



# Program Policies of Interest to Prospective Students

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## **Matriculation Policies**

### Technical Standards

Essential abilities and characteristics required for completion of the Program consist of certain minimum physical and cognitive abilities and sufficient mental and emotional stability to assure that candidates for matriculation, promotion, and graduation can satisfactorily complete all didactic courses and all aspects of medical training, with or without reasonable accommodation. Delineation of technical standards is required for the accreditation of the Program. Although these standards serve to delineate the necessary physical and mental abilities of all candidates, they are not intended to deter any candidate for whom reasonable accommodation will allow the fulfillment of the complete curriculum. Technological accommodation can be made for some disabilities, but the role of the physician assistant in the delivery of health care necessitates that he/she shall be able to perform independently.

Observation: Candidates must be able to observe materials presented in the learning environment including presentations in the lectures and lab, as well as procedural skills and simulation experiences. Observations must be made accurately and completely. This requires the functional use of visual, auditory, and somatic sensation.

Communication: Candidates must be able to communicate with, hear, and observe patients to elicit information, examine patients, describe changes in mood, activity, and posture, and perceive nonverbal communication. They must be able to communicate effectively and sensitively with patients. Communication includes not only speech but also reading and writing. Candidates must be able to communicate effectively and efficiently in oral and written form with all members of the health care team.

Motor Function: Candidates should have sufficient motor function to elicit information from patients by palpation, auscultation, percussion, and other diagnostic maneuvers necessary to complete a full physical exam. They must execute movements reasonably required to provide general care and emergency treatment to patients. Examples of movements reasonably required include but are not limited to the following: cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR); administration of intravenous medication; the application of pressure to stop bleeding; the opening of actions require coordination of both gross and fine muscular movements, equilibrium, and functional use of the senses of touch and vision.

Intellectual, Conceptual, Integrative and Quantitative Abilities: Candidates must have sufficient cognitive abilities and effective learning techniques to assimilate the detailed and complex information presented in the curriculum. They must be able to learn through a variety of modalities including but not limited to the following: classroom instruction; small group, team, and collaborative activities; individual study; preparation and presentation of reports; and use of computer technology. Candidates must be able to memorize, measure, calculate, reason, analyze, synthesize, and transmit information across modalities. They must also demonstrate the ability to comprehend three-dimensional relationships, and to understand spatial relationships of structures. Candidates must perform these problem-solving skills in a timely manner with stressful distractions consistent with the medical environment.

Behavioral and Social Attributes: Candidates must possess the emotional health required for full utilization of their intellectual abilities, exercise good judgment, and promptly complete all responsibilities attendant to the diagnosis and care of patients and the development of mature, sensitive, and effective professional relationships with patients. Candidates must be able to tolerate physically taxing workloads and adapt to changing environments, display flexibility and learn to function in the face of uncertainties inherent in the clinical problems of many patients. Compassion, integrity, concern for others, interpersonal skills, interest, and motivation are all personal qualities assessed during the educational processes.

Provisional students of the OSU-CHS Physician Assistant Program must confirm they meet the Program's technical standards or believe they can meet them with reasonable accommodation.

The Committee on Students with Disabilities evaluates provisional students who state they can meet the Program's technical standards only with accommodation and confirm that the stated condition qualifies as a disability under applicable law.

If a provisional student says they can only meet the program's technical standards with accommodation, the committee will review the request. The committee will decide whether the student can meet the standards with reasonable accommodation. This review will consider if the requested accommodation is realistic and whether it could put patient or clinician safety at risk, or interfere with the student's education, including essential classes, clinical training, and internships needed to graduate.

### Immunizations and Tuberculosis Testing

Oklahoma State University Center for Health Sciences ("OSU-CHS") recognizes that vaccine requirements in patient care settings are both prudent and important to protect the health of patients and to allow students to participate in clinical activities.

The Program follows the CDC's Recommendations for Vaccines for Healthcare Workers. A provisional student's admission to the Program is contingent upon the provisional student providing either proof of vaccination, evidence of serologic immunity (by positive titers), or vaccination exemption (pending approval by OSU-CHS) to the following:

- Hepatitis B
- Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR)
- Varicella
- Tetanus, Diphtheria, and Pertussis (TdaP)
- Covid 19
- Influenza Vaccine (Annually)
- Polio (IPV)

If a provisional student is unable to provide this information, the vaccination series must be started prior to matriculation and be completed within the first year of the Program.

Immunization status will be reviewed again prior to clinical rotations.

Students with patient-facing responsibility who wish to be exempt from the vaccination requirements must complete and submit the appropriate Vaccine Exemption Form (available from the Program by request). The basis of declining vaccinations may include medical and religious reasons. Exemption requests will be reviewed by the Office of Compliance.

Please note, however, that OSU-CHS does not control the vaccination policies of the sites that host clinical training experiences for students. If a site refuses to allow a student to participate in a particular clinical training experience due to a vaccine exemption, the Program may not be able to find an alternative clinical training experience without fundamentally altering the Program. If a student is unable to complete required clinical training experiences, the student will be unable to fulfill the requirements of the Program necessary to graduate. In other words, although a student may be able to participate in the didactic portions of the Program, if he/she requests and is granted a vaccine exemption by OSU-CHS, the Program does not guarantee that such student will be able to graduate from the Program.

The Program also follows the CDC's Recommendation for TB Screening for Healthcare Workers. Students must provide evidence of recent TB testing through either a 2 step TST Tuberculosis test or a TB QuantiFERON Gold in the year prior to matriculation.

#### Criminal Background Check

A provisional student's admission to the Program is contingent upon the provisional student completing a criminal background check, the results of which must be satisfactory to the Program. The criminal background check will be administered by a third-party vendor under contract with the Program. The Program reserves the right to rescind an offer of admission if the Program deems the results of the student's background check unsatisfactory.

The procedure in the event of an unsatisfactory background check is as follows:

1. The Program will notify the provisional student of the unsatisfactory background check results.
2. The provisional student shall have the opportunity to submit a response to the Director of Admissions within 1 week of receipt of notification of the unsatisfactory results to provide clarification or a satisfactory explanation for the unsatisfactory results. A provisional student's failure to respond will result in the automatic rescission of the offer of admission.
3. The Admission's Committee will review the results of the unsatisfactory background check in conjunction with the prospective student's response and make a recommendation to the Dean of the Graduate College prior to the date of matriculation.
4. Upon review of the documentation provided, the Dean of the Graduate College will determine a course of action.

### Drug Screen

A provisional student's admission to the Program is contingent upon completing a drug screen, the results of which must comply with and satisfy the Program's requirements. All students must complete a drug screen at least 14 days before classes start. If a student is accepted into the program less than 14 days before classes begin, they will have 14 days from the date they receive their acceptance notice to complete the drug screen.

Prior to the date classes are scheduled to commence, the OSU-CHS Drug Screen Review Committee will review any unsatisfactory drug screen results of any provisional student. Upon completion of the Committee's review, the Program reserves the right to rescind the provisional student's offer of admission or implement alternative measures where it is necessary. The requirements in this Matriculation Policy apply to provisional students.

### **Academic Policies**

Normal progression through the curriculum requires no "D" or "F" grades. The Standards and Promotions Committee review the academic progress of each student at the conclusion of each semester to evaluate whether the student met the minimum standards of eligibility for promotion.

#### Remediation – Didactic

Any student who fails to score a C grade or higher on a course will be placed on academic notice and may be offered remediation. Students will be granted the opportunity to attempt remediation of no more than one course per semester or two courses throughout the entire didactic curriculum. If the Program allows the student to remediate, the student will meet with the course director to generate a corrective action plan (CAP). The CAP will be submitted to the Standards and Promotions Committee for approval. Successful completion of the CAP will earn the student the maximum possible score of a C grade for the course. The course must be remediated in the semester in which the failure occurred. If the student fails to receive a passing grade on the CAP, then the original course grade remains.

#### Remediation – Clinical

Any student who earns an "F" grade in a clinical rotation will be placed on academic notice. The student must generate and submit a corrective action plan to the Standards and Promotions Committee. Students who earn an "F" grade in a clinical rotation will be required to repeat the rotation. Students may only repeat one rotation. Any student who earns an "F" grade in a repeat clinical rotation will be dismissed. Students who remediate the entire clinical year (decelerate) and earn an "F" grade on any rotation during the remedial year will be dismissed.

#### Promotion

Promotion is defined as progression from one academic semester to the next.

A student may not be recommended for promotion if the student is unable to pass each component of the Didactic or Clinical Summative Exam, fails (<C) one or more courses within

the semester, fails (<C) two or more courses within the didactic phase, earns an “F” on more than one clinical rotation, or fails to maintain a cumulative GPA of 2.70. If the student is not recommended for promotion they will be recommended to the Advisory Committee for dismissal from the Program.

#### Requirements for Graduation

A student will be recommended by the Standards and Promotions Committee for the Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies degree, provided the student has:

- Completed all didactic courses with no failing grades (<C)
- Completed all clinical rotations with a “P”
- Completed the Didactic and Clinical Summative Examinations with a “P”
- Completed all necessary steps for graduation as outlined in the Graduate College Academic Calendar

#### Academic Warning

An academic warning is not an official sanction by the Program. It is used to identify a student who is at risk for academic notice. Students may receive an academic warning for declining academic performance or instances of professional misconduct.

#### Academic Notice Policy

Academic Notice (Notice) represents an official sanction by the Physician Assistant Program (Program) for unacceptable academic performance, which includes cognitive and non-cognitive performance. Non-cognitive performance means a student’s ability to satisfy the professional and ethical standards imposed on physician assistants by Oklahoma law, the Code of Conduct of the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA), and the American Academy of Physician Assistants Guidelines for Ethical Conduct for the PA Profession. Notice is a period during which the Program will closely monitor the student’s progress and may result in the student being subject to additional conditions for continued participation in the Program.

This Policy and the OSU Graduate College’s Notice Policy apply to and govern Notice in the Program. However, this Policy controls to the extent it conflicts with the OSU Graduate College’s Academic Notice Policy. In some instances, this policy is different and/or more stringent than those in the OSU Graduate College’s Policy as a result of the professional nature and unique structure of the Program.

#### Notification of Academic Standing

A student placed on Notice will be notified in writing of the instances of unacceptable academic performance and the conditions the student must satisfy to be released from Notice status. A student who receives a written Notice for unacceptable non-cognitive performance shall have the opportunity to respond to the Program Director in writing, and such written responses shall be placed in the student’s file.

Due to the unique structure of the curriculum (multiple short-term courses in a regular semester), the timing of the Notice may occur at any time during a semester. Consequently, the period of Notice may be shorter than one semester; however, certain circumstances may warrant a Notice period longer than one semester, as determined by the Program. In that instance, the Program Director will notify the Dean of any Notice extension.

#### Conditions Warranting Notice Status

A student may be placed on Notice for any of the following reasons:

- Failing to maintain a cumulative GPA of 2.70
- Earning a GPA of less than 2.70 during a given semester
- Earning less than a “C” grade on any didactic course
- Failing any component of the Didactic Summative Exam
- Failing any component of the Clinical Summative Exam
- Earning an “F” grade on any clinical course
- Professional or ethical misconduct as defined by Oklahoma law, the Physician Assistant Student Handbook, the American Academy of Physician Assistants and/or the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants.

Any circumstance warranting a second Notice or a student’s failure to satisfy the conditions of Notice may result in dismissal from the Program. The Program will notify the Dean of the Graduate College of the intent to dismiss. The following qualifies a student for academic dismissal without Notice status:

- Earning less than a “C” grade in more than one didactic course within a given semester.
- Earning less than a “C” grade in more than two didactic courses over the didactic phase.
- Earning a “F” on more than one clinical rotation.
- Inability to pass each component of the Didactic Summative Exam.
- Inability to pass each component of the Clinical Summative Exam.
- Exhibiting egregious professional or ethical misconduct.

A student will be removed from Notice status only if all conditions of notice have been met.

#### Academic Deceleration

The Program does not allow academic deceleration.

#### Dismissal

Notwithstanding any other provision in this Academic Success Handbook, a student may be dismissed from the Program for any of the following reasons:

- Failure to comply with the conditions of academic notice.
- Failure to maintain a cumulative GPA of 2.70 or greater.
- Earning less than a “C” grade while on academic notice.

- Earning less than a “C” grade in more than one didactic course within a given semester.
- Earning less than a “C” grade in more than two didactic courses over the didactic phase.
- Earning a “F” on more than one clinical rotation.
- Earning a “F” grade on a clinical rotation while on academic notice.
- Inability to pass each component of the Didactic Summative Exam.
- Inability to pass each component of the Clinical Summative Exam.
- Exhibiting egregious professional or ethical misconduct.

The Standards and Promotions Committee recommend dismissal of a student, and the Advisory Committee makes the final decision on dismissal of a student.

Once dismissed from the Program, a student may return to the Program only by repeating the admissions process. There are no guarantees that the student will be readmitted.

### Voluntary Withdrawal

If a student chooses to withdraw from the Program, they must submit written notification to the Program Director. The date the Program receives the written withdrawal notification becomes the official withdrawal date from the Program. Students must also complete the withdrawal process with the Office of the Registrar who confirms the official withdrawal date from the University. The website for the Office of the Registrar is available here:

<https://registrar.okstate.edu/withdraw.html>. Tuition refunds may be granted in accordance with the Graduate College academic calendar. Information regarding tuition refunds may be found <http://catalog.okstate.edu/about/bursar/>

## **Appeals Policies**

### Student Appeal of Academic Grade

The fundamental principle of the Graduate Student Appeals Policy is that an equitable informal resolution is in the best interests of all parties and that formal Graduate Council Appeals should be reserved for rare situations. The Policy is applicable to all Oklahoma State University (OSU) graduate students in graduate degree or certificate programs and is not applicable to admission decisions. <https://academicaffairs.okstate.edu/content/grade-appeals-board-policies-procedures>

### Student Appeal of Dismissal

A Program student may appeal a dismissal founded on unacceptable cognitive or non-cognitive academic performance, including a dismissal based on failure to follow conditions of Notice, only in accordance with the following policy and procedures.

*Appeals Based on Allegation Program Failed to Adhere to Published Rules, Policies, and/or Processes.*

If a Program student believes the Program failed to follow published rules, policies, and/or processes in the process of dismissing the student, including dismissals based on the student’s

failure to follow conditions of Notice, the student may appeal in accordance with the OSU Graduate Student Appeals Policy. <https://gradcollege.okstate.edu/resources/appeals-policy.pdf>

*Appeals Based on Bias, Conflict of Interest, and/or Arbitrary and Capricious Action*

A Program student may utilize the following process and procedures to file a written appeal in response to a dismissal based on unacceptable academic non-cognitive performance, including a dismissal based on a failure to satisfy conditions of Notice predicated on unacceptable non-cognitive performance. A student dismissed for reasons other than non-cognitive performance cannot use the following appeal process and procedures.

The student shall submit an appeal in writing to the Provost of OSU-CHS (“Provost”) no later than 5 working days from the date of the notification informing the student of the dismissal. Failure to file an appeal within the prescribed time constitutes a waiver of any right to an appeal. No disciplinary action may be carried out while a matter is being appealed.

The appeal must be based on one or more of the following grounds and must include supporting argument(s) as to why an appeal should be granted on such ground(s):

- (1) an allegation the Program’s decision to dismiss the student was arbitrary and capricious;
- (2) an allegation the dismissal resulted from bias or conflict of interest the Program Director or a member of the Advisory Committee had against the student; and/or
- (3) The existence of new evidence that was not reasonably available at the time the Advisory Committee made its decision that could affect the outcome of the dismissal.

The burden of proof rests with the appealing student, who must prove by a preponderance of the evidence (i.e. it is more likely than not) that the ground(s) upon which the student appealed affected the dismissal.

Upon receipt of the student’s appeal, the Provost will review the student’s appeal materials and determine whether the student met the required burden of proof. To make the determination, the Provost may interview institutional personnel, review relevant documentation the student submitted and/or that the Program maintains, and may meet and discuss the appeal with the student.

The Provost will make a final decision and must send it in writing to the student within 10 working days of receipt of the student’s appeal. The Provost shall include in the written decision the basis for the decision and ensure the decision is inserted in the student’s file and forwarded to the Program Director and members of the Advisory Committee.

If the Provost determines the student failed to meet his/her/their burden of proof, the dismissal will be upheld.

If the Provost determines the student met his/her/their burden of proof, the Provost shall remand the matter back to the Advisory Committee for further consideration. If the student who met his/her/their burden of proof appealed on the ground an Advisory Committee member had a bias or conflict of interest against the student, the Committee member determined to have a bias or conflict of interest shall be recused during the reconsideration. If the student who met his/her/their burden of proof appealed on the grounds that new evidence existed, the Advisory Committee shall consider such new evidence during the reconsideration.

## **Student Policies**

Students are not required to provide or solicit clinical sites or preceptors.

Due to the rigorous nature and extensive time commitment of the Program, students are discouraged from maintaining employment while enrolled.

Students are strongly discouraged from enrolling in any other academic program while enrolled in the PA Program. Any PA student wishing to pursue another graduate program should discuss their interests with their faculty advisor and the Program Director before applying to another Program.

### Grievance Policy

The PA program does not tolerate mistreatment of students which includes but is not limited to discrimination, sexual harassment, unprofessional relationships, abuse of authority, and abusive and/or intimidating behavior. This policy applies to faculty, staff, and students.

### *Reporting Procedure*

To report grievances, such as an allegation of mistreatment, students should utilize one of the following steps:

- Students are encouraged to discuss grievances with specific individuals as incidents occur. If both parties cannot come to an agreement the student may utilize one of the reporting options as outlined below.
  - Utilize the anonymous report via the [OSU CHS Website](#)
  - The student may submit a non-academic grievance form.

All grievances must be reported within one week of the incident and a decision will be rendered within five days of receiving the grievance.

### *Appeal Process*

Any PA student has the right to appeal or petition a determination from a grievance.

- The appeals process is as follows:
  - The student may appeal to the Program Director

The student may then appeal to the Provost of CHS

### Travel and Housing Policy

Students are required to complete clinical rotations at sites assigned by the Program. These rotations may involve travel or temporary relocation. Students are responsible for all costs related to travel, housing, meals, transportation, insurance, licensure, and other related expenses (“rotation costs”). These costs are included in the Program’s estimated total cost of enrollment.

Rotation sites are located throughout Oklahoma. While many are within or near the Tulsa metro area, students may be assigned to sites up to approximately 400 miles (6.5 hours) from campus. Students should expect increased transportation and housing expenses during the second year of the Program, including the possibility of extended travel or temporary housing for one or more rotations a semester.

The Program is not required to provide housing. However, as a gesture of support, some clinical sites may offer housing at no cost. If housing is available, details and contact information will be posted in the learning management system. Housing opportunities arranged by the Program are available at little to no cost for several—but not all—sites located more than 50 miles from campus. Students should anticipate paying for housing at one or more sites. Students who decline the housing provided may incur additional costs not included in the projected cost of attendance.

Students are not required, but may request, to complete rotations outside of Oklahoma. Those who do may face additional housing and travel costs depending on location.

Rotation schedules are determined by clinical site availability and Program requirements. Students may not request changes to site assignments based on travel or housing preferences. On the final day of a rotation, students at sites more than three (3) hours from campus may leave at 12:00 p.m. to allow for travel.