SMU PRE-HEALTH PROFESSIONS
Suggested Pre-Physician Assistant (PA) Plan

Note: Some science courses may be completed in summer terms.

Individual program requirements may change at any time, and this plan may not reflect the most current information. It is the student’s responsibility to review, understand, follow, and remain up-to-date with the policies, guidelines, and requirements (including pre-requisite coursework) of each individual PA program and CASPA (Centralized Application Service for Physician Assistants). Based on significant variations in program requirements, this plan offers two options to complete the Anatomy and Physiology sequence, when required. Students are encouraged to compile a list of potential programs for future application and consult with the programs’ websites before finalizing course selections.

This plan could vary depending on the major chosen. Consult your advisor and check individual degree plans for suggested sequencing of courses. Grades of “C” or better are required to meet specific science (and math) pre-requisites for admission to PA school. Consult with your advisor before advancing to the next level course. Science pre-requisites include courses coded as Biology (including Anatomy & Physiology), Chemistry, Physics, and Math (including Statistics). See additional notes below.

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<th>1st Year Fall</th>
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<td>CHEM 1303</td>
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<td>CHEM 1113</td>
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<td>BIOL 1301</td>
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<td>BIOL 1101</td>
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<tr>
<td>DISC 1312 (UC 2016)</td>
<td>DISC 1313 (UC 2016)</td>
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<td>WRTR 1312 (CC 2020)</td>
<td>WRTR 1313 (CC 2020)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>STAT 2331</td>
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<td>CHEM 3117</td>
<td>PSYC 1300</td>
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<td>BIOL 3304</td>
<td>Genetics</td>
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<th>3rd Year Fall</th>
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<td>BIOL 3106</td>
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<td>BIOL 3403</td>
<td>GRE</td>
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Students can choose any major, however, the most competitive applicants will have completed a significant number of Biology courses beyond the minimum requirements listed above. The following advanced-level courses are strongly recommended (or required) by various PA programs: Immunology, Cell Biology, Human Physiology, Histology, Molecular Biology, Virology, Biochemistry, and Neuroscience.

Anatomy & Physiology (8 credit hours) for science majors may be required by some PA programs. Consult individual PA programs to determine the appropriate courses to meet this specific requirement. In general, science majors should complete the advanced-level (3000+) Human Anatomy & Physiology, including labs, in Biology.

The APSM/Biol 2441/2442 sequence has been accepted by multiple PA programs, however, it is the student’s responsibility to confirm acceptable coursework and provide any necessary documentation (if requested). In general, APHM majors should complete the APSM/Biol 2441/2442 sequence. If taking advanced-level Biol courses (3000+) to complete the Human Anatomy & Physiology requirements, Genetics and Cell Biology are pre-requisites. Consult with an advisor.

Students pursuing the B.S. in Biological Sciences are required to complete additional coursework including Calculus I, Physics I & II, and Biochemistry. Biochemistry will require the completion of Organic Chemistry I & II. Consult the websites of individual programs for PA pre-requisite requirements and a faculty advisor for requirements to complete the degree.

Pre-PA students should plan to apply using CASPA (Centralized Application Service for Physician Assistants) https://caspaprocessing.org/applicant-ux/#/login and take the GRE no later than June of the year they intend to submit an application (usually March-April of the junior year). CASPA opens yearly in April and early application is recommended.

The GRE is offered multiple times during the year. See the Pre-Health Director for more information and visit https://www.ets.org/gre.
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Behavioral and social science courses including Psychology, Sociology, and Anthropology are also recommended. Some programs require up to six credit hours. Medical Terminology and Pharmacology are often recommended but are not offered at SMU.

Students MUST refer to individual PA programs for specific pre-requisite courses. Some courses are required while others are strongly recommended. Some programs require that all pre-requisites are completed at the time of application while other programs will accept applications with one (or two) pre-requisites in progress.

It is the student’s responsibility to understand the specific requirements for individual programs. Most PA programs strongly recommend or require direct patient contact (DPC) hours. Refer to individual programs for the required (or recommended) number of direct patient contact hours and types of healthcare-related experiences (HCE) - including shadowing. Many programs require specific documentation of experiences (including shadowing). Consult with individual programs for specific documentation requirements.

Although not an exhaustive list, below are examples of healthcare-related experiences (some experiences may count as DPC), but the most relevant experiences include working directly “hands on” with patients:

- CNA (Certified Nursing Assistant)
- EMT-B (Emergency Medical Technician)
- EMT-P (Paramedic)
- Emergency Room Technician
- Hospital (or clinic) volunteer
- Hospice care volunteer
- Medical assistant
- Medic or medical corpsman
- Medical Scribe (not considered DPC by some programs)
- Phlebotomist

Resources:
https://paeaonline.org/caspa/
https://caspa liaisoncas.com/applicant-ux/#/login
https://www.thepalife.com/pa-program-picker/
https://www.tapa.org/AMSIMIS/TAPA/Student_Center/Texas_PA_Programs.aspx

Important Steps:
1. Compile a list of schools
2. Research individual programs
3. Complete pre-requisites
4. Seek DPC (Direct Patient Care) and/or Healthcare Experiences (HCE)
5. Document experiences, including shadowing
6. Take the GRE
7. Apply using CASPA

Application Timeline (begin process in January of the year of application):
1. Create a CASPA account - Applications open in early April for submission
2. Request 3 Letters of Recommendation (minimum)
3. Request transcripts
4. Submit Applications (some deadlines are in September)
5. Register for CASPer, if required - https://takecasper.com/ (Computer-Based Assessment for Sampling Personality Characteristics) – and submit results
6. Submit Supplemental Applications
7. Prepare for Interviews (usually during the fall of senior year)