ALBANY COLLEGE OF PHARMACY AND HEALTH SCIENCES

PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT STUDIES

Clinical Year PA Student Handbook

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Clinical Year Curriculum

Clinical Rotations (Supervised Clinical Practice Experiences/SCPEs)

The clinical year curriculum provides students with exposure to numerous patients in a wide variety of clinical settings. Students apply the knowledge and skills gained in the didactic phase of the curriculum within eight supervised clinical practice experiences (SCPEs). SCPEs prepare students to deliver quality healthcare to patients. Students will rotate through seven core SCPEs and one elective for a total of eight (8) SCPEs. SCPEs are each five weeks in duration. ***Clinical rotations (SCPEs) may occur throughout the United States***. ***Students are responsible for the cost of travel, housing and living expenses for all rotation locations.*** Students should expect to spend 37.5 hours per week at each clinical rotation experience. Each student will have experience in the inpatient, outpatient, emergency department and operating room environments.

The core rotations include:

1. Internal Medicine
2. Pediatrics
3. Behavioral Health
4. Family Medicine
5. Surgery
6. Emergency Medicine
7. Women's Health

Students will rank their desired clinical sites, and every attempt will be made to accommodate their preferences, but they are not guaranteed.

Students will rank their preferred elective rotation from the following list. Every attempt will be made to accommodate their preferences, but they are not guaranteed.

- Repeat of one of the core rotations, based on availability
- General surgery or a surgical subspecialty, based on availability
- Cardiology
- Critical care
- Dermatology
- Rehabilitation Medicine
- Hematology/Oncology

The clinical year begins in the summer semester in May, and each clinical rotation is 5 weeks in duration and 5 credit hours. There are two rotations in the first clinical year semester and three rotations per semester for the following two semesters for a total of 40 credit hours. Students are expected to attend SCPEs during many of the holidays that are otherwise recognized by the college. The holidays that students in the clinical year are permitted to take include:

1. Memorial Day
2. Independence Day
3. Labor Day
4. Thanksgiving

*Christmas and New Year's Day fall within a scheduled break when the school is closed.

Student-Identified Rotations

PA students are not required to identify or arrange their own clinical rotation sites. However, students may identify new rotation sites if they choose with the approval of the program director. Establishing new affiliation agreements with clinical sites takes time and students who have identified sites on their own should be aware that if the paperwork is not completed in time, they may be required to sit out the rotation, and their graduation may be delayed. International SCPEs are not allowed.

Telehealth

Telehealth is a method of delivering medical care to patients remotely, via telephone or video conference. Telehealth appointments give patients the opportunity to receive timely access to a medical provider without the need to travel to a medical facility. Telehealth is utilized throughout the healthcare system and is prominent in the treatment of behavioral health conditions. It is also commonly used in primary care. Students should expect to encounter telehealth visits during their clinical rotations but no more than 50% of any individual SCPE aside from behavioral health and no more than 20% of the patient encounters in total during the clinical year.

Assessments and Grading of SCPEs

Students will be assessed at each clinical rotation by their preceptor. The final clinical rotation grade for core rotations will include the preceptor's assessment (50%), and the end-of-rotation exam (EORE) score (50%). A professionalism rubric is used for each SCPE and will result in deductions of the final percentage points of the rotation for professionalism infractions. Examples of unprofessional behavior include frequent absences, tardies, leaving early, and treating staff, patients or their family with disrespect. See individual clinical rotation course syllabi for copies of the Preceptor Evaluation of Student Performance (PESP). See Professionalism Policies within the Professionalism section of this handbook. To pass the PESP, students must earn at least 73% and no more than one score of "Needs Development (1)" in any category. A score of "Needs Development (1)" in two or more different categories will result in a course failure (F). ***Students must pass the end-of-rotation exam (EORE) to pass the rotation, regardless of the final calculated course grade.***

The final rotation grade for elective rotations will include the preceptor's assessment (50%), an assignment of a grand-rounds style presentation of a patient encounter (25%), a multiple-choice examination on the specialty (25%) and the professionalism rubric.

Clinical Seminar Courses

Between each clinical rotation, students will attend a didactic course called Clinical Seminar I, II, and III (PAS 671, 672 or 673). Clinical Seminars are zero-credit pass/fail courses that span three days in between each rotation block. They include lectures and other learning opportunities. See associated syllabi.

End-of-Rotation Exams (EOREs)

At the conclusion of each of the core clinical rotations, students will take an End-of-Rotation Exam (EORE) corresponding to the specialty of that rotation. The exams are created by the Physician Assistant Education Association (PAEA). They are standardized; 120 multiple-choice questions that assess students' knowledge of that specialty. Students will be provided with one minute per question to take the exam, as that is the timing of the NCCPA National Certification Exam (PANCE). Students will have the opportunity to take each EORE up to two times. To receive a passing grade on the EOREs, each student must fall within 1.5 standard deviations of the national mean score. Students whose score falls below 1.5 standard deviations of the national mean score will be required to retake the EORE, even if the student earns an overall passing course grade of a B or better. Students ***must*** pass the EORE to pass the rotation. Two failed attempts at any EORE results in a failing course (rotation) grade (F).

The letter grade rubric for clinical rotations is listed below. ***A grade of B or better is required to pass all clinical rotations.***

Percentage Grade	**Letter Grade**
>97	A+
93-97	A
90-92	A-
87-89	B+
83-86	B
< 83	F

During clinical rotations, students will be assigned mid-rotation self-evaluations in which they will reflect on their overall progress during each rotation, and they must submit the evaluation to their preceptor for review. The preceptor will edit the evaluation and write comments as appropriate. Failure of students to complete the mid-rotation evaluations by the designated deadline will be considered a lapse in professionalism and will result in the professionalism rubric being used to reduce the total course grade. The mid-rotation evaluation contains the same questions/content as the final preceptor evaluation of student performance provided at the completion of the rotation. Preceptors are expected to notify the Clinical Coordinator at the time of the mid-rotation evaluation, if any student is at risk of failing the rotation based on the preceptors' evaluation.

Progression and Remediation of Clinical Rotations

Students must pass each clinical rotation with a final course grade of **B** or better. Students will have two attempts to pass the EORE of each core rotation. Students who do not meet these standards will be subject to dismissal and/or deceleration. Students who are allowed to remain in the program after a failed clinical rotation will be required to remediate the rotation. This remediation will include assignments pertaining to the corresponding topics, specific to the deficiencies identified, and multiple-choice assessment(s). If the failing rotation grade includes a failing EORE score, students must retake and pass the EORE corresponding to the rotation specialty. If the preceptor evaluation of the student during the failed rotation is less than 83%, the student will also be required to repeat the rotation,

and this will delay the student's graduation date. Students may repeat each rotation type only once. Students who fail the same rotation speciality twice are subject to dismissal.

PACKRAT Examinations

PACKRAT® is an objective, comprehensive self-assessment tool for students to identify areas of strength and areas for improvement. It is a 225 multiple choice question exam based on NCCPA content blueprint and detailed topic list developed by experienced PA educators and national exam experts, specifically for PA programs. The exam questions are similar to PANCE-style questions and may predict PANCE performance. Students will take two PACKRAT exams (PACKRAT 1 and PACKRAT 2); one at the end of the didactic year, and one at the end of the clinical year. The exams are not included in course grades. Students will be provided with a performance report after each exam to identify areas of strengths and areas of improvement. Students whose PACKRAT 2 score is less than 1.5 standard deviations below the national average, will be identified as at risk of failing PANCE and will receive content remediation and coaching on test-taking strategies. The aggregate scores on PACKRAT are included in the program's self-assessment process.

Technical Standards

Students in the clinical year of the program must possess, at a minimum, technical abilities in five categories: observation, communication, motor, intellectual, and behavior/social. Reasonable accommodation for people with documented disabilities will be considered on an individual basis, but a candidate must be able to perform in an independent manner. The following skills are required with or without accommodations:

Observation: Students must have sufficient capacity to observe in the classroom, the laboratory, and in all varieties of clinical settings. Sensory skills to perform a physical examination are required. Functional vision, hearing, and tactile sensation are required to properly observe a patient's condition and to perform techniques regularly required during a physical examination such as inspection, auscultation, and palpation.

Communication: Students must be able to communicate effectively in both academic and healthcare settings. Candidates must show evidence of effective written, verbal, and non-verbal communication skills. Candidates must be able to communicate effectively with patients to elicit information and provide sufficient patient education. Students must be able to communicate effectively with other healthcare team members to describe a patient's symptoms, objective findings, differential diagnoses, and management plans.

Candidates must be capable of completing accurate and thorough medical records and other documentation in a timely manner.

Motor: Students must be able to participate in basic diagnostic and therapeutic maneuvers and procedures. Candidates must have sufficient motor function, with or without assistive devices, to execute movements reasonably required to properly care for all patients. Candidates must be able to move freely about patient care environments and must be able to move between settings such as classroom buildings, clinics and hospitals. In addition, physical stamina sufficient to complete the rigorous course of clinical study is required. Long periods of sitting, standing, or moving are required in classroom, laboratory, and clinical experiences such as the operating room.

Intellectual: Students must be able to measure, calculate, reason, analyze, and synthesize data and information. Problem-solving, one of the critical skills demanded of PAs, requires all these intellectual abilities. Students must be able to read and understand medical literature. To complete the PA Studies program, students must be able to demonstrate mastery of these skills and the ability to synthesize them in a timely fashion for patient care.

Behavioral and Social Attributes: Students must possess the emotional health and stability required for full utilization of their intellectual abilities. They must exercise good judgment and be able to promptly complete all academic and patient care responsibilities. The ability to develop mature, sensitive, and effective relationships with patients and other members of the healthcare team is essential. Students must be able to function effectively in times of uncertainty or stress. Flexibility, compassion, integrity, motivation, and interpersonal skills are required. Students must be receptive to constructive criticism and manage interpersonal conflict.

Professionalism

Students in the clinical phase of education are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that is professional, respectful, and collaborative. Specifically, students must possess and display the following qualities:

1. Academic Integrity – cheating is not tolerated
2. Accountability – students are expected to take accountability of their academic performance
3. Adaptability - students are expected to be flexible when there are changes in their schedule or assignments
4. Altruism- students are expected to treat patients with compassion and advocacy

5. Commitment to learning- students are expected to study on their own time
6. Confidentiality- students are expected to use discretion when discussing patients
7. Honesty- students are expected to be truthful
8. Respect- students are expected to use language and behaviors that are polite
9. Self-motivation- students are expected to be proactive in their education to take advantage of learning opportunities throughout the clinical year
10. Presentable- students are expected to remain well-kempt, and dress appropriately for the clinical site
11. Punctuality and availability- students are expected to show up on time to clinical rotations and remain available and willing to work until excused by their preceptor or a delegate regardless of the assigned shift hours

Clinical Site Visits

Site visits to each SCPE location will occur by faculty or staff of the program at the initiation of the affiliation agreement and at least every five years. Students who are rotating at a SCPE site during the site visit will be included in the visit to provide feedback. Site visits may be conducted in person or remotely. Additional clinical site visits may be triggered by preceptors, faculty or students.

Graduation Requirements

To be eligible for graduation, students must have completed the following:

1. Pass a medical terminology competency exam
2. Maintain a minimum 3.0 GPA
3. Pass all didactic courses
4. Pass all required supervised clinical practice experiences (SCPEs)
5. Pass the End-of Curriculum Comprehensive Written Examination (EOCE)
6. Pass the Summative Clinical Skills Examination (SSE)
7. Log the minimum number of patient encounters to ensure sufficient exposure to each core specialty (see below for details)
8. Complete any outstanding requirements of the Registrar or Student Financial Services
9. All requirements must be completed within five academic years

Patient Encounter Logging

Students must log their patient encounters for each SCPE. This must be completed by 11:59pm EST on Sunday following the last day of the clinical rotation. Patients will be logged by encounter categories. Students should log **all** their encounters. There are minimum numbers of patient encounters that are required to be eligible for graduation. The same patient may be logged more than once if they fit more than one category. Patient identities must be omitted for confidentiality. Minimum numbers of patient encounters for each category are listed below.

By specialty:

- Outpatient Encounters: 95
- Inpatient Encounters: 65
- Internal Medicine: 100
- Family Medicine: 95
- Emergency Department Encounters: 75
- Behavioral Health Encounters: 45
- Women's Health Encounters:
    - Gynecologic Encounters: 30
    - Prenatal: 10
- Surgical Encounters: 70
    - Preoperative: 20
    - Intraoperative: 25
    - Postoperative: 25

By age:

- Pediatric: 65
    - Infants (ages 0-2): 10
    - Children (ages 3-11): 40
    - Adolescents (ages 12-17): 15
- Adult (ages 18-64): 230
- Elderly (ages 65+): 70

By type:

- Acute: 195
- Chronic: 125
- Emergency: 60
- Preventive: 105

Comprehensive Written Exam (EOCE)

Students must pass the end-of-curriculum comprehensive written exam (EOCE) to graduate from the program. The exam was developed by PAEA. It is a 300-question multiple choice exam that covers material from all aspects of the PA curriculum. The exam will be administered after the 6th clinical rotation block to allow for opportunities to remediate and retake it if a student does not pass the exam on the first attempt. Students will be provided with a report of their performance on the exam to inform them where to focus on studying for a retake and/or the PANCE. Students may take the EOCE a total of two times.

Summative Skills Exam (SSE)

Students must pass a Summative Skills Exam (SSE) to graduate from the program. The Summative Skills Exam is conducted within four months of graduation, and it is administered within the physical exam laboratory. Students will participate in a simulated patient encounter to demonstrate clinical skills, clinical reasoning and problem-solving abilities, interpersonal skills, and professional behaviors. Students will also demonstrate technical skills.

Students will rotate through eight stations.

In the first station, students will simulate a patient encounter by taking a history (interviewing the patient), performing a focused physical examination, choosing and interpreting diagnostic studies, developing a differential diagnosis and a treatment/management plan. The students will be measured in their skills in those areas as well as effective and culturally competent communication and professionalism. Patients may be of any age, and in any clinical setting with any chief complaint.

In each of the remaining seven stations, students will perform one technical skill using manikins and trainers to demonstrate competency. The seven skills are:

- Placement of an Intravenous Line
- Electrocardiography
- Intramuscular Injection
- Nasogastric Tube Placement
- Foley Catheter Placement
- Donning and Doffing of PPE and Scrubbing for a Sterile Procedure
- Repair of a Simple Laceration

Station 1 accounts for 50% of the final examination score, and the seven technical skill stations together account for the remaining 50%.

To pass the Summative Skills Exam, students must earn a final score of at least 73%. A score of "1=Poor" in any category of Station 1 results in automatic failure, as does a score of N = "No" on the critical step of any technical skill station (see technical skills rubrics in Clinical Seminar III syllabus for the steps identified as critical).

The exam will be administered after the 6th clinical rotation block to allow for opportunities to remediate and retake it if a student does not pass the exam on the first attempt. Students who do not pass the exam will be required to remediate their areas of deficiency. Students are allowed to retake the SSE or its sections up to three times.

Student Safety and Wellness

Environmental Hazards

Prior to attending clinical rotations, students will receive training on environmental hazards in the clinical environment including hazardous chemicals, infectious waste, radioactive materials and physical injury. Students will learn methods to prevent exposure to hazardous substances and physical injury. Students will learn to manage chemical spills and leaks, to handle and store cylinders and steps to take when exposed to hazardous substances, and after injury.

Exposure to Hazardous Environmental Substances

If exposed to hazardous substances, students should follow these steps as recommended by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)

1. Remove personal protective equipment.
2. Read the safety data sheet (SDS) pertaining to the substance for guidance.
3. Blot the skin if wet, brush off the skin if it is a solid substance, flush the area copiously with water unless the substance is water reactive.
4. If the eye is exposed, rinse the eye with water or other approved eyewash solution for at least 15minutes.
5. Remove and dispose of contaminated clothing.
6. Alert the preceptor and/or supervisor.
7. Seek medical attention at the Occupational Health office associated with the clinical site, or another medical clinic. Students are responsible for the cost of any associated healthcare.
8. Complete the site and school reporting forms.

Universal Precautions

Prior to attending clinical rotations, students will receive training on universal precautions. This training will include the appropriate methods of preventing the spread of communicable diseases, and handling and disposing of body fluids and body tissues. Students will also learn to handle and dispose of sharps (needles and other tools that penetrate skin). Students are responsible for applying their training in clinical practice during clinical rotations.

Accidental Exposure to Body Fluids

Students should immediately notify their preceptor or another responsible individual if they have been exposed to body fluids via a needle stick or another method. Students should seek medical attention if required and are responsible for the cost of any required healthcare. Common procedures for exposure include immediate washing or rinsing of the exposed area, testing the patient, if consented, for communicable diseases, and may involve testing the student for communicable diseases.

Physical Injury

Physical injury can occur in the healthcare setting due to falls or lifting and twisting and other mechanisms. If a student sustains an injury at a clinical rotation site, the student should notify the preceptor and the Program Director. The student should seek medical attention at the Occupational Health office associated with the clinical site, or another medical clinical or emergency department.

Students are responsible for the cost any healthcare related to injury or exposure.

Student Health and Wellness

The physical and mental health of PA students is essential for ongoing success within the program. Students are encouraged to stay appraised of their health needs and obtain services needed to maintain or improve their health. The program director, medical director, and principal faculty are not allowed to provide medical care to students, except in emergency situations.

Examples of time to seek resources include during times of diminished mental health, such as significant stress, mood changes, sadness or hopelessness, excessive worry, eating and/or sleeping problems, relationship issues, family worries, loss, or a personal struggle or crisis. Students are encouraged to notify a faculty member or the program director in these instances. The program director, medical director and PA principal faculty cannot provide formal mental health counseling to students.

Counseling Services

Students are encouraged to access the Office of Counseling and Wellness to support their emotional health. Counseling services are provided by full-time licensed clinicians. These services are free and are kept strictly confidential.

Call 518-210-5298 to schedule an appointment or see the Office of Counseling and Wellness webpage for additional information. Counseling Services | Albany College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences

Health Insurance

Students are required to possess health insurance. Please see page 11 of the Health Insurance section in the ACPHS Student Handbook. Student-Handbook-Fall-2026-2027.pdf.

Student Health Services

ACPHS Students may access medical services through Russell Sage College's Wellness Center on the Albany and Troy campuses. The health centers offer holistic medical care to students, including sick visits. Services are covered by the ACPHS student health and wellness fee. For more information, refer to the health services webpage Health Services | Albany College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences. The program director, medical director and PA faculty cannot provide health or medical services or medical advice to students.

Student health records are confidential and will not be accessible by the program faculty or staff except for immunizations and specific health screening necessary for clinical rotations.

Professional Liability Insurance

Students are covered by the institution for medical malpractice coverage up to $1,000,000 per claim for amounts students become legally obligated to pay due to a professional liability claim arising from a covered incident and up to $6,000,000 aggregate for all covered claims within the policy period. These insurance policies do not cover students during activities outside of assigned clinical rotations.

Immunization Requirements

Immunization requirements for enrollment at ACPHS include MMR (measles, mumps & rubella), varicella, meningococcal meningitis, and Hepatitis B.

Required immunizations and health screenings for the clinical year of the PA program include: Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria & pertussis), influenza, COVID, and screening for tuberculosis.

Medical exemptions to immunizations will be considered if a licensed physician, physician assistant, nurse practitioner or nurse midwife certifies in writing that the student has a health condition which is a valid contraindication to receiving a specific vaccine.

Religious exemption from immunizations will be considered if in the opinion of the institution, the student holds genuine and sincere religious beliefs which are contrary to the practice of immunization.

Clinical sites may deny student participation if the student is unable to produce proof of immunization, which could result in delayed graduation or the inability to graduate from the program.*

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability (HIPAA)

Federal law precludes those with access to patient medical records or health information from sharing personal medical information with anyone who is not involved in a patient's care without the written, expressed consent of the patient. Students in the program will receive training on HIPAA prior to attending clinical rotations. Students must complete this training to begin clinical rotations. Students must comply with HIPAA laws throughout the clinical year. Non-compliance of HIPAA may result in lawsuits, discharge from the rotation site, and/or dismissal from the program.

Absence Policies

Students are expected to be present for all clinical rotation shifts assigned to them. Students who are absent from a clinical rotation shift must notify the preceptor and the PA program clinical coordinator within 12 hours of the start of the shift. Students will be expected to make up missed shifts. Professionalism is included in the final SCPE grade. Protracted absences, tardiness or leaving early will result in a lower course grade. During inclement weather, students should use their judgment regarding their own safety traveling to rotation sites. If a student deems it unsafe to travel, they are permitted to be absent and must notify the preceptor and the clinical coordinator.

Leave of Absence

Students may request a leave of absence during the clinical year for no less than one rotation block and no longer than one year. Requests for leave of absences must be approved by the program director. The clinical year of the program is intensive and demanding. Students sometimes have competing interests with their personal lives and may benefit from taking time off until they are able to dedicate the time required to attend clinical rotations. See ACPHS LOA Procedure at this link Institutional-Leave-of-Absence-Procedure.pdf, and on page 15 of the college catalog 2026-27-College-Catalog-updated-to-final-doc-091006.pdf.

Student Employment

Students are discouraged from holding employment during the PA program due to the rigorous nature and time commitment required of the program, as students will always be expected to be available for clinical shifts, including nights, weekends and some holidays.

PA students must not substitute for, or function as, instructional faculty, clinical or administrative staff. PA students are not required to work for the program.

Student Identification

Students must always wear a name tag during clinical rotations that is visible and identifies themselves as PA students. Students must always introduce themselves as PA students at clinical sites.

Criminal Background Check

All students are required to undertake federal and state criminal background checks prior to starting clinical rotations. A criminal background may prevent students from attending clinical rotations and may prevent a student from attaining the competencies required to graduate and acquire a license to practice.


ACPHS