



**DEPARTMENT OF MEDICAL SCIENCE**

**PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROGRAM**

**POLICIES AND COMPETENCIES HANDBOOK**

**2024-2026  
Class of 2026**

**(Last Revised 9/30/2024)**

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## **PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION**

The Physician Assistant Program reserves the right in its sole judgment to issue and change rules and regulations and to make changes of any nature in its program, calendar, admission policies, procedures and standards, degree requirements, and academic schedule whenever it is deemed necessary or desirable. This may include without limitations: changes in course content, the rescheduling of classes, canceling of scheduled classes and other academic activities and requiring or offering alternatives in any such case giving such notice as is reasonable and practical under the circumstances.

In addition, the University reserves the right to make whatever changes in admissions requirements, fee charges, tuition, instructors' regulations, and academic programs it deems necessary prior to the start of any class, term, semester. The University also reserves the right to divide, cancel or reschedule classes and supervised clinical practical experiences if factors so require.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of the Arcadia Physician Assistant Program is to successfully educate compassionate and highly qualified medical professionals who are patient-centered and lifelong learners. We are committed to diversity, global awareness, and invested in preparing our students to excel in professionalism, leadership, and service.

## **THE EDUCATIONAL COLLABORATION**

*(A3.09)*

The training program upon which you are about to embark will be challenging and exciting. The best educational experience occurs when students and program personnel work together to achieve the goals of both the student and the program.

Teaching is the primary responsibility of the principal and instructional faculty. It is the faculty's responsibility to promote an environment which is conducive to the mastery of knowledge and skills necessary to enter the PA profession. Although clinicians themselves, faculty (including the Program Director and Medical Director) are NOT permitted to offer medical advice or provide medical treatment, except in an emergency, to students.

Learning is the responsibility of each student. Each student must be aware of the specific technical, academic, and behavioral standards required to successfully complete this program. Students must be able to effectively integrate the information and skills taught in the Program per our [Program Competencies](#). It is necessary for each student to dedicate the time and effort needed for individual success. Any student who experiences difficulty which causes interference with their success should seek assistance from faculty, faculty adviser, course directors, or Program Director.

Physician Assistant training may differ significantly from other educational experiences a student may have previously undertaken. In addition to achieving competence in the application of a significant body of didactic knowledge and psychomotor skills, the student must embody high standards of [professionalism](#) as referenced in this document. The curriculum is designed to assist students in developing an independent and self-directed approach to learning. This is consistent with the expectations of a graduate physician assistant, who will continually expand their knowledge base and expertise.

It is essential for each student to be able to organize, prioritize, and synthesize a large amount of material. Every student must pursue a consistent study routine which allows them to master a vast body of knowledge. Students

will be assessed in their mastery of this knowledge by a variety of methods, to include written, oral, and practical examinations, written research assignments, group projects, and other activities.

All students accepted into the Physician Assistant Program are expected to abide by the regulations set forth by Arcadia University as specified in the Arcadia University [Graduate Academic Policies](#) and the written Policies of the Physician Assistant Program as outlined in this *Handbook* as well as written in the *Clinical Phase Handbook*.

## **ACADEMIC POLICIES AND STANDING**

(A3.15a, A3.15b, A3.15g)

### **Maintaining Good Academic Standing**

The University reserves the right to dismiss a student at any time for unsatisfactory academic performance, academic dishonesty, conduct detrimental to the University, to the welfare of patients, or to the welfare of other students, faculty, or staff. The Department also reserves the right to dismiss a student if it is determined that a student's conduct is not consistent with the professional behavior of a future Physician Assistant. See "Dismissal Appeal Process" on the [Graduate Academic Policies](#) or the [Arcadia University Graduate Forms](#).

Failure to maintain good academic standing may result in dismissal from the program. All courses in the Physician Assistant curriculum are required and sequential. Students must receive a minimum grade of "C" in all courses before progressing in the program.

This is a 24-month program. At the discretion of the program director, students in the clinical phase may take up to a three-month leave of absence only. All degree requirements must be completed within 30 months from the start of the program, any exception to this will be at the discretion of the program.

### **Probation, Dismissal, Withdrawal, Readmission and Deceleration**

(A3.15c, A3.15d)

Academic progress is monitored closely. If a student is identified to be in academic jeopardy, the student may be counseled by the faculty, faculty advisor, the Course Director, the Director of Advising and Mentoring, the Director of Didactic Education, the Assistant Director of Didactic Education, and/or the Program Director.

**Probation.** If a student fails to maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2.70 in any semester, the student will be placed on academic probation. The student must then achieve a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.70 during the probationary semester. Students may be placed on academic probation for demonstration of unprofessional behavior, defined as conduct contrary to the *Minimum Technical Standards for Admission, Continuation, and Graduation* for the PA profession as detailed in this Handbook.

Students on academic probation may not be eligible for participation in international or distant experiences/rotations or to be recipients of certain distinguished honors or awards.

**Dismissal from the Program during the Didactic Phase.** *(Please refer to the Clinical Phase Handbook for academic requirements and causes for dismissal in the clinical phase of the Program.)*

1. If a student fails to obtain a minimum grade of “C” in any course, he/she will be dismissed from the program at the completion of the semester term.
2. Failure to maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.70 for two (2) consecutive semesters will result in the student’s dismissal from the program.
3. During the time of academic probation, subsequent demonstration of unprofessional conduct, defined as conduct contrary to our [Professionalism Policy](#) in this Handbook, will result in dismissal from the program.
4. All students MUST achieve the minimum cumulative GPA of 2.70 to enter the clinical phase of instruction. If this minimum GPA requirement has not been met by the end of the didactic phase, students will not be allowed to enter the clinical phase and will be dismissed from the program.
5. Successful completion of the core competency examination with a score of at least 70% after no more than two attempts (a third attempt is at the discretion of the PA Program Academic Review Committee). Students who do not score at least 70% on the core competency examination after two attempts or three attempts if approved by the PA Program’s Academic Review Committee will be dismissed from the program.

**Withdrawal and Readmission.** The PA Program does not admit students with advanced placement. However, students who have withdrawn or have been dismissed from the program may be readmitted and granted credit for some of the courses they have successfully completed. A student who wishes to formally withdraw from the Program must complete the [Withdraw from University Form](#). Dismissal from the program does not guarantee readmission. The readmission process begins with a student request for readmission which must be submitted to the Program Director no later than **six months** after the date of their dismissal or withdrawal. Students who are dismissed from the program after October 31st of the didactic year, must submit a request for readmission by April 1st of the following year in order to be considered for admission into the next year cohort of students. If a student dismissed after October 31<sup>st</sup> of the didactic year fails to respond by April 1<sup>st</sup> but still responds within the six month time frame, may be considered for admission into the next academic year of the program.

The student’s readmission request must include an explanation of the reasons leading to the student’s dismissal or withdrawal from the program and an articulated plan for overcoming similar or other obstacles to future success. The request for readmission is evaluated by the Physician Assistant Program Academic Review Committee (PAARC) and a decision is made regarding granting readmission. If the decision is made to readmit, the PAARC develops a readmission plan after careful review of the student’s academic record. Plans for remediation address numerous factors including grades, continuity of the academic experience, cohort support, and other pedagogical concerns. The plan is presented to the student requesting readmission. If all parties agree to the terms, an agreement is drawn up and signed by the student. Readmission is not guaranteed; the student must demonstrate an understanding of the obstacles they encountered and a realistic plan for their success as determined by the PAARC, which includes the Program Director.

Any student who is readmitted to the Program will be placed on academic probation as a condition for readmission. The readmitted student will remain on academic probation at the discretion of the PA Program Director.

In the event, the PA Program's Academic Review Committee (PAARC) does not decide to readmit a dismissed student, a dismissed student may appeal to the [University for reconsideration](#).

**Deceleration.** Deceleration refers to a student who remains matriculated in the program but does not remain with their entering cohort. The Program does not offer deceleration to students. Instead, students not meeting academic standards, as outlined in this handbook, are dismissed from the Program, and offered the opportunity to apply for readmission outside of the general applicant pool via the process outlined in the Readmission section above.

### **Tuition Refunds**

*(A1.02k)*

The [refund policy](#) applies only to tuition charges; fees are not refundable. During the fall and spring semesters, students who formally withdraw from one or more courses within the first five weeks of classes are entitled to a refund according to the schedule listed below. Refunds are calculated on the basis of the date on which notification was received by the Registrar's Office.

A student considering withdrawal after the seventh week of a semester is encouraged to contact the Office of Student Accounts in order to obtain a detailed estimate of the financial implications of the withdrawal. This is extremely relevant when a student loan is involved.

### **Successful Completion of Didactic Phase**

To enter the clinical phase of the program, a student must have:

- No course grades below "C"
- A minimum cumulative GPA of 2.70 (B-)
- Successfully completed the core competency examination with a score of at least 70% after no more than two attempts (a third attempt is at the discretion of the PA Program Academic Review Committee)
- Demonstrated appropriate professional attitude and demeanor ([see Ethical and Legal Standards](#))
- Permission of the Physician Assistant Program
- Tuitions/fees paid in full
- Completed and submitted to Student Health Services a satisfactory yearly physical examination and required screenings and immunization updates
- Demonstrated adherence with all required medical screenings and clearances
- Demonstrated maintenance of standards of professional behavior and technical standards
- Current CPR and ACLS certification, not to expire during the clinical phase
- Students must maintain CPR and ACLS certification for the entire clinical phase of the Program.

Many of the program's clinical sites require criminal background and/or child abuse history clearance forms. All students are required to submit to a complete criminal background check, a sexual offender history clearance and drug screen. Students who fail to pass the background/sexual offender check or drug screen may not be allowed to enter or continue in the program. Students may be required to submit to additional drug and / or background testing at the discretion of any clinical site and the PA Program.

## ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

*Academic dishonesty is grounds for immediate dismissal*

The term “academic dishonesty” includes, but is not limited to:

- Receipt or exchange of information (**by any means**) during any examination (online, written, oral or practical).
- Soliciting or obtaining knowledge of test items prior to the administration of examinations, or producing any written record of test items after examinations.
- Preparing written or electronic materials such as examination notes, copies of test items, examination topic item lists etc., following the administration of examinations, regardless of how they are obtained.
- Submission of written assignments as original writing without proper footnoting, citations, and/or referencing.

See the [Code of Academic Responsibility](#) in the Arcadia University Student Handbook for more information.

### **PROFESSIONALISM POLICY (as outlined in the linked document)**

The PA Program is committed to guiding and supporting students as they transition into their roles as practicing clinicians. By thoughtfully aligning the AAPA’s guide to ethical practice for PAs with our program’s core values, we have developed the attached guidance to help students become leaders who consistently demonstrate strong ethical principles in their actions and care for their communities and patients.

## EXAMINATIONS

### **Written Examinations**

Google calendar is used to communicate the didactic year schedule to first year students, including quizzes, examination schedules will be provided at the start of each semester. Once the proctor announces, “time is up,” **NO** additional time will be allowed to continue working on the examination and the exam must be submitted. The proctor determines the seating arrangement for examinations. During examinations, cell phones must be placed in the off or silent position and placed in your bags, away from your desk.

### **Examination Review**

Upon completion of written examinations, the course director(s) will validate exams within seven days in order to post student grades. Students will not be permitted to review a specific examination but may meet with the course director to discuss any topics of concern. Upon completion of the validation of an exam, the course director will provide a summary of the examination validation including any overall topics which the majority of students performed poorly or to clarify questions which allowed for multiple answer responses or provide additional clarity for students. Students may access their own personal strengths, weaknesses and opportunities report through Exemplify (Examsoft) platform and may request a meeting with the course director for further review. Any student scoring lower than 70% on an exam will be required to meet with a course director. Students may be prompted to prepare for this meeting by reviewing various course content in order to demonstrate remediation efforts prior to and during the meeting. Students scoring between 70-75% may choose to meet with the course director and should schedule a meeting with course directors accordingly. Students who score 80% or higher have demonstrated the minimum recommended knowledge base on lecture subject material and are discouraged from meeting with course directors unless the student strongly feels the need to meet to discuss topic material and not a specific question on an examination. All students should be prepared to discuss his/her/their understanding of the material and concepts prior to any meeting with a course director in order to ensure an interactive and purposeful learning experience.



## Practical Examinations

In addition to written examinations, students must pass all practical examinations in Physical Diagnosis I and II as outlined in the course syllabi.

## Missed Exam Policy

**Didactic year:** If a student is absent for a scheduled examination due to an unanticipated catastrophic life event, the student or their designee is required to promptly notify the department. The course director(s), in conjunction with the Director of Didactic Education, and/or Program Director, will determine the accommodation made regarding a make-up examination. In the event of an illness or other obstacle that precludes a student from taking an exam, this will be classified as an unexcused absence and the student is required to promptly notify the course director. The course director(s), in conjunction with the Director of Didactic Education, and/or the Program Director, will determine if a makeup examination will be administered. The maximum exam score a student can obtain for the makeup examination is 70%. Only one makeup examination for an unexcused absence will be granted during the didactic year.

**Clinical year:** If a student is absent for a scheduled examination due to an unanticipated catastrophic life event, the student or their designee is required to promptly notify the department. The clinical coordinator(s), in conjunction with the Director of Clinical Education, Assistant Director of Clinical Education, and/or Program Director, will determine the accommodation made regarding a make-up examination. In the event of an illness or other obstacle that precludes a student from taking an exam, this will be classified as an unexcused absence and the student is required to promptly notify the clinical coordinators. The clinical coordinators, in conjunction with the Director of Clinical Education, Assistant Director of Clinical Education, and/or the Program Director, will determine if and when a makeup examination will be administered. Only one makeup examination for an unexcused absence will be granted during the clinical year.

To notify the Program of an absence or late arrival, email [pattendance@arcadia.edu](mailto:pattendance@arcadia.edu).

## Device Policy for Examinations

At this time students are required to take all Program examinations using a student owned laptop, this device must meet the [University/Computer Recommendations](#). The Program will be using the PAEA End of Rotation Exams, and these will be taken on student-owned laptop computers also. These devices are subject to be searched by faculty should questions regarding academic dishonesty arise.

## Examination Remediation Policy

The remediation process is designed to help struggling students achieve the expected competencies and core academic and technical skills as outlined in each syllabus. Each syllabus with the Physician Assistant Program curriculum outlines the assessments (both formative and summative) for that course, and clearly specifies the passing parameters for each assessment.

Students who do not earn a passing grade on an examination, summative assessment, or Objective Structured Clinical Exam (OSCE) will be **required** to remediate and meet with either the Course Director(s) or the Director of Didactic Education or the Director of Clinical Education or the assistant Director of Didactic Education or the assistant Director of Clinical Education. The faculty member will determine the appropriate remediation plan to include identification of the deficient knowledge and skills, process for correcting the deficiency, and the resulting measurable outcome. Remediation processes may include, but are not limited to, review of the curriculum materials, additional readings or video assignments, self-reflection, and simulation. The process for measuring the outcome of the remediation may include, but is not limited to, retesting of the

content with a different version of the exam, skill proficiency demonstration, and simulation assessment. The remediation plan and outcome will be documented and placed in the student's programmatic file.

Students must pass the remediation with the same minimum passing standard specific in the syllabus for the original assessment. Remediations must be completed within the timeframe specified by the faculty member, otherwise, a professionalism infraction will be recorded in the student's academic record. If the remediation attempt is not successful, the student will be referred to the Physician Assistant Program's Academic Review Committee for further disposition which may include remediation through a different modality.

## FINAL COURSE GRADES

Final course grades are not rounded to the whole number. They are based on a percentage scale of 0-100%:

Grading Criteria	
A	93.45-100%
A-	89.45-93.45%
B+	86.45-89.44%
B	83.45-86.44%
B-	79.45-83.44%
C+	75.45-79.44%
C	70.00-75.44%
F	< 70%

## OFFICE POLICIES

Because of the heavy traffic in our office area, we would like to remind you of the following policies which have been established for the Program offices:

- Students are not permitted to use office telephones, copy machines, fax machines, computers, stationery, or supplies. Program Support Specialists cannot duplicate materials nor do other work for students.
- Students are not permitted to use the office area as a lounge. There are lounges available on the second floor of Brubaker Hall and on the first floor of Easton Hall in Glenside and in the PA Program department at the Christiana campus.
- "Guests" in the classroom are disruptive to effective learning and are discouraged. No "guests" are permitted in the classroom without prior approval from a principal faculty member. If granted permission, all guests must be introduced to the entire class.
- The Program cannot accept or deliver messages or allow students to place or receive phone calls at the PA office, except in an emergency. In addition, the student cannot use the Program address for receipt of personal mail or deliveries (including food items unless prior approval has been granted by a principal faculty member).

## REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS

Arcadia University provides reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. If you require accommodations or other academic supports due to a chronic medical condition, a physical, psychological, psychiatric or learning disability, you should contact [Disability Support Services](#) in the Office of Academic Development (Knight Hall Room 131) at the following numbers: 215-572-2122, 215-572-4686, or 215-572-4086, or [Counseling Services](#) at Heinz Hall Room 38 or call 215-572-2967.

If you have any temporary or chronic medical problems that may impair your ability to provide medical care or pose a risk to yourself, to patients, or to your fellow students, please inform a faculty member immediately.

## **STUDENT SAFETY AND WELLBEING**

Student safety is of utmost importance to the PA Program and University. The PA Program has developed Clearance Guidelines that establish policy all students must follow in order to enter the clinical setting during any phase of PA training. These guidelines were developed based on CDC guidelines and common clinical site requirements outlined in contractual agreements and are posted in the PA Class course in Canvas.

### **Public Safety at the Glenside Campus**

To maintain a safe environment for the University community, the university employs a trained public safety staff at the Glenside campus. [Public Safety](#) Officers patrol the campus 24 hours a day and operate an around-the-clock communications system. The contact number for non-emergent public safety inquiries is 215-572-2800 (ext. 2800 on campus). For emergencies on the Glenside campus, call 215-572-2999 (ext. 2999 from a campus phone).

### **Public Safety at the Christiana Campus**

The Christiana campus main building doors are operated via keypad with unique codes overnight from 6 p.m. – 8 a.m. daily. The building complex is staffed with a security guard. The campus suite main doors are locked 24 hours a day and **require a keycard for access**. Students must use their university issued ID badge to gain access to the Christiana campus. There are 5-closed circuit cameras located throughout the suite and monitored by campus security from the Glenside campus.

- For emergencies on the Christiana campus, call 911
- Call 215-572-2999 for phone escort (public safety will remain on the phone with you until you reach your destination).

### **Medical and Mental Health**

*(A3.09)*

Students may find they need to tend to medical or mental health concerns while enrolled in the PA program. The Program encourages PROMPT attention to these matters, as you cannot properly learn to care for others if your health and wellbeing are compromised.

Students at both the Glenside and Christiana campuses can access medical care through [Student Health Services](#) (215-572-2966) and mental health care through [Student Counseling Services](#) (215-572-2967), both services are located at Heinz Hall. Faculty are not allowed to offer advice, diagnose, or treat any matriculated student for any acute or chronic medical conditions.

In addition to the above support services, students may request to utilize one mental health day per semester per the mental health day policy. Students who do not follow the requirements to request the mental health day may not be granted its approval and could be considered to have an unexcused absence from class. (page 35)

### **COVID-19 Vaccination Policy**

#### **College of Health Sciences Statement Regarding COVID-19 Vaccination for Students**

Most clinical sites that accept students in our Department of Medical Science now require that students receive COVID-19 vaccination prior to attending their site for clinical training; while sites accepting students in our Department of Physical Therapy have required this to a lesser extent, we anticipate that the requirement will only become more prevalent over time. While Arcadia does not currently require COVID-19 vaccination for matriculation, students should be aware that, at present, if they do not receive the vaccine, their options for clinical site placements, and, consequently, pathways for program completion, may be severely limited.

Exemptions based on medical need or sincerely held religious belief may be available at clinical sites, and CHS personnel will support students in seeking an accommodation on these bases from any site to which the student has been assigned to complete their training. However, the University has no authority over outside entities and the policies that they choose to enforce, or decisions made pursuant to those policies. Therefore, Arcadia cannot guarantee that required clinical training experiences will be available for the unvaccinated student to complete their degree.

While the University will attempt to work with students who are unable to get the vaccine for medical or religious reasons in terms of program completion, students must be aware that an inability to participate in clinical experiences will most likely result in their inability to successfully complete clinical phase requirements and therefore not graduate from the College of Health Sciences program in which they are enrolled.

Students who refuse the vaccine for other reasons are not entitled to any programmatic accommodations, including any changes to the clinical year schedule. But any student in the Department of Medical Science has the option to request a maximum 12 week leave of absence during their clinical phase of training as outlined in the Clinical Phase Handbook. Each request will be reviewed by the PA Academic Review Committee (PAARC) with decisions being rendered on an individual basis.

Students should refer to the [University COVID-19 website](#) for the most current information.

### **Exposure to Hazardous Materials and Bloodborne Pathogens**

*(A3.08)*

Students will be exposed to inherent risks while participating in clinical training including possible exposure to blood, tissue or other body or laboratory fluids that may contain human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), hepatitis B virus (HBV) and/or hepatitis C virus (HCV). This policy is based upon the available data and Public Health Service recommendations for postexposure management of health care workers who have occupational exposure that may place them at risk of acquiring HIV and other blood-borne pathogen infection (A3.08).

The following outlines the procedure to follow if exposure to bloodborne pathogens occurs while a student is participating in clinical rotations:

1. Act as quickly as possible.
2. Wash the exposure site thoroughly with soap and water (or water only for mucous membranes).
3. Notify the preceptor of your rotation AND, if applicable, the nursing supervisor who should request source-person clinical information and blood work (e.g., HBsAG, HCV antibody, HIV) unless HIV, HBV and HCV status is already known.
4. The site may require you to complete an incident report.
  - a. Do NOT fill out a workman's comp or employee health claim
5. It is very important to report all exposures and get follow-up care promptly
  - a. This follow up care begins by you going to the nearest emergency department.
  - b. After being seen emergently by a healthcare professional, follow-up with your primary care provider is recommended to determine if you need post-exposure prophylaxis. If you do not have a PCP the insurance plan utilizes the MultiPlan Provider Network and you can contact them for a referral at the following phone number: (800) 557-6794.
6. Notify the PA Program (by contacting a clinical coordinator or the Director of Clinical Education) as soon as possible, no later than the next business day.
7. Send bills directly to your insurance company.
8. Complete the needlestick/splash claim form (Appendix B) and email to Nancy Woehrle at [woehrlen@arcadia.edu](mailto:woehrlen@arcadia.edu). An Arcadia representative will then complete the "Policyholder Representative" signature box and then it will be faxed to [\(972\) 492-4946](tel:(972)492-4946).

- a. Please note you will need to put the policy number on the claim form also: Policy No. N04964366.
- b. If you have any questions, you can use the following phone number: [\(972\) 492-6474](tel:9724926474) to follow up.
- c. This insurance coverage is considered secondary or excess coverage, meaning if your current health insurance does not cover any or all the expenses this plan will reimburse you up to the maximum benefit level (A3.06c).

If you are exposed to bloodborne pathogens while on a clinical training experience during your didactic year, a faculty member will be on premise. Follow steps one and two above and notify the faculty member immediately. They will help you seek emergency care. You will need to seek follow up from a primary care physician and submit your medical bills to your insurance company.

[See the University Health and Safety Plan](#) and [Bloodborne Pathogen Policy](#) ( for additional information on exposure to hazardous materials.

## **Title IX**

*(A1.02j, A3.15f)*

Arcadia University is committed to providing a learning, living, and working environment that is free from discrimination. The University's [Policy Prohibiting Sexual Harassment and Sexual Misconduct](#) details our commitment to preventing and addressing such behavior. We understand the impact that sexual harassment and sexual misconduct can have, and are committed to doing our part to foster an environment that is safe and equitable.

Please know that all faculty on campus are mandatory reporters. This means that if you disclose an experience of sexual harassment or sexual misconduct to us outside of a classroom discussion, a writing assignment, or a University-approved research project, we must share what you have reported to us with Arcadia's Title IX Coordinator. This does not mean that you will have to pursue an investigation, or go through a grievance process. Even if you do not choose these options, the Title IX Office can provide supportive measures and other resources to you. If you or someone you know has experienced sexual harassment or sexual misconduct, please know that you are not alone. If you would like to speak to someone confidentially, confidential resources are provided on the Office of Equity and Civil Rights [OECR website](#).

What is Title IX? [Title IX link](#).

## **GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES**

*(A1.02j)*

Policies for registering a grievance that cannot be addressed with the Program, please visit the [Office of Equity, and Civil Rights \(OECR\)](#).

## **FACULTY ADVISERS**

All students are assigned a faculty adviser and are encouraged to seek assistance when necessary for personal or academic reasons.

## **Letters of Recommendation**

All requests for letters of recommendation should be emailed to the student's advisor. Please fill out the [LOR Request Form](#) and be sure to include all requested information. In addition to the Request Form, you should also include a draft of your letter of recommendation. This draft should include why you feel to meet the qualifications for scholarship, award, clinical position, or residency program. Students must allow a reasonable amount of time for faculty to fulfill this request (typically 10 business days).

## **Credentialing Paperwork:**

Requests for credentialing for employment need to be submitted to: [pacredentialing@arcadia.edu](mailto:pacredentialing@arcadia.edu)

## **CLASS CANCELLATIONS**

**If there is a lecture change/cancellation or a scheduled examination needs to be changed, the class will receive notification by email and/or an announcement via Canvas if the change occurs within two weeks of the scheduled event. The Google calendar will be updated to reflect the change as well.**

## **LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

A leave of absence (up to 12 weeks) will only be granted after successful completion of the didactic phase of the Program. Requests for a leave of absence must be submitted in writing to the PA Program Director and should indicate the reason for the leave and expected duration. The PA Program Director may approve one (1) leave of absence. Granting of a leave of absence is a rare and unusual event reserved only for exceptional circumstances.

In the event of an emergency or tragedy in either the didactic or clinical phase of the program, a student may be granted an excused absence for up to five (5) consecutive and cumulative class days at the discretion of the Program Director. This is not considered a leave of absence.

## **CLASSROOM MAINTENANCE**

Every effort must be made to keep the classroom and student lounge clean. Students may bring food into the classroom in a respectful and responsible manner (allergens, smell, etc) provided it is cleaned up afterwards. If this privilege is abused it will be changed. Beverages are permitted provided they are in covered containers. Consumption of food is to be reserved for break time only. It is disruptive to eat while someone is lecturing in class. When leaving the classroom, any valuables should be taken with you.

## **CHANGE OF NAME, ADDRESS, PHONE**

It is your responsibility to inform the PA Program staff and appropriate University Offices (e.g. Registrar, Business, Public Safety) of any change in name, address, telephone, and Exxat profile. This notification should occur as soon as the name change is in effect.

## **STUDENT IDENTIFICATION**

*(A3.06)*

While at clinical sites, you must clearly identify yourself as a physician assistant student. You must wear your Arcadia issued name tag and a short, white laboratory coat with an Arcadia University PA Program patch to distinguish you from physicians, medical students, and other health professionals. Individual sites may issue and require you to wear their identification badge. If this is the case, you must wear the institution's badge and your university issued name tag unless specifically directed otherwise by the clinical site. Students are also expected to introduce themselves as a "Physician Assistant Student."

## **STUDENT TEACHING**

*(A3.05)*

Students enrolled in the Physician Assistant Program are not permitted to teach components of the program curriculum, although they are expected to make presentations before the class as part of their learning experience and participate in classroom discussion and active learning sessions. Students are encouraged to support their classmates and work collaboratively through study groups and informal peer tutoring.



## **STUDENT WORK POLICY**

*(A3.04, A3.05)*

Due to the intensity of the PA program, students are discouraged from outside employment while enrolled in the PA program. Students are prohibited from applying compensated clinical experience toward academic credit. Students cannot be required to work for the PA Program (A3.04), although they may be selected to voluntarily work for the graduate assistantship program, which serves to support instructional faculty in the classroom and manages the note taking service for PA lectures during the didactic year. Graduate assistantships are a merit-based opportunity offered to students at the time of acceptance into the program.

While in the clinical setting, students may not provide services within a preceptor's practice apart from those rendered as part of the clinical training arranged by the program (A3.05b). Students are not permitted to substitute for faculty, clerical or administrative staff while in the clinical setting. Students may not receive compensation for any work performed within the preceptor's site or practice.

### **Outside Volunteer and Paid Work Experiences**

Students who are involved in volunteer or paid work during their course of study in the PA Program cannot use their affiliation with the Program in any aspect of that job. Volunteer and paid work time cannot be used toward meeting clinical rotation requirements. Work outside the PA Program undertaken by the student, independent of the Program, is not covered by the liability insurance required for clinical work associated with the educational experience of the Program.

## **MINIMUM TECHNICAL STANDARDS FOR PA PROGRAM ADMISSION, CONTINUATION, AND GRADUATION**

[Technical standards](#) are defined as the attributes considered necessary for students to complete their education and training and subsequently enter clinical practice. These standards are prerequisites for entrance to, continuation within, and graduation from the Arcadia University Physician Assistant Program. They are also prerequisites to licensure by various state professional boards. Reasonable accommodation will be offered for persons with disabilities in conjunction with [Disability Support Services](#) and the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (<https://www.ada.gov/>).

Competency in technical standards will be assessed regularly throughout the Program. The Program has the ethical responsibility for the safety of patients with whom students and graduates will come in contact, and to the public to assure that its graduates can become fully competent PAs. Thus, it is critical that persons admitted to the Program possess the intelligence, integrity, compassion, humanitarian concern, and physical and emotional capacity necessary to practice medicine.

Students must verify that they meet these Technical Standards prior to or at the time of matriculation to the Program and maintain them during their PA training. Students are obligated to alert the Program in a timely fashion of any change in their ability to fulfill the Technical Standards. Students are subject to dismissal if they do not possess the minimum physical or cognitive abilities, or sufficient mental or emotional stability to complete the entire course of study; if they do not participate fully in all aspects of PA training; if they are not deployable as competent PAs (with or without reasonable accommodation); or if they otherwise do not meet the Technical Standards.

Students must possess aptitude, ability, and skills in the following six (6) areas:

1. Observation
2. Communication
3. Motor and Sensory Function

4. Intellectual-Conceptual, Integrative and Quantitative Abilities
5. Behavioral and Social Attributes
6. Ethical and Legal Standards

The functions described below are critically important and must be autonomously performed by the student. It should be understood that these are standards for minimum competence in the program:

### **Observation**

Students must be able to observe demonstrations, participate in physical examination sessions and clinical skills workshops, and observe the difference of normal versus pathological states. They must be able to obtain a medical history and perform a complete physical examination to integrate findings based on these observations and to develop an appropriate diagnostic and treatment plan.

Students must be able to accurately observe a patient near and at a distance, noting nonverbal, as well as verbal signs. Specific vision-related criteria include, but are not limited to, detecting, and identifying changes in color of fluids, skin, culture media, visualizing and discriminating findings on x-rays and other imaging tests, and reading written and illustrated materials. Students must be able to observe and differentiate changes in body movement, observe anatomic structures, discriminate among numbers and patterns associated with diagnostic tests such as electrocardiograms and competently use diagnostic instruments such as an otoscope, ophthalmoscope, and microscope.

### **Communication**

Students must be able to relate effectively to patients while conveying compassion and empathy. They must be able to clearly communicate with patients to elicit information, accurately describe changes in mood, activity, and posture of patients, and understand verbal as well as nonverbal communication.

Communication includes not only speech, but also reading and writing. Physician Assistant education presents exceptional challenges in the volume and breadth of reading required to master subject areas and impart the information to others. Students must be able to communicate quickly, effectively, and efficiently in oral and written English in the classroom and later with all members of the health care team. Specific requirements include but are not limited to the following: rapidly and clearly communicating with the medical staff on rounds or elsewhere, eliciting an accurate history from patients, and communicating complex findings in appropriate terms to patients and to various members of the health care team. Students must learn to recognize and promptly respond to emotional cues, such as sadness and agitation.

Students must be able to accurately and legibly record observations and plans in legal documents, such as the patient record. Students must be able to prepare and communicate concise, complete summaries of both limited patient encounters and complex, prolonged encounters, including hospitalizations. Students must be able to complete forms in a timely fashion, and according to directions.

### **Motor and Sensory Function**

Students must possess sufficient sensory and motor function to perform physical examinations using palpation, auscultation, percussion, and other diagnostic maneuvers. This requires sufficient exteroceptive sense (visual, auditory, touch and temperature), coordination to manipulate patients and adequate motor and diagnostic instruments.

Students must be able to evaluate various components of the voice, such as pitch, intensity, and timbre. They must also be able to accurately differentiate percussive notes and auscultatory findings, including but not



limited to, heart, lung, and abdominal sounds. Students must be able to accurately discern normal and abnormal findings, using instruments including, but not limited to, tuning forks, stethoscopes, and sphygmomanometers.

Students should be able to execute physical movements needed to provide general care and emergency treatments to patients. The student, therefore, must be able to respond promptly to emergencies within the hospital or practice setting, and must not hinder the ability of his/her co-workers to provide prompt care. Examples of emergency treatment reasonably required of a physician assistant include arriving quickly when called and assisting in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), administering intravenous medications, applying pressure to arrest bleeding, maintaining an airway, suturing wounds, and assisting with obstetrical maneuvers. As further illustration, CPR may require moving an adult patient, applying considerable chest pressure over a prolonged period, delivering artificial respiration, and calling for help.

Students should be able to learn to perform basic laboratory tests such as wet mount, urinalysis, etc., and diagnostic/therapeutic procedures such as venipuncture or placement of catheters and tubes. The administration of intravenous medications requires a certain level of dexterity, sensation, and visual acuity. Students must be able to measure angles and diameters of various body structures using a tape measure or other devices to measure blood pressure, respiration, and pulse, and interpret graphs describing biologic relationships. Clinical rotations require the ability to transport oneself to a variety of settings in a timely manner.

### **Intellectual-Conceptual, Integrative and Quantitative Abilities**

Students must be able to learn through a variety of modalities including, but not limited to, classroom instruction; small group, team, and collaborative activities; individual study; preparation and presentation of reports; and use of electronic technology. Students must have the mental capacity to assimilate and learn a large amount of complex, technical and detailed information to formulate diagnostic and therapeutic plans.

Problem solving, a critical skill demanded of physician assistants, often requires rapid intellectual function, especially in emergency situations. These intellectual functions include numerical recognition, measurement, calculations, reasoning analysis, judgment, and synthesis. Students must be able to identify significant findings in the patient's history, physical examination, and laboratory data, provide a reasoned explanation for likely diagnoses, and choose appropriate medications and therapy.

It is essential the student can incorporate new information, from many sources, toward the formulation of a diagnosis and plan. Good judgment in patient assessment and diagnostic/therapeutic planning is also essential. When appropriate, students must be able to identify and communicate the extent of their knowledge to others.

### **Behavioral and Social Attributes**

Students must have the emotional stability to function effectively under stress and to adapt to an environment that may change rapidly, without warning, and/or in unpredictable ways. They must accept responsibility for learning, exercising good judgment, and promptly completing all responsibilities during their academic training, as well as the responsibility attendant to the diagnosis and care of patients. They must understand the legal and ethical standards of the medical profession. Students must be able to work effectively, respectfully, and professionally as part of the educational and healthcare team, and to interact with instructors and peers, patients, patient families, and health care personnel in a courteous, professional, and respectful manner. Students must be able to contribute to collaborative, constructive learning environments; accept constructive feedback from others; and take personal responsibility for making appropriate positive changes.

### **Ethical and Legal Standards**

Students must be able to understand the basis and content of both general and medical ethics. Students must possess attributes such as compassion, empathy, altruism, integrity, responsibility, and tolerance. Students must

be able to recognize limitations in their knowledge, skills, and abilities and to seek appropriate assistance with their identified limitations. Students whose performance is impaired by abuse of alcohol or other substances are not suitable candidates for admission, promotion, or graduation. In addition, should a student be charged or convicted of any misdemeanor or felony offense while in the Program, s/he agrees to immediately notify the Program as to the nature of the legal difficulty. Failure to disclose prior or new offenses can lead to disciplinary action that may include dismissal. Students must meet the legal standards to be licensed as a physician assistant.

## **PERSONAL EXCUSED ABSENCES (Student Well-Being Days)**

### **Rationale**

Arcadia University is a caring community committed to student success. Students enrolled in the Physician Assistant program need to adapt to significant changes, such as moving to a new area, separation from familiar social networks and support systems, establishing a new social network, managing an intensive academic course schedule, perhaps coping with a disability in a new environment and, for international students, living in a new country and adjusting to a different culture. For many, these changes are exciting and challenging and an intrinsic part of the attraction of attending higher education. However, they can also give rise to anxiety and stress.

Most personal problems experienced during the didactic year of the physician assistant program can be resolved quickly by talking to a faculty member, speaking to a friend or seeking help from a member of the student's support system. It is important not to label these experiences as "mental health" problems which are in reality normal emotional reactions to new experiences. However, a number of students may experience emotional or psychological difficulties that without appropriate professional support are more persistent and inhibit their ability to participate fully in higher education. These difficulties may take the form of a long-term mental illness or a temporary, but debilitating, psychological condition or reaction. In addition, some students may arrive with a pre-existing psychological problem, either declared or undeclared. Mental health problems can seriously impair academic performance and may lead to confused or disturbed behavior. Minor difficulties that interfere with a student's capacity to work may also result in distress and wasted effort and undermine academic progress. The Physician Assistant Program aims to provide a supportive environment which will help students with mental health difficulties to realize their academic potential and more specifically, to meet course requirements.

### **Policy**

**Didactic Year:** Under this policy, a student will have up to 5 (five) personal days from class lectures due to the mental or behavioral health of the student or to attend a "life event" (wedding, graduation ceremony, etc). Students will be allowed to utilize no more than two days per semester (Summer, Fall, Spring) for a total of five days during the didactic year of the physician assistant program. These personal days are simply excused absences in the same way as if the student were physically ill with the exception of the need to complete any scheduled course examinations, practical examinations, problem based learning scenarios, student presentations or course assignment deadlines. While this policy excuses a student from class attendance, the student remains responsible for all material covered in class.

*Disclaimer: The Physician Assistant Program reserves the right to review specific situations to determine if exceptions to the established personal day policy are warranted.*

### **Scope of Applicability**

This policy is applicable to all physician assistant graduate students enrolled in the physician assistant program at Arcadia University.

## **Process and Notification**

The student must notify the Director of Didactic Education, the Assistant Director of Didactic Education and the student's Academic Advisor of the request to utilize a personal day. The personal day request will not excuse a student from completing a scheduled course examination, practical examination, student presentation or course assignment deadlines. Any student requesting a personal day will be required to complete any course examination, practical examination, student presentations, physical diagnosis labs, interprofessional experiences, certification programs and/or course assignment deadlines scheduled during the day of the request but will be excused from the remainder of the day's scheduled events. The Director of Didactic Education and/or the Assistant Director of Didactic Education will notify the necessary and appropriate course directors of a student's personal day absence. It is the responsibility of the student to communicate with their course instructors about any missed course instruction including physical diagnosis course lab sessions, clinical skills course procedures and/or any certification programs. In keeping with this policy, course directors shall excuse the student from class according to this policy and may provide an opportunity for the student to complete other required work and/or alternative assignments. Students who have followed this policy should not incur academic penalties.

## **Documentation**

Any student who wishes to utilize this policy is required to email their academic advisor, the Director of Didactic Education, and the assistant Director of Didactic Education prior to 24 hours of the requested date. Failure to provide documentation via email will result in the absence(s) being considered unexcused.

## **Appeal**

If an instructor fails to follow this policy, the student may appeal the instructor's decision in writing to the Program Director.

## **Counseling Services**

Arcadia University's Wellness Center is available to assist students and provide counseling services if so desired by the student.

## **BEREAVEMENT POLICY**

### **Rationale**

Arcadia University is a caring community committed to student success. In the event a student experiences the death of a loved one during the course of an academic term, the student may request to utilize the Bereavement Policy for Students. The Physician Assistant Program recognizes the impact a loss may have on the emotional and academic well-being of a student and wishes to support the student during this stressful time. The Physician Assistant Program also understands grief impacts every student differently and, therefore, this policy is not an attempt to quantify the impact of the death of a loved one or in any way address the nature of the grief process. Rather, the purpose of this policy is to provide a formal process to allow grieving students the time to attend the bereavement services, as well as the opportunity to be available for their families during times of death and grief.

### **Policy**

**Didactic Year:** Under this policy, a student will be excused from class for funeral leave, subsequent bereavement, and/or travel considerations. A student is entitled up to five (5) consecutive *academic* days of bereavement to mourn a death in the immediate family as defined below. For a death outside the immediate family as defined below, a student is entitled up to two (2) consecutive *academic* days of bereavement. While

this policy excuses a student from class attendance and examinations, the student remains responsible for all material covered in class as well as course assignments and must work with each individual professor upon return to complete any other required work and must work with each course director in order to schedule any makeup examinations which were missed. If the student wishes to take a course examination remotely during the leave of absence instead of an excused absence makeup examination afterwards, that option is at the discretion of the course director(s).

The immediate family includes:

- Parent(s) or legal guardian(s)
- Siblings
- Spouse or partner
- Children
- Other relatives living as members of the student's household

Relationships outside the immediate family may include, but are not limited to:

- Grandparents
- Aunts or uncles
- Cousins
- Nieces or nephews
- In-laws

*Disclaimer: The Physician Assistant Program reserves the right to review specific situations to determine if exceptions to the established bereavement policy are warranted.*

### **Scope of Applicability**

This policy is applicable to all physician assistant graduate students enrolled in the physician assistant program at Arcadia University.

### **Travel Days**

In addition to the aforementioned excused academic days, students may be granted up to two (2) additional *calendar* days to account for bereavement travel considerations. This is to be determined by the distance of the verified funeral services from Arcadia University's Glenside and Christiana campuses as follows:

- Within 150 miles of Arcadia University: 0 *calendar* days for travel
- Between 150 - 300 miles from Arcadia University: 1 *calendar* day for travel
- Over 300 miles from Arcadia University: 2 *calendar* days for travel
- Verified travel outside of North America: To be determined on case by case basis

(these days will be approved based upon a documented travel itinerary)

### **Process and Notification**

The student or a representative (family member, room/suitemate, on-campus faculty/staff) must notify the Physician Assistant Program Director and the Office of Student Success prior to the start of the bereavement leave. A representative from the Office of Student Success will notify the necessary and appropriate on-campus offices (Director of Didactic Education, assistant Director of Didactic Education, Director of Clinical Education, assistant Director of Clinical Education, Academic Advisor, Course Directors) of a student's bereavement leave and anticipated return date. The student is required to provide appropriate documentation to

the Office of Student Success and the Program Director. Upon return to the institution, it is the responsibility of the student to communicate with their instructors about any missed assignments and examinations and arrange to complete missed work or schedule makeup examinations. In keeping with this policy, course directors shall excuse the student from class according to this policy and provide an opportunity for the student to complete missed quizzes, exams, papers, other required work and/or alternative assignments. Students who have followed this policy should not incur academic penalties.

### **Documentation**

Any student who wishes to utilize this policy is required to provide documentation to the [Office of Student Success](#). Acceptable documents may include: a funeral program, obituary, signed letter from funeral home, or death certificate. Failure to provide documentation will result in the absences being considered unexcused.

### **Appeal**

If an instructor fails to follow this policy, the student may appeal the instructor's decision in writing to the Program Director.

### **Counseling Services**

Arcadia University's Wellness Center is available to assist students and provide counseling services if so desired by the student.