



ROCKY
MOUNTAIN
COLLEGE



Master of Physician Assistant Studies Program

Class of 2028 Student Handbook

Preface

Welcome to the Rocky Mountain College (RMC) Master of Physician Assistant Studies Program (MPAS). This Program-specific MPAS Student Handbook is published as an addendum to the RMC Catalog to support applicants, incoming students, and those actively enrolled in the program. The handbook should be used in conjunction with the following:

1. Current edition of the Rocky Mountain College online catalog, which may be accessed at <https://www.rocky.edu/academics/course-catalog>
2. Internet posting of RMC policies found at <https://rocky.edu/campus-life/student-life-offices/student-conduct-policies/student-handbook/>
3. Program Website: <https://www.rocky.edu/pa>

Each applicant and student needs to clearly understand both the College and Program-specific policies. Please read these sources carefully and contact the PA Program with any questions or concerns you may have with respect to these important documents and how they apply to you.

Occasionally, updates, corrections, additions, or other changes to this handbook become necessary. The PA Program reserves the right to alter the contents of this handbook as needed and at any time. Any changes will be communicated to students in a timely manner and will apply as appropriate in accordance with institutional policies. Students are responsible for remaining current with all program and institutional policies, including updates to this handbook and related documents. The faculty reserves the right to alter the curriculum, schedule of required courses, exams, and other regulations affecting admission and graduation requirements. Every effort will be made to keep students well informed with respect to any changes.

Validation of college registration implies the student's acceptance of the published academic rules and regulations found in this and any other official program or college publication.

From the Program Director



ROCKY MOUNTAIN COLLEGE *Master of Physician Assistant Studies Program*

Welcome to the Rocky Mountain College Physician Assistant Program. We are honored to have you join a community dedicated to preparing compassionate, skilled, and practice-ready physician assistants. Our program is grounded in a commitment to delivering healthcare that is safe, current, and evidence-based, with a particular emphasis on meeting the needs of rural and underserved populations.

Our faculty are deeply invested in your success and are committed to providing a rigorous, high-quality educational experience that prioritizes patient safety, clinical excellence, and lifelong learning. Beyond the classroom, we serve as your mentors, advisors, and colleagues—supporting your growth as both a clinician and a professional. Together, we strive to cultivate an environment rooted in transparency, integrity, accountability, professionalism, and teamwork.

As you begin this journey, you are entering a profession that carries both great responsibility and profound privilege. We encourage you to approach each learning opportunity with curiosity, humility, and dedication to service. We are grateful to be part of your education and look forward to supporting you as you develop the knowledge, skills, and values essential to providing exceptional care to your future patients.

We wish you every success in your pursuit of this rewarding and meaningful profession.

Carrie Hall, MPAS, PA-C

Program Director

Master of Physician Assistant Studies Program

Table of Contents

GENERAL INFORMATION	
The Role of a Physician Assistant	5
Physician Assistant Professional Oath	6
OUR PROGRAM	7
Rocky Mountain College Mission Statement	7
Master of Physician Assistant Studies Program	7
Our History	7
Accreditation	8
Faculty and Staff	9
Application	11
Admissions	11
Costs / Financial Aid	14
Required Supplies	15
Health Screening	16
Immunizations	16
Academic Advisement	17
Program Overview	18
National PA Certification (PANCE) Results	18
Didactic Curriculum	18
Clinical Practice Curriculum	28
Academic Calendar	33
PROGRAM STANDARDS OF PERFORMANCE	33
Academic Standards	33
Competencies Mastery	35
Technical Standards	36
Professional Standards – Code of Ethics	38
Completion / Graduation Requirements	41
Retention Standards / Changes in Student Status	42
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES	45
Academic Policies and Procedures	45
General Policies and Procedures	52
RESOURCES	55
Facilities	55
Internet Addresses	57
Professional Organizations	57

General Information

The Role of a Physician Assistant

The physician assistant is a health care professional licensed to practice medicine under the supervision of a physician. The role of the physician assistant is to perform medical duties from basic primary care to technically advanced procedures in emergency medicine or within medical specialties. The typical duties of a physician assistant include taking a patient medical history; performing complete physical examinations; ordering and interpreting laboratory tests; diagnosing and treating medical illnesses; assisting physicians in surgery; performing routine medical procedures, such as suturing and wound care; and prescribing medications. This is a team approach to medicine and health care, augmenting the needs and growing shortages within the current American health care delivery system.

Physician assistant education is based on the medical model to emphasize the collaboration of the PA-physician team. It is primary care oriented and prepares the physician assistant to be professionally competent and able to identify with physicians in terms of thought, patterns of action, and dedication to ethical and legal values and concerns.

The physician assistant's work setting varies from practice at a rural clinic, an office-based practice, within inpatient or long-term care facilities, or in industrial settings. They also work in education, health care administration, and research.



Physician Assistant Professional Oath

(Source: Student Academy of the American Academy of Physician Assistants, May 30, 2007)

I pledge to perform the following duties with honesty and dedication:

- I will hold as my primary responsibility the health, safety, welfare and dignity of all human beings.
 - I will uphold the tenets of patient autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence, and justice.
 - I will recognize and promote the value of diversity.
 - I will treat equally all persons who seek my care.
 - I will hold in confidence the information shared in the course of practicing medicine.
 - I will assess my personal capabilities and limitations, striving always to improve my medical practice.
 - I will actively seek to expand my knowledge and skills, keeping abreast of advances in medicine.
 - I will work with other members of the health care team to provide compassionate and effective care of patients.
 - I will use my knowledge and experience to contribute to an improved community.
 - I will respect my professional relationship with the physician.
 - I will share and expand knowledge within the profession.
-

These duties are pledged with sincerity and upon my honor.

Our Program

Rocky Mountain College Mission Statement

Rocky Mountain College educates future leaders through liberal arts and professional programs that cultivate critical thinking, creative expression, ethical decision-making, informed citizenship, and professional excellence.

Master of Physician Assistant Studies Program

Vision: Our vision is to excel as a center of health care education dedicated to providing medical services to the underserved and rural populations of this intermountain region.

Mission: The mission of the Rocky Mountain College Master of Physician Assistant Studies program (MPAS) is to educate primary care providers who embody a combination of academic talents of evidence-based medicine, clinical skills and professionalism while providing compassionate health care services, particularly to those in rural and underserved areas of this region. Our graduates distinguish themselves through an emphasis on patient safety and quality improvement.

Goals: The PA Program aims to provide a high quality medical education experience that will challenge you to:

- Demonstrate Core Medical Knowledge Appropriate to PA Professionals
- Demonstrate Interpersonal and Communication Skills Appropriate to PA Professionals
- Demonstrate Competence in Patient Care Appropriate to PA Professionals
- Demonstrate Professionally Appropriate Knowledge and Behaviors
- Demonstrate Systems-Based Practice and Patient Safety Competencies

Our History

Rocky Mountain College took its first steps toward creating a Physician Assistant Program in early 1993. Billings is the most populous city in Montana and the site of two major medical complexes: The Billings Clinic and St. Vincent Regional Hospital (Intermountain Health). Billings serves as a major regional referral center for Montana, Wyoming, and surrounding states. Billings is also the hub for educational interactive video technology, distance medical conferencing, and referrals from rural hospitals and clinics throughout the intermountain region.

Montana is a frontier state with the majority of its residents living in rural communities. Even though it is geographically the fourth largest state in the nation, encompassing 145,552 square miles, the population is just over 1 million, which is the sixth least populous state in the

country. There are many designated health professional shortage areas. Transportation is a major hurdle, and public transportation is spotty and non-existent in most of the rural communities. Therefore, many Montanans seeking primary and emergency health care face enormous access barriers.

It remains challenging to recruit and retain non-physician, primary health care providers to serve in Montana's extremely rural and medically underserved areas. Numerous health care entities need physician assistants: Certified Rural Health Clinics, Indian Health Service Units, Medical Assistance Facilities, Migrant Health Clinics, as well as physicians and clinics in rural areas.

In 1993, after establishing the need for physician assistants in Montana's sparsely populated rural areas, Rocky Mountain College faculty, trustees, and members of the local medical community began discussing the feasibility for a Physician Assistant Program in Montana.

A program located in Montana would provide access for Montana natives who are more likely to remain in the state to practice, and it would help meet the great need that exists in Montana's health care delivery system for primary health care providers. Rocky Mountain College was and remains a comprehensive four-year liberal arts college with an enrollment of approximately 1000. The College's strong core sciences program helped place increasing numbers of students in graduate medical programs around the country. Expanding its science curriculum to include the Physician Assistant Program was a logical next step.

Accreditation

Rocky Mountain College is accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU). Full accreditation of the Physician Assistant Program was first awarded by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) in October 1998.

The Program currently holds active accreditation from the ARC-PA (Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant). Only graduates from ARC-PA accredited PA programs are eligible to sit for the PANCE (Physician Assistant National Certifying Examination). The PANCE is an entry-level requirement for individual state licensure.

In 2002, NWCCU gave approval to Rocky Mountain College to begin awarding the Master of Physician Assistant Studies degree (MPAS). In March 2003, ARC-PA acknowledged the change in degree status. The matriculation of the MPAS charter class in July 2003 launched RMC's first graduate degree program.

Faculty and Staff

The full-time program faculty coordinate, direct, and oversee the curriculum, as well as monitor and evaluate students' academic and professional progress. You will work closely with each of these individuals throughout the 26-month curriculum. Program leadership, faculty, and staff maintain an open-door policy to enhance accessibility, communication, and professional exchange.

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Application

CASPA: The Rocky Mountain College Physician Assistant Program participates in the Central Application Service for Physician Assistants (CASPA) of the Physician Assistant Education Association (PAEA). Students who wish to apply to the Rocky Mountain College MPAS Program must follow the application instructions available online at the CASPA website <https://caspa.cas.myliaison.com/applicant/login>.

It is the applicant's responsibility to:

1. Keep the Coordinator of Admissions for Health Professions informed of any changes in contact information. This must be done in writing (e-mail is acceptable).
2. Ensure program's receipt of all required application materials.
3. Verify that all required prerequisite courses will be completed prior to matriculation in June of the following year.

Admissions

Admission to the MPAS Program is competitive and multi-faceted.

Admission Requirements:

<https://www.rocky.edu/academics/academic-programs/graduate/master-physician-assistant-studies/admission-requirements>

Required for Admission:

- Bachelor's degree required upon matriculation
- Science GPA of 3.0 or higher – no science prerequisites may be lower than a "C"
- Cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher
- No prerequisite coursework may be completed in an online format unless noted otherwise below
- Biology coursework to include 14 credits:
 - Two semesters of Human Anatomy & physiology w/lab (from a biology, physiology, zoology department, or an allied health program) (8 credits)
 - One semester of Microbiology w/lab (3 credits)
 - One semester of Genetics (3 credits)
- Chemistry coursework to include 8 credits:
 - Organic Chemistry – 2 semesters (1 year sequence) **OR**
 - Organic Chemistry AND Biochemistry – 1 semester of each
- Medical Terminology (online course acceptable, certificate not acceptable) (1 credit)
- Psychology – 1 semester (developmental or abnormal highly recommended) (3 credits)
- Social Science (other than Psychology) – 1 semester (3 credits)
 - Examples: Sociology, Geography, Anthropology, Political Science, Economics
- Mathematics coursework to include 6 credits:

- Pre-calculus (includes: functions, trigonometry, exponents, and logarithmic functions) or higher (3 credits) AND
 - Statistics/Probability (3 credits)
- English Composition – 1 semester (3 credits)
- 1,500 hours of paid direct hands-on patient care **before** you submit your CASPA application.
 - The higher the quality of patient care experience, the more competitive the applicant will be judged. For example, a certified nurse assistant, pharmacy technician, or phlebotomist will be less competitive than an emergency room technician, licensed practical nurse, or a paramedic. However, all applicants with direct patient care and high quality patient interactions are encouraged to apply.
- Three professional reference letters must be submitted to CASPA
 - At least one must be from a healthcare provider (preferably from a Physician Assistant)
 - Letters from family members are not accepted
- TOEFL score must meet standard requirements of Rocky Mountain College for all applicants if English is not the first language. (Visit our website at <https://www.rocky.edu/pa>).
- We highly encourage 1 year of undergraduate physics or additional quantitative courses and/or laboratory experiences. We also recommend additional writing courses.

Graduates of Rocky Mountain College who have met all the requirements for admission, and have earned a Bachelor’s degree with a minimum of 60 credits earned at RMC, will be granted an automatic interview. Please note, this interview DOES NOT guarantee acceptance into the program; students will compete with all other interviewing students for matriculating status.

Failure to complete the program prerequisite courses with a grade of “C-” or higher prior to the matriculation date of the class for which application is being made will result in withdrawal of conditional offer.

Official Transcripts: In accordance with Rocky Mountain College admissions policies and procedures, those students selected for admission to the PA program are required to submit *official transcripts* from all colleges/universities previously attended. These transcripts must be received directly from the college/university if they are not verified in CASPA.

Student-submitted copies are not acceptable. Copies submitted and verified through CASPA do fulfill this requirement, but courses completed after the application submitted date must be sent in final official form directly to RMC. Transcripts should be mailed directly to:

Rocky Mountain College
Attn: MPAS Admissions
1511 Poly Dr.
Billings, MT 59102

Transcripts must be received prior to the scheduled class matriculation date or class standing will be revoked.

Failure to submit the mandatory transcripts or fulfill any other requirements specified in a conditional offer of admission to the program prior to the scheduled class matriculation will result in withdrawal of conditional offer.

Advanced Placement: No advanced placement or transfer credit may be applied toward fulfilling the MPAS curriculum.

Selection Process & Preferences: All completed applications undergo a preliminary selection screening process which evaluates and awards admission points based upon the following program preferences:

- *Past Academic Performance (60%):*
 - Cumulative and science GPAs: A minimum cumulative college GPA of 3.0 is required. A minimum science GPA of 3.0 is required. Documented completion of all program-specific prerequisite courses before the scheduled class matriculation date. Students who have previously earned a Bachelor's degree are required to provide evidence of the awarded degree and completion of the program-specific prerequisite courses.
 - Grade improvement in repeated courses
 - Number of prerequisites completed prior to submission of CASPA application
- *Geographic Regionality (10%):* In accordance with the stated mission of this Program to prepare health care providers to meet the needs of this very rural region, applicants are awarded admissions locality preference points based upon the following:
 - Permanent address within the Program's stated region (Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, or Idaho)
 - Population of the location from which the applicant graduated high school (rural preference)
- *Clinical Work Experience (20%):* The quantity and quality (direct patient care) of past clinical work experience as well as any formal health career training (EMT, CNA, LPN, RN, RT, MA, etc.) are assessed as part of each applicant's screening evaluation. Candidates with clinical experience are clearly more competitive.
- *Personal Statement (5%):* Applicants are evaluated for their ability to express themselves in written communication as evidenced by the required personal statements.
- *Letters of Recommendation (5%):* The letter writer's assessment of the applicant's ability to be a future physician assistant is the basis of this evaluation.

Applications are ranked according to the number of points awarded during the selection screening process. Those with the minimum required score for admission could be invited to

complete the second phase of the selection process: a two-part virtual interview process that includes a program introductory session with a group of applicants, and an individual interview with the Admissions Committee. Not all qualified candidates will be invited to interview.

Costs / Financial Aid

Deposit: Upon notification of acceptance to the RMC MPAS Program, applicants are required to submit a \$1000 non-refundable admissions deposit. This deposit must be received in accordance to the deadline sent in the acceptance email from the Coordinator of Admissions for Health Professions. The deposit is applied toward the first summer term tuition and fees.

Tuition / Fees:

- First Summer Term: \$9,415
- Fall Semester: \$19,529 *
- Spring Semester: \$19,529*
- Second Summer Semester: \$19,529*
- Fall Clinical Semester: \$19,529*
- Spring Clinical Semester: \$19,529*
- Summer Clinical Semester: \$19,529*

**Reflects tuition costs for cohort beginning summer, 2026. Tuition is subject to change for the three clinical semesters. Academic Lab Fee (\$192), Campus Technology Fee (\$214), ASRMC Student Activity Fee (\$100), ASRMC Student Government Fee (\$17) are charged for all terms except the first summer term.*

Living Expenses / Travel / Transportation: Students are responsible for arranging their own housing accommodations, transportation, and any expenses associated with travel and relocations performed as a requirement of the Program.

During the first year of the Program, students will occasionally be commuting to clinics and hospitals throughout the Billings area.

During the second year, much longer distances of travel and extended periods of time away from Billings may be required (depending upon the location(s) of the individual clinical practice rotations). All Program participants can anticipate temporary relocation for at least one of their required clinical practice experiences during the final year of the Program.

Students can expect to be assigned to perform clinical practice rotations within the Program's primary geographic area (Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, North Dakota, South Dakota, Idaho, and Utah).

Financial Aid: For details regarding financial aid opportunities for MPAS students, refer to the following RMC web page:

<https://www.rocky.edu/academics/academic-programs/graduate/master-physician-assistant-studies/additional-program-info-3>

Required Supplies:

- *Textbooks and Information Resources:* Each student will be required to purchase textbooks (a list will be provided for all incoming students). The approximate cost for textbooks will be \$500 per semester. A trainee subscription to *UpToDate* (\$164.00 per year), an online evidence-based peer reviewed medical information resource, is also recommended for the clinical year.
- *Personal Computer:* Each student must have a reliable laptop computer for use through the entire 26- month curriculum. It must have current generation technology to include wireless (PC) capabilities and Microsoft Office (it must be able to run the full version of MS Office or MS Office for MAC). Laptops are recommended rather than iPads or other tablets.
- *Medical Equipment:* The Program requires each student to obtain the following medical equipment prior to the beginning of the first fall semester following matriculation:
 - Stethoscope: We strongly recommend you invest in a high quality stethoscope as this will have a profound effect on your technical ability to hear the subtle and significant physiologic sounds of the human body.
 - White lab coat, half-length ONLY (no full-length coats are allowed)
 - Spare lab coat to wear in the cadaver lab
 - Suture kit, during the late spring semester you will be required to purchase a suture kit and simulated skin for use in the Dermatology and Surgery modules and the clinical year. More information will be provided—estimated cost: \$20-\$45
 - Equipment costs vary widely depending on individual preferences. The total cost for quality equipment may range from \$250 to \$500.
- *Health Insurance:* Students **MUST** carry and maintain health insurance throughout the duration of the Program. Proof of insurance must be submitted to the Coordinator of Admissions for Health Professions. In the event of an injury or needlestick obtained at the college or rotation site, students are responsible for paying for all visits, labs and follow-up.
- | |
|---|
| ○ Students <u>will not</u> be allowed to participate without proof of health insurance |
|---|
- *Worker's Compensation Insurance:* An increasing number of clinical practice sites are requiring students to provide proof of compensation coverage in addition to personal health insurance coverage. If you elect to perform a clinical rotation at a facility that mandates this added insurance, the cost of purchasing the required policy must be borne by the student.
- *Background Investigation:* A background check will be required during the admission process and again before the start of the clinical year. All clinical rotation sites require a background investigation as part of their clearance procedures for both prospective students and employees. Many states have also added this requirement for licensure of

health care providers. As a result, you will be required to complete a background check through a designated online provider, that also covers HIPPA compliance, JCAHO compliance, immunization tracker, documentation of health insurance, CPR certification and proof of malpractice insurance. Information regarding how to obtain a background check will be sent to you during the acceptance process. The student is responsible for the fee associated with this.

- o *Drug testing* will be required prior to the start of clinical rotations and again for each site requiring it. It is impossible to anticipate this requirement, so all students should expect it.

- o In the event your Background Investigation reveals evidence/history of criminal activity that may disqualify you from full participation in the required training experiences of the Program or future licensure to practice medicine as a Physician Assistant, you may be dismissed from the Program (see Completion/Graduation Requirements).

Health Screening

Physical Examination: All students accepted for admission to the Physician Assistant program are required to submit a completed *Health History and Examination form* prior to matriculation. In order to insure confidentiality, this documentation must be submitted directly to the Rocky Mountain College Director of Graduate Admissions. DO NOT send any health screening information to the PA Program.

The *Health History and Examination form* is signed by an outside provider who evaluates the health information and determines the applicant's ability to complete the entire educational program without risk to her/himself or the patients.

Tuberculosis Screening: Applicants must provide documentation of tuberculosis screening through PPD testing, unless contraindicated, within the 6 months preceding program matriculation. For individuals with a history of previous positive PPD test results, documentation regarding follow-up evaluation (including results of last chest x-ray) and any treatment taken must be provided. Repeat testing will be required prior to the beginning of clinical practice rotations. Some clinical sites have stricter tuberculosis screening requirements, including two-step testing or testing within a specific period of time of rotation onset. In these cases, additional TB screening and or testing may be required.

Immunizations: Students must provide documentation demonstrating current immunization or laboratory evidence of immunity for those infectious conditions required by the State of Montana or prospective clinical practice rotation site-specific requirements and/or those recommended by the CDC for Health Care Workers. These immunizations include:

- Polio (3 dose series)
- MMR (Measles, Mumps, Rubella – 2 dose series)

- Varicella (Chickenpox vaccine or titer)
- DTap (primary series)
- Tdap (in last 10 years)
- Hepatitis B (3 step series)
- Influenza (must be current each year)
- Tuberculin (TB skin test)
- COVID-19 (proof of vaccine or declination form accepted)

During the clinical practice rotations, the Directors' of Clinical Education receive sporadic requests for verification of a student's immunization status in addition to the immunization tracker on the certified background report. Student applicants will also be required to sign a Health Information Release form. The Program will maintain this information in a secure individual student file until completion of all clinical practice rotations. Principal faculty, the Program Director, and the Medical Director will not participate as healthcare providers for students enrolled in the MPAS Program except in emergency situations. Students are expected to obtain healthcare services through independent healthcare providers and community healthcare resources.

Academic Advisement

Students will be assigned an academic (faculty) advisor at matriculation. All faculty advisors are members of the program's core faculty. Students should maintain regular communication with their advisor, especially if academic, technical, or professional difficulties are identified.

One of the academic advisor's specific responsibilities is to work with each student on developing professionalism. Professionalism is just as crucial to your ability to succeed, as is your acquisition of the basic medical, clinical, and social sciences knowledge base.

Students are responsible for meeting with their advisor at least twice each semester, at midterm and during finals week. Advisors will provide feedback about current academic standing, and will review the faculty evaluations of the students at the end of fall and spring semesters.

Responsibilities of the faculty advisors include but are not limited to:

- Closely monitoring the students' academic progress. If concerns arise, the faculty advisor will schedule individual conferences to address specific performance problems and develop a plan for remediation/correction.
- Addressing concerns about individual professionalism or academic issues that are raised by other faculty, staff, or students.

Program Overview

The pace across the 26-month program is fast, and the volume of material to be learned is high. Students need to learn to think analytically, critically, and logically while demonstrating a demeanor of compassion and empathy.

The program STRONGLY encourages a spirit of cooperation between students, and places a heavy emphasis on teamwork in and out of the classroom. You are encouraged to establish study groups and learn to work in a collaborative fashion, utilizing the broad range of knowledge and clinical skills brought by your student colleagues. By working together as teams, each person contributes strengths and expertise to the learning process. Your ability to interact and work cooperatively with your student colleagues for the benefit of each other is a critical determinant of your future success as a Physician Assistant. The Physician-PA team concept is at the very foundation of this profession.

As part of the professional development component of the program, students are encouraged to actively participate in the program's Physician Assistant Student Society as an official branch of the Student Academy of the American Academy of Physician Assistants (SAAAPA). This is a great opportunity to get involved in your new profession and to become acquainted with your future colleagues. Students are also encouraged to join the American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA) and the Montana Academy of Physician Assistants (MTAPA) to support their professional development, engage in advocacy efforts, and access valuable educational, networking, and career resources at both the national and state levels.

National PA Certification (PANCE) Results

Only graduates from ARC-PA accredited PA programs are eligible to take the PANCE (Physician Assistant National Certifying Examination) and become licensed to practice. The PANCE is the entry-level exam that PA's must pass to become nationally certified. Pass rates for program graduates can be found at MPAS page:

<https://www.rocky.edu/academics/academic-programs/graduate/master-physician-assistant-studies/policies-forms/national-pa>

Didactic Curriculum

The first 14 months of the program includes the fundamental behavioral, basic biomedical, and clinical sciences required for the professional course of study, as well as courses designed to better prepare the students for expanded health care roles that meet the developing needs of today's society. A total of 61 semester hours of credit are presented using a combination of lecture, demonstration, discussion, and laboratory formats. **Students must successfully complete all components of the didactic phase prior to advancing to the clinical instruction phase.**

Upon graduation from the program students will have completed 103 semester credits - 61 during the Didactic year and 42 during the Clinical year.

The program posts and maintains a detailed day-to-day schedule of educational activities electronically. Students are responsible for checking the class schedule frequently as the schedule is subject to change at any time.

Course Schedule:

First Summer Term (7 credits):

Course #	Title	Credits
PHA 508	Biostatistics	1
PHA 538	Clinical Human Anatomy and Physiology	4
PHA 575	Genetics & Molecular Basis of Health & Disease	2

Fall Semester (18 credits):

Course #	Title	Credits
PHA 501	Introduction to Clinical Medicine	1
PHA 505	Evidence-Based Medicine	3
PHA 509	Professional Practice Issues I	1
PHA 518	Allergy and Immunology	2
PHA 520	Physical Assessment	3
PHA 522	Hematology	2
PHA 533	Infectious Disease	2
PHA 543	Endocrinology	2
PHA 547	Ophthalmology	2

Spring Semester (18 credits):

Course #	Title	Credits
PHA 509	Professional Practice Issues II	1
PHA 523	Pulmonology	2
PHA 524	Cardiology	2
PHA 527	Nephrology	2
PHA 531	Behavioral Dynamics	2
PHA 535	Gastroenterology	1
PHA 539	Neurology	2
PHA 546	Pediatrics	2
PHA 549	Oncology	1
PHA 550	Introduction to Clinical Practice	2
PHA 557	Otorhinolaryngology	1

Summer Semester (18 credits):

Course #	Title	Credits
PHA 509	Professional Practice Issues III	1
PHA 551	Urology	2
PHA 556	Surgery	2
PHA 561	Obstetrics and Gynecology	2
PHA 562	Orthopedics	2
PHA 572	Dermatology	1
PHA 574	Rheumatology	1
PHA 610	Emergency Medicine	3
PHA 621	Problem-Based Clinical Correlation	2
PHA 641	Geriatrics	2

Course Descriptions

PHA 501

Introduction to Clinical Medicine

Semester: Fall

Semester Hours: 1

This course introduces the first-year PA student to general concepts of the study of clinical medicine and pharmacology. It also serves as a review of medically relevant microbiology topics.

PHA 505

Evidence-Based Medicine: Research, Communications, and Applications

Semester: Fall

Semester Hours: 3

This course prepares students to be independent, lifelong learners by mastering skills to locate, critically evaluate, and apply medical research to clinical practice, developing the foundation for evidence-based practice. Students learn to frame research questions, interpret biostatistics, and navigate the hierarchy of medical evidence. Additionally, the curriculum investigates public health systems and the impact of social determinants on population health outcomes.

PHA 508

Biostatistics

Semester: Summer

Semester Hours: 1

This course is designed to acquaint the student with the basics of biostatistics and emphasizes how an understanding of these areas is important in clinical medicine. An understanding of

biostatistics is important not only for analyzing the results of research, but also for understanding and reducing errors. The course centers on basic techniques of investigating the association of variables and significance of results in a clinical and epidemiological setting.

PHA 509

Professional Practice Issues

Semester: Fall, Spring, and Summer

Semester Hours: 1

This course is taken sequentially for three semesters (Professional Issues: I, II, and III), and is designed to prepare the student for professional medical practice. The three-credit series covers a wide range of topics to build a solid foundation of ethical, professional, and communication principles necessary for successful practice as a physician assistant.

PHA 518

Allergy/Immunology

Semester: Fall

Semester Hours: 2

This course introduces the student to the pathophysiology, pathology, clinical medicine, diagnostic and therapeutic modalities, and preventive medicine aspects in the practice of allergy and immunology.

PHA 520

Physical Assessment

Semester: Fall

Semester Hours: 3

This course prepares students to master the art of taking medical histories and performing physical examinations. The focus is on recognition of “normal” and the significance of “abnormal” findings. A systems approach is used and the material is taught using a lecture, demonstration, and laboratory practicum format. A laboratory session is scheduled weekly to incorporate/practice skills presented in the lectures.

PHA 522

Hematology

Semester: Fall

Semester Hours: 2

This course introduces the student to the pathophysiology, pathology, clinical medicine, diagnostic and therapeutic modalities, and preventive medicine aspects in the practice of hematology.

PHA 523**Pulmonology**

Semester: Spring

Semester Hours: 2

This course introduces the student to pathophysiology, pathology, clinical medicine, diagnostic and therapeutic modalities, and preventive medicine aspects in pulmonary medicine.

PHA 524**Cardiology**

Semester: Spring

Semester Hours: 2

This course introduces the student to the pathophysiology, pathology, clinical medicine, diagnostic and therapeutic modalities, and preventive medicine aspects in the practice of Cardiology.

PHA 527**Nephrology**

Semester: Spring

Semester Hours: 2

This course introduces the student to the pathophysiology, pathology, clinical medicine, diagnostic and therapeutic modalities, and preventive medicine aspects in the practice of Nephrology.

PHA 531**Behavioral Dynamics**

Semester: Spring

Semester Hours: 2

This course will introduce the student to the complexities of the practice of psychiatry including neurobiology, epidemiology, diagnosis and management of a variety of behavioral health and substance use disorders. Additionally, there is an introduction to the concepts of death, dying and bereavement.

PHA 533**Infectious Disease**

Semester: Fall

Semester Hours: 2

This course introduces the student to the pathophysiology, pathology, clinical medicine, diagnostic and therapeutic modalities, and preventive medicine aspects in the practice of infectious disease.

PHA 535**Gastroenterology**

Semester: Spring

Semester Hours: 1

This course introduces the student to the pathophysiology, pathology, clinical medicine, diagnostic and therapeutic modalities, and preventive medicine aspects in the practice of Gastroenterology.

PHA 538**Clinical Human Anatomy and Physiology**

Semester: Summer

Semester Hours: 4

This course is a fast-paced review of human anatomy and physiology designed to build upon the student's fundamental knowledge gained in prerequisite courses. This course will challenge students to begin applying these scientific principles as they relate to patient care in the clinical medicine course work that follows.

PHA 539**Neurology**

Semester: Spring

Semester Hours: 2

This course introduces the student to the pathophysiology, pathology, clinical medicine, diagnostic and therapeutic modalities, and preventative medicine aspects in the practice of neurology.

PHA 543**Endocrinology**

Semester: Fall

Semester Hours: 2

This course introduces the student to the pathophysiology, pathology, clinical medicine, diagnostic and therapeutic modalities, and preventive medicine aspects in the practice of endocrinology.

PHA 546**Pediatrics**

Semester: Spring

Semester Hours: 2

This course will examine infant and child health and development, focusing on major common pediatric illnesses and their signs, symptoms, and management relative to the primary health care provider. The problem-oriented medical record is presented, i.e., the pediatric history and

physical examination. Specific problems of the newborn and older child will be presented for discussion in such areas as immunity and allergy, pharmacotherapy, medical emergencies, preventive health care, and the psychosocial and developmental disabilities specific to pediatrics. Students will learn to perform and demonstrate an infant exam. Specific strategies for physical examination of the pediatric patient will be learned and practiced on live patients in a skills lab.

PHA 547

Ophthalmology

Semester: Fall

Semester Hours: 2

This course introduces the student to the pathophysiology, pathology, clinical medicine, diagnostic and therapeutic modalities, and preventive medicine aspects in the practice of ophthalmology.

PHA 549

Oncology

Semester: Spring

Semester Hours: 1

This course introduces the student to the pathophysiology, pathology, clinical medicine, diagnostic and therapeutic modalities, and preventive medicine aspects in the practice of Oncology.

PHA 550

Introduction to Clinical Practice

Semester: Spring

Semester Hours: 2

This course introduces the clinical practice of medicine through simulated patient care experiences, building upon the foundational skills developed in Physical Assessment. Students will navigate common clinical scenarios, focusing on effective patient communication across both outpatient and inpatient settings. Key competencies include developing differential diagnoses, selecting appropriate diagnostics to interpret, creating comprehensive medical assessments, curating problem lists, and presenting organized case information to other providers. Furthermore, the course emphasizes preventative healthcare, the application of medical literature to pathophysiology, and the formulation of treatment plans. Students are also introduced to administrative essentials, including medical documentation standards, prescription writing, and CPT/ICD-10 coding.

PHA 551

Urology

Semester: Summer

Semester Hours: 2

This course introduces the student to the pathophysiology, pathology, clinical medicine, diagnostic and therapeutic modalities, and preventive medicine aspects in the practice of urology.

PHA 556

Surgery

Semester: Summer

Semester Hours: 2

This course introduces the student to the pathophysiology, pathology, clinical medicine, diagnostic and therapeutic modalities, and preventive medicine aspects in the practice of surgery.

PHA 557

Otorhinolaryngology

Semester: Spring

Semester Hours: 1

This course introduces the student to the pathophysiology, pathology, clinical medicine, diagnostic and therapeutic modalities, and preventive medicine aspects in the practice of otorhinolaryngology.

PHA 561

Obstetrics/Gynecology

Semester: Summer

Semester Hours: 2

This course introduces the student to the pathophysiology, pathology, clinical medicine, diagnostic and therapeutic modalities, and preventive medicine aspects in the practice of obstetrics/gynecology.

PHA 562

Orthopedics

Semester: Summer

Semester Hours: 2

This course introduces the student to the pathophysiology, pathology, clinical medicine, diagnostic and therapeutic modalities, and preventive medicine aspects in the practice of orthopedics.

PHA 572

Dermatology

Semester: Summer

Semester Hours: 1

This course introduces the student to the pathophysiology, pathology, clinical medicine,

diagnostic and therapeutic modalities, and preventive medicine aspects in the practice of dermatology.

PHA 574

Rheumatology

Semester: Summer

Semester Hours: 1

This course introduces the student to the pathophysiology, pathology, clinical medicine, diagnostic and therapeutic modalities, and preventive medicine aspects in the practice of rheumatology.

PHA 575

Genetic & Molecular Basis of Health & Disease

Semester: Summer

Semester Hours: 2

The focus of this course is to gain an understanding of the biochemical, molecular, and genetic basis for health and disease with an emphasis on clinical applications. The purpose of this course is to provide students with a knowledge base that can be applied throughout their study of medicine.

PHA 610

Emergency Medicine

Semester: Summer

Semester Hours: 3

This course reviews the pathophysiology, pathology, diagnostic and therapeutic modalities, and preventive medicine aspects of clinical medicine within the context of emergency medicine. The focus of this course is to prepare students to rapidly recognize, evaluate, and manage acute illnesses and injuries across the lifespan that require emergent care, with emphasis on timely clinical decision-making, patient stabilization, and the performance of essential life-saving procedures.

PHA 621

Problem-Based Clinical Correlation

Semester: Summer

Semester Hours: 2

This course is designed to refine students' critical thinking skills within a problem-based clinical correlation model. Building on the Introduction to Clinical Practice course, students will continue to perfect their ability to critically evaluate, apply, and document clinical information. This includes synthesizing data from medical histories, physical examinations, diagnostic testing,

and pertinent medical literature to manage healthcare problems and provide patient education. Additionally, the course introduces advanced concepts such as inpatient documentation and the formulation of inpatient admission and discharge orders.

PHA 636

Patient Safety – Unifying Themes

Semester: Summer

Semester Hours: 3

Students will employ the Institute of Healthcare Improvement Open School modules on leadership, patient safety, and quality improvement. Building upon concepts and discussions begun during the didactic year regarding evidence-based medicine, ethics, and professionalism, the student will leave the program with a focus on enhancing patient safety through communication, data gathering, and quality improvement techniques. In addition, students will complete training in substance use.

PHA 638

Case Study and Community Education Project

Semester: Summer

Semester Hours: 3

Students will apply skills learned from Evidence-Based Medicine: Research, Communications and Applications, and Professional and Medical Practice Issues to choose a case study developed and researched during the clinical rotations. The course will conclude with an oral presentation to second-year peers and the faculty of a literature supported case study and a written 3-5-page paper. Case study development will be mentored by the director of clinical education and supported by the core faculty. Presentations will be delivered the week of graduation. This course also incorporates structured PANCE preparation.

PHA 641

Geriatrics

Semester: Summer

Semester Hours: 2

This course provides an introduction to gerontology with an emphasis on the normal biological, sociological, behavioral, and environmental changes that occur with age. Consequences of aging from the perspective of primary health care providers will be presented. Principles and methods of multidimensional assessment relative to the recognition and management of medical disease and mental illness with an emphasis on maximizing functional independence is discussed. The skills of history taking and physical assessment in the geriatric population will be taught. Students will understand the end-of-life issues and ethics in palliative care with review of the model of advanced care planning.

PHA 651

Clinical Rotations I*

Semester: Fall

Semester Hours: 12

Students complete clinical rotations as assigned by the physician assistant program.

PHA 652

Clinical Rotations II*

Semester: Spring

Semester Hours: 12

Students complete clinical rotations as assigned by the physician assistant program.

PHA 653

Clinical Rotations III*

Semester: Summer

Semester Hours: 12

Students complete clinical rotations as assigned by the physician assistant program.

Clinical Practice Curriculum

The final 12 months of the program constitute an extended period of clinical practice experience under the supervision of a board-certified physician or NCCPA-certified physician assistant, and, in rare instances, a nurse practitioner qualified in their area of instruction (under the supervision of a physician). The emphasis during this year is primary care in which the year is divided into 8 rotations. Our clinical training sites are located throughout a vast geographic area, most of which are rural. ***Students must be able to travel to accomplish their clinical practice rotations.***

All arrangements for and expenses associated with travel and living accommodations during the clinical phase of the program are the responsibility of the student.

Students are ***NOT*** allowed to establish their own clinical practice rotations. Students who wish to recommend a possible new preceptor must do so in writing using the *Preceptor Recommendation form*. The Program will evaluate the suitability of all prospective clinical preceptors to insure adequate and comparable clinical experiences are provided by all preceptors utilized by the Program.

All clinical experience preceptorships ***MUST*** be scheduled by the Director of Clinical Education (DCE) or other official Program representative.

Under no circumstances will students personally contact prospective or established program preceptors, nor take any actions toward establishing their own clinical practice rotations without written permission. Doing so will be considered a violation of program policy that will lead to dismissal from the program as evidence of unacceptable unprofessional behavior.

Once a rotation is confirmed, no student requests for changes to the scheduled rotation will be accepted. The program reserves the right to change an established student’s clinical rotation schedule at any time and without notice. These types of changes do not occur frequently, but are sometimes necessitated when the program receives last-minute notification from a scheduled preceptor of a change in availability. Any attempt by a student to change a confirmed clinical rotation will be considered a violation of program policy that will lead to dismissal from the program based upon unacceptable behavior.

Students on clinical rotations must be prepared to work any and all hours designated by their preceptor and must be available a minimum of 40 hours per week. Preceptors determine the student’s schedule and clinical activities (inpatient rounds, outpatient clinic, surgical cases, etc.) throughout the assigned clinical rotation, which may include weekends, evenings, nights and being on-call. Any student who fails to fully comply with the designated schedule or fails to complete the program’s minimum requirements established for a specific clinical rotation (as outlined in the course syllabi) will receive a failing grade (F) for the rotation and will be subject to dismissal in accordance with the Program Retention Standards.

Prior to any clinical exposure, all students must successfully complete the program-provided Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and Blood Borne Pathogens (BBP) training. The Program will maintain copies of your certificate of training. Specific site orientation is also required by some clinical affiliates. Student participation in clinical practice orientation programs is mandatory. Failure to comply will result in dismissal from the Program.

Course Schedule:

Semester	Course #	Description	Credits
Fall	PHA 651	Clinical Rotations I	12
Spring	PHA 652	Clinical Rotations II	12
Summer	PHA 653	Clinical Rotations III	12
Summer	PHA 636	Patient Safety – Unifying Themes	3
Summer	PHA 638	Case Study & Community Education Project	3

Course Descriptions:

PHA 651, 652, and 653: Clinical Rotations I, II, and III

Students complete clinical rotations as assigned by the MPAS Program*:

Clinical Rotation	# Weeks
Family Practice	6
General Internal Medicine	6
Emergency Medicine	6

General Surgery	6
Obstetrics/Gynecology (Women's Health)	6
Psychiatry	6
General Pediatrics	6
Elective	6

**One rotation must be performed in a rural area*

Family Medicine Rotation

This six-week core rotation provides supervised clinical experience in the evaluation and management of acute and chronic conditions, injuries, and preventive care across the lifespan within a family medicine setting. Emphasis is placed on the development of advanced history-taking and physical examination skills, clinical reasoning, and the application of evidence-based management strategies. Students will engage in a broad range of primary care procedures while developing proficiency in essential skills, including comprehensive patient assessment and interpretation of diagnostic studies, including chest radiographs and urinalyses. This rotation further emphasizes interprofessional collaboration, patient safety, and health promotion within the outpatient environment. Students will not function as primary providers or replace clinical staff; all patient care activities will be supervised and reviewed.

Emergency Medicine Rotation

This core six-week rotation provides clinical experience in the evaluation and management of acute illnesses and injuries in both pediatric and adult populations requiring emergency care. This rotation emphasizes the development of focused history-taking and physical examination skills, clinical decision-making, and the application of evidence-based management strategies. Students will participate in performing essential procedures and interventions under appropriate supervision, including airway management, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, fluid resuscitation, management of electrolyte and acid-base disturbances, laceration repair, interpretation of orthopedic X-rays, and splinting/casting. The rotation also highlights interprofessional collaboration, patient safety, and timely disposition planning within the emergency care setting. Students will not function as primary providers and will not replace clinical staff. All patient care activities will be supervised and reviewed.

Internal Medicine Rotation

This six-week core rotation provides supervised clinical experience in the evaluation and management of acute and chronic medical conditions in adult patients across inpatient, outpatient, and long-term care settings, as determined by the clinical site. Emphasis is placed on the development of advanced history-taking and physical examination skills, clinical reasoning, and the application of evidence-based management strategies across the continuum of care. Students will participate in the care of patients with complex comorbidities, gaining proficiency in comprehensive patient assessment, interpretation of diagnostic studies (including laboratory

data, imaging, and electrocardiograms), and the development of evidence-based management plans. This rotation further emphasizes interprofessional collaboration, patient safety, transitions of care, and follow-up. Students will not function as primary providers or replace clinical staff; all patient care activities will be supervised and reviewed.

General Pediatrics Rotation

This six-week core rotation provides supervised clinical experience in the evaluation and management of infants, children, and adolescents. Emphasis is placed on the development of advanced history-taking and physical examination skills specific to the pediatric population, clinical reasoning, and the application of evidence-based management strategies. Students will participate in newborn care, routine well-child care, and the management of common acute and chronic pediatric conditions. Learners will gain proficiency in comprehensive pediatric assessment, growth and development, immunization practices, and the interpretation of age-appropriate diagnostic studies. This rotation further emphasizes interprofessional collaboration, patient safety, family-centered care, and health promotion, including anticipatory guidance. Students will not function as primary providers or replace clinical staff; all patient care activities will be supervised and reviewed.

Obstetrics/Gynecology (Women's Health) Rotation

This six-week core rotation provides supervised clinical experience in the evaluation and management of conditions related to women's health across the lifespan, including both obstetric and gynecologic care. Emphasis is placed on the development of advanced history-taking and physical examination skills, clinical reasoning, and the application of evidence-based management strategies in both outpatient and inpatient settings. Students will participate in routine prenatal, intrapartum, and postpartum care, as well as the evaluation and management of common gynecologic conditions. Additional learning experiences include family planning and contraceptive counseling, screening and management of sexually transmitted infections, cancer screening and prevention, and the assessment of common reproductive health concerns. Learners will develop proficiency in comprehensive patient assessment, interpretation of diagnostic studies, and formulation of appropriate management and follow-up plans.

This rotation further emphasizes interprofessional collaboration, patient safety, and patient-centered care, including education and counseling. Students will not function as primary providers or replace clinical staff; all patient care activities will be supervised and reviewed.

General Surgery Rotation

This six-week core rotation provides supervised clinical experience in the evaluation and management of patients with surgically treatable conditions across the lifespan within a surgical setting. Emphasis is placed on the development of focused history-taking and physical examination skills, clinical reasoning, and the application of evidence-based perioperative management strategies. Students will participate in preoperative assessment and optimization,

intraoperative care, and postoperative management, including wound care and recognition of surgical complications, to develop an understanding of operative techniques and interprofessional team roles. Students will engage in a variety of procedural experiences while developing proficiency in essential skills, including interpretation of diagnostic studies relevant to surgical care. This rotation further emphasizes interprofessional collaboration, patient safety, and continuity of care across the perioperative period. Students will not function as primary providers or replace clinical staff; all patient care activities will be supervised and reviewed.

Psychiatry Rotation

This core six-week rotation provides clinical experience in the evaluation and management of psychiatric conditions across the lifespan. This rotation emphasizes the development of comprehensive and focused history-taking, mental status examination skills, clinical reasoning, and the application of evidence-based diagnostic and management strategies. Students will participate in the assessment and management of common psychiatric disorders under appropriate supervision, including mood disorders, anxiety disorders, psychotic disorders, substance use disorders, and behavioral emergencies. The rotation also highlights risk assessment (including suicide and violence risk), appropriate use of pharmacologic and non-pharmacologic interventions, interprofessional collaboration, patient safety, and disposition planning within psychiatric care settings. Students will not function as primary providers and will not replace clinical staff. All patient care activities will be supervised and reviewed.

Elective Rotation

This six-week elective rotation provides supervised clinical experience that allows students to explore professional interests and expand their knowledge and skills as future physician assistants. Elective experiences may include additional clinical practice in core disciplines or exposure to medical or surgical subspecialties. Emphasis is placed on the continued development of clinical reasoning, application of evidence-based medicine, and refinement of patient care skills within the chosen area of study. Students will engage in experiences appropriate to the selected elective, with opportunities to enhance patient assessment skills, interpret diagnostic studies, and develop management plans. This rotation further emphasizes professionalism, interprofessional collaboration, and patient-centered care. Students will not function as primary providers or replace clinical staff; all activities will be supervised and reviewed. Syllabi have been developed for all elective rotations.

Students will also be required to complete an online opiate use disorder training, supplemental online learning cases for each rotation, and a Pance prep program that will need to be completed by graduation, with further details, expectations, and evaluation criteria provided in the respective course syllabi

Academic Calendar

For a **tentative** academic calendar based on **Financial Aid distribution**, please visit:
<https://rocky.edu/academics/academic-programs/pa/academic-calendar/>

A more detailed academic calendar will be available at orientation.

Clinical Experience Rotations

For the schedule of clinical experience rotations, please visit:

<https://rocky.edu/academics/academic-programs/pa/academic-calendar/>

Program Standards of Performance

Academic Standards

Academic Integrity: Students in the Physician Assistant Program must comply with the RMC Academic Integrity Policy. Dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated in the Program. In addition to the ethical issue of honesty, as a professional program, we hold all our students to the AAPA Guidelines for Ethical Conduct for the Physician Assistant Profession. These guidelines can be found at the following website:

<https://www.aapa.org/career-central/practice-tools/ethical-guidelines-for-the-pa-profession/>

Honesty and scholarship require that a person exercise care to make proper acknowledgement when using another's intellectual work. Disregard of this standard of morality and scholarship lays a person open to charges of plagiarism or cheating. Refer to the RMC Catalog for details on standards for academic integrity.

Scholastic Achievement: Course grades are calculated on a percentage basis as outlined in the respective course syllabi. All final course grade percentages are rounded to the nearest integer as follows:

- XX.45% or higher is rounded up to the next higher integer
- XX.44% or less is rounded down

Final Course Grades are assigned according to the following academic standards:

Didactic & Research Courses		Clinical Rotations	
<i>Percentage Grade</i>	<i>Letter Grade</i>	<i>Percentage Grade</i>	<i>Letter Grade</i>
90 - 100	A	90 - 100	A
80 – 89	B	80 – 89	B
70 – 79	C	Less than 80	F
Less than 70	F		

Grades are considered a reflection of how well a student has done in comparison to the expectations:

- A – indicates that a student has exceeded the program’s expectations
- B – indicates that a student has met the program’s expectations
- C – indicates that a student has not met the program’s expectations

An “I” may be temporarily awarded to individuals who fail to complete course requirements within the defined time period of the course. Students must submit a written request for an “I” to the program director for approval **BEFORE** the end of the semester in which the “I” designation is being requested. If an “I” is not requested or not approved by the program director, the course grade will be calculated based upon that portion of the course that has been completed.

According to campus policy, all required course work **MUST** be completed within one year (12 months) of the date on which the incomplete grade is posted. **After one year any “I” grades will be permanently changed to an “F.”** A final grade of “F” in any PA course is a non-passing grade and results in automatic and immediate dismissal from the PA Program.

Assessments: Student assessments of learning and academic/scholastic achievement take several forms during the MPAS Program. These include:

- **Examinations:** Frequent written evaluations are conducted throughout the program to assess each individual’s acquisition of the required knowledge base to practice medicine as a Physician Assistant. These examinations occur on a frequent basis during the didactic phase and at the end of each clinical practice rotation during the clinical phase.
- **Clinical Skills Assessments (CSA):** Students must demonstrate acquisition of the diagnostic, clinical, and interpretive skills needed to fulfill the Technical Standards of Performance.
- **Objective Standardized Clinical Evaluations (OSCE):** These practical assessments are designed to evaluate each student’s skills and abilities to obtain a patient’s medical history, appropriately perform physical examinations, critically analyze the diagnostic dataset to establish a problem list/differential diagnosis, formulate a treatment plan, and provide appropriate patient education.
- **Faculty/Preceptor Evaluations of Student Performance:** These are prepared at the end of each semester during the didactic year and at the end of each clinical practice rotation during the clinical year. The assessments are primarily used to evaluate professionalism, participation, communication skills, and overall performance.
- **A Comprehensive Summative Evaluation:** This evaluation is conducted at the end of both the didactic and clinical components of the program. Each of these evaluations contains multiple clinical skills assessments and one or more OSCE(s) using standardized patients. The comprehensive summative evaluation conducted at the end of the didactic phase is used to provide each student with a detailed assessment of their mastery of the professional competencies (listed below). Grades obtained on the didactic phase comprehensive evaluations are not used to calculate any course grades. **However,**

students must pass the CSA and OSCE components of the summative evaluations at the end of the didactic component to move on to the clinical phase. Students who fail the summative evaluation will require remediation and retesting of the failed component prior to graduation. A second failure will result in the student being given a grade of “Incomplete” (I) for their final clinical rotations course/semester. They will be immediately placed on academic probation and a plan for remediation will be developed which may include (but is not necessarily limited to) additional assigned clinical practice experience.

Academic Progress: Students are required to maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 and achieve a course letter grade of “C” or better in all didactic and research courses. A clinical rotation letter grade of “B” or better is required in all clinical practice rotations to remain in good academic standing and to progress within the program. Failing any end-of-rotation examination must be satisfactorily remediated. Any student failing two end-of-rotation exams will be placed on academic probation and failing a third end-of-rotation exam will result in program dismissal (see page 35).

The program core faculty will review academic progress at the end of each semester. Any individual who does not meet the specified end-of-semester cumulative GPA requirements will be placed on academic probation for one semester. The cumulative GPA must be raised to the minimum requirement during the probationary semester. Failure to meet the minimum GPA at the end of the probationary semester will result in dismissal from the program. Students are also required to achieve a semester GPA of 3.0, regardless of their cumulative GPA. Any student who does not achieve a semester GPA of 3.0 will also be placed on academic probation. Any student who has two subsequent semester GPAs of less than 3.0 will be dismissed from the program, regardless of their cumulative GPA.

Competencies Mastery

The National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA), in conjunction with the AAPA, PAEA and ARC-PA, has developed a document entitled *Competencies for the PA Profession* (originally adopted in 2005; amended in 2012, 2021), available at <https://www.nccpa.net/resources/competencies-for-the-physician-assistant-profession/>. This document serves as a foundation by which physician assistants can chart their individual course toward attaining the fundamental competencies of the PA profession.

The Rocky Mountain College PA Program has adopted this manuscript (<https://www.aapa.org/download/90503>) as a resource for defining the basic knowledge, clinical skills, and professional attitudes and behaviors individuals enrolled in this program should strive to attain and demonstrate throughout their course of study. Students in the RMC PA Program must demonstrate competence in the following seven categories upon graduation:

1. *Knowledge for Practice*: Demonstrate knowledge about established and evolving biomedical and clinical sciences and the application of this knowledge to patient care.
2. *Interpersonal and Communication skills*: Demonstrate interpersonal and communication skills that result in the effective exchange of information and collaboration with patients, their families, and health professionals.
3. *Person-centered Care*: Provide person-centered care that includes patient- and setting-specific assessment, evaluation, and management and healthcare that is evidence-based, supports patient safety, and advances health equity. including age-appropriate assessment, evaluation, and management
4. *Interprofessional Collaboration*: Demonstrate the ability to engage with a variety of other healthcare professionals in a manner that optimizes safe, effective, patient- and population-centered care.
5. *Professionalism and Ethics*: Demonstrate a commitment to practicing medicine in ethically and legally appropriate ways and emphasizing professional maturity and accountability for delivering safe and quality care to patients and populations.
6. *Practice-based Learning and Quality Improvement*: Demonstrate the ability to learn and implement quality improvement practices by engaging in critical analysis of one's own practice experience, the medical literature, and other information resources for the purposes of self-evaluation, lifelong learning, and practice improvement.
7. *Society and Population Health*: Recognize and understand the influences of the ecosystem of person, family, population, environment, and policy on the health of patients and integrate knowledge of these determinants of health into patient care decisions.

Additionally, the NCCPA has created a blueprint for entry-level physician assistant certification in which the examination content is divided into two critical dimensions:

1. Knowledge of clinical skills physician assistants should exhibit when confronted with diseases and disorders
2. Knowledge of organ systems and the diseases, disorders, and medical assessments physician assistants encounter within those systems

To review this blueprint, please follow this link:

<https://www.nccpa.net/wp-content/uploads/PANCE-Blueprint.pdf>

Technical Standards

Technical standards refer to those physical, cognitive and behavioral abilities required of all Physician Assistant candidates. Students admitted to the Physician Assistant Program must meet certain basic/essential requirements (technical standards) that are necessary to perform as a Physician Assistant. Reasonable accommodation for persons with documented disabilities will be considered on an individual basis; but, an applicant must possess the intellectual, ethical, physical, and emotional capabilities required to independently undertake and complete the full

program curriculum and achieve the required level of competence in the time period allotted by program design/policy.

Candidates for the physician assistant profession must be able to effectively perform required clinical functions, with or without reasonable accommodation, including observation, communication, motor, and intellectual abilities. Diagnostic skills will be lessened without the use of the senses of equilibrium, smell, and taste. Additionally, they must have sufficient exteroceptive sense (touch, pain, and temperature), proprioceptive sense (position, pressure, movement, stereognosis, and vibration), and motor function to permit them to carry out the activities described in the sections that follow. Candidates must be able to integrate all information received by whatever sense(s) employed, consistently, quickly, and accurately, and they must have the intellectual ability to learn, integrate, analyze, and synthesize data.

Applicants will be required to sign a verification statement that they meet the Technical Standards as part of the Program-specific application Supplemental Materials. Students in the Rocky Mountain College Physician Assistant Program may be evaluated throughout the program by faculty or clinical preceptors as to their ability to perform these Technical Standards throughout their educational experience. Individuals who do not satisfactorily demonstrate the required skills and abilities outlined in the Technical Standards may be placed on academic probation and/or provided with remediation and academic counseling, and reassessed at the end of the subsequent semesters and/or clinical rotations for evidence of improvement. Failure to demonstrate satisfactory progress in future assessments will result in dismissal from the program.

The granting of an entry level master's degree signifies that the holder has developed the basic clinical skills requisite to perform their professional role in accordance with the laws of medical practice. The services they provide must, for the safety and welfare of the patient, be of the same professional quality that would be rendered by their supervising physician. The PA Program has the responsibility to assure its graduates are fully competent and capable of complying with the Hippocratic Oath "*to benefit and do no harm*" to the public they will serve.

A candidate for the physician assistant profession must possess the skills and abilities defined in the following five categories:

1. **Observation Skills:** The candidate must be able to observe demonstrations and experiments in the basic sciences, including but not limited to physiologic and pharmacologic demonstrations in animals, microbiologic cultures, and microscopic studies of microorganisms and tissues in normal and pathologic states. A candidate must be able to observe a patient accurately at a distance and close at hand. Observation necessitates the functional use of the sense of vision, hearing, olfaction, and somatic sensation.
2. **Communication Skills:** A candidate should be able to speak, hear, and observe patients in order to elicit information, describe changes in mood, activity and posture, and perceive nonverbal communications. A candidate must be able to communicate effectively and sensitively with patients. Communication includes not only speech, but

also reading and writing. The candidate must be able to communicate effectively and efficiently in oral and written form with all members of the health care team and patients.

3. **Motor Skills:** Candidates should have sufficient motor function to elicit information from patients by palpation, auscultation, percussion, and other diagnostic maneuvers. A candidate should be able to do basic laboratory tests, carry out diagnostic procedures, and read EKGs and X-ray films. A candidate should be able to execute motor movements reasonably required to provide general care and emergency treatment of patients. Examples of emergency treatment reasonably required of physician assistants are cardiopulmonary resuscitation, the administration of intravenous medication, the application of pressure to stop bleeding, the opening of obstructed airways, the suturing of simple wounds, and the performance of simple obstetrical maneuvers. Such actions require coordination of both gross and fine muscular movements, equilibrium, and functional use of the senses of touch and vision.
4. **Intellectual-Conceptual, Integrative, and Quantitative Abilities:** These abilities include measurement, calculation, reasoning, analysis, and synthesis. Problem solving, the critical skill demanded of physician assistants, requires all of these intellectual abilities. In addition, the candidate should be able to comprehend three-dimensional relationships and to understand the spatial relationships of structures.
5. **Behavioral and Social Attributes:** A candidate must possess the emotional health and stability required for full utilization of her/his intellectual abilities, the exercise of good judgment, the prompt completion of all responsibilities attendant to the diagnosis and care of patients, and the development of mature, sensitive, and effective relationships with patients. Candidates must be able to adapt to changing environments, to display flexibility, and to 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 that are assessed during the admission and educational processes. Throughout the entire 26 month program, students are expected to demonstrate emotional resilience and stability, adaptability, flexibility, and tolerance of ambiguity.

Technological compensation can be made for some disabilities in certain areas, but such a candidate should be able to perform required tasks safely and effectively within the PA role. Students with disabilities are responsible for requesting accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act through the procedures outlined in the Rocky Mountain College catalog. (See *Accommodations/Disabilities* in the General Policies and Procedures section of this handbook.)

Professional Standards – Code of Ethics

Students are required to demonstrate professional behavior throughout the duration of their enrollment at Rocky Mountain College – both in the didactic setting, as well as in clinical practice rotations.

Professional behavior means having and demonstrating respect for everyone, holding oneself to ethical and moral standards of behaviors, and developing the knowledge and skills that enable one to provide competent and compassionate care for their patients. At a minimum, Rocky Mountain College Physician Assistant students are required to abide by the professions Code of Ethics.

Code of Ethics:

The Rocky Mountain College Physician Assistant Program recognizes its responsibility to prepare its graduates to maintain the highest standards in the provision of quality health care services. To that end, this program teaches, endorses, and strives to adhere to the American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA) code of ethics. See AAPA website to view code of ethics" and replace with "See AAPA Guidelines of ethical conduct policies at:

<https://www.aapa.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Guidelines-for-Ethical-Conduct-for-the-PA-Profession-7-1-21.pdf>

Statement of Values of the PA Profession

- PAs hold as their primary responsibility the health, safety, welfare, and dignity of all human beings.
- PAs uphold the tenets of patient autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence, and justice.
- PAs recognize and promote the value of diversity.
- PAs do not discriminate; PAs treat equally all persons who seek their care.
- PAs hold in confidence the patient-specific information shared in the course of practicing medicine.
- PAs actively seek to expand their knowledge and skills, keeping abreast of advances in medicine. PAs assess their personal capabilities and limitations, striving always to improve their practice of medicine.
- PAs work with other members of the healthcare team to provide compassionate and effective care of patients.
- PAs use their knowledge and experience to contribute to a healthy community and the improvement of public health.
- PAs respect their professional relationship with all members of the healthcare team.
- PAs share and expand clinical and professional knowledge with PAs and PA students.

In addition to the above values, this section provides a summarized outline of key topic areas contained within the current American Academy of Physician Assistants Guidelines for Ethical Conduct for the PA Profession. This outline is intended for educational orientation only and is not a substitute for the full document. Students are expected to review, understand, and apply the complete AAPA Guidelines as the authoritative standard governing ethical and professional behavior in all academic and clinical settings, in the following areas:

1. The PA and Patient
 - a. PA Role and Responsibilities
 - b. The PA and Diversity

- c. Nondiscrimination of Patients and Families
 - d. Initiation and Discontinuation of Care
 - e. Informed Consent
 - f. Confidentiality
 - g. The Patient and the Medical Record
 - h. Disclosure of Medical Errors
 - i. Care of Family Members and Co-workers
 - j. Genetic Testing
 - k. Reproductive Decision Making
 - l. End of Life
2. The PA and Individual Professionalism
 - a. Conflict of Interest
 - b. Professional Identity
 - c. Competency
 - d. Sexual Relationships
 - e. Nondiscrimination in the Workplace
 - f. Sexual Harassment
 3. The PA and Other Professionals
 - a. Team Practice
 - b. Resolution of Conflict Between Providers
 - c. Illegal and Unethical Conduct
 - d. Impairment
 - e. Complementary, Alternative and Integrative Health
 4. The PA and the Healthcare System
 - a. Workplace Actions
 - b. PAs as Educators
 - c. PAs and Research
 - d. PAs as Expert Witnesses
 5. The PA and Society
 - a. Lawfulness
 - b. Executions
 - c. Access to Care / Resource
 - d. Community Well Being

The AAPA recognizes its responsibility to aid the PA profession as it strives to provide high quality, accessible healthcare. PAs wrote these guidelines for themselves and other PAs. The ultimate goal is to honor patients and earn their trust while providing the best and most appropriate care possible. At the same time, PAs must understand their personal values and beliefs and recognize the ways in which those values and beliefs can impact the care they provide.

Specific Program Standards of Conduct

- Students must adhere to the [Rocky Mountain College Student Conduct Programs](#).
- Students must adhere to the [Rocky Mountain College Student Academic Integrity Policy](#).
- Students will be required to conduct themselves in a manner conducive with the Guidelines for Ethical Conduct of the PA Profession.
- Students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that indicates respect toward other students, faculty, and patients.
- Students must refrain from any behavior that would bring harm or abuse to any person or property.
- Any behavior that disrupts teaching, research, administrative, or student functions is considered unprofessional.
- Any student whose behavior at a clinical site jeopardizes or leads to the loss of that site for future student clinical experiences will receive a failing grade for the rotation.

Failure to demonstrate any of the qualities defined in the [Guidelines for Ethical Conduct of the PA Profession](#) or the Specific Standards of Conduct listed above will serve as grounds for dismissal.

Evaluation of Professional Behavior

Formal evaluation of professional behavior will be performed by the program's faculty and clinical practice preceptors at the following points in the Physician Assistant curriculum:

- At the end of Fall, Spring, and Summer Semesters (Program faculty evaluation)
- Near the end of each clinical practice rotation (clinical preceptor evaluation)

The first time a student receives an unsatisfactory rating on any professionalism evaluation, he/she will be placed on Academic Probation that will continue until the next regularly scheduled evaluation. Any subsequent unsatisfactory professionalism evaluation will result in immediate dismissal from the program.

Program Completion and Graduation Requirements

The Master of Physician Assistant Studies degree will be granted to all students who have completed the requirements for graduation as specified in this Student Handbook and the corresponding Rocky Mountain College Catalog, and are recommended for graduation by the program's core faculty. Graduation is contingent upon demonstration of all program-defined competencies consistent with ARC-PA standards. Successful candidates for graduation must have completed the following:

Didactic Year (*Must be completed as a condition of eligibility to begin the clinical practice year*)

- Demonstrate professionalism consistent with program expectations, as assessed through formal faculty evaluations

- Successfully complete each course required with a minimum grade of a C, or successfully remediate any grade below a C. A grade below a C of two or more courses will result in immediate dismissal.
- Achieve the required minimum cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 3.0
- Additionally, students must successfully complete the Objective Standardized Clinical Evaluation (OSCE) and Clinical Skills Assessment (CSA) components of the comprehensive summative evaluation conducted at the end of the didactic year.

Clinical Year

- Successfully complete all the clinical practice experiences with a minimum grade of B in each rotation.
- Pass (with a minimum score of 70%) all end-of-rotation examinations. Failing any end-of-rotation examination must be satisfactorily remediated. Any student failing two end-of-rotation exams will be placed on academic probation, and the third failure of end-of-rotation exams will result in program dismissal.
- Maintain the required minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0.
- Demonstrate professionalism and competency to practice medicine as a physician assistant as evidenced by the preceptor evaluations of student performance.
- Successfully complete the OSCE and CSA components of the comprehensive summative evaluation conducted year the end of the clinical practice year.
- Complete the clinical skills competency checklist signed off by preceptors.
- Satisfactorily complete a research paper, Community Education Project PHA 638 and the patient safety and quality improvement modules PHA 636, to support competencies in Practice-Based Learning and Improvement, Systems-Based Practice, and Society and Population Health

Completion Timeframe

All program requirements must be finished within 12 months of the student's scheduled program completion date (calculated on the basis of the original program matriculation date).

Retention Standards and Change in Student Status

Earning a MPAS Degree is predicated on the faculty's determination that a student is *suitable* for the practice of medicine in terms of their professionalism, personal conduct, and academic achievement. ***Grades alone are not sufficient to warrant promotion to the next semester, clinical phase, or graduation.*** The program reserves the right to recommend dismissal of a student whose documented academic or professional performance does not meet program standards, in accordance with established policies and due process procedures.

Leave of Absence: A leave of absence for medical or personal reasons from the PA Program may be granted by the Program Director. Requests for leaves of absence must be made in writing

to the Program Director. Students may resume coursework upon submission and approval by the program of appropriate documentation verifying that the condition necessitating the leave of absence has been satisfactorily resolved. Repetition of course work previously and satisfactorily completed prior to the leave of absence will not be required provided resumption in training occurs within one academic year from the date the leave of absence began.

Withdrawal: Students may voluntarily withdraw from the program in accordance with college policies and procedures. (Consult the current Rocky Mountain College Catalog for details.) Written notice of intent to withdraw must be provided to the Program Director prior to initiating the formal college withdrawal process.

Probation: Being placed on probation is a warning to the student that their performance is below the minimum requirements of the program. During probation, a student must raise their grade point average or correct other identified problems, including professionalism deficiencies to the required minimum standard or risk dismissal from the program.

- This change in program status is imposed by the program director in accordance with the Standards of Performance policies and procedures outlined in this Student Handbook.
- The minimum length of probation is one semester.
- A student on probation will be subject to dismissal for failure to resolve the deficiency OR the occurrence of any other violation which mandates program dismissal.

Suspension: Any student may be suspended from continued participation in the program to allow sufficient time to investigate allegations of unprofessional behavior, violations of academic integrity, or other claims of personal misconduct. Suspension may be imposed by the Program Director in accordance with program policies while allegations are reviewed.

Dismissal: Dismissal is a permanent separation from the program. The following is a list of conditions under which students will be dismissed from the Rocky Mountain College Physician Assistant Program:

- Violation of any college or program rules, regulations, policies, or procedures with regards to academic integrity.
- Failure to achieve the required minimum grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 after having been on Academic Probation for one semester.
- Failure of more than 1 module/course in any single academic semester of the didactic year regardless of overall GPA.
- Refusal or failure to satisfactorily complete a remediation plan for any course, module, or clinical rotation.
- Judged to be professionally unfit for the practice of medicine (as determined by the formal end-of-semester professional evaluation or end-of-clinical rotation

Faculty/Preceptor Evaluation of Students) by at least two different faculty and/or clinical rotation preceptors.

- Students on probation or on an extended curriculum (i.e., their projected program completion date is extended beyond the originally scheduled program completion date for their class based upon their date of matriculation) are subject to immediate dismissal upon receipt of a failing rotation/course grade or violation of any of the terms of their probation.
- Receipt of a failing grade in two clinical rotations.
- Failure of a third clinical practice end-of-rotation written examination

All adverse actions (including probation, suspension, and dismissal) taken by the Rocky Mountain College Physician Assistant Program for the conditions outlined above are considered final, subject to the program's published Academic Appeal Policies and Procedures, which ensure due process.

Refunds: When a student withdraws before 60% of the semester elapses, the College must return to the Department of Education any unearned federal financial aid funds up to the unearned percentage of institutional charges for the portion of the period the student did not complete. Federal dollars that need to be returned will be applied in the following order: unsubsidized federal Stafford loan, subsidized federal Stafford loan, federal Perkins loan, federal PLUS loan, federal Pell grant, federal Supplemental Education Opportunity Grant, and Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnership program. The calculation of the return of these funds may result in the student owing a balance to either the College and/or the federal government.

If the student owes a balance to the College, the amount is due at the time of withdrawal. Arrangements for monthly payments may be set up if the student cannot pay the total amount. The student will not be able to validate his or her enrollment, attend future classes, or obtain transcripts or diplomas, until the balance is either paid in full or satisfactory payment arrangements have been made. If the student owes an overpayment to the Department of Education, the College will report the amount owed to the Department of Education through the National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS). The student will not be eligible for future federal financial aid funds until payment arrangements have been set up with the Department of Education or until the overpayment has been paid in full.

The withdrawal calculation for those students receiving institutional assistance or those receiving no assistance, who withdraw from the College before they have completed 60% of the term, will be evaluated in the same manner as a student receiving federal financial aid.

Readmission: Any individual who has been previously offered admission into the program but failed to matriculate in the designated class will be required to initiate a new application for admission.

Policies and Procedures

Academic Policies and Procedures

Attendance: Students are expected to attend all scheduled lectures, laboratories, examinations, clinical rounds, problem-based learning and case study activities, etc. Tardiness, early departure, and absence from classes are not conducive to optimal learning. It is the responsibility of students to arrive on time, to be prepared for class, and to remain for the entire class period. Any unprofessional conduct may lead to dismissal from the program.

Absences from any scheduled program activity are excused only at the discretion of the course director and the Program Director. Any foreseeable or planned program absence should be made known to the course director and Program Director at the earliest possible time, in writing (e-mail is acceptable).

Students can be assigned a failing course grade for not completing all scheduled course activities or for unexcused absences.

An extended illness (more than three consecutive days) at any time during the program must be “cleared” through the program and will require notification of any clinical preceptor(s) that may be involved as well. Any such absences may require documentation of reason for absence and specific make-up work as designated by the program and/or the clinical preceptors.

For any extended illness, a leave of absence from the program may be considered. Reasonable efforts will be made by the administration and faculty to provide a means for remediating deficiencies incurred during periods of excused absence without penalty to the student.

Following any absence (excused or unexcused) from the program, a health care provider’s documentation of the reason for absence and/or fitness to return to full program activity may be required by the program director. Failure to do so or information provided by a health care provider suggesting the absence was not necessary and/or appropriate will be considered evidence of unprofessional behavior and will be grounds for evaluation of the individual’s fitness to continue in the program.

For students on an approved leave of absence (LOA), the college and PA program provide ongoing support, including financial aid counseling. Students should be aware that, in accordance with federal regulations, an approved LOA may not exceed 180 days within any 12-month period. When a student returns within this timeframe, in-school status is typically maintained and federal loan grace periods are not activated. If the LOA exceeds 180 days, the student will be considered withdrawn for federal financial aid purposes, which may result in the expiration of the grace period and the initiation of loan repayment obligations.

Liability Insurance: The program maintains group liability insurance coverage for enrolled students in the amount of \$2,000,000 per claim/\$4,000,000 aggregate. An individual student policy is not required.

Participation of Students as Human Subjects: We require the participation of students as living subjects, as well as examiners (in an interchangeable fashion), during selected courses in the preclinical phase. We expect students in this program to willingly participate in all aspects of physical exam training in a professional and cooperative manner. At various times, students will be asked to wear clothing that will easily allow physical examination by another student.

Generally, students learn these examination techniques and skills in teams of two or three with the guidance of an experienced instructor. **ALL** students are required to participate in these critical educational activities by submitting to physical examination (including inspection, auscultation, palpation, and percussion) by their classmates. Students will also participate as subjects for one another during preclinical phase lab sessions to practice basic injections, venipuncture, and other minimally invasive procedural skills. All invasive procedures will be performed under the direct supervision of faculty.

An important part of any physical examination technique is learning appropriate draping of patients during the examination procedure to maintain patient dignity, preserve patient modesty, and limit embarrassment. This will be taught, performed, and stressed throughout these student laboratory experiences. When playing the role of a patient, students will be provided gowns to wear and appropriate draping will be emphasized. Consequently, students should plan ahead for scheduled physical exam activities, and wear clothing that will be easy to get in and out of to facilitate the exchange of roles during the training and testing experiences.

Unprofessional behavior (including but not limited to inappropriate physical contact or unsuitable verbal comments) will not be tolerated during physical examination experiences.

Such behavior may result in a failing grade for the course and may result in further actions to resolve the unprofessional conduct.

Evaluation of Performance: Each member of the program's faculty (including clinical preceptors) participates in systematic evaluation of student performance throughout the program with regards to academic, technical, and professional performance. When deficiencies are observed, individual student counseling is performed and a plan for remedial training is developed.

Evaluation of student performance is an ongoing process and includes academic success, professionalism, and ethical conduct. Academic performance is monitored in each course. Student professional and ethical evaluations are completed at the end of each semester and each clinical rotation. Successful completion of each training segment is a requirement for continuation within the program.

Testing Policies:

Examinations: Frequent evaluations are performed throughout the 26- month program to evaluate each student's acquisition of the knowledge and clinical skills needed to become a Physician Assistant. The format of these evaluations may include written examinations, clinical skills assessments, essays, written reports, quizzes, oral presentations, and oral examinations. Most of the written examinations will be computer-administered.

Computerized Testing: Whenever technology is involved in a given process, technologic failures are inevitable. Computerized testing is no exception. Fortunately, these occurrences are rare, but when they occur the program makes every effort to be equitable in making decisions about how to adjust for these technical difficulties. Students are required to adhere to program decisions if these events occur.

Test Policies: No personal materials, notes, books, headphones, food or drinks, calculators, phones, etc., may be present during testing without permission from the course director. Students may bring a pen/pencil. Clean scratch paper can be provided and must be returned to the test proctor before you leave the testing area.

- The wearing of baseball caps, visors, or other eye-shading headwear is not permitted during the examination.
- All computer programs must be closed before logging in to the test site. Do not attempt to access any other software programs during testing.
- Tests are **TIMED**.
- No questions regarding exam content or interpretation may be asked of the testing proctor while the test is being administered.
- Once you complete your test, you must leave the testing area until all students have completed their individual examinations.
- Your test score will be determined by the course director, and will be posted within 24-48 business hours after completion of the test.

Test Absences: Students are expected to take examinations at the designated time. In the event of an illness, the student must contact the course director and the Program Director **BEFORE** the test to inform them of the anticipated absence. A student who has missed an examination due to excused illness or personal crisis will have **NO MORE** than 48 hours in which to complete that examination or the first day back in classes, whichever occurs first. Students with a prolonged illness or personal crisis will be reviewed individually by the program director and arrangements made accordingly.

Student absences from scheduled examinations and laboratory sessions will be excused only under extraordinary circumstances. Examinations will not be administered prior to the scheduled examination time without the approval of the program director.

Testing Accommodations: Students registered with Disability Services for accommodations, must adhere to standard testing policies, except where specific modifications are outlined in their approved accommodation plan. To utilize these services, students must follow the administrative procedures established by Disability Services and the Program. (see "Accommodations" under General Policies below)

Post-test Reviews: We believe tests are a learning experience, and therefore tests need to be reviewed so that students understand important concepts and principles. Post-test reviews are conducted following examinations. As in all areas of professional training, the faculty member makes the final decision on the validity of any test question or answer.

Remediation: Remediation is the program-defined process for addressing deficiencies in a student's knowledge and skills, such that the correction of these deficiencies is measurable and can be documented ([ARC-PA Standards, 6th edition: GLOSSARY](#)).

Remediation is required whenever a faculty member or clinical preceptor identifies and documents any deficiency in a student's knowledge, skills, abilities, or professionalism. These may be identified during classroom activities, campus-based clinical skills training, clinical practice rotations, academic advising, remedial instruction, or other formal program instructional or student assessment activity.

Remediation will be required whenever a failing grade is earned on any formal examination or clinical skills assessment.

When the need for remediation is identified, the student will meet with the corresponding course director **within two (2) school days** of written notification. (The posting of a failing grade on a written examination on Moodle will be considered written notification to the student.)

The course director will be responsible for developing a formal documented remediation plan, which may include any or all of the following learning activities or any other actions that will assist the student in overcoming the identified deficiencies. Examples of remedial activities include:

- a) Examination review/analysis
- b) Individual or group tutorial instruction
- c) Assigned topic(s) literature search and written abstraction, or summation of the information learned
- d) Assigned case studies with written responses to study questions
- e) Oral re-assessment
- f) Other learning activities (videos, CME programs, self-reflection papers, readvised study plans etc.)

The student must also meet with their assigned faculty advisor within two days of the notification of need for remediation. The purpose of the meeting is to assess the student's overall program status and discuss any external influences that may have contributed to their

unsatisfactory progress. If a specific need for assistance is identified, the advisor will provide a recommendation of which campus service(s) the student should consult with.

A deadline for completion of the remediation activities will be established by the course director. Failure to successfully complete the required remediation will result in the assignment of a failing grade (F) for the course in which the remediation is required.

The completed documentation of remediation and academic advising activities performed will be filed in the student's program record. Remediation does not ensure that the student will successfully attain the required level of performance, but it serves to support the student in their attempt at skill mastery.

Grade Assignment: All grades are assigned by the program core faculty. Clinical preceptors ***DO NOT*** assign grades to students during their clinical practice experiences. Preceptors ***EVALUATE*** student performance (academically, clinically, and professionally) and provide the program with a written evaluation that is used by the program faculty to determine a final grade. Students are encouraged to discuss in a formative manner the preceptor's evaluation of their performance during the mid-rotation and end-of- rotation weeks (at a minimum).

Once the evaluation has been submitted to the program faculty for review, ***UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES*** is the student to approach a preceptor for further explanation of their evaluation. If a student approaches a past preceptor for any review of the evaluation after the grade has been assigned to it by the program faculty, the student will be placed on probation or dismissed from the program (if already in a probationary status).

Students wishing to appeal a grade and pursue a grade change (including any clinical rotation grade) must follow the Grade Grievances procedure outlined below.

Grade Grievances: When a grade concern arises, it is the student's responsibility to resolve the issue with the faculty course director who is responsible for assigning the grade. If the matter cannot be resolved to the student's satisfaction with the instructor, the student should contact their advisor for assistance. If still unresolved, a written appeal to the program director may be made within 5 days of the grade assignment. The program director will independently evaluate the situation and render a decision. The decision of the program director may be appealed in accordance with the program's Academic Appeals policy outlined below.

Academic Appeals: The Physician Assistant Program recognizes due process and the rights of a student to appeal program decisions affecting student progress within the program. Student appeals must be based on the program's or institution's failure to follow established policies or procedures, in accordance with college policy ([RMC Academic Appeals Policy](#)). Students must present evidence that supports their appeal of a program decision according to the appeal process as defined herein:

1. All appeals must be submitted to the program director, in writing, within 10 working days (or as otherwise approved by the program director for extenuating circumstances).

2. Appeals will be reviewed during a meeting of the program core faculty, and a decision will be rendered to the student within 5 working days of receipt of the appeal. Students will be invited to attend the faculty meeting at which the appeal is considered to present their case and respond to any questions the faculty may have. As this meeting is purely an academic proceeding, legal counsel may not actively participate, and participation of advisors is governed by institutional policy
3. Students who wish to challenge the program's appeal decision may initiate a subsequent appeal to the Office of the Provost/Academic Vice President. This appeal must be initiated within 10 working days of the program's appeal decision and must be submitted in writing.
4. All academic appeal decisions rendered by the Provost / Academic Vice President are final.

Personal Attire: It is the responsibility of the student to maintain a professional appearance. As a professional program, the following expectations are intended to promote patient safety, infection control, and a professional clinical environment. Attire must be clean, neat, and appropriate to the clinical or educational setting. Students are required to wear their Rocky Mountain College identification badge at all times in patient care settings. A white lab coat may be required; however, attire must comply with the policies of the assigned clinical site and preceptor. Patient care areas include any setting in which patients are examined, evaluated, or treated, including inpatient, outpatient, and campus clinical environments.

Attire must be professional and consistent with healthcare standards and clinical site-specific requirements. The following general guidelines apply:

- Students are expected to dress professionally and maintain appropriate personal hygiene at all times.
- Clinical sites and individual preceptors will establish dress code requirements appropriate to their setting, and students are expected to comply with those requirements.
- Unless otherwise specified by a preceptor, students should wear business casual attire and observe the following guidelines:

1. **Personal Hygiene**

- a. Strongly scented colognes, lotions, or perfumes should be avoided.
- b. Long hair should be secured as appropriate for patient care activities.
- c. Facial hair should be clean and neatly maintained.
- d. Fingernails must be short, clean, and appropriate for clinical care.

2. **Clothing**

- a. Clothing must be clean, well-kept, and appropriate for a healthcare environment.
- b. Clothing should not be excessively tight or revealing.
- c. Unless permitted by the clinical site or preceptor, jeans are not appropriate in clinical settings.

- d. Sandals and open-toed shoes are not appropriate due to risk of exposure to bodily fluids.
3. **Jewelry and Accessories**
 - a. Jewelry must not interfere with patient care, safety, or hand hygiene.
 - b. Rings should be removed when performing procedures requiring sterile technique.
 - c. Dangling or loose jewelry should be avoided due to safety risks.
4. **Piercings and Personal Adornments**
 - a. Students must comply with clinical site policies regarding piercings and personal adornments.
 - b. Any adornments must not pose a safety risk or interfere with patient care.

Additional dress requirements may be specified by individual clinical rotation sites and must be followed. Professional attire standards will be applied in a consistent and non-discriminatory manner.

Identification: Each student will receive a campus photo identification card during orientation. Prior to participation in any clinical site, each student will be given a RMC Program identification badge which must be prominently displayed at all times during clinical rotations or clinic shadowing experiences. Each student is responsible for this badge and, if lost, is responsible for the cost of a replacement badge.

Clinical Experience Logging: Students are required to maintain accurate and timely documentation of all patient encounters and procedures throughout their clinical rotations using the program's designated clinical tracking system (TYPHON). Clinical case logs are used to monitor each student's clinical experiences and progression toward competency. Logged encounters are routinely reviewed by program faculty, including the Directors of Clinical Education, to ensure that students are achieving appropriate breadth and depth of patient care experiences across the lifespan and clinical settings, including preventive, acute, chronic, and emergent conditions.

Students are expected to enter patient encounters as soon as possible after they occur and no later than 48 hours following the encounter. All encounters must be entered within 72 hours of the final day of each clinical rotation.

Case logging is a required component of the clinical curriculum. Failure to maintain accurate, complete, and timely documentation may result in academic or professionalism-related consequences, as determined by the program.

The program does not require a minimum number of patient encounters to demonstrate competency. Instead, clinical competence is assessed through a combination of preceptor

evaluations, clinical skills assessments, and faculty review of student performance. Clinical experience data are used to identify gaps in exposure, which may be addressed through targeted remediation or supplemental learning activities to support competency development.

General Policies & Procedures

Accommodations: The Rocky Mountain College and Physician Assistant Program are committed to providing accessible educational experiences for students with disabilities in accordance with ADA and Section 504. Students seeking accommodations are responsible for self-identifying, providing appropriate documentation, and working with Rocky Mountain College's ADA/Section 504 Coordinator to establish an approved accommodations plan. The Physician Assistant Program will implement approved accommodations to ensure that students receive equivalent access to course content, learning experiences, and assessment, without compromising program competencies or learning outcomes. Students are encouraged to initiate this process upon acceptance to ensure timely implementation. All accommodations must be coordinated through Rocky Mountain College's disability services office. Additional information is available at [RMC Academic Support](#).

Name and Contact Information Changes: It is every student's responsibility to keep the program administrative assistant informed of current contact information throughout their program application and enrollment. Changes must be reported within seven days of occurrence and updated by the end of the first week of each new clinical practice rotation. The contact information that must be kept current includes:

- Name Changes
- Mailing Address
- Telephone number(s)
- Email Address

The program will not be held responsible for consequences incurred as a result of our inability to contact students in a timely manner due to contact information changes that were not reported to the program, or for e-mail or other correspondence that goes unread. Failure to maintain current contact information may result in missed communications that could impact academic or clinical progression. Enrolled students are responsible for checking their RMC e-mail account, Moodle correspondence, and phone voice messages at least daily.

Drugs and Alcohol: Physician Assistant students must follow the RMC policies on drug and alcohol abuse. These policies are found in the RMC Catalog and at [RMC Drug and Alcohol Policy](#). If there is reasonable suspicion based on observed behavior or other documented concerns of substance use that may impair a student's ability to safely participate in academic or clinical activities, the Program may require evaluation by a qualified professional. Drug and/or alcohol testing may be required in accordance with institutional policies and/or clinical site requirements. All actions will follow established program policies regarding student conduct,

due process, and confidentiality. Failure or refusal to comply may be treated as a violation of program policy and may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. All violations will be evaluated on an individual basis, and all procedures will be applied in a consistent and non-discriminatory manner.

Social Media Policy: Physician Assistant students are expected to uphold the highest standards of professionalism in all digital interactions. This includes refraining from posting false, misleading, threatening, or harassing content, as such behavior can have long-term implications on one's professional reputation. Patient confidentiality is paramount. Students must never share any patient-related information, including images or case details, on social media platforms, even if identifiers are removed. When representing themselves online, students should clearly state that their views are personal and do not reflect those of the institution. Unauthorized use of the institution's name, logo, or branding elements is prohibited. Additionally, derogatory or unprofessional comments about classmates, faculty, staff, preceptors or rotation sites are unacceptable and may result in disciplinary action, including dismissal. Students are also reminded to adhere to legal standards, including HIPAA regulations, and to respect intellectual property rights by not sharing copyrighted materials without proper authorization. All concerns will be addressed in accordance with program policies on student conduct and due process.

Employment during the MPAS Program: Students are strongly discouraged from seeking or maintaining employment while enrolled in the program. If a student does work and encounters academic and/or disciplinary problems, the student may be counseled to cease employment. Under no circumstances will employment be considered as a reason for an excused absence from the student's didactic or clinical education commitments, nor will student employment considerations mitigate evaluation of outcomes.

Matriculated PA students will not be employed by the Physician Assistant Program under any circumstances. Students will not be allowed to perform clerical or administrative work for the program.

During clinical rotations, students participate in clinical education as learners under supervision and not as employees, therefore students will not be used to substitute for regular clinical or administrative staff. If a student is asked to substitute for regular staff on a rotation, they should inform the clinical coordinator or program director immediately.

Grievance Procedures: Students are encouraged to pursue informal resolutions to conflicts in a professional manner. Grievances of a non-academic nature, if formally pursued, must follow the policies and procedures described in the Rocky Mountain College Catalog (available online). Students have the right to pursue grievances without fear of retaliation. All grievances will be addressed in accordance with established institutional policies, ensuring due process and fair and timely resolution.

Nondiscrimination / Harassment / Sexual Misconduct: The following are specific policy statements of Rocky Mountain College:

1. *Harassment and Discrimination Policy* - Members of the Rocky Mountain College community have the right to work and study in an environment free of harassment and discrimination. Rocky Mountain College strongly disapproves of and forbids the harassment or discrimination of students, faculty, staff members, or campus guests. The College will not tolerate discrimination or harassment, which includes discrimination or harassment based on race, color, sex, religion, national origin, citizenship, age disability, ethnicity, gender identity and/or expression, marital status, place of birth, veteran status, sexual orientation or sexual identity.
2. *Sexual Misconduct Policy* - Sexual misconduct including, but not limited to: sexual assault, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking, are unacceptable and will not be tolerated at Rocky Mountain College. It is a violation of College policy to retaliate against any person making a complaint of sexual misconduct, or against any person cooperating in the investigation of any allegation of sexual misconduct, including testifying as a witness in an investigation. Incidents of retaliation should be made to the Title IX Coordinator or through institutional reporting mechanisms outlined in the RMC Catalog. The Office of the Executive Vice President (EVP) and Dean of Student Life will distribute copies of this policy to all current students. A periodic notice will be sent to faculty, staff, and students to remind them of the policy. Copies of the policy will be available at appropriate campus offices. A “no harassment” policy notice will be posted in residence halls, instructional buildings, and administrative office areas.

Each member of the College community is responsible for adhering to and implementing these policies. Employees and students will be subject to disciplinary action for violation of these policies. The Physician Assistant Program supports and adheres to these institutional policies and is committed to maintaining a safe, inclusive, and respectful learning environment. All reports will be handled in accordance with institutional procedures ensuring due process and confidentiality.

Printed copies may be obtained through the RMC personnel office.

Program Evaluations: The MPAS Program maintains a comprehensive, ongoing program evaluation process to support continuous quality improvement and to meet accreditation standards established by the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA). Students are expected to participate in program evaluation activities, including but not limited to evaluations of modules, courses, clinical rotations, the overall program, and instructional faculty/preceptors. Student feedback is a critical component of the program’s self-assessment and is used to inform programmatic and curricular improvements. All student evaluations are administered and collected in a manner that protects confidentiality and, where applicable, anonymity. Evaluations of instructional faculty consist solely of

quantitative rating measures and are collected anonymously. These data are reported only in aggregate form, and no identifiable student information is associated with faculty evaluation results. Student evaluations of courses, modules, and other program components may include written comments. Written comments are associated with the student's identity and are accessible only to designated core faculty serving as course directors or instructors of record pertaining to their courses for the purpose of course and program improvement. Evaluation of clinical preceptors is conducted in a confidential manner. Preceptors do not have access to individual student evaluations. These evaluations are reviewed only by the Director(s) of Clinical Education and when applicable, the program director and are used solely for clinical site assessment, preceptor development, and continuous improvement. The program strictly prohibits retaliation against any student who provides feedback in good faith. Any concerns regarding the evaluation process or the use of evaluation data will be reviewed and addressed promptly.

Completion of required evaluations is considered a component of professional responsibility. However, evaluation content is not linked to student grading, academic progression, or disciplinary action, and students are expected to provide honest and constructive feedback without concern for reprisal. The program utilizes secure electronic systems (e.g., Moodle or comparable platforms) to facilitate efficient data collection, analysis, and tracking of outcomes over time.

Security and Safety: Rocky Mountain College and the MPAS Program strive to assure the security and safety of students in all locations in which instruction occurs throughout the curriculum. Student safety is also considered in the development and approval of clinical sites. Students are encouraged to promptly report any concerns related to personal safety, security, harassment, discrimination, or unsafe clinical or educational conditions. Reports may be made directly to any program faculty or staff, college faculty and staff, or established institutional reporting systems found at [RMC Campus Safety](#). RMC has a **24/7 Campus Safety On-Call number: 406.238.SAFE (7233)**. The program prohibits retaliation against any student who, in good faith, reports a safety or security concern. All reports will be reviewed and addressed in a timely manner, and appropriate actions will be taken to mitigate risks and support student well-being.

Resources

Facilities

Classroom: The program has a dedicated classroom used exclusively by the Physician Assistant students. Each student is provided with an individual desk and a comfortable executive chair. Audiovisual support is available for presentations. Faculty and students have access to the classroom computer, and the room is equipped with a secure wireless internet connection for personal laptop computer use. An assortment of printed medical sources (textbooks and PA

journals) is maintained for easy reference. Access to the classroom (and other program dedicated resources described below) is available to students at all times throughout the length of the program.

Physical Assessment Labs: Six individual physical assessment rooms are equipped like typical outpatient clinic examination rooms to provide skills in patient interviewing and physical examination techniques. There is also a room that simulates an Emergency Department in which to practice emergency and inpatient skills. Students practice physical assessment on each other and standardized patients during the didactic year.

Clinical Skill Equipment, Simulators, and Mannequins: The program has and continues to acquire an assortment of clinical skills equipment, patient simulators, and anatomic mannequins that assist students in learning and practicing important physical assessment, diagnostic, life-saving interventional, and therapeutic skills. These resources must NOT be removed from the classroom. Students have access to all of these training materials during the corresponding course and upon request.

Cadaver and Anatomy Laboratory: The Rocky Mountain College Biology Program maintains a cadaver laboratory, which is utilized by the PA students throughout their didactic course work. The laboratory also maintains a collection of anatomic models and preserved human organs that demonstrate a myriad of normal and pathologic conditions.

Conference Rooms: Multiple conference rooms are available on campus for student and program use, including one in Conner Hall.

Computer Laboratories: Several computer laboratories are located on campus. The one closest to the classroom is found in the Educational Resource Center (ERC). This library-based computer lab has 36 desktop computers with printer access. Students are provided a Rocky Mountain College user profile during orientation to utilize any of the campus provided computer terminals and printers.

Libraries: In addition to the Educational Resource Center (ERC), students have access to more resources through the Billings Area Health Science Information Consortium, a group of public and private libraries dedicated to meeting the needs of students and professionals. These librarians are specifically trained in the needs of PA students and, thus, are excellent sources of information on how to access medical literature.

Internet Addresses

Rocky Mountain College: http://www.rocky.edu Campus Mail: http://mail.rocky.edu/openwebmail Campus Moodle: moodle-pa3.rocky.edu Program Website: rocky.edu/pa
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Professional Organizations

- American Academy of Physician Associates (AAPA) <http://www.aapa.org/>
- Student Academy of the AAPA (SAAAPA)
<https://www.aapa.org/governance/student-academy/>
- Montana Academy of Physician Assistants (MTAPA) <http://www.mtapa.com/>
- Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA)
<http://www.arc-pa.org/>
- National Commission for Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA)
<http://www.nccpa.net/>
- PA Education Association (PAEA) <http://www.paeaonline.org/>