

**SAINT FRANCIS UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF HEALTH SCIENCES
AND EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF PA SCIENCE**



**MASTER OF PA SCIENCE (MPAS) PROGRAM
GENERAL POLICY MANUAL
2024-2025**

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INTRODUCTION AND MISSION STATEMENT/VISION

Introduction

The Physician Assistant Program Student Policy Manual is intended to provide the student with guidelines regarding the Saint Francis University Physician Assistant Program. It is to be viewed as a supplement to the rules, regulations and guidelines that govern you as a student at Saint Francis University. We encourage every student to become familiar with guidelines listed in the University's Student Handbook and the Physician Assistant Policy Manuals. Any questions regarding policies contained within the Physician Assistant General Policy Manual should be directed to the Chair of the Department of Physician Assistant Science. Although every effort has been made to make this manual as complete and up-to-date as possible, it should be recognized that circumstances will occur that the manual does not cover. Changes in the manual will also be necessary due to changes in the Department of Physician Assistant Science. Students will be notified of any changes or additions and when they will take effect.

When a circumstance is not covered by the manual or the interpretation is ambiguous, the Chair of the Department will make the necessary decision or interpretation. The fact that written policies are not in the manual should not be interpreted as an absence of a policy or regulation. If students have questions regarding a situation, they should discuss it with the Chair of the Department of Physician Assistant Science.

The policies and guidelines in this Manual are not intended to supersede the policies of Saint Francis University. When an apparent conflict exists, the student is advised to contact the Department Chair for clarification.

Mission Statement

To educate individuals as physician assistants to provide competent, compassionate, and comprehensive health care as expressed through the Franciscan tradition.

Our Vision

Our faculty, graduates, and students will:

- ◇ Strive for excellence in all academic and professional endeavors
- ◇ Provide for the health care needs of all
- ◇ Provide service to others, especially to the poor and needy
- ◇ Have a reverence for all life
- ◇ Have respect for the uniqueness of individual persons

PROGRESSION STANDARDS FRESHMAN THROUGH JUNIOR

Standard A3.15a b- The program must define, publish, consistently apply and make readily available to students upon admission academic performance and progression information to include: ... any required academic standards...requirements for progression in...the program.

Progression and continuance in the Saint Francis University Master of Physician Assistant Program is based upon scholastic achievement and personal qualities for the professional practice of medicine as a physician assistant. In addition to academic standards for acceptance into the 3+2 PA Program, students must be able to meet the Program's Technical Standards, with or without accommodations, upon admission. Students must continue to meet the academic progression standards, each of the technical standards and abide by policies and procedures in the Program's General Policy Manual throughout the freshman, sophomore, and junior years to progress into the didactic (4th) year of the PA

Program.

Progression Standards for Freshman-Junior Years

1. A maximum of two (2) repeated courses are permitted in the total curriculum of the Physician Assistant Program in the freshman-junior year years.
 - a. A student may repeat up to two (2) courses; however, no course may be repeated more than once. A third repeat of the same course will not be calculated into the student's cumulative or major/science QPA for the Physician Assistant Program.
 - b. If a student passes a science course with a "C" or better grade and elects to repeat it to increase the major/science QPA, the repeated course will count toward the total repeated course limit.
 - c. A withdrawal from ANY course, which a student registers for again in a subsequent semester, will count as a repeated course and will count toward the total repeated course limit. A student who withdraws from courses due to an approved Departmental leave of absence will not have any of the courses from that semester count towards the total repeated course limit.
 - d. A course which is a prerequisite course for a more advanced course in the same discipline may NOT be repeated after a more advanced course has been successfully completed.
2. Receipt of a final grade of an "F" in ANY course with the exception of EXAM 301: Writing Competency Exam is a cause for dismissal from the Physician Assistant Program.

Progression Standards for Each Year

Freshman (Year 01 - These requirements pertain to Fall and Spring semester)

In addition to the Progression Standards for Freshman-Junior Years outlined above, all freshman students must maintain the following academic standards to progress into the sophomore year as a Physician Assistant major:

- 1) Obtain a minimum 3.00 cumulative Q.P.A. at the completion of the spring semester of freshman year, and
- 2) Earn a minimum grade of "C" in all science* courses

Upon completion of the fall semester (freshman year), any student with a cumulative Q.P.A. below 3.00 will automatically be placed on one semester of Physician Assistant Program Academic Probation. If a student fails to obtain a minimum "C" grade in any science* courses during the freshman year, or at the completion of the spring semester (freshman year) falls below the minimum 3.00 cumulative Q.P.A., the student will be dismissed from the Physician Assistant Program.

Sophomore (Year 02 - These requirements pertain to Summer, Fall and Spring semester)

In addition to the Progression Standards for Freshman-Junior Years outlined above, all sophomore students must meet the following academic requirements to progress into the junior year as a Physician Assistant major:

- 1) Maintain a minimum 3.00 cumulative Q.P.A. each semester during the sophomore year, and
- 2) Earn a minimum grade of "B" in all major** courses each semester, and
- 3) Earn a minimum grade of "C" in all science* courses each semester and
- 4) Obtain a minimum 2.666 Q.P.A. ("B-") average in a combined Q.P.A. of BIOL 205/205L and BIOL 206/206L, if taken during the sophomore year and
- 5) Obtain a minimum 3.00 cumulative Q.P.A. for all major** and science* courses by the completion of the spring semester of the sophomore year

If a student fails to obtain a minimum "B" grade in a major** course, minimum "C" grade in a science* course during the sophomore year (including summer), or at the completion of either the fall or spring semester (sophomore year) falls below the minimum 3.00 cumulative Q.P.A., the student will be dismissed from the Physician Assistant Program. Additionally, any student who fails to obtain a minimum 2.666 Q.P.A. ("B-") average in a combined Q.P.A. of BIOL 205/205L and BIOL 206/206L, if taken during the sophomore year, will be dismissed from the Physician Assistant Program. Upon completion of the spring semester (sophomore year), any student with the major**/science* courses cumulative Q.P.A. below 3.00 will be automatically placed on one semester of Physician Assistant Program Academic Probation.

Junior (Year 03 - These requirements pertain to Summer, Fall and Spring semester)

In addition to the Progression Standards for Freshman-Junior Years outlined above, all junior students must maintain the following academic requirements to progress into the didactic year as a Physician Assistant major:

- 1) Obtain a minimum 3.20 cumulative Q.P.A. at the completion of the spring semester of the junior year, and
- 2) Obtain a minimum 3.00 cumulative Q.P.A. for all major** and science* courses by the completion of the spring semester of the junior year, and
- 3) Earn a minimum grade of "B" in all major** courses each semester, and
- 4) Earn a minimum grade of "C" in all science* courses each semester, and
- 5) Obtain a minimum 2.666 Q.P.A. ("B-") average in a combined Q.P.A. of BIOL 205/205L and BIOL 206/206L and
- 6) Provide documentation of 100 hours of health care experience (40 of which must be spent directly shadowing a PA in clinical practice) by the last day of class before final examinations start.

Upon completion of the fall semester (junior year), any student with a cumulative Q.P.A. below 3.20 or the major**/science*courses cumulative Q.P.A. below 3.00 will be automatically placed on one semester of Physician Assistant Program Academic Probation. If a student fails to obtain a minimum "B" grade in a major** course, minimum "C" grade in a science*course during the junior year (including summer), or at the completion of the spring semester (junior year) falls below the minimum 3.20 cumulative Q.P.A. or the major**/science*courses cumulative Q.P.A. is below 3.00, or fails to meet the minimum 2.666 Q.P.A. average ("B-") in a combined Q.P.A. of BIOL 205/205L and BIOL 206/206L, the student will be dismissed from the Physician Assistant Program.

Any junior student who does not provide documentation of 100 hours of health care experience by the end of spring semester (junior year) will be delayed in entering the didactic year by at least one year.

Dismissal from the Physician Assistant Program, during the freshman through junior years, may also result from any of the Causes for Disciplinary Action as listed in the Department of Physician Assistant Sciences Policy Manual (General Information - Personal Policies - Section F).

A student dismissed from the Physician Assistant Program as a freshman, sophomore or junior will need to contact the Office of Advising and Retention to be assigned another major. No seat in the didactic year of the Physician Assistant Program is guaranteed for students who do not meet the minimum progression standards.

All core, science*, introductory physician assistant major**, prerequisite, and professional elective courses must be satisfactorily completed before the student is allowed to progress into the didactic year.

* Science courses: Chemistry 121, Chemistry 122, Biology 111/111 lab, Biology 205/205 lab, Biology 206/206 lab, Biology 214/214 lab

** Major courses: PA 200, PA 201, PA 202, PA 301, PA 302, and PA 303

Prerequisite courses: Psychology 101 and three credits in Mathematics (at least MATH 110 or higher) or any Statistics course

STUDENT TECHNICAL STANDARDS

OBJECTIVE: OPERATIONS, STANDARD A3.13e

"The program must define, publish, consistently apply and make readily available to ... students, policies and procedures to include: any required technical standards for enrollment."

INTRODUCTION from the Accreditation Standards for Physician Assistant Education:

"Physician assistants are academically and clinically prepared to practice medicine on collaborative medical teams. The collaborative medical team is fundamental to the PA profession and enhances the delivery of high-quality health care. Within the collaborative medical team, PAs are medical professionals who diagnose illness, develop and manage treatment plans, prescribe medications, and often serve as a patient's principal healthcare provider. With thousands of

hours of medical training, PAs are versatile and collaborative. PAs practice in every state and in every medical setting and specialty, improving healthcare access and quality.”

Functions performed by physician assistants include, as a minimum, the following general categories of services:

- Evaluation
- Monitoring
- Therapeutic
- Patient Education
- Referral
- Professionalism

To provide the services listed above in a compassionate, competent and efficient manner, students in the PA Program need to be capable of performing the following techniques on their own or with reasonable adaptations:

General Characteristics: The role of the physician assistant demands intelligence, sound judgment, intellectual honesty, appropriate interpersonal skills, and the capacity to respond to emergencies in a calm and reasoned manner.

The student needs to:

- have an attitude of respect for self and others, adherence to the concepts of privilege and confidentiality in communicating with patients, and a commitment to the patient’s welfare
- have the mental capacity and physical abilities to assimilate large amounts of complex information and apply that information in an interpreted fashion to solve clinical problems and formulate therapeutic and diagnostic plans in an accurate and efficient manner
- remain calm and reasoned in a high stress environment and respond quickly and appropriately in emergencies
- consistently display honesty, integrity, empathy, and compassion
- function effectively under stress, making use of available resources to proactively maintain both physical and mental health

History Taking: Initially approach a patient of any age group in any setting to elicit an accurate, detailed history (appropriate to the situation) and record that data in an acceptable fashion.

The student needs to:

- be able to speak and understand English with a fluency level adequate to navigate most patient situations
- have the ability to adjust their level of communication to the patient's level of understanding
- demonstrate interactive verbal and proficient written communication skills
- be able to read and process information from a computer screen and enter information into a computer

Physical Examination: Perform a comprehensive or focused physical examination of a patient of any age, gender or condition in any setting.

The student needs to possess:

- adequate auditory acuity to accurately use a stethoscope, tuning forks, etc.
- adequate visual acuity for inspection techniques and the use of an ophthalmoscope
- adequate depth perception for surgical/technical procedures, and the accurate use of an oto/ophthalmoscope and microscope
- keen tactile sensation for palpation techniques

Diagnostic Skills: Identify, perform, order, and/or interpret, at least to the point of recognizing deviations from the norm, common laboratory, radiologic, cardiographic, and other routine diagnostic procedures used to identify pathophysiologic processes.

The student needs to possess:

- accurate visual and auditory acuity for the interpretation of diagnostic procedures

- the ability to reason through a patient's problem in an orderly fashion
- competency in the integration of didactic skills, as demonstrated by written and practical examinations
- ability to record diagnostic and other findings accurately, efficiently, and clearly

Therapeutic Skills: Performing routine procedures such as injections, immunizations, suturing and wound care, managing simple conditions produced by infection or trauma, assisting in the management of more complex illness and injury, and taking initiative in performing evaluation and therapeutic procedures in response to life-threatening situations.

The student needs to demonstrate:

- flexibility, dexterity, and strength of his/her extremities for use in surgical/technical procedures
- degree of coordination in motor skills is needed to respond to emergency situations quickly and appropriately

An inability to perform any of the above listed tasks or functions at any time after matriculation into the program may lead to a professional evaluation of the student's abilities and potential dismissal from the Physician Assistant Program if suitable accommodation is determined to not be possible.

PROGRAM GOALS AND COMPETENCIES / LEARNING OUTCOMES

GENERAL AREA: SECTION A: ADMINISTRATION from the Accreditation Standards for Physician Assistant Education

OBJECTIVE: OPERATIONS, STANDARD A3.12b

"The program must define, publish and make readily available to enrolled and prospective students general program information to include: evidence of its effectiveness in meeting its goals."

Description of the Profession: The clinical role of physician assistants includes primary and specialty care in medical and surgical practice settings. Professional competencies for physician assistants include the effective and appropriate application of medical knowledge, interpersonal and communication skills, patient care, professionalism, practice-based learning and improvement, systems-based practice, as well as an unwavering commitment to continual learning, professional growth and the collaborative medical team concept, for the benefit of patients and the larger community being served. These competencies are demonstrated within the scope of practice, whether medical or surgical, for each individual physician assistant as that scope is defined by the supervising physician and appropriate to the practice setting.

In keeping with the expectations listed above, graduates will be able to perform the following services in a professional manner that is compassionate, competent, and efficient:

Medical Knowledge:

Graduates will have medical knowledge including an understanding of anatomy and physiology, pathophysiology, patient presentation, differential diagnosis, patient evaluation and management, surgical principles, health promotion and disease prevention to be able to provide competent and comprehensive health care. Graduates will be able to demonstrate core knowledge about established and evolving biomedical and clinical sciences and the application of this knowledge to patient care utilizing an investigatory and analytic thinking approach to clinical situations.

Clinical Competence:

Graduates will have the ability to provide effective patient care that includes assessment, evaluation and management to diverse populations across the life-span in an ethical, compassionate and inter-professionally collaborative manner. Graduates will possess the necessary technical skills as well as clinical reasoning and problem-solving abilities to provide equitable and efficient patient-centered care.

Interpersonal and Communication Skills:

Graduates will possess interpersonal and communication skills including verbal, nonverbal and written that result in effective information exchange with patients, families, physicians, and other health professionals.

Professionalism:

Graduates will be able to demonstrate appropriate academic and professional skills, attributes, attitudes, and behaviors necessary to function as a physician assistant. Graduates will possess an understanding of health policies and delivery systems to promote their participation as health care leaders in identifying solutions to community and professional endeavors, including service to people and communities in need, as expressed through the Franciscan tradition.

Please refer to the Program's web site which discusses the success of the MPAS Program in achieving the goals outlined above.

PROGRAM GRADUATE FUNCTIONS AND TASKS

In keeping with the Program Goals and Competencies / Learning Outcomes listed above, graduates will be able to perform the following functions and tasks in a professional manner that is compassionate, competent, and efficient:

Evaluation: Elicit a detailed and accurate history; perform an appropriate physical examination; order, perform and interpret appropriate diagnostic studies; create a differential diagnosis; develop management plans and record and present data.

Monitoring: Implement patient management plans, complete medical documentation and participate in the provision of continuity of care.

Therapeutic: Perform therapeutic procedures and manage or assist in the management of medical and surgical conditions, which may include assisting surgeons in the conduct of procedures and taking initiative in performing evaluation and therapeutic procedures in response to life-threatening situations.

Patient Education: Counsel patients regarding issues of health care management to include preventive care, compliance with prescribed therapeutic regimens, normal growth and development, family planning, and emotional problems of daily living.

Referral: Identify the referral of patients, who would benefit, to other health care providers or agencies, such as rehabilitative, palliative, and end-of-life care, as appropriate.

Professionalism: Demonstrate essential attributes of a physician assistant, including an attitude of respect for self and others, adherence to the concepts of privilege and confidentiality in communicating with patients and commitment to the patient's welfare.

GENERAL STUDENT INFORMATION

OBJECTIVE #1: PROGRAM PERSONNEL, STANDARDS A2.05e & f

“Principal faculty...must be responsible for, and actively participate in the processes of: e) academic counseling of students and f) assuring the availability of remedial instruction.”

OBJECTIVE #2: OPERATIONS, STANDARD A3.10

“The program must define, publish, make readily available and consistently apply written procedures that provide for timely access and/or referral of students to services addressing personal issues which may impact their progress in the PA program.”

Calculation of Grade Point Averages

For students in the PA program, GPAs (also referred to as Q.P.A.s) are calculated out two places beyond the decimal point, and then truncated. Q.P.A.s will **NOT** be rounded. For example, a Q.P.A. of 2.74999 will be represented as 2.74, and will not be rounded up to 2.75. This is uniform across all years of the program.

Academic Accommodations

To request accommodations for medical or academic needs, students must contact Accessibility Services in the Center for Academic Success (CAS), 814-472-3024. Students seeking accommodations based on documented disabilities will meet with a staff member in CAS, complete a Student Academic Accommodation Request form and submit any required additional documentation to the Accessibility Services Coordinator. Once accommodations have been granted, the student must meet privately with the course coordinator if an undergraduate student, the Academic Coordinator if in the didactic year, or their academic advisor if in the clinical year to make arrangements for the accommodations. Any request for accommodations should be made at the beginning of the semester or as soon as a student is aware of the need. Although accommodations can be initiated at any time during the semester, please be aware that no evaluative measures completed in a course before proper instructor/coordinator notification of need for accommodations will be allowed to be repeated. Additionally, individual courses may have specific requirements regarding the use of accommodation. Students should refer to the appropriate course syllabus for more information.

Student Advising Policy

Each student will be assigned to a faculty advisor within the Department. In keeping with the mission of the University, the goals for academic advising include: clarification of life and career goals, development of suitable educational plans, selection of appropriate courses and other educational experiences, interpretation of institutional requirements, increasing student awareness of educational resources available, evaluation of student progress toward established goals, development of decision-making skills and referral to and use of other institutional and community support services, where appropriate.

The advisor is also available to discuss individual progress in meeting Program requirements. It is suggested that the student take advantage of this service at least once per semester to map their progress. Advisors will make students aware of opportunities to meet, usually around the mid-semester time frame. Students or advisors may schedule meetings at any time, as needed, to deal with situations in a timely fashion. Students must meet with their advisor, in person or virtually, in order to be cleared to register for the upcoming semester. Those students who are spending the semester abroad may communicate with their advisor via email or telephone.

A. Faculty Advisor

Each student is assigned a faculty advisor during each year of the Program. The purpose of the advisor is to:

1. Provide communication between the student and faculty.
2. Assist the student in meeting the educational objectives of the Program and University.
3. Identify additional faculty member(s) or University personnel that will be accessible if a student wishes to discuss a problem of a personal or professional nature.
4. Enable the student to identify materials or services which may help them to achieve the educational objectives of the Program.

Student input is critical for the success of this process. Each person in the Program, advisee and advisor, will have specific responsibilities.

B. Student Responsibilities

1. Honestly discuss areas of strengths and areas for improvement with the advisor.
2. Honestly complete the self-evaluation form, when required.
3. Help plan a course of action to remediate deficiencies and capitalize on strengths.
4. Meet with advisor at least once per semester at a mutually arranged time.
5. Meet with advisor on an as needed basis when issues arise.
6. Make an honest effort to follow the plans devised from the session.

C. Advisor responsibilities

1. Honestly discuss areas of strength and areas for improvement with the student.
2. Help plan a course of action to remediate deficiencies and capitalize on strengths.
3. Offer to meet with student at least once per semester at a mutually arranged time.
4. Meet with student on an as needed basis when issues arise.
5. Apprise students of their options in a given situation.
6. Collect and review appropriate data on student prior to advising session.
7. Make written records of meeting events for student file.
8. Initiate referrals for academic, clinical and/or emotional support to facilitate the student's academic success.
9. Notify appropriate support personnel, as deemed necessary, to safe-guard the health and welfare of everyone involved.

D. Example of Output from Advising Sessions (Not Comprehensive)

- Referral to Center for Academic Success
- Referral to Counseling Center
- Referral to health care provider
- Recommendation to change study habits
- Education on behavior modification
- Development of a specific remediation program
- Arrangement of meeting with program or university tutor
- Recommendation to begin exercise program or other stress reducing activities
- Reexamination of career goals

The advisor will NOT:

1. **SOLVE YOUR PROBLEMS.** That is up to you. They will discuss your problem, help you clarify options and help you devise a plan of action.
2. **ACT AS YOUR MEDICAL PROVIDER.** It is inappropriate for any of the Department of Physician Assistant Sciences faculty to provide a student health care. If you have a medical problem, see the University Student Health Service or the outside provider of your choice, as appropriate to your situation.
3. **ACT AS A COUNSELOR.** If you have problems that require counseling and need the help of a professional counselor, the University Counseling Center is available.
4. **ACT AS A PARENT.** It is your responsibility to see your advisor and schedule a mutually convenient time for midsemester advising. The advisor will not "track down" any student who does not make an appointment after initial notification by the PA Program. It is also your responsibility to act on the plan devised during the session.

The advising session can be a powerful tool for you to use to get the most from your education and in your development as a health professional. The process must be an active one to be effective. Remember that someone from the Program or the University Counseling Center is available at any time during weekdays (8:00 AM to 4:00 PM) to either provide you with help or make arrangements to get you to help in an emergency. In an emergency situation, your advisor or another faculty member can address your concern immediately. For non-emergent problems, make an appointment with your advisor. Please be advised that you can leave a phone message at any time of the day or night at 814-472-3130. For any emergency outside of Program or University Counseling Center office hours, please contact University Police at 814-4723360.

Student Rights

A. Basic Rights

Enrollment in the Physician Assistant Program provides the student with some basic rights.

1. The student has the right to competent, knowledgeable instructors who conduct themselves in a professional manner in their interactions with students in the work setting. Students who have an issue with any faculty member or course should follow the procedures as outlined under the Student Grievance Process in the Academic Policies section below.
2. Classrooms should be able to provide the proper educational environment for student learning. These classrooms or other appropriate facilities should also have available current instructional materials and modern equipment that meets the technical training needs of the physician assistant student, as outlined in the Standards.
3. A classroom environment that is conducive to and compatible with learning must be maintained during all educational activities. Students who disrupt that environment will be asked to leave the classroom or clinical area. Such behavior will also be documented on the student's Professionalism rubric utilized during the didactic and clinical years of the Program. If a student continues to engage in disruptive behavior, disciplinary action may be initiated.

B. Rights to Privacy

1. Students are provided privacy of records, which are protected from access and release by the Federal Privacy Act of 1974.
2. Students are granted access to their own files after completion of a formal request. Students may inspect and review files in the Department of Physician Assistant Sciences office during regular office hours. At no time will information be removed from a student's permanent file. Students will also NOT be allowed to copy, photograph, or otherwise duplicate information found in their file. All evaluations and minutes of meetings such as the Performance Review Committee, become part of the student's permanent record. Students who wish to challenge content of records may submit a written letter to be placed in the student file indicating the student's objection(s) to an entry in their record.
3. Release of student records by the Program (i.e. to potential employers) is granted only upon completion of a Written Consent for Release of Information by the student.
4. Department faculty, Saint Francis University employees, and others who have direct involvement with the educational process of the student are provided access to student file information as appropriate. Such persons may review student records without written consent of the student at the discretion of the Department Chair.

Standards of Professional Conduct for the Physician Assistant Student

GENERAL AREA: SECTION B CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION from the Accreditation Standards for Physician Assistant Education

OBJECTIVE: *STUDENT EVALUATION, STANDARD B4.03e*

“The program must conduct and document a summative evaluation of each student...to verify that each student meets the program competencies required to enter clinical practice, including professional behaviors.”

Rationale:

As stated in the Introduction of the Accreditation Standards for Physician Assistant Education: "The role of the PA demands intelligence, sound judgment, intellectual honesty, appropriate interpersonal skills, and the capacity to respond to emergencies in a calm and reasoned manner. Essential attributes of the graduate PA include an attitude of respect for self and others, adherence to the concepts of privilege and confidentiality in communicating with patients, and a commitment to the patient's welfare.”

In addition, the Competencies for the Physician Assistant Profession lists professionalism as one of the core competencies that a PA should possess. Students need to exhibit respect, compassion and integrity in all interactions that occur within the academic and/or clinical setting. Students should have a commitment to excellence and on-going professional development, and a willingness to uphold ethical principles.

In as much as behavior has a strong practical relation to the substance of primary care, physician assistants should also have a functional understanding of personality development, child development, normal and abnormal responses to stress, psychosomatic manifestations of illness and injury, sexuality, responses to death and dying, and behavioral patterns related to the maintenance or restoration of health. The development of counseling skills is encouraged so as to help patients cope with illness and injury, follow prescribed treatment regimens, and modify attitudes and behaviors to more healthful patterns.

During their educational experience, the student should receive a thorough orientation to the range of responsibilities and functions of physician assistants, the nature of their relationship to physicians and other health care providers and the significance of issues affecting their role. The student should be encouraged to develop basic intellectual and ethical principles essential for gaining and maintaining the trust of professional associates, the support of the community, and the confidences of the patient.

Professional Relationships

Pursuant to the above statements, it is expected that the physician assistant student will maintain an exemplary professional demeanor in their relationships with all University personnel, peers, other members of the medical team, patients, and the public. The following minimum standards will be practiced while interacting with any of the aforementioned groups.

A. PA Student/Peer

As a professional colleague, peers will be accorded due respect in interactions taking place in or outside the classroom/clinical setting.

Students are encouraged to utilize their classmates as a resource in surmounting the challenges of the Program. Sharing experiences with their classmates will allow one to realize the range of experiences and common challenges encountered with this type of training. Many physician assistant students have found that studying in small groups has been a valuable adjunct to their normal study patterns. It is expected that upper-class physician assistant students will provide objective feedback to underclass students on the types and nature of their experiences in a particular phase of the Program.

As a PA student, it is natural that you are excited to share developing medical knowledge with other students on campus. However, in your role as a student learner, it is NOT appropriate to provide medical advice to any University student. If a student approaches you about medical complaints or wants your opinion on a diagnosed or undiagnosed condition, please refer the student to the University's Student Health Center.

B. PA Student/Faculty and Staff

Full time and adjunct members of the faculty meet the qualifications set forth in the Standards and are qualified by experience and training to engage in the educational process. As mentors involved in the students' education, it is expected that students will display respect and courtesy in their interactions with faculty. Departmental staff members provide valuable services to the students and as such, should also be treated with respect. Additionally, faculty and staff in other Departments and offices that provide student support services must be treated in a professional manner.

Students enrolled in the didactic and clinical years of the Physician Assistant Program are considered graduate students by the Department. As such, they are expected to produce work and function at a level commensurate with their education.

Students who have an issue with any faculty or staff member or course should follow the procedures as outlined under the Student Grievance Process in the Academic Policies section below.

C. PA Student/Members of the Medical Team

Each member of the medical team lends a particular expertise to the holistic care of the patient. It should be realized that the physician assistant does not supplant any other team member's role, but complements each role to provide more effective patient care. Thus, each member of the medical team possesses knowledge from which the student may benefit. Each student is not only an ambassador of the Department of Physician Assistant Sciences at Saint Francis University, but of the entire profession. It is important that the student consistently display excellent interpersonal and professional demeanor.

D. PA Student/Patient Contact

In initiating the clinical relationship, the student properly introduces themselves and greets the patient by using an appropriate title. Whenever possible, the student will assume a position suitable to maintaining the same eye level as the patient.

During the entire contact, the physical and emotional comfort of the patient is of paramount importance to the student. By use of verbal and non-verbal cues, the student will transmit an attitude of concern, professionalism, and pleasantness to the patient. All physical barriers will be removed from between the patient and student during the course of the clinical contact, when possible.

The physician assistant student facilitates the interview by adjusting the language to the patient's level of understanding, using attentive postures, verbal and non-verbal language and gestures of understanding. The confidential nature of the information discussed during the interview is recognized by the student.

While performing any physical examination on a patient, the student is careful to explain each step to the patient. The student is constantly alert to verbal and non-verbal cues transmitted by the patient to signal physical or emotional discomfort. The patient's modesty will be maintained at all times, while not compromising exam technique.

As appropriate per setting and preceptor, findings and conclusions are shared by the student with the patient. The patient is encouraged to express any concerns or ask any questions regarding their health status. The student is

careful to encourage the patient to take part in the maintenance of their own health and educate the patient as to the best method to accomplish this. The encounter is ended after the patient has a clear sense of what is going to be done and why. The patient is encouraged to contact their health provider at any time if they have questions.

Professionalism in the Didactic and Clinical Years

Since professionalism is an important component in the role of the practicing physician assistant, during the didactic year, students will be evaluated through the use of a professionalism rubric. Each student will be expected to meet or exceed expectations necessary to demonstrate professionalism in the following areas:

- Integrity/Academic Honesty
- Respect
- Learning community
- Flexibility
- Attendance/Punctuality
- Attire/Appearance

Didactic year students will be evaluated by the faculty and staff throughout the didactic year. The rubric will be completed at mid-semester during the student advising session. Any behaviors not meeting expectations will be reviewed at those times with the student. Didactic-year preceptors will also evaluate student professionalism during each half-day clinical experience. Should unprofessional behavior come to the department's attention, a professionalism rubric may be completed at any time. Additionally, a Performance Review Committee (PRC) meeting may be convened to review any unacceptable student behavior.

Professionalism during the clinical year will be evaluated by the faculty and staff through use of the clinical year professionalism rubric once a semester. It will also be assessed as part of the preceptor evaluation of the student to reflect expected professional behaviors during each clinical rotation. Preceptor evaluations will occur at mid-rotation and at the conclusion of each rotation. In addition, professionalism will be evaluated during clinical year site visits.

Professionalism in the Freshman, Sophomore, and Junior Years

Due to the accelerated nature of the Program and the chosen career path, Physician Assistant students are held to a high standard both on and off campus. Though undergraduate students are not routinely evaluated using the professionalism rubric, any lapses in professionalism may warrant such evaluation by a course instructor, course coordinator, or academic advisor. Additionally, egregious violations may result in the student being required to appear before the Performance Review Committee.

Student Learner Characteristics

Students who successfully accomplish the competencies / learning outcomes of each of the PA courses, including clinical experiences, will share the following characteristics:

- Reporting to all classes, labs, critical thinking/simulation sessions, clinical experiences and scheduled events on time and appropriately prepared to participate in the scheduled activity.
- Completing research on topics utilizing appropriate instructional objectives, prior to lecture, lab, critical thinking/ simulation sessions or clinical experiences.
- Completing all assignments on time and in a thorough manner.
- Utilizing current and evidence-based medicine resources to augment classroom and clinical learning experiences and accomplish learning outcomes.
- Actively participate in the learning process by asking questions to provide clarification of concepts (as needed), solving problems and providing answers to questions posed during scheduled activities.

- Anticipating that all Program sponsored learning experiences are subject to evaluation by written and/or practiced examinations.
- Reviewing performance on written examinations to identify areas of weakness.
- Accepting criticism in a constructive fashion.
- Maintaining a professional demeanor in interactions with university personnel, faculty, lecturers, student peers and clinical preceptors.

Performance Review Committee

The Performance Review Committee (PRC) typically convenes in order to discuss issues regarding a student's ability to meet Program standards. Maintenance of Program standards is important to not only protect the integrity of the Program, but more importantly, safeguard the welfare of patients. Generally, the PRC may be convened at the request of the Department Chair or other faculty to review a student's academic or professional performance, as it relates to their role as a PA student. Students may also be required to appear before the PRC for any University mandated leave of absence/ withdrawal even if only for one semester. Examples of outcomes of the PRC may include dismissal from the PA major, academic probation, deceleration, or other alterations of the student's curriculum plan.

A student may also request an appearance before the Performance Review Committee for the following reasons:

- If the student has concerns about their academic or professional performance. This process would then allow discussion to occur in relation to options the student may have to alter their current curriculum plan.
- To appeal their dismissal from the PA Program. The PRC will heavily weigh the existence of extenuating circumstances that occurred and adversely impacted the student's ability to meet progression standards. Students who have not met the progression standards to move into either the didactic or clinical years of the Program, if readmitted to the PA major, will be required to decelerate at least one year and meet the progression standards prior to progression into the next phase of the Program.
- For didactic year students: After dismissal anytime during a semester for consideration to be allowed to continue with the current semester courses as a non-PA major. This option would be in order to complete the credits needed to graduate with a Bachelor's degree in Health Sciences.

To request a review before the PRC, a student must submit to the Department Chair a written request outlining the reasons why a review is necessary. The PRC would then attempt to meet within five business days of receipt of the written appeal.

All PRC meetings are confidential in nature. The PRC consists of the Department faculty, a university faculty member external to the PA department, and other appropriate members, as deemed necessary by the circumstances. The student will appear before the PRC to discuss the case. Additional attendees, including parents, lawyers or other persons, unless directly involved in the case, will not be allowed to attend the PRC meeting.

All decisions rendered by the PRC will be final and binding. Students may choose to appeal the final PRC decision to the Dean of the School of Health Sciences and Education utilizing the "Student Appeal to the Dean" form. This form will be provided to all students who have an adverse decision upheld by the PRC. This appeal must be made and received in the Dean's Office within five (5) business days of notification of the appeal being denied by the Department.

Any student requesting readmission to the PA Program following dismissal from the major will be considered a new applicant and will need to complete the appropriate admission process.

State Authorization Information for Clinical Experiences

Many states require post-secondary educational institutions to be legally authorized to offer activities, such as internships, clinical or fieldwork experiences, in their state. Saint Francis University is in a continuous process to monitor regulations in states and territories in which it "operates."

Saint Francis University has been approved by the Pennsylvania Department of Education to participate in the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA). As a SARA-approved institution, Saint Francis University is authorized to offer internships, clinical or fieldwork experiences that occur in other SARA states for students enrolled in the University's academic programs (with some limitation). Additional information regarding SARA can be found at [NCSARA](#).

Students that wish to complete an activity such as an internship, clinical or fieldwork experience should consult one of the Program's Clinical Education Coordinators before initializing any contact with a business or agency outside of Pennsylvania. Experiential learning opportunities, such as internships, clinical or field experiences are permitted in SARA states provided that: 1) The University has already obtained all the necessary professional and licensure approvals necessary (if any) to conduct the learning opportunity in that state; and 2) Only 10 students in the same academic program from each institution are physically present simultaneously at a single field placement site, unless a higher number is approved by the University's SARA portal entity, the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Students should consult the [State Authorization Status List](#) for specific information regarding state authorization to find out whether opportunities for internships, clinical or fieldwork experiences are permitted in your home state.

FRESHMAN-JUNIOR YEAR HEALTH CARE EXPERIENCE INFORMATION

CONFIDENTIALITY

Training on HIPAA is covered in PA 201: Introduction to Medicine I. Students are NOT to discuss patient identification or information with others. Disclosing who a student saw while shadowing, with what conditions the patient was diagnosed, and the prognosis of the patient are all violations of confidentiality. In addition, care should be taken to not discuss patient information in public places, even when both parties (ie. student and preceptor) have access to the confidential information.

An appropriate response to a question by a friend or family member is: "I am not permitted to discuss any patient-related information."

OBTAINING HEALTH CARE EXPERIENCE SHADOWING HOURS

When inquiring about shadowing, remember that you are required to obtain hours, but an office or facility is NOT required to provide them for you. You must utilize offices or facilities that will accept you and they have a right to refuse. You are a guest in their setting, and you must behave as such.

Remember to diversify your shadowing (not all 100 hours in the same setting) and start to make connections now. These connections may be beneficial in the future for identifying potential preceptors for the Program to contact if you want to complete rotations near your home or eventually for a potential job, upon graduation. You are not guaranteed housing or preferred locations in the clinical year so these connections can be very beneficial should you desire to complete rotations near your home. Current required rotations for the Program include family

practice, general internal medicine, general pediatrics, women's health, surgery, emergency medicine and behavioral medicine.

HEALTHCARE EXPERIENCE HOURS REQUIREMENTS (Effective Fall 2021)

All students are required to provide documentation of a minimum of 100 hours of healthcare experience by the end of their junior year in the program.

- At least 40 of the required hours must be spent shadowing a physician assistant
- A maximum of 20 hours completed before the beginning of freshman year will be accepted
- Of the remaining 60 hours:
 - There is no limit to the number spent shadowing a PA, MD/DO, Nurse Practitioner, or Nurse Midwife
 - There is no limit to the number spent working as an EMT, paramedic or military medic/hospital corpsman
 - A maximum of 20 hours may be spent working as a Certified Nursing Assistant, Patient Care Technician, shadowing an athletic trainer, physical therapist, podiatrist, optometrist, chiropractor, occupational therapist, or EMS professional
 - A maximum of 10 hours may be spent shadowing a registered nurse (RN), speech pathologist, working as a scribe, or working at a camp for a special needs population

BE ON TIME/EARLY FOR ALL CLINICAL EXPERIENCES

First impressions are very important. Do not cancel a health care shadowing experience that you have set up unless absolutely necessary. Some sites complete significant paperwork for you to be there and you need to uphold all commitments. Please arrive 10-15 minutes early.

PARKING You must park in the designated student area or in a remote area of the parking lot. Do not park in patient areas close to main entrances.

DRESS APPROPRIATELY Please refer to the PA Program dress code, outlined below

DO NOT MEDDLE in other's business/participate in gossip

NO FOUL LANGUAGE OR HARASSMENT, to include physical, sexual, verbal, or emotional.

TELEPHONE/E-MAIL ETIQUETTE

Speak/write clearly and identify yourself. Leave a call-back number or other contact information. Inquire politely about shadowing; do not expect or assume the site will assist.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Do NOT utilize cell phones or other electronics in the clinical setting unless you have received permission from the preceptor.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Do NOT post any patient information or patient experiences you've had on social media. Do not take or post pictures of medical findings. (Refer to the section on "Use of Social Media")

DRESS CODE FOR CLINICAL SITES

Students should maintain a professional appearance and dress appropriately whenever they are representing SFU and the PA profession in any off-campus setting. This includes clinical sites, meetings and special events. Being neatly dressed and well-groomed exemplifies a professional appearance.

The following dress code is intended for freshman, sophomore and junior students who are participating in a healthcare experience. Students in the didactic or clinical years of the Program should refer to the policy manual for their respective year for further guidance on appropriate dress in the clinical setting.

- **CLOTHING: SHOULD NOT BE TIGHT, SHORT, LOW CUT OR EXPOSE THE TRUNK WITH MOVEMENT**

Men are to wear dress pants, shirts and ties. Women are to wear dresses, dress pants or skirts, with blouses, dress shirts or sweaters. Students are NOT to wear such items as jeans, leggings, sweatpants, shorts, cut-offs, sweat shirts, hoodies, T-shirts, tank tops, halter tops, off the shoulder or strapless tops or clothing with rips/tears. Hats are not to be worn.

- **SHOES:** Wear closed toe dress shoes. No tennis shoes, clogs, sandals, flip flops or shoes with heels > 2".

- **JEWELRY:** Watches, wedding bands and/or engagement rings are permissible as appropriate. No excessive bracelets or necklaces. No other visible body piercings. No ear lobe gauging.

- **TATTOOS:** No visible tattoos (must be covered during work hours).

- **PERFUME / AFTER-SHAVE:** No excessive or heavy perfumes or after-shaves/colognes.

- **HAIR:** Must be a natural color. Hair should be clean and arranged so as not to interfere with patient care.

- **STUDENT ID:** Which identifies you as an SFU student should be worn while at the clinical site.

- **NO GUM CHEWING OR USE OF TOBACCO PRODUCTS, TO INCLUDE ELECTRONIC CIGARETTES, WILL BE ALLOWED IN THE CLINICAL SETTING.**

- **PERSONAL USE OF ELECTRONIC MEDIA IS NOT PERMITTED IN THE CLINICAL SETTING.**

* If the clinical site has established policies and practices regarding dress, the site's policies supersede those of the SFU PA Department.

SCHOOL OF HEALTH SCIENCES AND EDUCATION DRUG AND ALCOHOL POLICY

The School of Health Sciences and Education has established a comprehensive drug and alcohol policy in an effort to protect the safety, health, and welfare of patients. This policy will be provided to each student at the beginning of the freshman year and again at the beginning of the didactic year. The policy is also posted in the student center on the learning management system.

ACADEMIC POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Students admitted as freshman PA majors must meet the Program Progression Standards for Freshman through Junior Years, including the technical standards, to remain in the major. While it is expected that all required course work will be completed in the three years prior to the didactic year, extenuating circumstances may exist causing a student to request an extension. A written request must be submitted to the Department Chair for approval. Approval of such requests will be made on a case-by-case basis.

Students who have not met the progression standards to move into the didactic year of the Program, if readmitted to the PA major, will be required to decelerate at least one year and meet the progression standards prior to progression into the didactic (4th) year.

Academic Honesty

The Department follows the University's policy on academic honesty as published in the Student Handbook which is available for review on the SFU website.

Honesty is a core requirement for the profession you have chosen. It is an ethical cornerstone that is required for interpersonal interactions, written and oral communication and all aspects of patient care. Academic honesty is an extension of this and is looked upon as a reflection of your ability to maintain high standards of honesty throughout your development as a physician assistant. Academic honesty is also an essential part of the Saint Francis University experience. Dishonesty in any aspect of the Program is viewed as being unethical and unprofessional as well as being viewed as incompatible with the University's moral tradition. Any violation of academic honesty may bring serious consequences ranging from a score of zero on an assignment, quiz, or exam, to appearance before the Performance Review Committee and dismissal from the Program.

Types of Academic Dishonesty, include but are NOT limited to (Additional examples can be found in the University Student Handbook):

- 1. Collaborating with other students on assignments intended to be done individually and/or with other groups for group assignments, unless permitted by the instructor.**
- 2. Sharing completed and graded assignments with other students in your current courses and/or other PA students in courses that you are currently enrolled in or have completed.**
- 3. Memorizing and reproducing test items.**
- 4. Utilization of another individual or organization's material, without appropriately crediting the source through proper citation documentation, regardless of whether the material is copyrighted.**
- 5. Discussing written or practical examination components with a student who has not yet taken the examination.**
- 6. Cell Phones or other electronic devices:**
 - ▶ Using a phone to take a picture of the exam pages or computer screen
 - ▶ Using a phone to store information from an examination
 - ▶ Text-messaging or emailing examination content
 - ▶ Accessing a file through a phone or smart watch during an exam
 - ▶ Internet searching to look up information online while taking an examination
- 7. Any form of cheat/crib sheets**
- 8. Accessing programs, files or websites during any examination.**
- 9. Having access to examination materials prior to the examination being administered.**
- 10. Writing on body parts, clothing, or other items prior to an assessment that will be present during the assessment.**

11. Copying answers from another student's examination or allowing another student to copy from your examination.

Class Attendance Policies

In keeping with the University's policy on class attendance, students are expected to attend all classes, labs, small group sessions, and required course experiences, as scheduled, as an academic obligation. Completing assignments in a timely manner, being present for examinations, preparing adequately for educational activities and participating in class discussions builds a strong foundation for solid academic performance. Instructors have no inherent obligation to provide make-up opportunities for an absence, unless, in their judgment, the reason for the absence warrants such consideration or it is a university-approved absence, as defined below. If a student is placed on financial hold by the University and is not able to register for courses or attend classes, this may cause a delay in progression within the PA Program resulting in a potential delay in graduation.

The following general rules of attendance for all courses offered by the PA Program will be enforced:

The Program expects each student to attend all classes and designated activities as part of the course requirements. Punctuality and being prepared for each day's class develops professional attributes that will be necessary to future development as a health care provider. Students are expected to be present at the scheduled time ready to begin class participation. Faculty reserve the right to deny access to the classroom for any student that is late to class and to count it as an unexcused absence. Tardiness is disruptive to the classroom environment and demonstrates a lack of professionalism. Repeated incidences of tardiness may lead to the student being required to appear before the Performance Review Committee and potential dismissal from the PA Program.

Students should be aware that scheduled University breaks begin and end the calendar day that is designated by the University. ***It is expected that students will be present for all activities as scheduled the day immediately before and after a break.*** Travel plans should be made accordingly.

Clear communication between the student and course instructor/coordinator about absences from class is imperative. Absences are separated into two categories, excused absences, and unexcused absences. The University also has a system in place to identify undergraduate students that have been absent excessively from classes, to include those offered by other departments. This is outlined in the University's Student Handbook available on my.francis.edu. Students may be reported to the Center for Academic Success for excessive class absences. Any student who adopts a pattern of chronic absenteeism may be dismissed from the University immediately and for the entire semester after the semester of dismissal (Fall and Spring semesters). Any student who is dismissed from the University for attendance issues, must notify the Chair of the PA Program in writing about their dismissal. The Program reserves the right to require the student to appear before the Program's Performance Review Committee. Any student who is dismissed from the University for attendance issues may be required to decelerate, which will cause a delay in progression and graduation, or potential dismissal from the PA Program.

1. Excused Absences

University-Approved Absence

If a student needs to miss class for a military obligation, hospitalization, or medical absence due to a documented disability, they must notify the Director of the Center for Academic Success as well as the program. For consideration of a university-approved absence, the student must present appropriate

verification to the Center for Academic Success. All university-approved absences are considered excused absences.

For university-approved absences, it is the responsibility of the student to contact the individual instructors regarding requests to live-stream and/or record class. All requests are to be made *at least 24 hours* prior to class, if possible, to allow faculty to make proper arrangements.

Examples of University Approved Absences

1. Military obligation
2. Serious illness or injury of the student with prescribed orders not to attend class*
3. Medical absence due to a documented disability*
4. Death of a member of the student's immediate family (defined only as parent, legal guardian, sibling, child, spouse or life partner, grandparent and grandchild)
5. Athletics participation approved through the SFU Athletics Department
6. Participation in a professional conference or meeting

* An absence due to any medical condition of three days or longer must be documented in writing by the student's health care provider to include medical clearance to return to classes and clinical experiences, as applicable.

Planned Absences

While regular attendance is important at all scheduled Program classes and labs, the Department recognizes that, at times, a student may need to be absent. Any student requiring a planned absence must coordinate with the instructor who will be teaching at the time of the absence. If a student will be missing a scheduled examination, notification of a planned absence must be made at least two weeks prior to the exam; whenever possible. The instructor will work with the course coordinator to determine when the exam is to be made up. Once this is determined, it is the student's responsibility to make arrangements with the Testing Center for the make-up examination.

Examples of Planned Absences

- Scheduled appointments (dental, medical, legal, etc.)
- Illness of an immediate family member (spouse, parent, child)
- Death of a family member not included in the University-approved absences; death of anyone other than family (i.e. close friend) will be addressed on an individual basis
- Absence due to special religious holidays
- Attendance at a wedding, graduation, etc.

For planned absences, it is up to the individual instructor to consider requests, on a case-by-case basis, to live-stream or record class. It is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor at least 24 hours in advance, when possible, if they wish to make such a request. The choice by a faculty member to live-stream or record class for a planned absence is solely at their discretion, as there is no requirement to accommodate a request.

Unplanned Absences

Unplanned excused absences from class, including labs, may occur as long as a student who will be late and/or absent from class contacts the course coordinator or instructor each day of their tardiness or absence **prior** to the start of class. This can be done via email.

Any absence or tardiness negatively impacts the student's educational experience. The student remains fully responsible for mastering any missed material. A student who is late for or misses an examination (either due to

acute illness or tardiness) has the responsibility to communicate with the course coordinator and instructor to complete the exam as soon as possible.

For unplanned absences, it is up to the individual instructor to consider, on a case-by-case basis, requests to live-stream or record class. It is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor to make such a request. Faculty are not required to live-stream or record class for unplanned absences.

Examples of Unplanned Absences

- Acute medical illness that is reported prior to the start time
- Tardiness to class that is reported prior to the start time
- Other circumstances beyond the student's control such as weather or transportation-related issues that is reported prior to the start time.

2. Unexcused Absences

An unexcused absence is defined as any absence from **each hour of class** without prior approval from the course instructor/coordinator and/or lack of proper notification from the student in relation to the absence as noted above.

Having three unexcused absences will **result in lowering of the course final grade by one letter grade (A to A-; A- to B+, etc)** for 200 and 300-level PA courses. Further incidents of unexcused absences may result in additional lowering of the course final grade and/or the student appearing before the Performance Review Committee and subsequent dismissal from the Program.

Audio or Video Taping of Lectures

Any student who desires to audio or video tape a lecture must ask permission of the instructor that is presenting the material. It is the instructor's individual prerogative whether to allow any taping of the session that is being presented. Any material that an instructor allows to be recorded is for the express use of the students in that class, and must not be posted or otherwise be made available to those outside of the class unless permission to share it is granted by the instructor.

Student Grievance and Mistreatment Process

GENERAL AREA: SECTION A: ADMINISTRATION from the Accreditation Standards for Physician Assistant Education

OBJECTIVE #1: OPERATIONS, STANDARDS A3.15g

“The program must define, publish, consistently apply and make readily available to students... g) policies and procedures for student grievances and appeals.”

OBJECTIVE #2: OPERATIONS, STANDARD A3.15f

“The program must define, publish, consistently apply and make readily available to students ... f) policies and procedures for allegations of student mistreatment.”

Problem Resolution

Every organization maintains a protocol for the resolution of conflicts that may arise to assure smooth operation. Adherence to these guidelines is necessary for the prompt resolution of issues and to bring

appropriate resources to bear in problem solving. The following steps should be taken in chronological order to address any issue in a course or required experience.

1. Think about the issue, is this something you can solve by changing your approach or considering another option. Clearly define what the issue is.
2. Talk to the faculty member in charge of that experience or the course instructor/coordinator, including Clinical Education Coordinators for clinical rotations, directly. Explain your situation and specifically request a solution or present options. The faculty member directly responsible is most able to address your concern; they are empowered with the most options. MOST problems should be able to be solved at this level.
3. Contact your advisor. Explain what you have done to that point and what the outcomes were. See if they have other suggestions.
4. In the rare instance where the above actions do not result in an acceptable outcome, contact the Department Chair/MPAS Program Director. The Program Director may be able to suggest other options, however, remember that University policy dictates that the faculty member assigned to the course has final say over issues related to their course.
5. Following the final Departmental decision, any student may also choose to appeal to the Dean of the School of Health Sciences, utilizing the “Student Appeal to the Dean” form. This form will be provided to students who have an adverse decision upheld by the Program. This appeal must be made and received in the Dean’s Office within five (5) business days of notification of the final decision of the Department.

Appealing a Grade

The Department follows the University’s rules for appealing a grade. The steps necessary to appeal a grade can be found in the University catalog under the Academic Policy section on my.francis.edu.

Student Mistreatment Procedure

Any accusation of mistreatment of a student is a serious matter, and will be investigated fully. The Department follows the University’s rules for processing any complaints of student mistreatment. Please check the University’s Student Handbook for the policy on student mistreatment which is available for review on my.francis.edu

PERSONAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Transfer Credit Policy for Freshman-Junior Years

A student who enters Saint Francis University directly from high school may transfer credits from other institutions such as College in High School, Advanced Placement Tests, CLEP, PEP and Armed Forces Course Equivalencies as approved by the University. Such credits do not count toward the student’s quality point average at Saint Francis University.

Once a student has matriculated as a freshman in the PA major, the student is not permitted to take any collateral/ prerequisite or professional elective courses required by the PA Program at another institution. All major and collateral/prerequisite and professional elective courses must be taken through Saint Francis University. This also applies to any repeat of a major or collateral/prerequisite or professional elective course. Any course that is not a major, collateral/prerequisite or professional elective course may be taken at another

institution; however, requires permission to do so from the appropriate Department prior to enrolling in the course. Please refer to the University policy in relation to “Transfer of Outside Courses into Saint Francis University” under the Academic Policy section as outlined in the University catalog found on my.francis.edu.

GENERAL AREA: SECTION A: ADMINISTRATION from the Accreditation Standards for Physician Assistant Education.

Withdrawal or Change of Major

OBJECTIVE: OPERATIONS, STANDARD A3.15d

"The program must define, publish, consistently apply and make readily available to students ... : d) policies and procedures for withdrawal...."

Withdrawal from the University

Students contemplating voluntary withdrawal from the University should follow the steps as outlined in the University catalog under the Academic Policy section found on my.francis.edu. The official withdrawal process includes the completion of the official withdrawal form, and clearing of all financial obligations. Any student requesting readmission to the Program following voluntary withdrawal will be considered a new applicant and will need to complete the appropriate admission process to be considered for readmission.

Students who are mandated by the University to withdraw for any length of time from the University must notify the Department Chair in writing of the circumstances surrounding the involuntary withdrawal within three days of the departure from campus. The Program will review such cases and determine if a leave of absence from the Program or appearance before the Program’s Performance Review Committee (refer to page 12) is warranted.

Change of Major

Students who desire to change their major should contact their academic advisor and complete the required form. The process and policy regarding change of major can be found in the University catalog under the Academic Policy section found on my.francis.edu.

Leave of Absence from the University/PA Program

A leave of absence from the Physician Assistant Program is not recommended; however, the Department does recognize that some personal circumstances may give students few options. These are considered by the Department Chair and faculty on an individual basis. Any requests for a leave of absence must be directed to the Department Chair in writing for approval. A leave may be granted for up to one year in length. Students should outline the circumstances for the leave and the duration of the leave to include such items as, first day of absence and expected date of return. If the leave of absence is required for medical reasons, a medical clearance from a health care provider will be required prior to the student’s return. If the leave of absence is due to a military obligation, a copy of the military orders should be attached to the leave request.

If a student requests a leave of absence which is approved by the Department, all requirements for the leave of absence and return to the Program will be outlined in writing for the student. Students that are granted a leave of absence may be required to demonstrate competency on a Program exam upon their return and/or repeat course work. The student will be asked to sign acknowledging their understanding of these requirements prior to the granting of the leave. Please understand that this does not excuse the student from completing the University leave of absence process or excuse a student from observing the University’s policy on withdrawal from courses/withdrawal from the University.

It will be the student's responsibility to notify the Department Chair in writing of their intent- to- return date and to fulfill any other requirements as outlined in their original leave of absence agreement.

Any student who does not return on their expected date or does not notify the Department of their intention to return in writing, will be considered withdrawn from the Program and forfeit their seat in the class. If an extension of the return date is needed, the student must submit in writing a request to the Department Chair. The Department faculty will review the request and decide whether to allow the extension. Students are advised to consider all academic and personal factors that will be affected by a leave of absence prior to making a request, including financial aid and the University's policy on withdrawal from courses/withdrawal from the University.

Refund of Tuition and Fees

OBJECTIVE: OPERATIONS, STANDARD A1.02k

"The sponsoring institution is responsible for k) defining, publishing, making readily available and consistently applying to students its policies and procedures for refunds of tuition and fees."

All students who withdraw from a class or withdraw from the University are subject to payment refunds as outlined in the University catalog found on my.francis.edu. Please refer to the University catalog for specifics regarding the percentage of refund based on time of withdrawal.

Employment While in the Program

OBJECTIVE #1: OPERATIONS, STANDARD A3.15e

"The program must define, publish, consistently apply and make readily available to students upon admission...: e) policy for student employment while enrolled in the program."

OBJECTIVE #2: OPERATIONS, STANDARD A3.04

"PA students must not be required to work for the program."

OBJECTIVE #3: OPERATIONS, STANDARD A3.05a & b

"Students must not substitute for or function as instructional faculty and clinical or administrative staff."

The Faculty does not advise having outside employment while in the didactic and clinical phase of the MPAS Program. Faculty recognize employment may be a requirement for some students who have financial obligations. However, it is important to understand that Program obligations will not be altered due to a student's work schedule or obligations. It is further expected that work obligations will not interfere with the student's learning progress or responsibilities while in the Program. The Department also discourages the student from working at the same site where they are completing clinical rotations.

Physician assistant majors are not required to work for the PA Program. Although students may volunteer to work for the Department as a peer tutor, student workers will not substitute for faculty or administrative and technical support staff. During the supervised clinical practical experiences, students will not substitute for clinical or administrative staff. Any student on a clinical experience who is being required to primarily fulfill job duties of a certified physician assistant or administrative staff person must notify the appropriate Clinical Education Coordinator of the situation. Each report will be fully investigated by the Program and suitable action will be taken.

Mental Health and Substance Abuse Resources

GENERAL AREA: SECTION A: ADMINISTRATION from the Accreditation Standards for Physician Assistant Education

OBJECTIVE: OPERATIONS, STANDARD A3.10

“The program must define, publish, make readily available and consistently apply written procedures that provide for timely access and/or referral of students to services addressing personal issues which may impact their progress in the PA program.”

The stresses of a demanding program such as the Physician Assistant Program may cause the student to suffer from symptoms of emotional distress. The following are resources that may provide assistance:

Identification and Prevention:

1. Faculty Advisor conference per semester or as needed
2. Discussion and observation by community preceptors
3. Discussion with and observation by Department faculty
4. Regular discussion in Departmental meetings

Treatment Methodology:

1. Individual counseling from the University Center for Well-Being
2. Student Health Center
3. Use of community resources, such as:
 - UPMC Altoona Center for Behavioral Health. . . .814-889-2141
 - UPMC Altoona Community Crisis Center....814-889-2279 (800-540-4690)
 - Cambria County Crisis Center814-535-8531 (877-268-9463)
 - Or other area psychiatrists or psychologists of the student's choice.

Should the student be directed to seek psychiatric or psychological services or other counseling by the Department Chair, the student may be required to present documentation of attendance at said sessions and/or submit a letter of certification of fitness to return to their role as a physician assistant student.

Saint Francis University Center for Well-Being and Student Health Center are available free of charge to all full-time students. Students are responsible to provide payment for services rendered by agencies outside of Saint Francis University.

Causes for Disciplinary Action and Potential Dismissal from the Program

OBJECTIVE: OPERATIONS, STANDARD A3.15d

"The program must define, publish, consistently apply and make readily available to students ... : d) policies and procedures for ... dismissal.”

All of the following offenses are serious violations of conduct and will engender swift disciplinary action or possible dismissal from the Program. This list is not intended to be comprehensive.

1. Cheating or plagiarism.
2. Forgery; altering or misuse of Department and/or medical documents or knowingly furnishing false information.

3. Misrepresentation of oneself as a graduate of the Program or in a capacity which exceeds the student's level of training.
4. Obstruction or disruption of the educational process or other University functions while on or off University property.
5. Physical or verbal abuse or the threat of physical violence against a University member or member's family.
6. Entry into an unauthorized area of University property or the property of a University member.
7. Theft or non-accidental damage to University property.
8. Possession of explosives, dangerous chemicals, or deadly weapons on University property without proper authorization.
9. Engaging in lewd, indecent, or obscene behavior on University property or at a University sponsored event or clinical site.
10. Improper use, possession, sale or provision to others of controlled or unlawful substances.
11. Soliciting or assisting another to do any act which could subject a student to discipline as cited in this section.
12. Presenting a danger to patients due to severe deficiencies in patient care.
13. Exhibiting behaviors that do not reflect the philosophy of the Department and that are considered by the faculty to be actions unbecoming of a St. Francis University Physician Assistant student.
14. Violating the University's or Department's Policy on Academic Honesty.
15. Suspension by the Office of Student Development.

Use of Social Media

Many forms of social media exist in society today. While there are distinct advantages to staying connected and informed, it is essential that the use of this media does not bring harm.

Harm to self – All students in the PA Program share the same goal, to become a respected member of the physician assistant profession. Posting inappropriate content in an open forum can negatively impact this goal. In recent years, it has become commonplace for employers to conduct a web search in an attempt to learn more about prospective employees. Inappropriate photos or comments posted for all to see can mean the difference between finding a good job and unemployment.

Harm to the Department – Saint Francis University MPAS Program has maintained an excellent relationship with the surrounding community for many years. There are many medical professionals in the surrounding area who go to great lengths to offer their expertise and skills, both by lecturing during the didactic year and/or by precepting didactic and clinical year students. The posting of defamatory comments about these individuals, their staffs or their facilities as well as any Program faculty and staff, could potentially cause great damage to the strong relationship that has been forged over the years. This, in turn, could deter their future involvement with the PA Program, as well as that of their colleagues. Should a student have a negative

experience with any guest lecturer, clinical preceptor, Department faculty or staff member, it should be brought to the immediate attention of the Department Chair.

Harm to Patients – While it is human nature to want to share interesting experiences, a patient’s right to privacy must be protected at all times. In accordance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), patient information such as name or address must NOT be shared. It is, however, permissible to share a small amount of information which is not so specific as to identify the patient in question. For example, it would be inappropriate for a student to post and/or announce “I saw a 96 year-old patient at Windber Hospital yesterday and he has colon cancer.” However, if you remove identifying characteristics such as, “I saw a patient with colon cancer;” this could be an acceptable posting. If a student is uncertain about a particular scenario, they should speak with their academic advisor.

These guidelines on social media are simply meant to clarify and not to supersede those of the University.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE PA PROFESSION

Competencies for the Physician Assistant Profession

Competencies for the Physician Assistant Profession resulted from a collaborative effort by the National Commission on Certification of Physicians Assistants (NCCPA), Accreditation Review Commission for Education of the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA), the Physician Assistant Education Association (PAEA), and the American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA).

This document contains a set of basic competencies that all physician assistants are expected to acquire, develop and maintain throughout their career. The professional competencies discuss the categories of medical knowledge, interpersonal and communication skills, patient care, professionalism, practice-based learning and improvement and systems-based practice. This document should be read for further understanding of the life-long competencies expected from you for your chosen profession.

This document may be accessed at:

<https://paeonline.org/our-work/current-issues/competencies-for-the-pa-profession>

<https://www.nccpa.net/resources/competencies-for-the-physician-assistant-profession/>

NCCPA Task Areas

The National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA) is the regulatory body for preparation and administration of the Physician Assistant National Certifying Examination (PANCE) exam. The Task areas include knowledge and cognitive skills areas that are identified as important to PA practice. The didactic and clinical phase curriculum is designed to ensure exposure to each of these vital task areas which include:

- history taking and performing physical examinations
- using laboratory and diagnostic studies
- formulating most likely diagnosis
- health maintenance
- clinical intervention
- pharmaceutical therapeutics

- applying basic science concepts

For a more detailed description regarding the knowledge and cognitive skills for each of the above areas, please review the information at the following link:

[NCCPA Tasks](#)

NCCPA Organ System Disease List

The NCCPA also maintains a list of organ systems that serve as a guide of diseases, disorders and medical assessments that provide a basis for examination preparation. The didactic and clinical phase curriculum is designed to ensure exposure across all organ systems to include the majority of the specific entities outlined in this detailed listing.

The following provides a link to the full document and should be read for further understanding of the depth and breadth of knowledge that will be expected from you during the didactic and clinical phase of the Program as well as for life-long learning as a graduate.

[NCCPA Organ Systems](#)

Professional Agencies and Regulatory Bodies

A. American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA)

The AAPA is the national professional organization of Physician Assistants. Its membership includes graduate and student physician assistants as well as affiliate membership for physicians and physician assistant educators. The Academy provides a wide range of services for its members from representation before federal & state governments & health related organizations, public education, pamphlets and brochures, insurance and financial programs, and employment assistance. Student membership is highly recommended and currently consists of a flat membership fee that provides membership until four months after graduation. Please see the AAPA Web site at www.aapa.org for a complete description of fees, services and benefits.

B. Pennsylvania Society of Physician Assistants (PSPA)

The PSPA is a state constituent Chapter of the AAPA. Currently there are fifty-eight constituent chapters. The state Physician Assistant Society works in concert with the national American Academy of Physician Assistants to further issues concerning all Physician Assistants.

Student membership is available in the PSPA Society. As a student attending a Pennsylvania school, you are strongly encouraged to join the PSPA. Membership benefits include reduced student rate for the October state conference, eligibility to become one of two student members on the PSPA board and eligibility for a scholarship offered in the final year of physician assistant training. Please see the PSPA Web site at www.pspa.net for further information.

C. National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA)

All graduates of Physician Assistant Program's accredited by the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant, Inc (ARC-PA) are eligible to sit for the national boards offered by the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA).

The NCCPA offers the Physician Assistant National Certifying Examination (PANCE) exam. PANCE is a 300-question, multiple-choice exam that must be passed in order to gain licensure in all states. This examination is offered 50 weeks out of the year and is administered in a computer-generated format.

Please see the NCCPA Web site at www.nccpa.net for further information.

D. State Registration

The majority of states have state regulations governing Physician Assistants. The Graduate Services section of the Department's Web site contains information about and Web links in regard to state registration.

Most states require registration through a State Board of Medical Licensure prior to the start of employment. Students are encouraged to check with the specific State Board of Medicine for the state in which they desire to practice to check current requirements and learn how to apply.

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