UNIVERSITY OF CHARLESTON
PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROGRAM

STUDENT HANDBOOK

2013 - 2015

UNIVERSITY OF CHARLESTON
PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROGRAM

training compassionate, patient-centered providers!

– From the Program Director –

This is a very exciting time for the Physician Assistant profession! Never has there been a greater need to train dedicated PAs who are capable of delivering high quality care. We have worked diligently to develop an outstanding program, one that is committed to training students comprehensively. We will go beyond the domains of medical knowledge and patient care. We will teach you to think critically, solve complex medical problems, and utilize evidence to make excellent decisions at the point of care. We will help you learn how to communicate effectively with your PA colleagues, other healthcare professionals, and patients of different backgrounds. Our intent is to teach you not only the science of medicine, but instruct you in the art as well. We are excited to share this journey with you. Bring your hunger for learning and your passion, and together we will make a huge difference in the lives of thousands!

David Payne PA-C

Program Director
University of Charleston
Physician Assistant Program

UNIVERSITY OF CHARLESTON
PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROGRAM

STUDENT HANDBOOK

Table of Contents

Disclaimer: This handbook is program specific and to be used as a supplement to University of Charleston policies and procedures as defined in the University Handbook and University Catalog

STUDENT HANDBOOK

Disclaimer: This handbook is program specific and to be used as a supplement to University of Charleston policies and procedures as defined in the [University Handbook](#) and [University Catalog](#)

Introduction

You made a great choice to become a Physician Assistant. It's a very rewarding career, one where you can make a profound difference for society at large and for the patients you will work individually. I strongly encourage you to carefully read and then subsequently refer to this handbook often. It will provide you with many details that will be helpful for you to make the most out of your experience while participating as a student in this program.

The Physician Assistant

Physician Assistants are highly trained medical professionals who practice medicine on a physician-led team. They practice in all medical and surgical specialties. PAs take histories and conduct physical exams, order and interpret tests, diagnose and treat illness, counsel on disease and preventive health, prescribe medications, and perform procedures.

Physician Assistants are licensable to practice medicine and have prescription privileges in all 50 states. Even though physician assistants legally require physician supervision, most practice autonomously, consulting their supervising physician only when they feel it is necessary. PAs are provided with a great breadth and depth of medical training, thereby providing the foundation for them to excel in all areas of medicine.

Values of the PA Profession

As healthcare practitioners, Physician Assistants have a responsibility to conduct themselves ethically in their interactions with patients, colleagues, other health professionals, and society. The following "Statement of Values" was drafted and adopted in 2008 by the [American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA)](). These values provide a foundation upon which our profession's ethical guidelines rest. All students who matriculate into the University of Charleston (UC) Physician Assistant Program are expected to adopt and hold dear these values.

Statement of Values of PA Profession

- Physician assistants hold as their primary responsibility the health, safety, welfare, and dignity of all human beings.

- Physician assistants uphold the tenets of patient autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence, and justice.

- Physician assistants recognize and promote the value of diversity.

- Physician assistants treat equally all persons who seek their care.

- Physician assistants hold in confidence the information shared in the course of practicing medicine.

- Physician assistants assess their personal capabilities and limitations, striving always to improve their medical practice.

- Physician assistants actively seek to expand their knowledge and skills, keeping abreast of advances in medicine.

- Physician assistants work with other members of the health care team to provide compassionate and effective care of patients.

- Physician assistants use their knowledge and experience to contribute to an improved community.

- Physician assistants respect their professional relationship with physicians.

- Physician assistants share and expand knowledge within the profession.

UNIVERSITY OF CHARLESTON

PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROGRAM

Competencies of the PA Profession

In 2003, four major Physician Assistant organizations teamed up to define competencies for the PA Profession. That effort resulted in a document entitled *Competencies for the Physician Assistant Profession*. You can think of the competencies as the expectations we as Physician Assistants have set upon ourselves. They encompass the knowledge, skills, and attitudes we are expected to acquire and maintain throughout our careers, regardless of the specialty or setting in which we work. As such, they provide sound guidance for all of us, both educationally and professionally. All students who matriculate into the UC Physician Assistant Program are expected to make a commitment to strive throughout their studies and career to acquire and maintain these competencies. The following constitutes the most recent version of the Physician Assistant Competencies (version 3.5 3/22/05)

Medical Knowledge

Medical knowledge includes an understanding of pathophysiology, patient presentation, differential diagnosis, patient management, surgical principles, health promotion and disease prevention. Physician assistants must demonstrate core knowledge about established and evolving biomedical and clinical sciences and the application of this knowledge to patient care in their area of practice. In addition, physician assistants are expected to demonstrate an investigatory and analytic thinking approach to clinical situations. Physician assistants are expected to:

- understand etiologies, risk factors, underlying pathologic process, and epidemiology for medical conditions
- identify signs and symptoms of medical conditions
- select and interpret appropriate diagnostic or lab studies
- manage general medical and surgical conditions to include understanding the indications, contraindications, side effects, interactions and adverse reactions of pharmacologic agents and other relevant treatment modalities
- identify the appropriate site of care for presenting conditions, including identifying emergent cases and those requiring referral or admission
- identify appropriate interventions for prevention of conditions

- identify the appropriate methods to detect conditions in an asymptomatic individual
- differentiate between the normal and the abnormal in anatomic, physiological, laboratory findings and other diagnostic data
- appropriately use history and physical findings and diagnostic studies to formulate a differential diagnosis
- provide appropriate care to patients with chronic conditions

Interpersonal & Communication Skills

Interpersonal and communication skills encompass verbal, nonverbal and written exchange of information. Physician assistants must demonstrate interpersonal and communication skills that result in effective information exchange with patients, their patients' families, physicians, professional associates, and the health care system. Physician assistants are expected to:

- create and sustain a therapeutic and ethically sound relationship with patients
- use effective listening, nonverbal, explanatory, questioning, and writing skills to elicit and provide information
- appropriately adapt communication style and messages to the context of the individual patient interaction
- work effectively with physicians and other health care professionals as a member or leader of a health care team or other professional group
- apply an understanding of human behavior
- demonstrate emotional resilience and stability, adaptability, flexibility and tolerance of ambiguity and anxiety
- accurately and adequately document and record information regarding the care process for medical, legal, quality and financial purposes

Patient Care

Patient care includes age-appropriate assessment, evaluation and management. Physician assistants must demonstrate care that is effective, patient-centered, timely, efficient and equitable for the treatment of health problems and the promotion of wellness. Physician assistants are expected to:

- work effectively with physicians and other health care professionals to provide patient-centered care

- demonstrate caring and respectful behaviors when interacting with patients and their families
- gather essential and accurate information about their patients
- make informed decisions about diagnostic and therapeutic interventions based on patient information and preferences, up-to-date scientific evidence, and clinical judgment
- develop and carry out patient management plans
- counsel and educate patients and their families
- competently perform medical and surgical procedures considered essential in the area of practice
- provide health care services and education aimed at preventing health problems or maintaining health

Professionalism

Professionalism is the expression of positive values and ideals as care is delivered. Foremost, it involves prioritizing the interests of those being served above one's own. Physician assistants must know their professional and personal limitations. Professionalism also requires that PAs practice without impairment from substance abuse, cognitive deficiency or mental illness. Physician assistants must demonstrate a high level of responsibility, ethical practice, sensitivity to a diverse patient population and adherence to legal and regulatory requirements. Physician assistants are expected to demonstrate:

- understanding of legal and regulatory requirements, as well as the appropriate role of the physician assistant
- professional relationships with physician supervisors and other health care providers
- respect, compassion, and integrity
- responsiveness to the needs of patients and society
- accountability to patients, society, and the profession
- commitment to excellence and on-going professional development
- commitment to ethical principles pertaining to provision or withholding of clinical care, confidentiality of patient information, informed consent, and business practices
- sensitivity and responsiveness to patients' culture, age, gender, and disabilities
- self-reflection, critical curiosity and initiative

Practice-Based Learning and Improvement

Practice-based learning and improvement includes the processes through which clinicians engage in critical analysis of their own practice experience, medical literature and other information resources for the purpose of self-improvement. Physician assistants must be able to assess, evaluate and improve their patient care practices. Physician assistants are expected to:

- analyze practice experience and perform practice-based improvement activities using a systematic methodology in concert with other members of the health care delivery team
- locate, appraise, and integrate evidence from scientific studies related to their patients' health problems
- obtain and apply information about their own population of patients and the larger population from which their patients are drawn
- apply knowledge of study designs and statistical methods to the appraisal of clinical studies and other information on diagnostic and therapeutic effectiveness
- apply information technology to manage information, access on-line medical information, and support their own education
- facilitate the learning of students and/or other health care professionals
- recognize and appropriately address gender, cultural, cognitive, emotional and other biases; gaps in medical knowledge; and physical limitations in themselves and others

Systems-Based Practice

Systems-based practice encompasses the societal, organizational and economic environments in which health care is delivered. Physician assistants must demonstrate an awareness of and responsiveness to the larger system of health care to provide patient care that is of optimal value. PAs should work to improve the larger health care system of which their practices are a part. Physician assistants are expected to:

- use information technology to support patient care decisions and patient education
- effectively interact with different types of medical practice and delivery systems
- understand the funding sources and payment systems that provide coverage for patient care

- practice cost-effective health care and resource allocation that does not compromise quality of care
- advocate for quality patient care and assist patients in dealing with system complexities
- partner with supervising physicians, health care managers and other health care providers to assess, coordinate, and improve the delivery of health care and patient outcomes
- accept responsibility for promoting a safe environment for patient care and recognizing and correcting systems-based factors that negatively impact patient care
- apply medical information and clinical data systems to provide more effective, efficient patient care
- use the systems responsible for the appropriate payment of services

Our Program

Accreditation

The purpose of accreditation is to establish and maintain standards of quality. The Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA) is the agency authorized to accredit PA Educational Programs.

Only graduates of programs accredited by the ARC-PA or its predecessors are eligible to take the Physician Assistant National Certifying Examination (PANCE). Certification is required to be eligible for licensure to practice as a Physician Assistant. For details about accreditation as it relates to the UC Physician Assistant Program, please visit the detailed web page by clicking here.

Mission, Vision, Goals

Program Mission

The mission of the UC Physician Assistant Program is to prepare competent physician assistants who value and provide comprehensive, patient-centered, culturally sensitive

primary care, and are committed to lifelong-learning, professional growth, community health, and caring for underserved populations.

Program Vision

Our vision is to foster a culture of learning by employing innovative educational strategies and a team-based approach within a supportive environment and to provide an application-based curriculum centered on critical principles of health and disease.

Program Goals

Our goals are to prepare physician assistants:

- ~ Who practice primary care medicine
- ~ Who are committed to the medically underserved
- ~ Who actively participate as members of their community
- ~ Who assume leadership roles within the profession
- ~ Who support and sustain the UC Physician Assistant Program

Learning Outcomes

Knowledge-Related Outcomes

Upon completion of the UC Physician Assistant Program, graduates will:

1. Demonstrate knowledge of biomedical sciences and an ability to integrate and apply this knowledge to the care of patients.
2. Differentiate between the normal and the abnormal in anatomic and physiologic findings and other diagnostic test data.
3. Understand psychological, socioeconomic, cultural, and spiritual dimensions of human health and illness.
4. Identify the appropriate interventions for prevention of disease conditions and promotion of healthy living behaviors.

Skill-Related Outcomes

Upon completion of the UC Physician Assistant Program, graduates will:

1. Gather essential and accurate patient information.
2. Competently perform physical examination, basic diagnostic, and therapeutic clinical procedures.
3. Interpret, assess, integrate, and apply diagnostic test data and patient assessment information in the process of clinical problem-solving, reasoning, and decision-making.
4. Apply the principles of evidence-based medicine to critically evaluate and resolve clinical problems.
5. Communicate and effectively collaborate with patients and members of the health care team to provide competent comprehensive patient-centered care across the lifespan.
6. Learn independently with a critical awareness of the scope and limits of one's knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Values and Attitudes-Related Outcomes

Upon completion of the UC Physician Assistant Program, graduates will:

1. Commit to a high ethical standard sensitive and responsive to the patient's needs, culture, age, gender, and disabilities.
2. Demonstrate respect, compassion, integrity, and accountability to patients, society, and the profession.
3. Create and sustain sound professional relationships with patients and members of the health care team.
4. Demonstrate emotional resilience and stability, adaptability, flexibility and tolerance of ambiguity and anxiety with an awareness of the importance of maintaining one's own well-being.

Technical Standards

The UC Physician Assistant Program is a rigorous and intense program that places specific requirements and demands on all students enrolled in the program. The minimum technical standards establish the essential qualities considered necessary for students admitted to this program to achieve the knowledge, skills, and competencies of an entry-level physician assistant. In the event an applicant is unable to fulfill these technical standards prior to or any time after admission, with or without reasonable accommodation (see official UC ADA Statement), the student will not be allowed to enter or progress within the program.

Candidates for admission and students within the Physician Assistant program must possess aptitude, ability, and skills in the following categories:

- Observation
- Communication
- Sensory and Motor Functions
- Intellectual Conceptualization, Integration, and Quantitation
- Behavioral and Social Attributes

Observation

1. Candidates and students must be able to observe and actively participate in all demonstrations and experiments in the basic medical and clinical sciences, including observations made through a microscope and demonstrations made in the classroom using standardized or classmate patient-models.
2. Candidates and students must be able to observe a patient accurately and completely both at a distance and up close, noting both verbal and nonverbal signs.

Communication

1. Candidates and students must possess the ability to comprehend written English at a level sufficient to adequately evaluate technical materials, medical reports, and biomedical texts and journals.
2. Candidates and students are expected to be able to communicate, both verbally and in writing, the results of their examination to the patient and to their colleagues with accuracy, clarity, and efficiency.
3. Candidates and students must be able to accurately and legibly document observations and plans in a thorough and timely manner.

Sensory and Motor Functions

1. Candidates and students must have sufficient use of somatic sensation and the senses of vision, hearing and smell to perform the inspection, palpation, auscultation and percussion components of the physical examination.
2. Candidates and students must possess the gross and fine motor coordination skills necessary to learn and perform routine laboratory tests, and diagnostic and therapeutic procedures.
3. Candidates and students should be able to perform the physical activities needed to provide general and emergency care for patients. This may include, but not be limited to, activities such as bending, lifting, carrying and running.

Intellectual Conceptualization, Integration, and Quantitation

1. Candidates and students must be able to learn to quantify, analyze, integrate, synthesize, solve problems, and reach diagnostic and therapeutic judgments.
2. Candidates and students must be able to learn and to demonstrate the ability to recognize limitations in their own knowledge, skills, and abilities and seek appropriate assistance with their identified limitations.

Behavioral and Social Attributes

1. Candidates and students must be able to work collaboratively with their classmates to sustain a non-competitive learning atmosphere and with their colleagues and patients to develop collaborative professional relationships.
2. Candidates and students must possess the endurance to tolerate physically taxing workloads and to function effectively under stress. At times this may require working for extended periods of time or with rotating schedules.
3. Candidates and students must possess the emotional health needed for full use of their intellectual abilities, exercise of good judgment, and prompt and appropriate action in emergency situations.
4. Candidates and students must be able to adapt to changing environments and to display flexibility in the face of uncertainties inherent in the training process and the practice of medicine.
5. Candidates and students are expected to willingly accept and invite constructive criticism and, if necessary, subsequently adopt appropriate modifications in their behavior.

Faculty and Staff

David Payne MPAS, PA-C
Program Director
Office: 304-357-4818
davidpayne@ucwv.edu

Jennifer Pack MMS, PA-C
Director of Didactic Education
Office: 304-357-4790
jenniferpack@ucwv.edu

Bill Carter MD
Medical Director
Office: 304-357-4968
PAProgram@ucwv.edu

Rob Chrest DO
Associate Medical Director
Office: 304-357-4968
robchrest@ucwv.edu

Tina Chafin MSPAS, PA-C
Director of Clinical Education
Office: 304-357-4834
tinachafin@ucwv.edu

Pam Carden MA
Admissions Coordinator
Office: 304-357-4968
pamcarden@ucwv.edu

University of Charleston

Student Services

There are several services and resources available for physician assistant students at the University of Charleston. These are designed to support the educational process and fulfill campus life needs. Several of these services and resources are listed below.

General Services

- **Dining Services:** UC Cafeteria, Mo Harv's Food Court and the Coffee Tavern provide year round on-campus opportunities to meet students' sustenance needs. Click here for more information.
- **Morrison Fitness Center:** Includes resistance training equipment, treadmills, ellipticals and other aerobic machines. Classes are free to students and include Zumba, Cardio Kickboxing and Yoga. Click here for more information.
- **Wellness Services:** Counseling services are provided by Process Strategies and are available to students for free. Health clinic services are available on campus two days weekly and are provided by Charleston Internal Medicine. Click here for more information. The University also has a full service Walmart Pharmacy on campus. Click here for more information.
- **Bookstore:** Located in the first floor of the Geary Student Union, the bookstore shelves textbooks, supplies, apparel and more. Click here for more information.

Academic Resources

- **Schoenbaum Library:** Multiple services are available via the on-campus library. There is also a full-time Health Services librarian. Click here for more information.

STUDENT HANDBOOK

- **West Virginia University Health Sciences Center Library:** Located less than a mile from campus, this comprehensive medical library is open to physician assistant students and faculty. [Click here for more information](#).
- **Academic Success Center (ASC):** The ASC provides a resource where students can connect with consultants for assistance with their studies. [Click here for more information](#).
- **Learning Support Services (LSS):** Provides a variety of services and classes to help students achieve academic, personal and professional success. Among others, includes testing and disability services. [Click here for more information](#).
- **Online Resources:** A repository of online resources has been curated that can prove helpful for a number of student issues/concerns such as stress management, study skills, test anxiety and time management. [Click here for the full list of resources](#).

Program Costs and Financial Aid

The standard undergraduate tuition rate does not apply to students who matriculate into the UC Physician Assistant Program. The table available in the [Program Costs policy](#) outlines the expected total program tuition and fees based on the rate of tuition that will be applied for the 2012-2013 academic year and estimated fees. It should be noted that tuition and fees can change from year to year subject to economic influences, the needs of the university, and needs of the program. Other required expenses and estimations for living expenses are also included in the [Program Costs policy](#).

The [Student Solutions Center](#) at the University of Charleston includes staff who help guide students through the process of registering for classes, receiving financial aid, and paying associated bills. [Information regarding the Financial Aid Process can be accessed by clicking here](#).

Community Standards

All students and faculty are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that supports the University's mission to educate each student for a life of productive work, enlightened living, and community involvement. Respect for and honoring the rights of others and for the University and its property are essential expectations for every student. The [University Handbook](#) outlines expectations and accountability standards for members of the University community.

Non-Academic Grievances

Any member of the University community may report a violation of the expectations and accountability standards to the Office of Student Life or the Department of Safety and Security. Details regarding the process for reporting is included in the [University Handbook](#).

General Program Policies

The following includes extracts from program policies that pertain to prospective and enrolled students. The full policies can be accessed on the web via our [Program Policies web page](#). These policies are subject to change at the discretion of the Physician Assistant Program Faculty.

Academic Performance and Progression

Required Academic Standards

Students must successfully pass all didactic and clinical courses. A score of 80% or higher is required to pass a course. A final course score of 80.00% or higher signifies a passing score. A final course score of 79.99% signifies a failing score.

Requirements for Progression and Graduation

Requirements for Progression:

Due to the sequential nature of the curriculum, students must successfully pass all courses for a given semester before becoming eligible to take courses in the subsequent semester.

At the conclusion of each semester, students must be recommended for progression to the next semester by program faculty to be eligible to take courses in the subsequent semester.

Requirements for Graduation:

To graduate from the PA Program and earn a Master of Physician Assistant Studies (MPAS) degree, students must:

- Successfully pass all didactic and clinical courses.
- Successfully pass all components of the summative evaluation.
- Demonstrate they have met all program outcomes.
- Submit a completed graduation application to the Student Solutions Center.

Remediation

Student progress is monitored and documented in a manner that promptly identifies deficiencies in knowledge or skills and establishes means for remediation as described herein:

- Except for assessments associated with the Summative Evaluation, remediation is required for any failed written examination or skills assessment included in the curriculum and for any rating of "UNACCEPTABLE" performance in any category of the end-of-rotation Preceptor Evaluation of the Student. The score for a failed assessment/preceptor evaluation will be 0% until the student completes the formalized remediation plan, at which time the original assessment score will count toward the final course score.

- In circumstances where it is statistically impossible for a student to pass a course, remediation will not be required and the original examination, evaluation and/or assessment scores will be utilized to calculate final course scores.
- Remediation may also be required when an academic deficiency is identified by a faculty member in any other activity associated with the PA Program. This is at the discretion of the observing faculty member.
- Within one week of any student assessment failure or identified deficiency, the course director or faculty member will meet with the student to establish a formalized remediation plan.
- The specific remediation plan developed is at the discretion of the course director or faculty member and may include but is not limited to:

    1. Reading assignments
    2. Written completion of selected course learning objectives with reference citations
    3. Written response to selected exam items with reference citations
    4. Problem-based learning exercises focused on area(s) of weakness
    5. Written self-reflection exercise
    6. Individual faculty-led tutoring (especially skills related deficiencies)
    7. Additional supervised clinical practice experience up to and including repeating an entire rotation

- Students must complete the remediation plan within 2 weeks of receipt.
- The responsible course director or faculty member must document remediation efforts and outcomes on the formal remediation form and file this in the student's official file.

Adverse Actions

Academic Probation:

Students will be placed on Academic Probation when they demonstrate a consistent pattern of academic deficiency as evidenced by one or more of the following:

1. Acquiring an average examination score of less than 75% in a single didactic course.
2. Failing 6 or more formal assessments across all courses in a single semester.
3. Receiving a mark of "Unacceptable" on the Preceptor Evaluation of Student.
4. Failing two End of Rotation (EOR) written examinations.

Procedure for regaining good standing following placement on Academic Probation:

1. In order to return to good standing following placement on Academic Probation, students must refrain from demonstrating any of the academic deficiencies listed above during the probationary semester.
2. Students who demonstrate a deficiency warranting academic probation during the final didactic semester will not be placed on academic probation if they successfully complete the Preclinical Comprehensive Evaluation.

Professionalism Probation:

Students will be placed on Professionalism Probation when they do not demonstrate acceptable professionalism behaviors as evidenced by one or more of the following:

1. Receiving an "Unacceptable" mark on a didactic professionalism evaluation.
2. Receiving an "Unacceptable" mark in the professionalism category of the Preceptor Evaluation of Student.

Procedure for regaining good standing following placement on Professionalism Probation:

1. In order to return to good standing following placement on Professionalism Probation, students must refrain from demonstrating any of the professionalism deficiencies listed above during the probationary semester.

Dismissal:

Students *will* be dismissed from the UC Physician Assistant Program in the following circumstances:

1. When they fail to meet post-acceptance requirements in the manner specified in the Admissions policy.
2. When they fail a course.
3. When they fail to achieve good standing the semester following placement on Academic Probation.
4. When they fail to achieve good standing the semester following placement on Professionalism Probation.
5. For receiving an additional mark of "Unacceptable" on a subsequent Preceptor Evaluation of Student in any category.
6. When they fail a third EOR written examination.
7. For any gross violations of professional conduct.

8. For conduct that would render them ineligible to participate in clinical rotations or obtain licensure.
9. When they are unable to meet the minimum technical standards necessary to achieve the knowledge, skills, and competencies of an entry-level physician assistant
10. When it is no longer possible for them to complete all program requirements for graduation within 5 years of their original date of matriculation.

Students *may* be dismissed from the Physician Assistant Program in the following circumstances:

1. When their behavior poses a threat to the standards of orderly operation, scholarship, and conduct.
2. When they have violated principles related to academic integrity and plagiarism as outlined by the University of Charleston. Click here for UC's statement and definitions on Academic Integrity and Plagiarism.
3. When their behavior poses a threat to the mental or physical well-being of patients.

Students dismissed from the Physician Assistant Program have the right to:

1. Appeal the decision (see the Appeals Process section under Student Grievances)
2. Seek re-entry by applying for admission during the normal admissions cycle. In the event that a student is admitted into the program, the program faculty reserves the right to attach contingencies to the admittance.

Conduct Violations and Harassment

The UC PA Program adheres to the same policy adhered to by the School of Health Sciences. This can be found in the University of Charleston Student Handbook. Please refer to subsection III.D entitled "Conduct which violates the dignity and/or safety of an individual" and subsection V entitled "Process for Reports and Hearings" of the "Student Expectations & Accountability" section.

Student Grievances

Academic Grievances:

Students who disagree with the score or qualitative evaluation of any formal assessment or course should attempt to resolve the difficulty or concern in a professional, non-confrontational manner with the course director. If the matter cannot be resolved to the

student's satisfaction, the student should contact his/her mentor for assistance. If the course director and mentor are one in the same, the student has the right to choose a principal faculty member of their choice to work with. If still unresolved, a written appeal to the Program Director may be made within 10 days of the assessment evaluation. The Program Director will independently evaluate the situation and render a decision. The decision of the Program Director is final.

Appeals Process:

The Physician Assistant Program recognizes due process and the rights of a student to appeal Program decisions/actions affecting student progress within the Program. Student's appeals must be based upon the Program's failure to follow established policies or procedures. The appeal letter should be succinct and contain evidence that supports their appeal of a program decision/action according to the appeal process as defined herein:

1. All appeals must be submitted to the Program Director in writing within 5 working days of the Program action/decision being appealed.
2. Appeals will be reviewed during a meeting of the program faculty and a decision will be rendered to the student within 10 working days of receipt of the appeal. Students will be invited to attend the faculty meeting at which the appeal is considered to present their case and respond to any questions the faculty may have. As this meeting is a purely academic proceeding, no legal counsel will be allowed to attend or participate. The appellant student may, however, request participation by other students or non-program faculty with approval of the Program Director. Proceedings may not be recorded in any manner (audio, video, digital, etc.)
3. Students who wish to challenge the Program's appeal decision may initiate a subsequent appeal to the Dean of the School of Health Sciences. This appeal must be initiated within 10 work days of the Program's appeal decision and must be submitted in writing.
4. All academic appeal decisions rendered by the Dean of the School of Health Sciences are final.

Deceleration, Completion Deadline

- Deceleration is only allowed in the event that a student is granted a leave of absence.
- Students may request a leave of absence when personal (non-academic) circumstances arise which jeopardize the likelihood for successful completion of their studies. Poor academic performance will not be regarded as a justifiable reason to request a leave of absence. Students must submit a written formal request with an explanation for the request to the faculty. Requests will be handled on a case-by-case basis. The faculty reserves the right to approve or deny the request. Only students who are in good standing are permitted to request a leave of absence. Program faculty reserves the right to attach conditions that must be met for students to return.
- All requirements for completion of the program must be completed within 5 years of the origin date of matriculation. Inability to do so will lead to dismissal of the student.

Withdrawal

- Students are permitted to withdraw from the program at their discretion following the University defined procedure.
- Unless a leave of absence is requested and granted, withdrawal from an individual course will not allow a student to progress in the program as per the requirements for progression (see Requirements for Progression and Graduation section) and therefore constitutes withdrawal from the program.

Admissions

Post-Acceptance Requirements:

All students who accept a seat are subject to the Post-Acceptance Requirements as described on the UCPAP web page of the same name. Students are required to fulfill all Post-Acceptance Requirements no later than two weeks prior to the first day of

orientation or they will not be allowed to matriculate into the program, except in the following circumstances:

- Students who have completed required prerequisites and/or their Bachelor's degree (Direct Admission students) in the Fall semester preceding program matriculation must supply unofficial transcripts documenting fulfillment of post-acceptance requirements at least two weeks before their first day of orientation. Students failing to do so will not be permitted to matriculate into the program. Receipt of official transcripts documenting course/degree completion is still required and must occur no later than the end of the first semester of the PA Program. Students failing to do so will be dismissed from the program.
- Students who require one or more multidose-vaccine series to meet Immunization requirements must provide medical documentation that they have initiated the process at least two weeks before their first day of orientation. Students failing to do so will not be permitted to matriculate into the program. They must also provide medical documentation of completion of the process according to established CDC immunization timelines. Students failing to do so will be dismissed from the program.

Late Acceptance

Late Acceptance is defined as notification of acceptance to the program within one month of the first day of orientation. In these circumstances, deadlines for fulfilling Post-Acceptance Requirements are detailed in the candidate's acceptance letter and supersede deadlines as described in this policy.

Safety and Infection Control

It is the policy of the UC Physician Assistant Program to follow the guidelines and recommendations made by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regarding the use of Standard Precautions to prevent the spread of infection and reduce occupational exposure to blood and body fluid pathogens. For details, please refer to the full Safety and Infection Control policy.

Student Assessment

Student assessment is an integral part of both didactic and supervised clinical education, ensuring that students adequately meet program expectations and have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed for entry-level PA practice. The following outlines program policy relative to general student assessment.

Policies associated with assessment in the areas below are located within their respective syllabi. Therefore, the policies included hereafter do not apply to these particular areas.

- **Preclinical comprehensive examination** – Preclinical Seminar syllabus
- **Clinical rotations** – Supervised Clinical Practice Experience syllabus
- **Program Summative** – Summative Seminar syllabus

Successful Completion of Assessments

- Passing is defined as a score of 75% or greater for a formative examination. Failure to achieve a 75% will mandate remediation (refer to the Remediation section in the Academic Performance and Progression section).
- For skills assessments, the minimum passing score is an 80%. However, course directors may define a passing score higher than 80% for specific assessments. Requirements will be published in the course syllabus. Failure to pass a skills assessment will mandate remediation (refer to the Remediation section in the Academic Performance and Progression section).
- When a score ends with 0.50% or higher, the score will be rounded up. If a score ends with 0.49% or lower, the score will be rounded down.

Tardiness for Assessment

- Students are expected to arrive 10 minutes prior to the scheduled start time of an examination to set up laptop computers. Exams will begin on time.

- Students arriving after an examination has begun will be allowed to take the examination, but no additional time beyond the scheduled conclusion of the examination will be allowed.
- If a student arrives for an examination after another student has completed the examination, he/she will not be allowed to take the examination and therefore receives a score of zero (0).
- Recurrent tardiness is considered unprofessional and may result in formal evaluation of a student's professionalism and remedial action.

Missed Examination

- In order to be eligible to make-up a missed examination, the absence must be an excused absence as determined by the course director. Unexcused absence from an examination administration will result in a grade of zero (0) on that exam.
- Students must be prepared to take the exam on the day they return to classes, but will take the make-up exam when scheduled by the course director.

Early Examinations

There will be no early examinations given.

Examination Question Challenges

- If a student questions an exam question's validity, the student may provide a written challenge within 48 hours of the scheduled exam review. The strength of the challenge will be based upon two factors:

    1. The written explanation for the challenge
    2. The quality of the reference source cited as the basis for the challenge. Reputable sources include refereed journals or textbooks published in the past 5 years.

- When possible, the student will be notified of the course director's decision within five working days of receipt of the student's challenge.

Examination Review

- Formative exams for each course will be reviewed by the course director with the class at a scheduled exam review session.
- The purpose of exam review is continuing instruction. Professional behavior is expected during the review session. Any conduct deemed unprofessional may result in termination of the review session, student dismissal from the review, and/or formal evaluation of the student's professionalism.
- Because learning occurs during exam review, students are expected to attend exam review if their exam score is less than 90%. Exam review is optional for students scoring greater than 90%.
- If a student chooses not to participate in an exam review that is optional, there will be no other time made available to review the exam.
- Unless otherwise directed by the Course Director, students' desks should be clear during the exam reviews and there is to be no recording (written, electronic, or digital) of the session.

Academic Integrity

- To maintain exam validity and academic integrity, students may not make inquiry about exam items or content during the administration of the examination or assessment.
- If problems related to exam administration are encountered, the examination proctor should be notified immediately.
- During an examination, students may not have, at their desk or on their persons: caps or hats, written material of any kind, or any electronic devices, unless approved by the Course Director.
- When an exam is given electronically, no other windows may be open simultaneously. The testing screen must be fully maximized.
- Laptop computers must be equipped with a privacy screen.
- Students who must leave the room during an exam must leave their exam material and all personal items in the exam room.
- Refer to the Academic Integrity Policy.

Re-examinations

Save in circumstances relative to the Pre-Clinical Comprehensive Evaluation and Program Summative Evaluation, written examinations are given only once (there are no re-examinations).

PACKRAT

- As a tool for student self-assessment and program assessment, each student is required to take the Physician Assistant Clinical Knowledge Rating and Assessment Tool (PACKRAT) two times during the program. The examinations will be given:
  1. Upon completion of the didactic curriculum
  2. Upon completion of the supervised clinical practice experience (SPCE) curriculum

- There are no minimum performance requirements associated with the PACKRAT; students should use their performance to identify deficiencies in knowledge and develop a plan to address areas in which they are weak.

Student Attendance, Participation, and Inclement Weather

Didactic Phase

- Consistent attendance is a component of professional behavior. As such, attendance is expected for all program activities.
- In the event of an absence, students should email and/or call the PA program office and the course director prior to the scheduled activity.
- The student is responsible for contacting the course directors to discuss make-up work.
- Faculty expect students to use good judgment when taking an absence. These guidelines have been established to make provisions for student absences. The following are examples of occurrences when an absence may be excused:
  1. Personal illness
  2. Family emergencies

3. Death in the immediate family
4. Observance of a religious holiday

- Family obligations, employment, travel, and previous plans are not generally accepted as excused absences. Special circumstances will be reviewed by the course director.

Clinical Phase

- In the event of an absence, students must call and/or email the Director of Clinical Education or the Associate Director of Clinical Education. Students must also notify the preceptor. Notification of the absence should be done prior to the absence.
- If a student misses more than two (2) days on any rotation, he/she must discuss with the preceptor ways to make-up the additional time. If there is no opportunity for the student to make up the excessive days, the student will have to repeat the rotation.
- Students are allowed no more than six (6) absences for the entire clinical year.
- Students are required to be at their assigned clinical site a minimum of 40 hours per week.
- Attendance at the American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA) conference is required in the Spring semester in which clinical rotations begin.
- Attendance at the West Virginia Association of Physician Assistants (WVAPA) conference is required in the Spring semester in which clinical rotations are completed. As a program requirement, absence from the clinical site during the conference will not effect the maximum six (6) days absence limit.

Unexcused Absences

- An absence is determined to be excused or unexcused by the course director during the didactic phase and by the Director of Clinical Education during the clinical phase.
- Unexcused absence is considered unprofessional and may result in formal evaluation of a student's professionalism and remedial action.

Participation

- Multiple modalities are utilized by the program to ensure program outcomes are being met. To maximize learning, students must actively participate in all learning activities, such as required readings and other preparation needed before class, class discussions, class assignments, team-based case studies, and laboratory skill sessions. Failure to actively participate in program requirements is considered unprofessional behavior.
- Students are required to participate as a patient model during laboratory sessions and skills assessments.

Inclement Weather

- When snow, floods, power outages, or similar events force the temporary closing or postponement of classes at the University of Charleston, students should listen to the local radio stations, watch for details on the local televisions stations, or call 304-357-4700 for a recorded message regarding postponement/cancellation information.
- In the event that program activities are being held, students should not attempt to travel under unsafe conditions or to take unnecessary risk due to inclement weather. The program office and/or course director should be notified if the student is unable to attend class or other activity due to the weather.

Student Employment

The UC Physician Assistant Program:

- Does not permit its students to work for the PA Program.
- Does not substitute student workers for administrative support staff.
- Discourages students from being employed while enrolled and communicates to students that employment can not be used to excuse absence from scheduled learning activities or poor performance/progression in the program.

Student Health

Health Insurance and Health Screening

- All students are required to provide proof of health insurance prior to matriculation and that their personal health insurance policy remain active throughout their participation in the program.
- Students are financially responsible for the cost of all health care services they may require while enrolled in the program, including any health care services required as a result of their participation in scheduled program activities (e.g. PPD testing, immunizations, injuries, pathogen exposure evaluation and treatment)
- The UC Physician Assistant Program requires health screening consisting of baseline tuberculosis screening in the form of a tuberculosis skin test (TST) performed in accordance with CDC guidelines within one year prior to matriculation and again before beginning their clinical rotations. If the TST is positive, evaluation (and treatment if indicated) must be completed in accordance with CDC guidelines.
- Students are required to obtain immunizations and/or provide record of immunization or serologic proof of immunity for those conditions required by the UC Immunization Policy and currently recommended by the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) for healthcare personnel, to include:

   1. **Hepatitis B:** Must provide quantitative hepatitis B surface antibody (HBsAb) test results to validate immune status
   2. **Mumps:** Records of titer validating current immunity and/or 2-dose vaccine series being administered on schedule
   3. **Rubeola:** Records of titer validating current immunity and/or 2-dose vaccine series being administered on schedule
   4. **Rubella:** Records of titer validating current immunity and/or 1-dose MMR immunization
   5. **Varicella:** Records of titer validating current immunity and/or 2-dose vaccine series being administered on schedule. Note: History of previous infection is not sufficient evidence of immunity.
   6. **Pertussis:** Record of having received 1 dose Tdap.

7. **Meningococcal Disease:** Record of having received a single vaccination.
8. **Influenza:** Record of having received viral influenza immunization during the fall semester preceding matriculation. Will be required to obtain influenza immunization annually while enrolled in the program.

- Students are required to provide a signed Release of Information authorizing the program to maintain a copy of their tuberculosis screening test results and record of immunizations in their program student records and authorizing the program to release that same information to all clinical sites to which they are assigned for program required supervised clinical practice experience (SCPE).
- The UC Physician Assistant Program does not permit the principal program faculty, program director, medical director, associate medical director, or program staff to participate as health care providers for students enrolled in the program or to have access to any student health information other than that defined in this policy.

Documentation of TB Screening and Immunization History

- Records of tuberculosis screening, immunizations and proof of immunity must be primary source documentation as follows:

    1. Copies of the applicant's medical record(s) on which administration and results of tuberculosis screening data is recorded.
    2. Copies of the applicant's medical record(s) on which administration of the immunization series is documented by the immunization provider.
    3. Copies of the laboratory report(s) documenting results of serologic testing for immunity (antibody test results)
    4. Copies of the applicant's medical record(s) or a letter from the applicant's health care provider documenting immunization non-conversion and explaining the process by which that conclusion was reached

- Historical documentation without primary source evidence of tuberculosis screening, immunizations and/or serologic proof of immunity will not satisfy the program's documentation requirements.
- Copies of medical records submitted to the program for documentation of tuberculosis screening, immunization history or serologic evidence of immunity

must NOT include any other health information. Received records which contain any other medical information not directly related to immunization or tuberculosis screening will be returned to the sender.

Student Role in Classroom and SCPEs

Physician Assistant students often bring knowledge and prior experiences and skills that are valuable to contribute in a learning environment. The following outlines the student's role in the learning environment and establish boundaries for how these contributions can be utilized.

The role of the Physician Assistant student during the course of their studies is that of a learner. Therefore, students are not permitted to assume functions that should be fulfilled by organizational employees. The UC Physician Assistant Program:

- Does not permit students to substitute for or function as instructional faculty. Students may assist faculty in didactic and laboratory sessions so the benefits of their knowledge and skills can be realized. However, they are not permitted to be the primary instructor or instructor of record for any component of the curriculum.
- Does not permit students to substitute for clinical or administrative staff during supervised clinical practice experiences (SCPEs). This is outlined in the PA Program Faculty and Preceptor Handbook that is provided to SCPE sites.

There are multiple physical examination and skills activities that occur throughout the program. In addition to training students in the role of practitioner, having students fill the role of patients during these activities helps them to become sensitive to the patient perspective. Additionally, active participation and repetition reinforce learning. Therefore, the UC Physician Assistant Program:

- Requires the participation of students as human subjects during selected courses of the preclinical phase. We expect students in this Program to willingly participate in all aspects of physical exam and technical skills training in a professional and cooperative manner. At various times, students will be asked to

wear clothing that will easily allow physical examination by another student. Females will be asked to wear a modestly appropriate sports bra and shorts, and males will be asked to wear shorts.
- Requires students to sign a form signifying understanding of this policy and a willingness to abide by it.

Technology Policy

The medical industry is heavily reliant on technology and on practitioners who are proficient in utilizing technology. As a result, the University of Charleston Physician Assistant Program requires extensive utilization of electronic devices and various softwares throughout the curriculum.

The purpose of this policy is twofold: 1) to define minimum technology requirements for students to ensure they are equipped with the hardware and software necessary to facilitate their participation and success in all facets of the program, and 2) to communicate digital etiquette expectations related to utilizing technology in the classroom.

Technology Requirements

Students are required to secure a laptop computer for use during the course of their studies. The laptop computer may be either a Mac or a PC as long as it adheres to the following specifications:

- **Processor:** 1.6 GHz Intel Core i5 or better
- **RAM:** 4 GB or more
- **Storage:** 128 GB or more
- **Display:** 13 inches or larger
- **Battery Life:** 7 hours or longer

The following models adhere to the specifications above and are strongly recommended:

- **Mac Laptops:** (**PLEASE NOTE:** Apple offers an educational discount for students. Make sure to shop via their Education Store to receive the discount.)
  1. 13-inch MacBook Air
  2. 13-inch MacBook Pro

- **PC Laptops:**
  1. HP Folio 13-1020US 13.3-Inch Ultrabook
  2. Sony VAIO T Series SVT13112FXS 13.3-Inch Ultrabook

Students are required to bring their laptops to class with a fully charged battery. Students may bring iPads to class if they wish to use them for taking notes. However, iPads may not serve as a replacement for a laptop.

Microsoft Office software is required. Students with a Mac should have Office for Mac Home and Student 2011 and PC users should have Microsoft Office Home & Student 2010 or better (Home and Business or Professional versions are acceptable).

Students are required to have a personal Dropbox account. For those who are not familiar with Dropbox, a free account can be established by clicking here. Students are encouraged to become comfortable with using Dropbox prior to matriculation. Learn more about Dropbox by clicking here.

Students are required to have a personal Evernote account. For those who are not familiar with Evernote, a free account can be established by clicking here. Students are encouraged to become comfortable with using Evernote prior to matriculation. Learn more about Evernote by clicking here.

Digital Etiquette in the Classroom

Intended Purpose: The University of Charleston Physician Assistant Program is committed to providing an optimal learning environment for all students. Electronic devices serve professional needs. However, they are also typically used for personal

needs. During formal learning experiences, it is expected that students will only use electronic devices for context specific professional learning purposes. In order to mitigate potential distractions, and to facilitate increased individual participation and overall class engagement, the use of electronic devices for the following purposes is prohibited during formal learning experiences:

- Conducting personal business (e.g. email or text messaging)
- Engaging in social media and/or playing video games
- Any other activities that may interfere with an optimal learning environment

Mobile Devices: Mobile devices should remain off or engaged with settings where they will not cause distractions for students and faculty. Students should only use mobile devices in the classroom when directed by faculty for specific learning experiences or when there is a need to research information pertinent to current subject matter.

Laptops and Tablet Devices: Laptops and tablet devices will be used extensively in class, particularly during team-based learning experiences and for taking examinations and quizzes (laptops only). Students may use laptops and tablet devices for these purposes, as a mechanism to take notes, and as tools to research information pertinent to current subject matter.

Violation of Digital Etiquette: Digital etiquette violations are considered unprofessional and may result in formal evaluation of a student's professionalism and remedial action.

Social Media Policy

The use of social media has become increasingly prevalent for both professional and personal purposes. Social media includes internet-based technologies which are used as a means of communication and interaction among its users. Examples of social media include, but are not limited to: Twitter, Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, and YouTube. The purpose of this policy is to encourage students who participate in social media and networking to maintain appropriate standards of conduct as it relates to the University of

Charleston Physician Assistant Program (UCPAP) and professionalism as a physician assistant student.

UC PAP students should understand and adhere to the following guidelines and professional considerations when engaging in social media networking:

- UC PAP Faculty and Staff members are not permitted to extend or accept "friend requests" to/from students.
- Classroom and clinical site training commitments should be respected. Students should not engage in social networking during in-class and on-site clinical time.
- The integrity of the coursework of the UC PAP and student and classroom privacy should be protected. Students should not share questions or answers to assignments, exams, or quizzes via social media.
- Patient privacy must be protected. Students should not share any identifiable patient or clinical information via social media. HIPPA laws apply to all social networking sites.
- Students should ensure accuracy regarding statements made about the UC PAP. Students should not provide false, intentionally inaccurate, or inflammatory comments.
- All laws governing copyright and fair use of copyrighted material must be followed.
- Students should recognize that one's professional reputation can be affected through social networking and therefore be judicious when posting content.

Failure to follow the above stated guidelines may be considered a breach of professional conduct and be subject to disciplinary action.

Dress Standard Policy

The physician assistant program is dedicated to training students to function as respected healthcare professionals. As such, students should understand how to dress in a manner befitting a professional. The purpose of this policy is to outline acceptable dress standards for the University of Charleston Physician Assistant Program (UCPAP).

University of Charleston Physician Assistant students should maintain a neat, clean, and professional appearance during all didactic classes and clinical rotations. Required dress code for the physician assistant program is business casual attire.

- For males, business casual attire includes: slacks or trousers, button front or collared shirts, and socks and shoes. Neckties are not required for daily didactic classes.
- For females, business casual attire includes: dresses or skirts of the appropriate length, slacks, blouses, and appropriate shoes.
- The following items are NOT considered acceptable business casual attire and therefore should be avoided: jeans, shorts, capri's, mini-skirts, tank tops or halter tops, tee shirts, jogging suits or exercise clothing, see through or revealing clothing, hats or caps, flip flops.
- UCPAP approved scrubs are acceptable to wear on lab days during the didactic phase.
- Students are required to wear their white lab coats in lab sessions during the didactic phase and at rotation sites during the clinical phase.
- Open-toe shoes must be avoided during lab sessions of the didactic phase and at clinical rotation sites.
- Other specific dress requirements may be needed for participation in clinical rotation sites and will be addressed prior to the start of the clinical phase. Refer to the Supervised Clinical Practice Experience syllabus for more information regarding student appearance during the clinical rotation phase.

Failure to adhere to dress standards is considered unprofessional and may result in formal evaluation of a student's professionalism. Remedial action, including professionalism probation, may be initiated.