

Physician Assistant Pre-Professional Program 2025-2026

General Areas of Service: The Physician Assistant (PA) is an important member of the healthcare team who acts interdependently with a supervising physician to provide diagnostic and therapeutic care in a variety of medical settings. PA programs prepare students to take comprehensive medical histories, complete physical examinations, order and interpret diagnostic tests, diagnose illnesses, create treatment plans, aid in surgery, and perform minor procedures. A physician assistant is frequently involved in more hands-on patient care than a doctor would be.

Educational Experience: Successful completion of a physician assistant program will provide the student with a master's degree. There is a wide variety in the prerequisite course work for PA programs, so students should check with the school(s) to which they wish to apply to as early as possible to ensure completion of appropriate courses. Physician assistant programs usually require a bachelor's degree, but application may be submitted before completion of this undergraduate degree. Recommended undergraduate majors include biology, biochemistry, health science, or another biomedical field. Many PA programs also require clinical experience of at least 2000 hours of hands-on patient care (actual number of hours varies by program and many require far fewer hours).

PA training is a rigorous but exciting experience. PA programs are now master's level programs. The first year of the program typically focuses on classes and lab instruction in basic medical sciences including anatomy, pharmacology, physiology, clinical lab science, microbiology, pathophysiology, physical diagnosis, and behavioral sciences. The second phase of programs lasts between nine and fifteen months and includes clinical internships in hospitals, clinics, long-term care facilities, and physicians' offices. Most programs also require clinical rotations in internal medicine, family medicine, surgery, pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, psychiatry, emergency medicine, and geriatric medicine.

Job Outlook: According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), "Employment of physician assistants is projected to grow 28 percent from 2021 to 2031, much faster than the average for all occupations. About 12,700 openings for physician assistants are projected each year, on average, over the decade.." (See www.bls.gov)

Earnings: In their May 2021 salary survey, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reports the median annual wage for physician assistants at \$121,530, with the lowest 10 percent earning \$77,940 and the highest 10 percent earning \$164,620. Wages will vary by location. (See www.bls.gov)

Note: Walla Walla University does not offer the clinical portion of this degree.

The following path is comprised of requirements allowing for application to the four SDA schools with PA programs; however, students should request information about current admission requirements from the PA school they plan to attend.

PRE-PROFESSION: PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT

Rigby Hall
(509) 527-2762

Websites

[Walla Walla University](#)
[University Bulletin](#)

[Pre-Profession: Physician Assistant](#)

Faculty

Advisor
[Kyle Craig](#)

Professional Organizations

[American Academy of Physician Assistants](#)

[Physician Assistant Education Association](#)

Additional Sources

[Loma Linda School of Allied Health Professions: Physician Assistant](#)

[Advent Health University: Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies](#)

[Kettering College: Master of Physician Assistant Studies](#)

[Union Adventist University: Physician Assistant Studies](#)

Suggested Degree Path

See the Undergraduate Bulletin for Details

The chart below details one suggested path a student may take to complete the requirements for entry into a Physician Assistant program. Not all suggested coursework shown is required for all Physician Assistant programs. You will need to choose a major.

Freshman Year

Fall Courses	Hours
Anatomy & Physiology (BIOL 121 & 121L)	4
General Psychology (PSYC 130)	4
Intro to Analytical Writing (ENGL 121)	3
General Studies and/or Courses in Your Major	5
Total	16

Winter Courses	Hours
Anatomy & Physiology (BIOL 122 & 122L)	4
Intro to Research Writing (ENGL 122)	3
General Studies and/or Courses in Your Major	9
Total	16

Spring Courses	Hours
Anatomy & Physiology (BIOL 123 & 123L)	4
Fundamentals of Speech Comm. (SPCH 101)	4
Social Science Option (ANTH 225 OR SOCI 204)	4
General Studies and/or Courses in Your Major	4
Total	16

Sophomore Year

Fall Courses	Hours
General Chemistry & Lab (CHEM 141 & 144)	4
Pre-calculus I (MATH 121)	4
Research Writing (ENGL 223)	3
General Studies and/or Courses in Your Major	5
Total	16

Winter Courses	Hours
General Chemistry & Lab (CHEM 142 & 145)	4
Pre-calculus II (MATH 122)	4
Developmental Psychology (PSYC 215)	4
General Studies and/or Courses in Your Major	4
Total	16

Spring Courses	Hours
General Chemistry & Lab (CHEM 143 & 146)	4
Microbiology (BIOL 222) & Lab	5
General Studies and/or Courses in Your Major	7
Total	16

Junior Year

Fall Courses	Hours
General Biology & Lab (BIOL 141 & 141L)	4
Organic Chemistry (CHEM 321 & 324)	5
General Studies and/or Courses in Your Major	7
Total	16

Winter Courses	Hours
General Biology (BIOL 142 & 142L)	4
Organic Chemistry (CHEM 322 & 325)	5
General Studies and/or Courses in Your Major	7
Total	16

Spring Courses	Hours
General Biology (BIOL 143 & 143L)	4
Medical Terminology (NRSG 234)	2
Intro to Statistics (MATH 106)	4
General Studies and/or Courses in Your Major	6
Total	16

Senior Year

Fall Courses	Hours
Foundations of Biochemistry (CHEM 431)	4
General Studies and/or Courses in Your Major	12
Total	16

Students must complete 32 more credits (typically two more quarters) for a bachelor's degree, which is required for admission to Physician Assistant programs.

+ Offered even years only

- Offered odd years only

*AP and CLEP credits do not meet PA schools' requirements for science courses.

Recommended Courses:

Elementary Spanish ([SPAN 101, 102, & 103](#))

It is recommended that the pre-PA student strongly consider taking such courses as organic chemistry, biochemistry (1-2 quarters, lab may be required), Cell Biology I: Structure and Bioenergetics, Cell Biology II: Genetics and Molecular Biology, animal physiology, human anatomy, and further courses in psychology.

- LLU requires that the applicant have a B.S. degree in a health-related field such as Emergency Medical Care, Respiratory Therapy, Medical Technology, Nursing, Radiation Technology, or an A.S. degree in a health-related field plus a B.S. degree in any field. A minimum of 2,000 hours of direct hands-on patient care experience must be completed prior to enrollment. Shadowing a PA or volunteer service does not count towards patient care hours. Loma Linda University's preferred direct patient care hours are those accredited, credentialed professions that provide patient assessment, treatment, patient care plans, and diagnostic testing. Review program requirements and minimum patient care hours for the physician assistant program you plan to attend as many require far fewer patient care hours than LLU does.
- PA programs are master's-level programs, which means pre-PA students must complete a bachelor's degree. It is a wise plan for students to have several options for PA programs they could apply to. See your adviser or the AAPA website for more information.

Students should request information about current admissions requirements from the professional school they plan to attend.