

Master of Physician Assistant Studies, MPA

The Master of Physician Assistant Studies (MPA) program emphasizes primary care medicine, particularly family medicine. It also offers elective clinical rotations in selected medical subspecialties. Students who complete the program are eligible to take the National Certifying Examination for Primary Care Physician Assistants, which they must complete successfully in order to register as physician assistants in the United States.

The Department of Physician Assistant Studies and Services is accredited by the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant and is a member of the Physician Assistant Education Association.

Requirements

The Master of Physician Assistant Studies (MPA) requires a minimum of 114 s.h. of credit. The curriculum spans 28 months and consists of a didactic phase and a clinical phase. The program begins in August.

The Master of Physician Assistant Studies requires the following work.

Didactic Curriculum

The MPA program's didactic phase is built on a triple-helix model whose three strands consist of clinical and professional skills (CAPS), mechanisms of health and disease (MOHD), and medicine and society (MAS). The strands are interwoven, assuring that their material is integrated and revisited throughout the didactic phase so that students' understanding and mastery of the material deepens progressively.

The didactic curriculum consists of the following courses.

Human Anatomy and Foundations of Life

| Course # | Title | Hours |
|----------|------------------------------|-------|
| ACB:8101 | Medical Gross Human Anatomy | 5 |
| MED:8123 | Foundations of Cellular Life | 5 |

Clinical and Professional Skills

The clinical and professional skills (CAPS) strand provides students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for professional development and clinical excellence, including the sense of inquiry and lifelong habits of skill acquisition, self-assessment, and reflective practice. CAPS features developmental learning through increasingly challenging experiences across the curriculum, repeated practice opportunities, observation and feedback, and self-directed learning and reflection. CAPS requires the following three courses.

| Course # | Title | Hours |
|----------|-------------------------------------|-------|
| MED:8121 | Clinical and Professional Skills I | 3 |
| MED:8131 | Clinical and Professional Skills II | 4 |

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| MED:8221 | Clinical and Professional Skills III | 4 |
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Mechanisms of Health and Disease

The mechanisms of health and disease (MOHD) strand focuses on multisystem mechanisms. MOHD requires the following five courses.

| Course # | Title | Hours |
|----------|---|-------|
| MED:8124 | Mechanisms of Health and Disease I | 8 |
| MED:8133 | Mechanisms of Health and Disease II | 7 |
| MED:8134 | Mechanisms of Health and Disease III | 11 |
| MED:8223 | Mechanisms of Health and Disease IV | 10 |
| MED:8224 | Mechanisms of Health and Disease Keystone | 7 |

Medicine and Society

The medicine and society (MAS) strand teaches students about disease prevention, health promotion services, public health, epidemiology, health services organizations and delivery, and community dimensions of medical practice. MAS requires the following three courses.

| Course # | Title | Hours |
|----------|--------------------------|-------|
| MED:8122 | Medicine and Society I | 3 |
| MED:8132 | Medicine and Society II | 4 |
| MED:8222 | Medicine and Society III | 4 |

Summer Curriculum

The summer curriculum consists of a six-week summer session that includes didactic workshop material in cardiology and radiology. Students complete a two-week introduction to clinical medicine before beginning the clinical rotations. The summer curriculum requires the following four courses.

| Course # | Title | Hours |
|----------|---|-------|
| PA:8212 | Fundamentals of EKG and ACLS for Physician Assistant Students | 2 |
| PA:8213 | Fundamentals of Radiology for Physician Assistant Students | 1 |
| PA:8301 | Seminar for Physician Assistant Students | 1 |
| PA:8302 | Physician Assistant Professional and Clinical Skills | 2 |

Clinical Curriculum

The program's second phase concentrates on clinical education. Students complete four weeks of didactic workshops and rotations and a 36-week core of required primary care clinical rotations, including general internal medicine, surgery, family medicine, pediatrics, emergency medicine, gynecology, and psychiatry in affiliated hospitals throughout the United States and select international locations. Students then select eight weeks of electives, which may include rotations such as geriatrics, cardiology, dermatology, and orthopedics.

The primary care clinical rotations are designed to provide instruction and experience in caring for patients in a way that

enables students to integrate the knowledge, skills, behaviors, and attitudes they learned in the program's didactic phase. Clinical training is provided at University of Iowa Health Care, the VA Iowa City Health Care, the VA Central Iowa Health Care System, Broadlawns Medical Center in Des Moines, and other affiliated hospitals throughout Iowa. In elective rotations, students gain additional clinical experience through placement with selected preceptors involved in office-based practices, typically in medically underserved rural areas.

Students also complete a master's degree project as part of the clinical curriculum.

Required Clinical Rotation

The following clinical rotations are required.

| Course # | Title | Hours |
|----------|---|-------|
| PA:8304 | Emergency Medicine for Physician Assistant Students | 4 |
| PA:8305 | Gynecology for Physician Assistant Students | 4 |
| PA:8306 | Family Practice I for Physician Assistant Students | 4 |
| PA:8307 | Family Practice II for Physician Assistant Students | 4 |
| PA:8308 | General Surgery for Physician Assistant Students | 6 |
| PA:8309 | Internal Medicine for Physician Assistant Students | 6 |
| PA:8310 | Pediatrics for Physician Assistant Students | 4 |
| PA:8311 | Psychiatry for Physician Assistant Students | 4 |

Elective Clinical Rotations

Students select elective clinical rotations from one of the following general categories. Subspecialties for the clinical rotations are included under each general category. Registration in the subspecialty area may vary based on availability from year to year.

| Course # | Title | Hours |
|---|---|-------|
| PA:8325 | Pediatric Elective for Physician Assistant Students | arr. |
| Subspecialty areas in pediatrics may include, but are not limited to allergy, bone marrow transplant, cardiology, gastroenterology, genetics, neonatal intensive care (NICU), neonatology, orthopedics, pulmonary, and psychiatry | | |
| PA:8326 | Radiology Elective for Physician Assistant Students | arr. |
| PA:8329 | Psychiatry Elective for Physician Assistant Students | arr. |
| PA:8330 | Surgery Elective for Physician Assistant Students (Subspecialty areas: burn, cardiothoracic, neurology, surgical neonatal intensive care (SNICU), transplant and organ retrieval) | arr. |

Subspecialty areas in surgery may include, but are not limited to burn, cardiothoracic, neurology, surgical neonatal intensive care (SNICU), and transplant and organ retrieval

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|---|---|------------|
| PA:8335 | Internal Medicine Elective for Physician Assistant Students | arr. |
| Subspecialty areas in internal medicine include but are not limited to alternative medicine, cardiology, correctional medicine, dermatology, endocrinology, gastroenterology, genetics, gynecological oncology, hospice, infectious disease, interventional radiology, medical intensive care unit (MICU), migrant health, nephrology, neurology, obstetrics, ophthalmology, oncology, orthopedics, otolaryngology/ear, nose, throat, palliative care, pulmonary, rheumatology, and urology | | |
| PA:8337 | Internal Medicine (EKG) Elective for Physician Assistant Students | arr. |
| PA:8346 | Family Practice Elective for Physician Assistant Students | arr. |
| PA:8347 | Gynecology Elective (Women's Health) for Physician Assistant Students | arr. |
| PA:8353 | International Medicine for Physician Assistant Students | arr. |
| PA:8364 | Emergency Medicine Elective for Physician Assistant Students | 2,4,6,8,10 |

Subspecialty areas in emergency medicine may include, but are not limited to occupational health, toxicology, urgent care, and wilderness medicine

Admission

Applicants must:

- be citizens or permanent residents of the United States;
- hold a baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution in the United States (the degree does not have to be completed at the time of admission, but must be conferred prior to the start of the program)¹;
- have a minimum cumulative grade-point average (GPA) of 3.00 on a 4.00 scale;
- have a minimum overall science GPA of 3.20 on a 4.00 scale or a science GPA of at least 3.20 on a 4.00 scale on the most recent 40 s.h. of college-level, science-based coursework (science courses are subject to department approval);
- have completed the prerequisite courses no more than 10 years before they apply and all courses must be taken for letter grades (see "Prerequisite Science Courses");
- have completed a minimum of 1,000 hours of direct patient health care experience by Dec. 31 of the application year (hours subject to departmental approval and applicants can be awarded between 0-100% of hours completed);
- submit three letters of recommendation (one must be from a collegiate academic reference and one must be from a health care supervisor (shadowing experience does not count, but may be used for the third recommendation letter));
- meet the admission requirements of the Graduate College (see the Manual of Rules and Regulations on the Graduate College website);

- be able to meet the program's technical standards (see "Technical Standards" below).

¹ International applicants will have their credentials reviewed for degree completion and equivalency.

Prerequisite Science Courses

Applicants must have completed preparatory science courses in biological, chemical, and statistical sciences. Prerequisite courses can be in progress at the time of admission unless stated otherwise. Science-based courses are subject to the approval by the Department of Physician Assistant Studies and Services.

Biological Science

These courses are required.

- An introductory biology or zoology course sequence (minimum of a two-semester sequence unless otherwise approved).
- An animal, exercise, or human physiology course.
- A minimum of three additional upper-level biological science courses. To qualify as upper level, the biological science courses must require a prerequisite course to enroll. Courses that have been used to satisfy this requirement include cell biology, cell physiology, endocrinology, genetics, histology, immunology, microbiology, molecular biology, neurobiology, pharmacology, and other related disciplines.

Chemical Science

These courses are required.

- An introductory chemistry course sequence (a minimum of a two-semester sequence, unless otherwise approved).
- At least one semester of organic chemistry (must be at a higher level than a survey of organic chemistry course).
- At least one semester of biochemistry (must be at a higher level than a survey of biochemistry course and be completed at the time of application).

Statistical Science

This course is required.

- Any course with a statistical focus, such as a general, introductory, psychological, or business statistics course; or biostatistics; or a qualitative research methods course.

Satisfaction of the basic admission requirements does not ensure acceptance to the program. The admission committee selects the applicants it considers best qualified. The admission committee requests interviews with the most qualified applicants.

Technical Standards

Individuals admitted to the Department of Physician Assistant Studies and Services must possess the capability to complete the entire curriculum and earn the Master of Physician Assistant Studies degree. The curriculum requires demonstrated proficiency in a variety of cognitive, problem-solving, manipulative, communicative, and interpersonal skills. For more information, view the University of Iowa Carver College of Medicine Technical Standards for Admission and Retention on the Department of Physician Assistant Studies and Services website.

Application Timeline and Process

Applications are accepted from the end of April to Oct. 1 for entry into the program the following August. Applicants must apply through the Central Application Service for Physician Assistants (CASPA).

The admission committee prefers that the majority of prerequisite course requirements be completed by the Oct. 1 application deadline date.

All materials must be received and verified by CASPA, and all additional information requested by the Physician Assistant Studies and Services Program submitted by the Oct. 1 deadline.

All final decisions related to admission deadlines, processes, and decisions are up to the department administrator, in collaboration with the admission committee.

Career Advancement

Physician assistants work in a variety of settings, including medical offices, hospital emergency rooms, nursing homes, rural satellite clinics, health maintenance organizations, and patients' homes.