



# 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). A few PA programs are beginning to use the PA-CAT (Physician Assistant College Admissions Test) instead of the GRE exam. See additional detail below.

### 1<sup>st</sup> Year Fall

CHEM	1303	General Chemistry
CHEM	1113	General Chemistry Lab
BIOL	1301	Introductory Biology
BIOL	1101	Introductory Biology Lab
DISC	1312	Discernment and Discourse (UC 2016)
WRTR	1312	Introduction to Academic Writing (CC 2020)

### 1<sup>st</sup> Year Spring

CHEM	1304	General Chemistry
CHEM	1114	General Chemistry Lab
BIOL	1302	Introductory Biology
BIOL	1102	Introductory Biology Lab
DISC	1313	Discernment and Discourse (UC 2016)
WRTR	1313	Writing and Critical Reasoning (CC 2020)

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Year Fall

CHEM	3371	Organic Chemistry
CHEM	3117	Organic Chem. Lab
BIOL	3304	Genetics

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Year Spring

STAT	2331	Statistics
PSYC	1300	Introduction to Psychology

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Year Fall

BIOL	4306	Human Anatomy with Physiology
BIOL	3106	Physiology Lab
APSM/BIOL	2441	Anatomy & Physiology I (see notes below)
BIOL	3370	Microbiology
BIOL	3170	Microbiology Lab

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Year Spring

BIOL	4364	Integrated Human Physiology with Endocrinology
BIOL	4164	Functional Anatomy & Histology Lab
APSM/BIOL	2442	Anatomy & Physiology II (see notes below)
		GRE

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. Only upper-level BIOL courses (3000+) count toward the major.

**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.



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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. **Presently, Biochemistry is not required by most programs, but this may change before the time of application. The addition of the PA-CAT by more programs may increase the number of programs requiring Biochemistry.** PA-CAT Covered Subjects: *Anatomy, Physiology, General Biology, Biochemistry, General and Organic Chemistry, Microbiology, Behavioral Sciences, Genetics, Statistics.*

**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.**

Pre-PA students should plan to apply using CASPA (Centralized Application Service for Physician Assistants) <https://caspa.liaisoncas.com/applicant-us/#/login> and take the GRE no later than June of the year they intend to submit an application (usually May of the junior year). CASPA opens yearly in April and **early application (by June) is recommended.**

The GRE is offered multiple times during the year. See the Pre-Health Director for more information or visit <https://www.ets.org/gre>.

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

### **Important Steps:**

1. Compile a list of schools (Is the PA-CAT required?)
2. Research individual programs
3. Complete pre-requisites
4. Seek DPC (Direct Patient Care) and 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 early – by June** (however deadlines extend to 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 or year of application)

### **Resources:**

<https://www.aapa.org/news-central/2018/08/6-steps-become-pa/>  
<https://paeaonline.org/caspa/>  
<https://www.aapa.org/news-central/2020/04/pre-pa-tips-and-tricks-to-help-you-on-the-path-to-becoming-a-pa/>  
<https://www.thepalife.com/how-to-become-a-physician-assistant-in-8-simple-steps/>  
<https://www.thepalife.com/pa-program-picker/>  
[https://www.tapa.org/AMSIMIS/TAPA/Student\\_Center/Texas\\_PA\\_Programs.aspx](https://www.tapa.org/AMSIMIS/TAPA/Student_Center/Texas_PA_Programs.aspx)  
<https://mypatrainiq.com/checklist-for-applying-to-pa-school/>