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## Getting Into PA School

### What should I major in?

Anything! All PA program prerequisites just need to be completed for your desired programs. Many Pre-PA students at GVSU choose to major in Allied Health Sciences (Pre-PA) or Biomedical Sciences.

### What are the prerequisites for PA school?

Unfortunately, each PA program requires different prerequisites. You can locate a list of program's prerequisites right on the PA program's website.

### What should be my biggest priority for getting into PA school?

GPA should be your number one priority. In addition, it is important to job shadow and get a variety of hands-on patient care experience. Volunteering, community service, and medical mission trips are also great ways to boost your application. Every program values different aspects of the application, and it is important to research what programs your application fits best. If your GPA is low, focus on the other areas of your application to make them strong.



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## PA School

### How long is PA school?

PA school normally ranges from 24-36 months depending on the program.

### What is didactic year?

Didactic year is spent in the classroom learning the necessary information you will need to succeed in clinical year and as a PA. Clinical year follows didactic year, and it is made up of completing multiple rotations of different areas in medicine.

## Our Club

### Why should I join GVSU's Pre-PA club?

The Pre-PA Club at GVSU is a great opportunity to make connections, learn more about how to become a PA, and meet a lot of new friends who understand what you are going through. We are all a team, and the Pre-PA club is here to encourage and help every student wherever they are on their Pre-PA journey.

### What does the Pre-PA club do?

As a club, apart from our meetings, we volunteer, provide resources, host events, and offer activities to help you grow as a future PA student and PA-C. To learn more visit our website:

[www.gvsuprepa.com](http://www.gvsuprepa.com)

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# Pre-PA Crash Course

All of the Questions You Have About Becoming a  
Physician Assistant Answered



Make an appointment with an academic advisor for guidance throughout this process. Visit [www.gvsu.edu/chpss](http://www.gvsu.edu/chpss) for more information or to schedule an appointment.

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## How do I know the Pre-PA route is right for me?

Research and shadowing. If you are unsure about what direction you want to go in the healthcare field, the best way to see what profession fits you is to watch it in action. Career counseling is also a beneficial tool when choosing what career is right for you.

## CASPA & Your Application

### How do I apply to PA school?

Most PA programs utilize the Central Application Service for Physician Assistants (CASPA).

### When do I apply?

As an undergraduate student, it is up to you whether you would like to take a gap year (in order to gain more experience), or go right into PA school. This decision is based on whether you have completed your desired programs' admission requirements. If you choose to go straight into PA school, it is necessary to apply April of your junior year.

### When does CASPA open?

CASPA will open in April for those looking to begin PA school the following calendar year.

### How do I know which PA schools to apply to?

Research! It takes a lot of research of different PA programs to find what programs are the best match for you and your application. The United States has around 243 (+ counting) unique PA programs.

## What is PCE/HCE?

PCE (Patient Care Experience) and HCE (Health Care Experience) are areas of experience you have had in the medical field. Every PA program requires a certain number of PCE for its applicants. Recently CASPA changed its definitions of what is considered PCE and what is considered HCE, but ultimately the schools to which you are applying will make the judgement on what category your hours fall into. These details should be listed on each PA program's website. CASPA's new definitions of PCE and HCE are attached below.

### Patient Care Experience

Experiences in which you are directly responsible for a patient's care; for example, prescribing medication, performing procedures, directing a course of treatment, designing a treatment regimen, actively working on patients as a nurse, paramedic, EMT, phlebotomist, physical therapist, dental hygienist, etc.

### Health Care Experience

Both paid and unpaid work in the health or health-related field where you are not directly responsible for a patient's care but you may still have patient interaction; for example, filling prescriptions, performing clerical work, delivering patient food, cleaning patients and/or their rooms, administering food or medication, taking vitals or other record keeping information, working as a scribe, CNA, medical assistant, etc.

## The Basics

### What is a Physician Assistant?

According to the AAPA, "PAs are medical professionals who diagnose illness, develop and manage treatment plans, prescribe medications, and often serve as a patient's principal healthcare provider. With thousands of hours of medical training, PAs are versatile and collaborative. PAs practice in every state and in every medical setting and specialty, improving healthcare access and quality."

### How do I Become a PA?

1. Earn a Bachelor's Degree & complete required prerequisite courses
2. Obtain PCE/HCE
3. Take the GRE
4. Write a Personal Statement
5. Acquire Letters of Recommendation
6. Apply to PA School
7. Get into PA School
8. Complete Didactic Year of PA School
9. Complete Rotations
10. Pass the PANCE & become a PA-C

### What is the GRE?

The GRE stands for "The Graduate Record Examinations". It is a standardized test that is required by not all, but many PA schools in order to apply. Visit [ets.org](https://ets.org) to register.