested in exploring loan repayment opportunities through the National Health Service Corps scholarships should call NHSC at (800) 221-9393 or visit the NHSC Web site. <http://www.nhsc.hrsa.gov/scholarships/>

Contact Information

Primary Contact:

Physician Assistant Program
(540) 545-7381

pa@su.edu
<http://www.su.edu/physician-assistant/>

Office of Financial Aid
(540) 665-4538

finaid@su.edu
www.su.edu/financial-aid/

Office of Admissions
(540) 665-4581

admit@su.edu
www.su.edu/admissions

**Course Sequence for Academic Years 2024-2026
for Class of 2026**

Semester	Title	Credits	Course Number
Summer 1	Medical Physiology & Genetics	3	PA-504
	Introduction to the Physician Assistant Profession	1	PA-511
	Subtotal	4	
Fall 1	Anatomy for Physician Assistants I	4	PA-508
	Medical Interview & Physical Assessment I	2	PA-515
	Medical Interview & Physical Assessment Lab I	1	PAL-515
	Clinical Medicine I	4	PA-525
	Diagnostic Tests & Procedures I	1	PA-530
	Pharmacotherapeutics I	1.5	PA-535
	Clinical Integration Seminar I	1.5	PA-635
	Professional Seminar I	0.5	PA-645
	Subtotal	15.5	
	Spring 1	Anatomy for Physician Assistants II	4
Medical Interview & Physical Assessment II		2	PA -517
Medical Interview & Physical Assessment Lab II		1	PAL-517
Clinical Medicine II		4	PA-526
Diagnostic Tests & Procedures II		1	PA-531
Diagnostics Lab		0.5	PAL-531
Pharmacotherapeutics II		2.5	PA-536
Clinical Integration Seminar II		2.5	PA-636
Professional Seminar II		0.5	PA-646
Subtotal		18	
Summer 2	Neuroscience	1	PA-507
	Healthcare Systems and Issues in Healthcare	1	PA-513
	PA Clinical Skills	1	PA-519
	PA Clinical Skills Lab	1	PAL-519
	Exposure to Clinical Practice	2	PA-579
	Subtotal	6	
Fall 2	Clinical Medicine III	4	PA-527
	Diagnostic Tests & Procedures III	1	PA-532
	Pharmacotherapeutics III	2.5	PA-537
	Humanities for the PA Profession	2	PA-611
	Epidemiology, Research & Interpreting Medical Literature	3	PA-614
	CI Case Seminar III	1.5	PA-637
	Professional Seminar III	0.5	PA-647
	Women's Health	2	PA-671
Subtotal	16.5		

Spring 2	Clinical Rotations *	10	
	Rotation Seminar I	1	PA-600
	Subtotal	11	
Summer 3	Clinical Rotations *	5	
	Rotation Seminar II	0.5	PA-601
	Health Promotion, Disease Prev.& Community Resources	2	PA-612
	Subtotal	7.5	
Fall 3	Clinical Rotation *	2.5	
	Capstone Seminar	1	PA-603
	Transition to Practice Supervised Clinical Practice Experience	4	PA-690
	Subtotal	7.5	
	Total Non-Elective Credits	86	
	Grand Total (includes three credit elective course)**	89	

*Sequence of clinical practica will vary by student.

**Additional requirement. Each student is required to take at least one 3 credit professional elective course that is interdisciplinary in nature. Scheduling will be determined by the student based on course availability and in consultation with his/her advisor. Generally graduate courses with the HP prefix will be approved. However, students may select other graduate courses to fulfill the elective with the approval of their advisor.

Breakdown of Clinical Courses

	<u>Credits</u>	<u>Weeks</u>
Exposure to Clinical Practice (PA-579)	2.0	4
Family Medicine Supervised Clinical Practice Experience (PA-680)	2.5	5
Pediatric Medicine Supervised Clinical Practice Experience (PA-681)	2.5	5
Women's Health Supervised Clinical Practice Experience (PA-682)	2.5	5
Emergency Medicine Supervised Clinical Practice Experience (PA-683)	2.5	5
Surgical Medicine Supervised Clinical Practice Experience (PA-685)	2.5	5
Internal Medicine Supervised Clinical Practice Experience (PA-687)	2.5	5
Elective Supervised Clinical Practice Experience (PA-689)	2.5	5
Transition to Practice Supervised Clinical Practice Experience (PA-690)	4.0	8
Total Clinical Weeks		47