

GW Department of Physician Assistant Studies

Technical Standards

The George Washington University Physician Assistant Program considers it essential for all physician assistant students to have the knowledge and skill to function in a variety of clinical settings and to provide a wide spectrum of patient care as required by the curriculum. Therefore, every physician assistant student must master a common body of basic science knowledge and master the principles, knowledge, and procedures of the major required clinical specialty clerkships, including internal medicine, surgery, emergency medicine, pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, psychiatry, and primary (ambulatory) care medicine. This requires that every student have sufficient capacities and abilities in: **Communication, Observation, Motor/Tactile Function, Cognitive/Intellectual Function, and Behavioral and Social Attributes.**

Completion of this program requires that each student independently demonstrates these capabilities continuously throughout enrollment. Surrogates cannot be used to accomplish the essential requirements. Students may not have undue dependence on technology or trained intermediaries. Students are required to acknowledge that they meet these technical standards (outlined more fully below) prior to entry into the Program and prior to beginning the clinical phase.

Communication includes the ability to speak, hear, read, and write sufficiently to achieve adequate exchange of information with other healthcare professionals, patients and their support network.

- The student must have the ability to receive and process auditory information, and speak and write clearly for all communications with patients, their families, and other healthcare professionals.
- The student must communicate effectively through written and electronic media.
- The student must be able to communicate sensitively with patients and their families.
- The student must be able to read sufficiently to comprehend complex medical literature, and convey this information in easy to understand terms.
- The student must be able to perceive forms of non-verbal interpersonal communications including facial expressions, body language, and affect.

Observation includes the ability to perceive, using senses and mental abilities, information presented in both educational and clinical settings. Educational information will be presented through lectures, small groups and one-on-one interactions, as well as written and audiovisual materials.

- The student must possess sufficient sensory (visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory) and mental abilities to accurately perceive information provided in the educational settings. This includes written and audiovisual materials, laboratories, diagnostic images, microscopic and physical examination.
- The student must be able to accurately observe (using visual, auditory, tactile, and/or olfactory senses) a patient's medical condition, including patient affect, up close and at a distance, with and without medical instrumentation. This includes but is not limited to radiography, electrocardiograms, sonograms, monitors and other graphic images.

Motor/Tactile Function

- A student must have sufficient motor function to directly perform palpation, percussion, auscultation, and other diagnostic and therapeutic maneuvers.

- A student must be able to execute movements reasonably required to provide general and emergency medical care to patients. These skills require coordination of fine and gross motor skills, equilibrium and functional sensation.
- A student must have the capability to manipulate equipment and instruments for the performance of basic laboratory tests and procedures.
- A student must have the ability to move oneself from one setting to another and negotiate the patient care environment in a timely fashion.
- A student must have sufficient physical stamina to perform the rigorous course of didactic and clinical study. This includes long periods of sitting, standing and moving which are required for classroom, laboratory, and clinical experiences.

Cognitive/Intellectual Function

- A student must be able to demonstrate cognitive and problem solving skills in an efficient and timely manner in order to meet the Program Competencies. Problem solving is one of the critical skills demanded of physician assistants. It requires all of these intellectual abilities:
 - Comprehension of visual-spatial relationships.
 - Reading and understanding the medical literature and the patient's chart.
 - Learning, measuring, calculating, retrieving, prioritizing, analyzing, organizing, assimilating, integrating, and synthesizing technically detailed and complex information and applying this information appropriately.

Behavioral and Social Attributes

- The student must possess emotional stability for full utilization of her/his intellectual abilities, the exercise of good judgment, and the prompt completion of all responsibilities attendant to both didactic studies and patient care.
- The student must be able to develop mature, sensitive, and effective relationships with patients and their family members, staff and colleagues.
- The student must be able to work collaboratively and effectively as a small group member as well as a health team member.
- The student must have sufficient interpersonal skills to relate positively with people across society, including all ethnic backgrounds, economic levels, sexual orientation, and belief systems.
- The student must possess compassion and concern for others; interest in and motivation for service; and integrity.
- The student must be able to tolerate physically taxing workloads and to function effectively under mentally and emotionally stressful situations.
- The student must be able to adapt to changing environments, to display flexibility, and function in the face of uncertainties inherent in the clinical problems of many patients.
- The student must behave in an ethical and moral manner that is consistent with professional values.
- The student must be able to accept constructive criticism and appropriately respond through modification of her/his behavior.

Reasonable accommodations will be made for applicants with disabilities who can meet the requirements noted above. These accommodations must be accomplished without altering the essential requirements of the PA curriculum. Inability to meet the technical standards throughout Program enrollment will necessitate further review which may delay or terminate progression and/or enrollment in the Program.