

Sam Houston State University

Masters of Physician Assistant Studies Program

Technical Standards for Admission, Matriculation, and Graduation

Technical Standards represent the physical, cognitive, and behavioral abilities essential for successful completion of all components of the curriculum, as well as the development of the professional attributes expected of all graduates by the faculty. These core abilities include skills in observation, communication, motor function, intellectual reasoning, conceptual integration, quantitative analysis, behavior, social interaction, and ethical conduct.

To fulfill the requirements of a Physician Assistant (PA) education, students must have functional use of the following senses: vision, hearing, balance (equilibrium), and smell. Their exteroceptive senses—such as touch, pain, and temperature—as well as proprioceptive senses—including position, pressure, movement, stereognosis, and vibration—must be sufficiently intact to enable them to perform all educational and clinical tasks. Additionally, students must possess the motor capabilities necessary to meet the demands of both PA education and comprehensive patient care. Intellectual abilities to learn, integrate, analyze, and synthesize information are also essential.

Sam Houston State University's Master of Physician Assistant Studies Program is committed to providing equal opportunity to all qualified individuals. In alignment with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the program does not discriminate on the basis of disability. However, all students must be able to meet the program's Technical Standards, with or without reasonable accommodations.

These standards outline the essential abilities required not only for the successful completion of the PA Program, but also for the effective and safe practice of a physician assistant. The faculty acknowledges its responsibility to both the patients involved in the educational process and the future patients who will depend on the competence of our graduates. In developing and applying these standards, patient safety has been given the highest priority. Consequently, the faculty must carefully assess each candidate's personal and emotional attributes, motivation, diligence, maturity, resourcefulness, and overall health.

1. Observation

Students must be able to:

- Must possess visual, auditory, and tactile sensory abilities to effectively receive information in classroom, laboratory, clinical, and other educational environments.
- Accurately observe patients both from a distance and at close range.
- Detect and interpret variations in human responses to illness through visual, auditory, tactile, and other sensory input
- Recognize changes in monitoring equipment and alarms using both sight and hearing

2. Communication

Students must be able to:

- Communicate effectively and sensitively in English with patients, families, faculty, and members of the healthcare team.
- Communicate verbally, process spoken information, and observe patients nonverbal cues to gather data in shifts in mood, behavior, and posture.
- Document patient information clearly and accurately in written and electronic formats.

3. Motor Function

Students must have sufficient motor function to:

- Perform physical examinations and diagnostic procedures which includes sufficient dexterity and strength.
- Execute movements required for general and emergency care (e.g., airway management, wound closure, and CPR).
- Demonstrate sufficient stamina to sit, stand, and/or move for extended periods in classrooms, laboratories, examination and treatment rooms, operating rooms, emergency departments, hospitals, and while traveling to assigned clinical sites.
- Navigate clinical environments, including patient care settings, in a timely and safe manner.

4. Intellectual-Conceptual, Integrative, and Quantitative Abilities

Students must be able to:

- Problem-solve and think critically in both classroom and clinical environments.
- Integrate, analyze, and synthesize complex information from multiple sources in high stress situations.
- Comprehend three-dimensional relationships and understand spatial and numerical relationships essential to the practice of medicine.

5. Behavioral and Social Attributes

Students must:

- Demonstrate emotional health and maturity necessary to fully use their intellectual abilities.
- Exhibit sound judgment, ethical behavior, and integrity in all academic and clinical interactions.
- Demonstrate strong compassion for others, genuine motivation to serve, unwavering integrity, and an awareness of social values.
- Tolerate physically and emotionally demanding workloads and adapt to changing environments.
- Maintain professional relationships and work collaboratively in diverse teams.

6. Professionalism and Ethics

Students must:

- Adhere to the ethical principles and professional standards expected in the medical profession.
- Demonstrate accountability, punctuality, and responsibility in all program-related activities.
- Respect the confidentiality and dignity of patients and others in all settings.

Typical Demands of Physician Assistant Students

Mental Demands

PA students must be able to:

- Process, retain, comprehend, integrate, analyze, synthesize, and apply extensive information related to science, medicine, and professional ethics, including legal and moral principles
- Maintain focus and performance during prolonged hours in settings such as classrooms, labs, exam and treatment rooms, hospitals, emergency departments, operating rooms, and in self-directed study
- Respond constructively and promptly to feedback from faculty and clinical preceptors
- Communicate effectively in both verbal and written formats
- Participate actively in all educational components, including exams, practicals, quizzes, demonstrations, simulations, presentations, written assignments, and ongoing evaluations
- Accurately gather and report patient information, conduct physical examinations, perform assessments and evaluations, develop treatment plans, and deliver patient education

Physical Demands

PA students must have the ability to:

- Demonstrate manual dexterity, eye-hand coordination, and a full range of motion to assist in patient care during routine and emergency situations
- Possess adequate vision and hearing (with or without correction)
- Sit for extended periods during classroom and lab activities
- Stand and walk for prolonged durations during clinical rotations and hospital visits
- Work effectively under physical and mental stress, including during long and irregular hours, while being exposed to communicable diseases and bodily fluids
- Perform physical tasks required for life support interventions
- Exhibit the strength and endurance necessary to assist in surgical procedures
- React promptly and effectively in emergency situations

Working Conditions

PA students must be prepared to:

- Function in diverse environments including classrooms, laboratories, and clinical settings, where exposure to communicable diseases, hazardous substances, ionizing radiation, pharmaceuticals, and occasionally hostile individuals may occur
- Interact compassionately and competently with patients of all ages and backgrounds, presenting with a wide range of acute and chronic medical and surgical conditions

Student Performance Requirements

PA students are expected to perform effectively in a variety of clinical and educational settings, including:

- Medical, surgical, pediatric, obstetric/gynecologic, emergency, psychiatric, and other primary care environments, across both inpatient and outpatient facilities
- All aspects of didactic and clinical education and training
- Execution of both invasive and non-invasive medical procedures
- Participation in pre-operative, intra-operative, and post-operative patient care
- Delivery of emergency medical care as required

Re-Evaluation Policy

If a student in the Master of Physician Assistant Studies Program develops a condition that may affect their ability to meet the established Technical Standards, they must undergo an evaluation by a U.S.-licensed medical provider specializing in the relevant field. The evaluating provider must submit formal written documentation to the MPAS outlining the student's medical readiness to resume rigorous medical training. The MPAS reserves the right to require an independent, second medical opinion, which will be at the student's expense. Following a review of all relevant documentation, the Department Chair may determine that a student is unable to meet the Technical Standards. In such cases, the Chair has the authority to terminate the student's enrollment in the program.

Acknowledgment

I have read and understand the Technical Standards and Typical Demands of Physician Assistant Students. I agree to comply with the policies as outlined above.

Student Signature: _____

Date: _____

Printed Student Name: _____

