



MASSACHUSETTS COLLEGE of PHARMACY
and HEALTH SCIENCES

MCPHS-Boston PA Program Policies and Procedures

In accordance with the accreditation standards established by the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA), Physician Assistant programs are required to make certain policies and procedures readily available to prospective students. The policies contained in this document represent those most relevant to individuals considering application to the MCPHS Physician Assistant Program.

These selected policies are provided to promote transparency and to help applicants understand the expectations, standards, and principles that guide the student experience within the Program. While this document highlights key policies required for public access, it does not include every policy governing enrolled students. The complete set of Program policies and procedures is available to matriculated students through internal university platforms and may be reviewed by others upon request.

The MCPHS Physician Assistant Program remains committed to fairness, professionalism, and the highest standards of academic and clinical education.

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Academic Policies

Requirements for Program Completion

In order to graduate from the Program, students must successfully and sufficiently fulfill the following requirements:

- a. Pass Medical Terminology Competency (required to progress into the second didactic year)
- b. Successfully complete PA Prep Academy, a PA Preparatory course through PA EXCEL (required to progress into the second didactic year)
- c. Maintain a minimum 2.85 GPA
- d. Pass all required didactic courses
- e. Pass all required clinical rotations
- f. Pass the End of Curriculum Exam (a comprehensive written summative examination)
- g. Pass the Summative Skills Exam (a summative clinical skills examination)
- h. Complete the Procedures and Skills Log which prove competency in all listed procedures and skills. This is uploaded to Blackboard. Complete the Patient Encounter Logging which documents the student has completed the minimum number of patient encounters in each discipline. This is done in EValue.
- i. Fulfill any other University requirements

Deadlines for Program Completion

All students must complete all didactic and clinical year phases of the PA Program within five years from the matriculation date in the PA Program. Failure to complete the course of study in five years may result in dismissal from the PA Program.

Standards to Maintain Enrollment and Progress in the Curriculum

In order to maintain enrollment and progress through the three-year MCPHS-Boston PA curriculum, a student must be in good Academic Standing. Failure to maintain good Academic Standing will result in a student being placed on Academic Probation which may delay academic progression through deceleration or, in the worst-case scenario, result in dismissal from the program and/or University. Below are PA Program-specific guidelines related to Academic Standing and Academic Probation which are consistent with University standards.

Academic Standing

Students who do not meet the minimum academic requirements of the Program as outlined above will be referred to the Academic Standing Committee (ASC) at the conclusion of the semester in which the lapse in good standing has occurred. The ASC will consider the PA Program and University policies on progress and remediation to make a recommendation to the Program Director as to the appropriate course of action. The ASC may recommend academic probation, remediation, deceleration, or dismissal from the Program. The Program Director will inform the students of their disposition.

Good Academic Standing Requirements

- a. To remain in Good Academic Standing in the PA Program, a student must maintain a cumulative professional GPA (cpGPA) of ≥ 2.85 on a 4.0 scale and the student must pass all courses in each semester.
- b. As per University policy students who do not maintain an cpGPA of ≥ 2.85 will be referred to the Academic Standing Committee (ASC) at the end of each semester when this occurs. All students with an cpGPA < 2.85 , will, at the least be placed on Academic Probation (AP) and will receive a letter of Academic Standing from the Program Director including conditions of probation. These requirements are developed in accordance with the PA Program Progress and Remediation policies and University policies.
- c. As per University policy, ASC will review each student's academic record at the end of each semester to determine their academic standing and progression recommendations.
- d. The first semester on AP is defined as the semester that follows the ASC meeting wherein the student was placed on AP. For example, if a first-year PA student has an cpGPA of 2.5 at the end of the fall semester and if they are allowed to progress, their first semester on Academic Probation will be the spring semester of their first year.

Academic Probation

Students who do not meet program progression requirements will be placed on Academic Probation. A student on Academic Probation is required to make improvements in performance that are specified in the terms and conditions developed by the Academic Standing Committee and Program Director. A student is placed on Academic Probation (AP) for the following reasons:

- a. An cpGPA of < 2.85
- b. A course failure irrespective of the student's cpGPA

A student may remain on AP for a second semester if the student's cpGPA does not reach ≥ 2.85 within 1 semester on AP but is moving towards the requirement for the cpGPA > 2.85 and the student otherwise meets the requirements in their Letter of Academic Standing.

If a student fails to make progress towards the required cpGPA of ≥ 2.85 (no improvement or the cpGPA decreases) during their second contiguous semester on AP, and/or the student does not meet all the other requirements in the Letter of Academic Standing, the student may be considered for continued AP into the next semester or may be subject to dismissal or deceleration.

Summer Semester 1 and 2 are not considered "a semester on Academic Probation" for First-Year and Second-Year PA students; the reason for this is a student is not engaged in a full course load during the Summer, only PAS 590 and PAS 591 modules, thus the PA Program does not consider Summer when calculating semesters on Academic Probation for First- and Second-Year PA students. Third-Year students are carrying a full credit load during the Summer Semester on Clinical rotations and thus Summer(s) of clinical rotations are considered in the calculation of semesters on AP.

Return to Good Academic Standing

A student is taken off of AP and returned to good academic standing when all the following conditions are met: The student:

- a. Reaches an cpGPA of ≥ 2.85
- b. Passes all courses including PAS 590 remediation courses (if required)
- c. Adheres to all of the conditions of probation in their Academic Standing Letter.
These requirements may include, but are not limited to, attending office hours, advisor meetings, CASE meetings, tutoring meetings; retaking courses as recommended; successful completion of all subsequent courses and competencies.

Policies and Procedures for Remediation

The purpose of remediation is to provide students with an opportunity to address and improve upon identified deficiencies in knowledge, clinical reasoning, or application of skills, and to encourage meaningful self-reflection on strategies for future success.

Remediation may occur at the assessment level (for specific examinations, assignments, or practical evaluations) or at the course level (when overall performance within a course does not meet established standards).

A critical component of successful remediation is active engagement as a self-directed learner—a quality that is essential not only for this process but also for the development of competent, reflective, and adaptable future healthcare providers.

The following definitions are provided to clarify key terms used in the remediation process.

- **Assessment:** Any graded activity (for example a test, a small group graded activity, a simulation activity, etc.).
- **Assessment Remediation:** a structured plan designed to provide students with additional support and instruction to address specific academic weaknesses or skill gaps that result in an assessment failure. Remediations incorporate both an activity and a Re-Assessment to ensure competency.
- **Course Remediation:** A five-week structured course designed to provide student with additional support and instruction to address specific academic weaknesses or skill gaps that result in a course failure. Remediations incorporate both activities and at least one Re-Assessment to ensure competency.
- **PAS 591:** A no cost/no credit module required of a student when the student fails their first remediation attempt for any assessment.
- **PAS 590:** A 1 credit course required of a student who fails a course.

Students are required to achieve a score of 72.45% or greater on all graded assessments / activities that are worth $\geq 6\%$ of the total weighted course grade. If a student does not achieve a score of $\geq 72.45\%$ on these assessments / activities they will be required to participate in Assessment Remediation.

If a course is a Pass / Fail course, or a PAS 590, students must achieve a score of 80% or greater on all assessment / activities and an overall course grade of 80% or greater to earn a Pass.

Assessment Remediations

Remediation for all failed didactic course assessments includes successfully completing a *Remediation Activity* and passing a *Remediation Re-Assessment* in a PAS 591 module.

- *Remediation activities* are structured activities that allow students to review and improve their knowledge regarding their missed material / topics / Learning Objectives.
- The specific activity is determined by the course coordinator.
- The course coordinator will publish their remediation activity design (designs) and their expectations for remediation in the course syllabus.

- Once the remediation activity is successfully completed, students must take and pass a *Remediation Re-Assessment* that will be in the same format as the original exam / assignment.
- Students will have one attempt at passing the *Remediation Re-Assessment* during the semester.
- Any student who fails the *Remediation Re-Assessment* will move forward in the course, receive a final course grade of “Incomplete” for that course until they successfully pass the PAS 591 module.
- Timing of PAS 591 module will be determined by the course coordinator and must be mutually agreed upon by the student and course coordinator. For second year students, this may delay progression into the Clinical Year.
- All PAS 591 modules must be completed no later than 3 weeks from the start of Summer Session I.
- When a student successfully completes a PAS 591 module, the final course grade of “Incomplete” will be changed to the course grade the student mathematically earned for that course. The PAS 591 module does not impact the course grade nor the student’s GPA.
- All students who fail the PAS 591 module will retain the final course grade of “Incomplete” and will be referred to the Academic Standing Committee. This may affect the student’s progression within the program.

Course Remediations

Remediation for all failed didactic courses includes successfully completing PAS 590.

- PAS 590 courses will be held during the Summer I and/or Summer II sessions only.
- The course coordinator will create a syllabus for each PAS 590.
- PAS 590 courses may include graded assignments, quizzes, and activities at the discretion of the course coordinator.
- All PAS 590 courses are graded with a final grade of either “Pass” or “Fail”.
- The individual assignments, quizzes, activities will be graded numerically. Students must receive a score of 80% or greater on all assignments, quizzes, activities, including the final course grade, in order to receive a “Pass” in a PAS 590.
- When a student successfully completes a PAS 590, the grade earned on the transcript will be replaced with the minimum passing grade which is a “C”.
- A student who fails the PAS 590 will be referred to the Academic Standing Committee.

Policies and Procedures for Deceleration

Students who do not meet the minimum standards for progression may be recommended for deceleration in the Program. Deceleration may occur during any phase of the curriculum and may require repeating PA courses. Individualized curricula may be created based on academic deficiencies. For internal PA Pathway students, deceleration from the first year of the Program may involve returning to the School of Arts & Sciences to complete designated required coursework before returning to the Program.

Policies and Procedures for Withdrawal and Leave of Absence

The PA Program follows the University's policy on student withdrawal and leave of absence. Procedures, requirements, and deadlines related to administrative withdrawal, return from hospitalization, health / medical leave of absence, involuntary leave of absence, course withdrawal and university withdrawal are outlined in the MCPHS University Catalog.

Prospective and current students are encouraged to review this information in detail to understand the implications of withdrawal or a leave of absence on academic standing and program progression. For the full University policy, please visit the [MCPHS University Catalog](#).

Policies and Procedures for Dismissal

The MCPHS Physician Assistant Program adheres to the University's policy on academic dismissal. Criteria, procedures, and appeal processes related to academic dismissal are detailed in the MCPHS University Catalog.

Prospective and current students should review this policy carefully to understand the standards for academic performance and the circumstances that may lead to dismissal from the University. For the full University policy, please visit the [MCPHS University Catalog](#).

Policies and Procedures for Student Appeals

The MCPHS Physician Assistant Program follows the University's established policies and procedures governing student appeals. Students have the right to appeal a variety of academic and administrative decisions, including—but not limited to—those related to grades, academic progression, dismissal, withdrawal, and financial aid determinations.

Because the appeals process may differ depending on the nature of the decision, students and prospective candidates are encouraged to review the detailed University policies that

outline the appropriate procedures and timelines for each type of appeal. Complete information can be found in the [MCPHS University Catalog](#).

Immunization Policies

General Immunization Policy

The University's immunization policy is based on current CDC guidelines and Massachusetts recommendations for health professions. Please see both the University Immunization Policy and the Physician Assistant Studies Immunization Policy in the [MCPHS Student Handbook](#) for the current immunization requirements for PA students. The current requirements for COVID-19 vaccination and testing can be found on the [MCPHS COVID-19 Information website](#).

Immunization Policy Specific to the Clinical Phase of Training

For all clinical rotations, students are responsible for providing a Summary of Immunization Data to the appropriate person(s) at the clinical sites well in advance of the start of the rotation if required.

Students must be in compliance with the University's immunization policies (See MCPHS University Student Handbook) as well as all clinical rotation site policies. Immunizations must be in compliance with CDC guidelines and state mandates. Students will find the names and addresses of the persons who need information listed under the site information for each rotation in E*Value. It is highly recommended that the student have a current copy of all immunization records on hand in case the rotation site does not have the records. The student is responsible for providing the information to the University's vendor (CastleBranch) and clinical sites on time. Failure to do so may result in a delay of the start of the rotation and/or removal from a clinical site if the student is not in compliance.

The clinical sites may require additional physical examinations, immunizations and /or TB testing, over and above what MCPHS University requires of its students. Students must comply with each site's requirements in addition to MCPHS University's requirements. If the student does not comply with the site's requirements, they may be delayed in starting that rotation or removed from the site until compliant. This may cause a delay in their graduation date.

Attendance

During the didactic phase of training, attendance at all on-campus educational activities—including classes or lectures; small group learning sessions; lab sessions; simulation sessions; written, computer-based, or practical examinations; -or other scheduled sessions—is mandatory. Students are expected to be present and participate fully in all program activities unless an absence has been formally approved in advance.

Students are strongly encouraged to secure housing either on campus or within close proximity to the Boston campus of MCPHS University. Travel time to and from campus can be extensive, particularly for those residing outside of the Boston metropolitan area, and the Program does not provide accommodations or alternative attendance options based on commuting challenges or traffic conditions.

Even when individual courses provide access to recorded lectures or other instructional materials, such recordings are intended solely as supplemental learning resources and do not substitute for in-person attendance or participation.

Attendance expectations differ during the clinical phase of training, during which limited accommodations may be made to allow students sufficient travel time to and from away rotation sites.

Travel and Transportation Policies

Policy for Student Travel to Required Rotation Sites

To provide students with exposure to a broad range of patients in a wide variety of practice settings, travel beyond the metropolitan Boston area will be required. Students will be assigned to clinical sites throughout the United States, and some students may elect to participate in an international rotation.

The student will be held responsible for transportation to and from all assigned rotation sites, regardless of their location. In addition, the student is also responsible for any expenses incurred while rotating at the clinical site, including lodging, food, parking, and any other incidentals.

Rotation assignments are made in the mid Spring semester before the Clinical Year begins, however they are always subject to changes based on multiple unpredictable factors. The Clinical Team does their best to allow students time to plan for travel and housing, but some changes may occur at the last minute. If the Clinical Team needs to make an

unexpected change in a rotation assignment, the student will be notified by the Program as soon as possible.

Students assigned to clinical sites located outside of the Boston metropolitan area (“away sites”) may request one day off from rotation to allow for travel to the site at the start of the rotation and/or one day off at the end of the rotation period to return to campus for scheduled Graduate Seminar days. Approval of such requests is not automatic. The Clinical Team will determine, based on the distance and travel requirements, whether the location warrants a full travel day.

International Travel

Physician Assistant students participating in university-sponsored international programs are connected to the Center for International Studies (CIS) for guidance on travel requirements. The CIS aligns immunization guidance with that which is issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for destination-specific travel. Students participating in international programs are responsible for researching and adhering to all vaccination and health requirements published by CDC. Additional information and support are made available through the University's international travel insurance partner, ISOS.

As part of their pre-departure requirements, each student traveler is required to submit to CIS a health clearance form completed by their PCP or comparable healthcare professional. Specific international partners may have additional documentation requirements, communicate additional recommendations or requirements on immunization, and provide further travel information specific to their program and destination(s).

Students preparing to participate in international clinical rotations are encouraged to discuss any potential vaccinations with a qualified travel health professional to insure and safeguard their health while abroad. Students are informed that MCPHS-approved vaccination waivers are subject to host-country review and may not be accepted or may require additional approvals.

Student Employment and Non-Program Activities

Policy for Student Employment while Enrolled

Because the PA Program curriculum is rigorous and requires many hours of study outside of the classroom, PA students are strongly discouraged from working during their time in the PA Program. In addition, due to the demands of clinical rotations, which may require

students to be present on nights, weekends, and holidays, students should not plan to work during their clinical year.

Policy for Student Employment by the Program

PA students are never required to work for the Program, and they must not substitute for or function as a replacement for instructional or clinical faculty or administrative staff.

Use of Students in Clinical Settings

Clinical rotations are designed as educational experiences, not as opportunities for sites to use students as substitutes for clinical or administrative staff. While PA students are expected to participate as active members of the healthcare team—including performing routine tasks such as obtaining vital signs or assisting with patient intake—they should not be used to replace staff or fill staffing shortages.

If a student believes they are being used inappropriately as a substitute for staff, they should contact the Clinical Education Team for guidance and support.

Non-Program Activities During Clinical Training

To meet the demands of the clinical year and successfully complete the rotation experience, students must make their rotations a top priority during the clinical year. It is for this reason that the PA Program strongly discourages students from engaging in any outside, non-program-related activities (e.g., employment, volunteer work) throughout the clinical year. If a student chooses to participate in such outside activities, they must understand that rotation sites will not be assigned or re-structured to accommodate these activities. Furthermore, these non-program-related activities will not be considered when determining the student's ability to attain minimum competencies for the rotation experience.

Other Policies

Policies and Procedures for Processing Student Allegations of Harassment and Mistreatment and Policies and Procedures for Student Grievances

The full procedures for addressing allegations of harassment or mistreatment are available online here: [MCPHS Protection from Discrimination & Harassment](#).

At MCPHS University, we prioritize the safety, dignity and fair treatment of all students and are committed to ensuring that concerns around harassment or mistreatment are promptly addressed.

Clinical Site and Preceptor Solicitation

Students may recommend new rotation sites or preceptors to the program but are never required to find their own rotation sites or preceptors. These recommended rotation sites or preceptors must be approved by the Program Clinical Team and the University before any placement can occur.