Physician Assistant

EDUCATION & TRAINING
Physician assistants need leadership skills, self-confidence, and emotional stability. They must be willing to continue studying throughout their career to keep up with medical advances. Candidates must be graduates of an accredited program and be certified by the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA). All states require that new PA’s complete an accredited, formal education program. Currently there are 116 accredited or provisionally accredited PA programs; 64 award a Bachelors Degree or option. The rest offer a certificate, an associate degree, or a master's degree. Most PA graduates have at least a bachelor's degree. The typical PA program is 24-27 months long and requires entrants to have at least two years of college and some health care experience. Some PAs pursue additional education in order to practice in specialty area such as surgery, neonatology, or emergency medicine. PA postgraduate residency training programs are available.

The average PA program curriculum runs approximately 26 months. There are currently more than 130 accredited programs (http://www.aapa.org/pgmlist.php). Education consists of classroom and laboratory instruction in the basic medical and behavioral sciences (such as anatomy, pharmacology, pathophysiology, clinical medicine, and physical diagnosis), followed by clinical rotations in internal medicine, family medicine, surgery, pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, emergency medicine, and geriatric medicine.

PA programs look for students who have a desire to study, work hard, and to be of service to their community. Most physician assistant programs require applicants to have previous health care experience and some college education. The typical applicant already has a bachelor's degree and approximately 4 years of health care experience. Commonly nurses, EMTs, and paramedics apply to PA programs. Check with PA educational programs of interest to you for a list of their prerequisites. These may vary among schools.

PREPARATION COURSE WORK
*It is important to remember that different schools may require different coursework and strongly recommend other coursework. It is important to look at each school individually to find out the specific requirements.

- One year of BIOLOGY with lab
  - Taking the Life Sciences series 1-4 can satisfy this. It is recommended that you take this entire series to prepare you for the Natural Sciences section of the DAT. Upper division course work in the life sciences is also recommended.
- Two years of CHEMISTRY (through Organic Chemistry and Biochemistry)
  - The 14 series (through 14D) or the 20/30 series (through 30C) and Biochemistry 153A & 153L can satisfy this requirement. As you will notice, the 20/30 series is actually the equivalent of two and a half years, this is due to the curriculum of each series taught at a different pace. Many schools include a separate requirement for or a strong recommendation to take biochemistry. The general and organic chemistry coursework prepares you for the Natural Sciences section of the DAT.
- One quarter MICROBIOLOGY with lab
  - Taking MIMG 101 & 101L can satisfy this. MIMG 6 is the lower division microbiology class, but does not have a lab component. One course from a community college with lab may also be acceptable for most schools.
- One course in HUMAN ANATOMY
  - Physiological Science 13 or 107 may satisfy this. Upper division Phy Sci courses are restricted to students in the major. Please inquire with the Phy Sci Department for further information about enrolling into their courses. Phy Sci 13 is also offered through UCLA Extension. Be sure to check with the individual schools for what course material will be equivalent to this requirement.
- One course in HUMAN PHYSIOLOGY
The Physiological Science Department has listing for a few different Human Physiology courses including Phy Sci 3, 5, or 111A-C. Upper division Phy Sci courses are usually restricted to students in the major. PS 3 does not have a lab component. One course from a community college with lab may also be acceptable. Be sure to check with the individual schools for what course material will be equivalent to this requirement.

- One year of **ENGLISH**
  - One year of college level literature and composition. Writing I and Writing II courses, select general education literature courses, and any upper division English literature or English Composition courses will satisfy this requirement. Literature courses without a "W" designation offered in departments outside of English (Comparative Literature, Spanish, French, German, and all other language departments) will NOT count toward the year of English requirement. These courses will prepare you for the Reading Comprehension section of the DAT. A list of additional English courses that will satisfy this requirement can be found at [http://career.ucla.edu/gradschool/health/englishreq.asp](http://career.ucla.edu/gradschool/health/englishreq.asp).

The following course work is STRONGLY RECOMMENDED for most schools:

- One year of **PHYSICS**
  - Taking the Physics series 6ABC or 6AH, BH, CH or 1ABC, 4AL, 4BL can satisfy this. One year with labs is generally required which is included in any of the series. Trigonometry-based physics can also satisfy this requirement, but UCLA only offers calculus-based courses and these are required for the various science majors.

- One year of **MATH**
  - Taking Math 3ABC or Math 31AB, 32A can satisfy this. The may also include statistics and computer programming classes (PIC 10A, 10B, 10C). This is your preparation for calculus-based physics. These courses will prepare you for the Quantitative Reasoning section of the DAT.

- **STATISTICS**
  - Statistics 10, M11, M12, 13, Biostatistics or Biomath, Psychology 100A.* *Check with individual schools for acceptability of classes offered outside of the Statistics department. These courses will prepare you for the Quantitative Reasoning section of the DAT.

- Knowledge and cultural competency of at least one **FOREIGN LANGUAGE**
  - This need not have been taken at the college level. If your future plans include working in California or the southwestern states, Spanish is highly valued and somewhat expected.

- **HUMANITIES** and **SOCIAL SCIENCE** courses
  - The non-science GPA is an important component of your overall academic record and liberal arts education. Courses in the following can enhance your communication skills and overall understanding of the world: Anthropology, Communication Studies, Economics, any ethnic studies area (e.g. Women's Studies, LGBT Studies, Afro-American Studies, Chicana/Chicano Studies, Near Eastern Studies), Philosophy, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology, and Speech to name a few. It is important to look at individual school sites to find if they recommend any courses in particular.

- **COMPUTER SKILLS** are highly recommended
  - Many programs have incorporated computers and electronic media into their curriculum. It is not necessary to take computer courses if you feel you have sufficient knowledge. Several programs are strongly recommending that students own a computer. Other programs have indicated that students will soon have to purchase a computer as part of the requirements of their program.

**UCLA is not responsible for coursework being accepted by recipient schools.**
Applicants should also consider volunteering within their field of interest to gain practical experience in the health professions. In addition, a well-rounded sample of extra-curricular activities or work experiences, both related and unrelated to medicine, will help broaden an applicant's knowledge and development. Community service is an indication of your commitment to helping others. Your community service doesn't have to be through UCLA; it can be in your home community, through a church group, etc., but your record of service should show a genuine commitment. A sample listing of opportunities for community service is on the OBEE Undergraduate Program website under "Opportunities."

**California Programs**
Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science
Keck School of Medicine of the University of Southern California
Loma Linda University
Riverside County Regional Medical Center/Riverside Community College
Samuel Merritt College
San Joaquin Valley College
Stanford University School of Medicine
Touro University at Mare Island College of Health Sciences
Univ. of California - Davis
Western University of Health Sciences

**Useful Websites**
http://www.aapa.org/
http://www.career.ucla.edu/gradschool/health/physicianasst.asp
http://www.aapa.org/pgmlist.php3
https://secure.caspaonline.org/