

MASTER OF PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT STUDIES - MPAS

Program Description

The MPAS Program at St. Catherine University is an entry-level, graduate education program that prepares students to be Physician Assistants (PAs). PAs are licensed medical professionals who practice medicine in collaboration with licensed physicians and in teams with other healthcare providers. They evaluate, diagnose, and treat patients by taking histories, performing physical exams, and ordering and interpreting laboratory and diagnostic studies. PAs also prescribe medication, counsel patients, make referrals to specialists, and certify health status. This program educates students for general practice in primary care. Students will earn a Master of Physician Assistant Studies degree upon successful completion of the program and will be prepared to take the National Certification Examination required for licensure and clinical practice.

Regulation of PA practice occurs through delegation agreements; whereby physicians delegate scope of practice to a PA. This MD-PA delegation agreement allows for flexibility in PA responsibility according to differing physician delegation of responsibility. PAs practice medicine within the scope of collaborating physicians. Primary care has been the main practice area for PAs, but as physician specialty practice has increased, so has specialty practice increased for PAs.

Degree Program

St. Catherine's Master of Physician Assistant Studies program is a full time, focused course of study that consists of 110 credits and over 2,000 clinical hours. Courses run full time during fall semester, spring semester, and summer session. The full-time curriculum takes 28 months to complete and is divided into three sections: 14 months of didactic courses, 14 months of supervised clinical experiences and a concluding senior seminar.

The 14-month didactic phase of the program covers traditional medical content that is organized around body systems, patient populations and practice settings – with an integrated approach incorporating many traditional “stand-alone” medical courses such as anatomy, pathophysiology, clinical medicine, patient evaluation and management. These courses are delivered one course at a time. Research courses are semester long and delivered in tandem with integrated didactic courses.

The didactic phase is followed by 14 months of clinical clerkships. The 14 months of clinical experiences are divided into clerkships of various lengths in the areas of: family medicine, pediatrics, women's health, general surgery, internal medicine, emergency medicine and mental health. Several weeks of elective time and two senior clerkships allow St. Kate's students the opportunity to customize their own learning with a focus toward specific areas of interest, global perspectives or strengthening areas of self-assessed weakness. Clinical clerkships take place at many practice locations and affiliates. The program concludes with a senior seminar designed to polish and present student portfolios and enhance a student's preparedness for the national certification exam and for employment as a PA.

Program Goals

The Master of Physician Assistant Studies program strives to:

1. Graduate students who have obtained the foundational knowledge, skills and professional attributes necessary for PA certification and practice.
2. Provide an innovative curriculum and resources within a supportive learning community.
3. Emphasize evidence-based primary care practice, highlighting a holistic, patient-centered approach to health and wellness.
4. Promote effective and professional communication and interpersonal skills for interaction with patients, their families, peers, consultants and healthcare team members.
5. Incorporate the critical thinking, clinical reasoning and medical decision-making skills reflective of quality patient care.
6. Emphasize inter-professional and team relationships across disciplines and health professions.
7. Value the highest standards of professionalism and the fundamental importance of ethical practice and social justice, thereby reflecting principals of Catholic social teaching and intellectual inquiry.
8. Align with the Liberal Arts Goals of St. Catherine University.
9. Promote leadership skills and abilities.
10. Foster an appreciation for research and participate in the generation of new knowledge.
11. Advance understanding of diversity, global responsibility and competence in providing effective medical care in diverse settings.
12. Collaborate with clinical and community partners for reciprocal benefits.
13. Recruit, retain and support the development of a highly qualified faculty.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students attain the breadth and depth of curricular and co-curricular content necessary for fulfillment of the MPAS program mission, for first-attempt passing of the NCCPA certification exam, and for successful practice as a PA. The Learning Outcomes reflect the competencies of many professional sources, to include: the NCCPA blueprint, the Physician Assistant Professional Competencies, and the ARC-PA Accreditation Standards within the foundational mission, values and liberal arts goals of St. Catherine University. Students will be expected to demonstrate competency in eight core learning outcome categories:

Graduates of the MPAS Program will:

Medical Care

- Comprehend a wealth of medical knowledge including an understanding of basic and biomedical sciences, clinical medicine, patient presentation, differential diagnosis, patient management, surgical principals, health promotion and disease prevention.
- Demonstrate core knowledge and skills in researching established and evolving biomedical and clinical sciences and the application of this knowledge to patient care.

Patient Care: Evaluation, Assessment and Management

- Attain knowledge and skills in the area of patient care including age-appropriate assessment, evaluation and management of disease and wellness.
- Demonstrate care that is effective, patient-centered, timely, efficient and equitable for the treatment of health problems and the promotion of wellness.

Healthcare Systems Based Practice

- Attain the knowledge and understanding of healthcare systems-based practice, which encompasses the societal, organizational and economic environments in which health care is delivered.
- Demonstrate an awareness of and responsiveness to the larger system of health care to provide optimal patient care and improvements to community and health care systems.

Interpersonal Skills and Communication (Leadership, Collaboration & Team Based Care)

- Demonstrate interpersonal and communication skills for effective information exchange with patients, their patients' families, physicians, professional associates, and the health care system.
- Possess interpersonal and communication skills that encompasses verbal, nonverbal and written exchange of information.
- Attain the skills and attributes necessary to participate in team-based care, work in collaboration with others and take on leadership roles in their community, clinic or profession.

PA Practice/Professionalism; Ethics, Social Justice and Catholic Intellectual Teaching

- Demonstrate professionalism, ethical conduct, responsibility, sensitivity to a diverse patient population and adherence to legal and regulatory requirements.
- Demonstrate a solid understanding of PA practice, which includes an understanding of professional and personal limitations.
- Explain commitment to Catholic Social Teaching, Intellectual Inquiry and the Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services of respect for life, service and advocacy; contribute to common good, and stewardship of resources.

Practice Based Learning

- Apply practice-based learning skills that include critical analysis of self learning, mentorship, analysis of medical resources and literature, and use of technology and resources for implementation of the electronic health record, management of health information, and practice of evidence-based medicine.

Cultural Competence: Patient Populations, Diversity and Global Perspectives

- Demonstrate the knowledge, professional attitude and skills related to cultural competence, its relationship to health, health disparities, disease incidence and prevalence for specific communities and diverse patients.

Clinical Reasoning through Critical Thinking and Creative Inquiry

- Demonstrate effective clinical reasoning skills through critical thinking and creative inquiry.
- Demonstrate an investigatory and analytic thinking approach to clinical situations.

Accreditation

The Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA) (<http://www.arc-pa.org/accreditation/accredited-programs/>) is the national accrediting agency of PA Programs. The ARC-PA has granted Accreditation - Continuing to the St. Catherine University PA Program. The next accreditation review is scheduled to take place in 2025.

Years to Complete the Program

Students typically complete the program within 2.5 academic years of initial enrollment and must complete in 5 years.

Degree Requirements

In addition to completion of 110 graduate credits with an overall minimum grade point average of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale, fulfillment of University requirements and following all University policies for graduate program standing and progression, students enrolled in the MPAS Program must observe the following progression requirements:

1. Adherence to all course prerequisites;
2. Adherence codes and standards of the PA profession, and demonstration of professional behavior;
3. Maintenance of good Program standing, as defined by the University;
4. Successful completion of the didactic phase of the Program;
5. Demonstration of adequate formative competence on the Formative Evaluation prior to entrance into the clinical phase of the program;
6. Successful completion of all core clinical clerkship courses prior to taking the Program summative evaluations;
7. Successful completion of the research sequence, clinical quality improvement project, clinical clerkships and summative evaluations; and
8. Demonstration of competence in all eight MPAS Student Learning Outcome categories on the Summative Evaluation;
9. Approval for graduation through completion of a graduate exit interview with positive recommendation from Program principal faculty.

Progression Policy

Successful progression through the MPAS Program is based on scholarly achievement, demonstration of clinical competence, and personal and professional qualities for the practice of medicine as a PA. Student performance attributes in some areas are objective and can be directly reflected in course grades. However, other performance attributes are less objective and are not as easily reflected in course grades. These attributes are defined in the Professionalism standards outline above. Academic grades alone are not sufficient to warrant promotion within the Program or for graduation from the Program.

Didactic Phase Progression

In general, all systems based courses must be completed before moving to population based courses, and all didactic population courses must be completed before a student moves to care setting based courses. Students must pass or successfully remediate every course in the didactic phase and pass or successfully remediate the Formative Evaluation before progressing to the clinical phase. Failure of 2 courses or requiring more than 6 remediations may result in academic dismissal from the Program.

Clinical Phase Progression

All required clinical rotations must be satisfactorily completed as judged by the Clinical Coordinator before the student is recommended for graduation from the Program. If the student is not performing at an acceptable clinical or professional level at a rotation site and is either removed or dismissed from the site prior to the end of the rotation due to poor performance or unprofessional behavior an investigatory process will be completed by the Clinical Coordinator. The student will have to repeat the rotation in its entirety unless allowed to return and complete the rotation with a passing grade. In addition, the student will be subject

to an appropriate Level Review and may be subject to dismissal from the Program.

Discipline

Levels of Review

Levels of Review are the structure used for academic performance or professional behavior issues. The level assigned to a review indicates the seriousness of the concern. A student will normally progress through the Levels of Review in a sequential order, however, an instance may arise in which the incident is determined by a faculty member to be serious enough to warrant an immediate Level 2 or 3 Review.

Level 1 Review

When a faculty member has a concern about a student meeting academic criteria or related to professional behavior or academic performance, the faculty member will hold a meeting between the faculty member and the student. The faculty member will:

1. Discuss the concern directly with the student and seek to work with the student to resolve the difficulty; and
2. Notify the student's advisor in writing.

Document in writing the dates, topics and plan discussed with the student and place documentation in student's advising folder. In many cases, meetings between faculty and students resolve the concern(s) and do not lead to further reviews.

Level 2 Review

When a student is not meeting or following a Program or University standard, policy, or procedure, OR when concerns have not been resolved from a Level 1 Review, a Level 2 Review will be initiated. A Level 2 Review involves the student, the student's advisor and the appropriate third party faculty member. If a problem arises in the clinical setting, the Clinical Coordinator will contact the clinical instructor for input before the meeting.

In this information gathering process, the faculty member will determine the nature of the concern, and gather sufficient information to develop a written plan to address that concern if one is needed. No further action may be required or the student may be asked, in writing, to modify his or her behavior and/or seek appropriate assistance. This process is designed to assist students in dealing with identified concerns that have an impact on their performance. Written documentation is kept in the student's advising file.

The faculty member will also assess and maintain documentation and decide if it is necessary to conduct a more comprehensive review or a move to a level 3 review.

Level 3 Review

When repeated patterns are identified with students or when the issues are serious enough to require formal consultation with other faculty and the student, or when the student is being considered for dismissal from the Program, a Level 3 Review is initiated.

The Level 3 Review participants will include 4 members of the MPAS department: the Program Director, Medical Director, the phase Coordinator and the student's advisor. In the event that a faculty member has two roles, another faculty participant will be appointed by the Program Director. Most often, a level 3 review is sufficient to deal with student performance issues and is the final step in the MPAS review process.

When a Level 3 Review is initiated, the Program Director will review the material from the Level 2 Review, if one was conducted, and determine the nature of the problem and identify alternatives for its remediation. The student will be notified in writing of the concerns and meeting date with sufficient time to prepare for and attend the meeting.

Students must be notified of the Level 3 Committee decision in writing within seven calendar days of the review. It is the responsibility of the Program Director to communicate the decision to the student.

Academic Standards

Students are expected to maintain a cumulative GPA greater than or equal to 3.0. Multiple types of assessments are utilized within each of the courses and clerkships. Research courses require a cumulative score of 80.0% for passing.

Didactic Phase

Each didactic phase course defines certain components as "Core." Successful academic progression through the Program requires a student pass or successfully remediate every course. A passing grade for didactic phase (non-research) courses requires:

1. Achievement of 75.0% or greater in each course-defined Core component;
2. Cumulative course-defined Core component score of 80.0% or greater; and
3. Entire course cumulative score of 80.0% or greater.

The final grade, if all passing requirements are met without remediation, will be the course cumulative score.

Each research course requires a cumulative score of 80.0% or greater.

Clinical Phase

A passing grade for clinical phase clerkships requires:

1. Entire course cumulative score of 80.0% or greater; and
2. A passing score (75.0% or greater) on the Clinical Instructor Evaluation(s).

Remediation

Failure to meet any requirement for passing in the didactic phase courses will result in remediation. In the case of a Core component score less than 75.0%, that component will be remediated. In the case of a cumulative Core component score or course cumulative score less than 80.0%, the remediation terms will be determined by the advisor in consultation with the course director. Remediation will be offered early (by the end of the first week of the following course) and late (at the conclusion of the semester). In the case of a course that concludes at the end of a term, late remediation will be conducted in the week following Spring Break for the final Fall Term course or at the end of Summer Term for the final Spring Term course.

If all passing requirements are met after early remediation, the final cumulative score will not be adjusted any higher than the original cumulative score or 80.0%, whichever is higher. If passing requirements are not met after early remediation, then late remediation will be offered at the conclusion of the term, or earlier if necessary, with the final cumulative score calculated as above. Failure to meet all passing requirements after late remediation will result in course failure and a Level 3 Review.

Each remediation attempt, early and late, will count as one remediation. Students requiring 4 or more remediations will receive a Level 3 Review

and be placed on Academic Probation. Students may remediate no more than 6 times throughout the didactic phase of the program.

If a student scores between 75.0 and 79.9% on a Core course component while passing the course, or requires remediation, a Level 1 Review will be conducted with the faculty advisor, at which time an Academic Mentoring Plan (p.) (AMP) will be devised. Individualized interventions and outcomes will be determined through shared decision-making.

If a student does not pass a remediation attempt, a Level 2 Review will be conducted and the student is placed on Academic Probation. The student must meet with his or her advisor and the Curriculum Director or Course Coordinator, who will determine and oversee the student's remediation through an Academic Improvement Plan (p.) (AIP). The AIP will specify a specific study plan and timeline and terms for discontinuing Academic Probation. Failure to pass a late remediation may result in academic dismissal. Successful completion of the late remediation allows for continued progression in the Program.

Academic Probation

Probation establishes formal conditions for the student's continuance in the Program. Grounds for being placed on academic probation include, but are not limited to:

1. Failure to maintain a cumulative GPA above 3.0;
2. Requiring more than 4 remediations;
3. Course failure; or
4. Lapses in professionalism.

During the probation term, the *student* will:

1. Meet with his or her advisor prior to the beginning of the term to review the situation and to plan the steps needed to be removed from probation; and
2. Meet with his or her advisor during the probation term to monitor progress and to address any difficulties.

During the probation term, the *advisor* will:

1. Monitor the commitments made in the student plan; and inform the Program Director if recommendations are not being followed.

During the probation term, the *Program Director* will:

1. Verify and report to the student any failure by the student to supply the plan or meet its goals and to give the student warning that a failure to meet the plan's goals will lead to termination.

Academic Dismissal

In some situations, it will be recommended that the student no longer continue in the MPAS Program. The student will be counseled to withdraw from the Program. If that does not occur, the student will be dismissed from the Program. In either case, the student will be provided with documentation regarding the specific reasons for their dismissal and the conditions, if any, under which he or she may return. Grounds for Program dismissal include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Failure to raise the cumulative GPA above 3.0 at the completion of two academic Program semesters of probation (this includes the summer session);
2. Requiring more than 6 remediations;
3. Two course failures;
4. Failure to successfully remediate the Formative Evaluation;

5. Failure to meet conditions established in an AIP or probationary terms; or
6. Lapses in professionalism that are not corrected on an improvement plan, or are so severe that a patient is placed in jeopardy.

Major Requirements

Code	Title	Credits
First Year		
PA 6000	Foundations	1
PA 6010	Dermatology	3
PA 6020	Musculoskeletal	4
PA 6030	Neurology	3
PA 6040	Eyes Ears Nose Throat Infectious Disease	3
PA 6050	Cardiovascular	5
PA 6060	Pulmonary	4
PA 6070	Gastroenterology	3
PA 6080	Genitourinary	2
PA 6090	Hematology and Oncology	2
PA 6115	Endocrine	3
PA 6120	Mental Health	2
PA 6205	Obstetrics and Gynecology	3
PA 6305	Pediatrics	3
PA 6400	Geriatrics	2
PA 6500	Social and Cultural Perspectives in Medicine	2
PA 6605	Primary Care	3
PA 8010	Evidence-based Medicine I: Search for Justice	2
PA 8012	Evidence-Based Medicine II: Search for Equity	2
Second Year		
PA 6700	Surgical and Hospital Care	2
PA 6800	Urgent and Emergency Care	2
Clinical clerkships:¹		
PA 7050	Primary Care Clerkship	4
PA 7150	Family Medicine Clerkship	4
PA 7200	Pediatrics Clerkship	4
PA 7350	Women's Health Clerkship	4
PA 7450	Internal Medicine Clerkship	4
PA 7500	General Surgery Clerkship	4
PA 7650	Emergency Medicine Clerkship	4
PA 7700	Mental Health Clinical Clerkship	4
PA 7800	Elective I Clerkship	4
PA 7850	Elective II Clerkship	4
Third Year		
PA 7255	Community of Clinical Quality Improvement	4
PA 7900	Senior Clerkship I	4
PA 7950	Senior Clerkship II	4
PA 7985	Senior Seminar-Capstone	2
Total Credits		110

¹ Clinical Clerkships: Students will register for clerkships in varying order from each other. Any of the following will occur in the second year. All of these, with the exception of 4 credits of a course will occur in the

third year. Clerkship courses will be assigned at the conclusion of the first spring term.

PA 7985	Senior Seminar-Capstone	2
Total Credits		110

NOTE: The following term by term program of study includes placeholders for clinical clerkships. Students will register for clerkships in varying order from each other. Students are encouraged to update their Degree Works Plan when their program is solidified after their first spring term of enrollment.

Code	Title	Credits
Fall Term		
PA 6000	Foundations	1
PA 6010	Dermatology	3
PA 6020	Musculoskeletal	4
PA 6030	Neurology	3
PA 6040	Eyes Ears Nose Throat Infectious Disease	3
PA 8010	Evidence-based Medicine I: Search for Justice	2
Spring Term		
PA 6050	Cardiovascular ¹	5
PA 6060	Pulmonary	4
PA 6070	Gastroenterology	3
PA 6080	Genitourinary	2
PA 6090	Hematology and Oncology	2
PA 6115	Endocrine	3
PA 6120	Mental Health	2
PA 8012	Evidence-Based Medicine II: Search for Equity	2
Summer Term		
PA 6205	Obstetrics and Gynecology	3
PA 6305	Pediatrics	3
PA 6400	Geriatrics	2
PA 6500	Social and Cultural Perspectives in Medicine	2
PA 6605	Primary Care	3
Fall Term		
PA 6700	Surgical and Hospital Care	2
PA 6800	Urgent and Emergency Care	2
	Clinical Clerkship	4
	Clinical Clerkship	4
Spring Term		
	Clinical Clerkship ¹	4
	Clinical Clerkship	4
	Clinical Clerkship	4
	Clinical Clerkship	4
	Clinical Clerkship	4
Summer Term		
	Clinical Clerkship	4
	Clinical Clerkship	4
	Clinical Clerkship	4
Fall Term		
PA 7255	Community of Clinical Quality Improvement	4
PA 7900	Senior Clerkship I	4
PA 7950	Senior Clerkship II	4