

## **Prospective Student Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

### **Application:**

#### **1) Why should I apply early?**

The Shenandoah University PA (SUPA) Program uses a type of rolling admissions which encourages applicants to submit their applications early, allowing for a much greater opportunity to be selected for an interview and making it more likely to secure a place in your preferred location.

#### **2) Am I too old to apply?**

The Shenandoah University PA (SUPA) Program's admissions policies do not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, color, religion, national or ethnic origin, age, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation. Candidates are urged to review the Technical Standards located on the SUPA program website and consult us to determine if the University can provide reasonable accommodations to meet the Standards for practice.

#### **3) Will you evaluate transcripts or courses before I apply?**

Due to the volume of applications received each year, we are unable to offer this service to candidates who are not current CASPA applicants. Please read the entire section on prerequisites in the admissions guide for further guidance. If you are unsure if a particular course will satisfy a prerequisite, you may email a course description and syllabus for review to [pa@su.edu](mailto:pa@su.edu) once you have applied to the SUPA Program through CASPA.

#### **4) How do I apply?**

The SUPA Program participates in the Central Application Service for Physician Assistants (CASPA) the Customer Service Representatives of which are available M-F, 9:00 am – 5:00 pm Eastern Standard Time (ETS) by phone at (617) 612-2080, or you may email CASPA.

#### **5) Does the program require a supplemental application?**

Yes, preference will be given to candidates who demonstrate an alignment with the mission and core values of the program. Students will choose three of the values and explain how they've been used in action via an essay of 500 words or less. There is no fee for this required part of the application.

#### **6) When should I send my materials into CASPA in order to meet Shenandoah deadlines?**

We strongly recommend that you submit your completed application by August 1st in order to meet our application verification **September 1st**. Otherwise, delays in CASPA processing could jeopardize consideration of your application.

### **7) What are the typical number of applications and number of seats available?**

For the 2022-23 admissions cycle, we averaged over 10 applications per seat. In 2022 we admitted 60 students (42 for the Winchester campus and 18 for the Scholar Plaza, Loudoun site).

### **8) Is my application viewed more favorably if I am a Shenandoah University (SU) student/graduate or complete prerequisites at SU?**

a) SU Student –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. Students will submit a CASPA application, and as long as admissions requirements are met an interview invitation will be granted. If a student is not offered a seat in cohort initially, the student’s application will automatically be entered into the pool of regular applicants. The SUPA Program reserves a set number of seats for current SU students under the articulation agreement.

b) SU Graduate – Students who take a gap year, or are otherwise an SU alum are ineligible to be considered for the Articulation Agreement.

c) Visiting/Non-degree Student –Visiting and non-degree students are ineligible to be considered for the Articulation Agreement.

Students desiring to enter Shenandoah University as a freshman and who wish to be considered for the SUPA Program should review the Early Assurance program.

### **Prerequisites:**

#### **1) What are the prerequisite requirements for entrance?**

The entrance requirements include a bachelor’s degree, a minimum 3.0 overall cumulative, science Grade Point Average (GPA) and prerequisite GPA, and at least a letter grade of C (A or B is competitive) obtained in each prerequisite course. GPAs are calculated by CASPA at the time of application, and repeated courses are included in calculations.

The course requirements are detailed on our SUPA Program web site. Prerequisite courses required for admission include:

Human Anatomy and Physiology I & II with labs  
General or Introduction to Chemistry

General Biology (or Biochemistry without a lab)  
Microbiology with lab  
Introduction to Psychology  
Statistics

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. Human Anatomy & Physiology courses are required to be taken at the same institution.

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.

## **2) Can I apply before my prerequisites are complete?**

Yes. You may apply if you are confident that you will be able to complete all prerequisites, including a bachelor's degree, no later than May 15 of the enrollment year with official transcripts documenting this completion received by May 31. It's required that candidates have no more than two outstanding prerequisites left to complete at the time of application.

## **3) Why must courses be current within ten years?**

Information rapidly changes in today's academic environment. Thus, students should have a knowledge base that is current and up to date. If a candidate demonstrates that he/she has worked in a science-related discipline allowing him/her to remain current, then the candidate may petition the program to substitute work experience instead of repeating the course(s). This requires documentation to include a formal request, resume and letter from a work supervisor. The petition must be uploaded to one's CASPA application. The PA Program does not review petitions until the application is received.

## **4) Do you accept College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) credits, Advanced Placement credit (AP), and International Baccalaureate (IB) for prerequisite courses?**

Advanced Placement credit (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), or CollegeLevel Examination Program (CLEP) credits will NOT fulfill prerequisite course requirements.

## **5) Do you accept prerequisite courses completed at community colleges?**

Prerequisites may be taken at any college or university (regionally-accredited by an agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education), which includes community colleges which are not evaluated differently than equivalent four year institution courses.

## **Entrance Exam:**

### **1) Does the SUPA Program require the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) or other entrance exams?**

No. We do not require the GRE, MCAT, PA-CAT, or any other entrance exam.

## **Shenandoah University Physician Assistant (SUPA) Program:**

### **1) Where can I find out more information about the SUPA Program?**

Candidates are encouraged to visit our SUPA Program website regarding admission details and curriculum. In addition, Information Sessions (Open Houses) are hosted. These sessions provide an opportunity to meet faculty and students, tour our facilities, and receive further information regarding the PA Profession in general and the SUPA Program in particular. The dates and registration form are posted on SUPA's Information Session Registration Page.

### **2) Is the SUPA Program accredited?**

Yes, the program is fully accredited by the Accreditation Review Committee on Education for the Physician Assistant, Inc. (ARC-PA). The next review of the program will be in March 2025.

### **3) What is the length of the SUPA Program?**

The curriculum is 30 months (eight terms) in duration beginning in early July each year. The program includes three summer sessions and graduation is in December. The first five terms are primarily didactic (classroom and laboratory) and the last three terms are the clinical phase. There are opportunities for clinical exposure (primarily observational) during the first year. Clinical rotations total 47 weeks. Additional information regarding the curriculum is found on our website.

### **4) Can I work while attending the PA Program?**

The program is only offered on a full-time basis. Because of the rigor of the program, students are strongly discouraged from working either part-time or full-time while enrolled.

### **5) What is the pass rate on the national certification examination?**

SUPA's pass rate for first-time takers over the past five years (2018-22) is 93 percent. The national pass rate for the past five years is 94 percent.

### **6) Do you offer a dual enrollment program?**

Yes. Shenandoah University also offers a Master degree in Public Health (MPH) program. Up to 15 credits of MPH coursework overlaps with graduation requirements for the PA & MPH Dual Degree option, thus saving students both time and money. Additional information is available at PA/MPH Dual Degree. Students may elect to enroll in the Dual Degree option before, during, or after starting the PA program.

### **Clinical Phase:**

#### **1) Where are SUPA Program's clinical sites? May I complete clinical rotations in my hometown or home state?**

Most clinical rotations are located within a ninety mile radius of students' home campus in Winchester or site in Loudoun County. However, students may be required to complete rotations that are beyond this radius. Students are responsible for their own travel and lodging expenses during the clinical year. The program will work with the clinical site to help identify inexpensive local housing when the assignment is beyond commuting distance, but this cannot be guaranteed. Students in good academic standing may apply to complete faculty-approved clinical rotations at distant sites. Students are not asked to find their own clinical placements.

### **Grade Point Averages (GPAs):**

#### **1) If I do not have a minimum 3.0 overall cumulative, science and prerequisite GPAs, is there any point in applying?**

An applicant with an overall cumulative or 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. Average GPAs for students admitted to the SUPA Program have been over 3.5 for the past several years.

#### **2) I have retaken a class; do Shenandoah and CASPA look at the new grade or the average of both?**

CASPA does not recognize individual school's forgiveness, academic renewal, or grade replacement policies in regards to repeated courses. All grades which you earned for repeated courses will factor into your CASPA GPA. (See the CASPA website for more details on GPA calculation.) Shenandoah does not recalculate GPA other than for a) additional coursework taken after application is submitted to CASPA, or b) independent evaluations of foreign transcripts.

### **Recommendations:**

#### **1) Where should I obtain references?**

It is recommended that 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.

### **Healthcare Experience:**

#### **1) Do you require healthcare experience (HCE) and, if so, what type and how much?**

Although we do not require HCE or PA shadowing as an entrance requirement, it is recommended.

#### **2) May I add additional hours of health care experience to my application after it's been submitted?**

Applicants can update their applications per CASPA guidelines at any time. Because this program does not require health care experience, the choice to update records is up to the individual applicant.

### **Campus Site Locations:**

#### **1) What is the facility like at the Northern Virginia Campus location?**

The Scholar Plaza Loudoun (SPL) site is located near the campus of Inova Loudoun Hospital in Leesburg, Virginia. SPL is a newly renovated facility with classroom space containing state of the art technology, along with a large and fully equipped physical exam lab, and a state-of-the-art cadaver lab. It also includes a cafeteria, student study lounge areas, and a small fitness gym.

Applicants note campus preference in their application, however, the SUPA program cannot guarantee that all students will be placed at their campus preference site.

#### **2) If I attend the program at the Scholar Plaza, Loudoun (SPL) site, will I have access to the same faculty and other resources as the students at the Winchester campus?**

While core faculty will be based at one of the two sites, they are accessible to all students at both locations. All students are assigned a faculty advisor from the core faculty at their assigned site. Faculty maintain an open-door policy for students when they are in their office, or students can make an appointment. Student-faculty meetings can also take place face-to-face or by virtual means.

Most resources required for academic work are available online for all students which includes access to the learning management system, texts, journals and library services. Wellness, learning, and writing services are also offered at both campuses.

**3) May I take classes at both the Winchester and at Scholar Plaza or switch campuses during the program?**

No. Courses must be attended at your assigned campus from the start and through the duration of the didactic program. Students are normally not permitted to switch campuses.

**4) Is the curriculum the same at both sites?**

Yes. SUPA's curriculum includes independent study, lecture, discussions, small-group work, case-based exercises, and practical application at both sites. The curriculum is delivered synchronously between the two sites utilizing distance learning technology for lecture-based learning. The lecture can originate from either site. Practical application courses such as physical exam, anatomy lab, and clinical integration case exercises are held in an in-person format with a low student to faculty ratio comparable at both sites. On occasion, students may be required to travel to either one of the sites or to another location for special events or training.

**Admissions Decision:**

1) If I am admitted to the SUPA Program, may I defer my admission to the following year?

No. The PA Program is unable to defer admissions. Candidates who have not yet matriculated are not eligible for a leave of absence.

2) If I have alternate status and are not admitted, do I need to reapply the following year?

Yes, candidates on the wait-list who are not offered a seat for the current admissions cycle must reapply through CASPA in order to be considered for subsequent admission decisions.

3) If I am denied, can I reapply and how can I improve my application?

The SUPA Program encourages reapplication as it is an indication of motivation and perseverance. The successful candidate typically exceeds minimum entrance requirements in multiple areas. In addition, his/her interview demonstrates a high level of professionalism, in-depth knowledge regarding the SUPA Program and the PA profession as well as excellent communication skills. Candidates may request a general review of their application by email through the [pa@su.edu](mailto:pa@su.edu) email. The program publishes a "Characteristics of Admitted Students" profile on its recently admitted class on its web site to view as a benchmark for improving one's application.

**International Student:**

I have a foreign medical degree; do I still need to complete the:

Prerequisites or an English proficiency exam?

Yes. Candidates with transcripts from another country must submit them to the World Education Services (WES) (or equivalent) for course-to-course translation and evaluation. Courses taken outside of the United States will count toward degree requirements and overall/science GPAs. Prerequisites must be completed at a college or university in the United States therefore, the prerequisite GPA cannot be determined from courses outside of the United States. Please contact Shenandoah University's International Admissions Office if you have questions regarding English proficiency and visa requirements. The phone number is 540-665-4581.

Entire program?

Yes. There is no test which an international medical graduate (IMG) can take to obtain a PA license, or become nationally certified as a PA. All IMGs accepted into the program are not given priority consideration and must complete the entire program. Courses previously taken in medical school cannot be substituted for courses taken in the SUPA program.