

SAINT FRANCIS UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT SCIENCES
MASTERS OF PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROGRAM

POLICY MANUAL
PROFESSIONAL PHASE
(04/2009)

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PROGRESSION STANDARDS PROFESSIONAL PHASE

Standards A3.07 – The following must be defined, published, and readily available to prospective and enrolled students: required academic...standards.

Progression and continuance in the Saint Francis University Physician Assistant Program is based upon scholastic achievement and personal qualities, as contained in the Standards for accreditation, for the professional practice of medicine as a physician assistant.

First Professional Year (P1)

During the P1 year, the student must meet the following academic requirements to maintain good academic standing and progress as a Physician Assistant student:

- 1) obtain a minimum 2.0 semester Q.P.A. for the Summer, Fall and Spring semesters, and
- 2) pass each Physician Assistant course with a minimum grade of "C."

First year professional students who achieve a semester Q.P.A. below 2.0 and/or receive one "D" or "F" grade in any of the PA courses must appear before the Physician Assistant Program Performance Review Committee (PRC) before the start of the next semester. The PRC will review the student's case and contract with the student the terms of Physician Assistant Program probation. The student will be allowed to repeat the course in question **once**, based on a schedule decided upon by the PRC. Students should realize that repeating a course will cause a delay in starting rotations and graduation. All P1 year courses must be satisfactorily completed and the student must successfully obtain Advanced Cardiac Life Support certification before the student is allowed to progress into the second professional (P2) year and start clinical rotations.

Students who do not achieve a "C" grade or better on their retake course will be dismissed from the Physician Assistant Program. In addition, any professional phase student who receives two course grades below a "C" in any of the PA courses during the same semester or who gets a second grade below a "C" in any subsequent semester through graduation will be dismissed from the Physician Assistant Program.

Dismissal from the Program may also result from any of the Causes for Disciplinary Action as listed in the Department of Physician Assistant Sciences policy manual (General Information - Personal Policies - Section F)

Second Professional Year (P2)

During the P2 year, the student must meet the following academic requirements to maintain good academic standing prior to graduation:

- 1) obtain a minimum 2.0 semester Q.P.A. for the Summer, Fall and Spring semesters, and
- 2) pass each physician assistant course, including all clinical rotations, with a minimum grade of "C."

When the Physician Assistant Program is notified about unsatisfactory academic or behavioral performance of a P2 student on a clinical rotation, the student will appear before the Performance Review Committee (General Information – General Student Information – Performance Review Committee). Second year professional students who do not maintain minimum program standards may be dismissed from the Physician Assistant Program.

Dismissal from the Program may also result from any of the Causes for Disciplinary Action as listed in the Department of Physician Assistant Sciences policy manual (General Information - Personal Policies - Section F)

Due Process

Any student who wishes to appeal dismissal may request **in writing** to the Department Chairperson to appear before the Physician Assistant Performance Review Committee. Appeals must be received in the Department Office within 10 days after the student receives notification from the Department regarding action as discussed above.

EVALUATION POLICIES

A. EVALUATION OF FIRST YEAR PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS (P1)

First year professional students are evaluated by various methods to insure that they meet the requirements contained in Accreditation Standards for Physician Assistant Education and the Competencies for the Physician Assistant Profession. The following instruments and processes may be used in this effort:

1. Examinations, quizzes and assignments
2. Head-To-Toe Physical Exam
3. Problem Specific Exams
4. Observation by Department faculty
5. Performance of Clinical Procedures
6. Home Health Visits
7. Clinical Experiences
8. Discussion with preceptors at P1 clinical sites
9. Observation by Department faculty in Critical Thinking Sessions
10. Behavioral Performance Evaluation
11. Comprehensive PA Exam
12. Faculty Advisory Reviews
13. Evaluation of medical documentation
15. Patient Presentations

B. EVALUATION OF SECOND YEAR PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS (P2)

Second year professional students are evaluated by the health professionals (preceptors) who teach and supervise them in the clinical settings, as well as the Department. The preceptor will evaluate the student based on items of clinical knowledge, skills and attitudes, including professionalism. Input for the student's evaluation may be obtained by the designated preceptor from other physicians, physician assistants, nurses and other associated staff members. A copy of the Preceptor Evaluation of Student Performance form is available for your perusal in the Department office.

In conjunction with the preceptor's evaluation of student performance, the Department will evaluate the student during Transition to Practice Days and formal site visits. At the end of each five week block of rotations, during Transition to Practice Day, the student will be required to sit for an End-of-Rotation Exam based on the objectives for the accomplished rotation and perform a patient encounter simulation. Each student will also be evaluated on one patient presentation. Formal site visits will be held at designated clinical sites at least once a year. In addition, each P2 student will be required to complete a Master capstone and summative evaluation experience as approved by the Department.

C. PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROGRAM EVALUATION

The Physician Assistant Program is a dynamic entity. The Department faculty are constantly engaging in activities that provide evaluation data on the Program's performance. Student input is a vital part of this process. Every effort is made to assure that students play a continuing role in the development of the Saint Francis University Department of Physician Assistant Sciences.

Methods of Program evaluation that employ student's input include:

- Course Evaluations
- Instructor Evaluations
- Student Input Sessions
- Faculty-Student Conferences
- Performance Review Committee Feedback
- Self-Study Committees
- Student Self Evaluation
- Admission Process Evaluation
- Orientation Evaluation
- Student Focus Group Sessions

Additional methods of Program evaluation include:

- Annual Report to the President of Saint Francis University
- Assessment of student performance on PA Comprehensive Exam
- Assessment of student performance on NCCPA Exam
- Outside Consultants

Student Input Sessions

Each month, Physician Assistant students may arrange Student Input Sessions on an as-needed basis. This is facilitated by the Director of the Counseling Center. These sessions are not attended by Department faculty unless requested. These sessions present the opportunity for students to discuss problems among themselves and in their relation with Department faculty. Any problem with interpersonal relationships or psychosocial issues is considered germane for this time slot. The Department Chairperson does not receive detailed reports of the content of the sessions. The Director of the Counseling Center may relay some feedback to the Department Chairperson, if it will improve the training Program. Any such feedback is done anonymously.

Participation in Program Evaluation Process

All Physician Assistant students participate in ongoing Program evaluation efforts. This process includes completing evaluations, surveys etc. The Department reserves the right to withhold student final grades until evaluations are completed.

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

In order to maintain an effective learning environment, it is necessary for learners to observe these guidelines for classroom etiquette. Please check individual course syllabi for other guidelines. Please see the course instructor/coordinator with any questions.

- Any computers or PDAs maintained at the desk during class time are adjuncts to the learning environment. To this end, students are encouraged to surf for web sites or articles related to the discussion at hand. Web surfing for non-related materials and instant messaging are contrary to these purposes and prohibited.
- Printers are provided in the classroom for your convenience to use before and after class. **DO NOT PRINT MATERIALS DURING CLASS OR TESTING SITUATIONS.**
- Breaks are given before and after each classroom session. Students are encouraged to take advantage of these breaks to attend to necessary tasks. Only on extremely rare occasions should it be necessary to leave the classroom and return during the class session.
- Students who are not able to stay for the entire class session should seek the permission of the instructor prior to class to leave early. If the student is unable to attend the entire class session the faculty member has the prerogative to indicate that the student not attend the session at all. In this case, the student should obtain notes from a fellow student and obtain additional assistance from the faculty member as needed at a later date. It is also the prerogative of the instructor to count this as an unexcused absence.
- Any cell phones or pagers that are in your possession during class, are either to be switched off or to be kept on vibrate or silent mode. It is inappropriate to answer any cell phone or pager calls during a scheduled class session.
- Please refrain from bringing children to any scheduled class sessions.
- Out of respect for fellow students and the instructor, refrain from unnecessary talking during the lecture. If you have questions, you are encouraged to ask them of the instructor, as often others have similar inquiries. Interpersonal communications of a non-topic related manner prove distracting for others and are subsequently discouraged.
- In order for everyone to equally benefit from the learning experience, it is suggested that students ask questions of the instructor during class and not individually following the session.

ABSENCES DUE TO ILLNESS

Any student missing three (3) or more consecutive days, or ten (10) or more days total, from class during any semester due to physical or emotional illness shall be required to submit a letter from their physician stating their current medical status. The Department Chairperson shall review the letter and make a decision regarding the student's fitness to continue in the Program. The Department Chairperson may convene the Performance Review Committee (PRC) to review selected cases. Excessive absenteeism, either excused or unexcused, may necessitate an appearance before the Performance Review Committee.

STUDENT SUPERVISION ISSUES

The Department of Physician Assistant Sciences and the facility recognize that the ultimate legal authority and responsibility for the actions of the physician assistant student reside with the physician preceptor. This physician preceptor shall be a licensed M.D. or D.O. within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, or appropriate state and shall have staff privileges within the facility where the students are to participate. It is further understood that the student's scope of activities shall not exceed those of his/her supervising physician preceptor. In general, clinical experience for Physician Assistant Students shall be monitored in two ways: 1) by direct supervision and 2) by indirect supervision.

Direct supervision shall mean the immediate presence of the physician (or his designated agent; i.e., PA-C, IV team, nurse, respiratory therapist, etc.) while the student performs his/her tasks. Indirect supervision means that while the physician is not immediately available, he/she can be contacted by phone for advice in a timely manner.

Tasks which physician assistant students are permitted to perform under indirect supervision are limited to the following:

1. Obtaining medical histories (interviews) from patients designated by the supervising staff physician.
2. Performing physical examinations on patients designated by the supervising staff physician.
3. Recording findings of histories and physical examinations in the patient record provided they are countersigned by the physician within 24 hours of their entry into the patient record and further provided that the physician has reviewed and agrees with the student's findings. These records shall include admission histories and physicals, daily progress notes, and discharge summaries.

Tasks which physician assistant students are permitted to perform under direct supervision shall include:

1. Generally, those tasks which the attending staff physician has expertise and hospital privileges to perform and which he feels the student has adequate academic and clinical preparation to perform. Examples of such tasks would include, but not necessarily be limited to:
 - Ordering diagnostic tests and therapeutic orders provided there is immediate review and countersignature by the attending physician of those orders.
 - Recording in the patient records, emergency room notes, pre- and post-operative notes with immediate review and countersignature of the staff physician.
 - Insertion of intravenous lines.
 - Insertion of urinary catheters.
 - Venipuncture for diagnostic tests.
 - Suturing lacerations.
 - Application of splints, casts and bandages.
 - Incision and drainage of superficial abscesses.
 - Insertion of nasogastric tubes and catheters.
 - Assisting in the operating room.
 - Assisting in the delivery room.
2. The tasks which physician assistant students may perform are expected to vary from rotation to rotation and among students depending upon prior experience, academic excellence, rotation objectives, physician experience and variations of problems encountered in the physician's practice. In general, tasks performed by physician assistant students are those designed to meet minimum basic major and specific responsibilities and competencies for the entry-level physician assistant practitioner.

INSURANCE

Saint Francis University carries malpractice coverage for health professional students, thus students need not purchase their own malpractice insurance.

It is important to recognize that as a student you are not covered by the worker's compensation insurance that covers on-site injuries at the clinical sites, since you are not an employee. You are also not covered by the University's worker's compensation insurance, as you are also not an employee of the University. Therefore you must carry your own health insurance to cover any medical expenses incurred as a result of injury at clinical sites, such as blood borne exposures. The Department cannot pay for any of these expenses. The University requires students to have health insurance coverage. The school has a health insurance policy that may be purchased. A student will need to show proof of health insurance coverage within 30 days of matriculation.

VEHICLE POLICY STATEMENT

It is noted that throughout the professional phase of the Physician Assistant Program students are required to attend various clinical conferences and participate in clinical experiences in the community medical settings. Students are required to provide their own transportation to hospital and clinical sites during the professional phase. Transportation to various hospitals, didactic year clinical experiences and other events will be through use of the individual's own vehicle. Clinical year students are responsible for transportation to all clinical rotation sites. It is therefore expected that all physician assistant students will have a valid driver's license or will make personal arrangements for transportation to all required experiences.

HEALTH REQUIREMENTS AND GUIDELINES FOR THE FIRST YEAR PROFESSIONAL STUDENT

One goal of the PA Program is to provide the student with patient contact early in the professional phase of his/her training. In order to meet the requirements of some of the clinical affiliations, the Department has implemented health guidelines for all P1 students.

1. The Health Record Forms will be kept on file at the University Student Health Center. The student will sign a form stating the Department and the Student Health Center will have the authority to release health records to a clinical affiliate, if required for student placement.
2. It is the student's responsibility to make an appointment with a medical provider to have the Department's Physical Exam form completed. Each student is also responsible to insure completion and documentation to the University Student Health Center of all required health information including labs, immunizations and titers as found on the 'Professional Student Health Record Summary' by the advertised due date.
3. Students must have a negative urine drug screen and have been cleared by Student Health in order to attend clinical experiences. Not attending clinical experiences may affect your progression in the PA Program and prevent or delay graduation.
4. A criminal background check and pediatric abuse clearance will be required prior to entrance into the professional phase of the Program. Each student will be notified by the Department to access the Certified Background website to complete this process by a specific date prior to the start of the professional phase of the Program. Failure to complete the process in a timely manner may delay your progression in the PA Program and prevent or delay graduation.

NEEDLE STICKS/BLOOD BORNE PATHOGENS POLICY

Please follow the University policy, available at the Student Health Center and on the Department Web site, in regards to a needle stick or other blood borne pathogen exposure.

FIRST PROFESSIONAL YEAR CLINICAL EXPERIENCE GUIDELINES AND OBJECTIVES

A. CLINICAL EXPERIENCE GUIDELINES

- 1. BE ON TIME:** Know where you are supposed to be and when, and be there. It is your responsibility to fully participate in the clinical experience.
- 2. APPEARANCE:** A clean, neat appearance is MANDATORY. Dress conservatively! Please see the Dress Code for Clinical Sites that follows this section.
- 3. PROFESSIONAL DEMEANOR:** Understand your student role and maintain a professional demeanor. Remember, there's a time for both fun and seriousness, recognize the difference. ASK.

A - Be Assertive

S - Be Studious

K - Be Kind

At no time is the personal use of cell phones or pagers to occur in the clinical setting.

- 4. SUPERVISION:** All sites have designated supervisors, some with varying schedules. You are immediately responsible to the on-site staff and ultimately to the Department faculty.
- 5. SITE PROTOCOLS:** Individual site protocols or guidelines are to be followed as per instruction from your on-site supervisor.
- 6. EXPERIENCE WILL VARY:** There will be a mix of busy and slow periods. Ever attempt will be made to ensure uniform exposure to various clinical experiences during the first professional year.
- 7. ADEQUATE USE OF SLOW PERIODS:** Remember good time management. Slow periods are ideal for study, supervisor reviews, question and answer sessions, or case presentations.
- 8. STUDENT SITE PARTICIPATION:** Your participation will be governed by site protocols. Initially your role will probably be one of observing with progressive participation as your exposure continues.
- 9. IN THE EVENT OF SITE DIFFICULTIES:** Every effort should be made to settle upon a mutual solution to the problem with your immediate site supervisor. If you are unable to rectify the situation, the Department faculty should be notified.
- 10. HAVE FUN AND LEARN:** Being on clinical can be very rewarding. Remember, it is what you make it.
- 11. OBJECTIVES:** The objectives for student performance are to be considered a minimal guideline. YOU are responsible to be assertive, initiate your participation and fulfill the outlined objectives.

Lastly, remember that each site and its base of supervisors have agreed to ALLOW you into their practices. Treat them and their patients with respect. These people are giving fully of themselves for YOUR benefit, not theirs.

B. CLINICAL EXPERIENCE GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. **HISTORY:** The physician assistant student will elicit an appropriate complete, interval or acute directed history from patients of any age or sex in any setting.
2. **PHYSICAL EXAMS:** The physician assistant student will perform as appropriate, a complete or focused physical exam of any patient in any setting.
3. **DIAGNOSTIC STUDIES:** The physician assistant student will identify, order and/or perform diagnostic procedures, as appropriate to the setting and student experience, based on history and physical exam findings as directed under supervision.
4. **DIFFERENTIAL DIAGNOSIS/DIAGNOSTIC IMPRESSIONS:** The physician assistant student will develop a differential diagnosis and diagnostic impression in keeping with the patient's data base.
5. **THERAPEUTICS:** The physician assistant student will identify, perform and/or order routine therapeutic procedures as directed and under the supervision of the site preceptor, which may include but is not limited to:
 - Administering and starting I.V. therapies to include venipuncture
 - Injections (intradermal, sub-Q, IM) and immunizations
 - Simple suturing and wound care
 - Obtaining and interpreting EKG and routine x-rays
 - Managing simple conditions produced by infection or trauma
6. **EMERGENCY SKILLS:** The physician assistant student should be able to recognize and assist in the management of emergencies in any setting, in keeping with student's knowledge base, which may include but is not limited to:
 - CPR
 - ACLS
 - Emergency measures for shock
 - Hemostasis of hemorrhage
 - Recognition of altered mental status
 - Assisting in the management of more complex illness and injury, which may include surgery
7. **COMMUNICATION:** The physician assistant student will be able to communicate in a medically professional manner both orally and in written forms. The student will be responsible to orally present each patient to his/her supervisor in keeping with the objectives outlined above. In addition, the student will be responsible to the Department to provide written SOAP notes, H&Ps and other medical documentation as directed by the Department, in accordance with the aforementioned objectives.

C. DRESS CODE FOR CLINICAL SITES

Students should maintain a professional appearance and dress appropriately whenever they are representing SFU and the PA profession in any off campus setting. This includes clinical sites, meetings, and special events. Being neatly dressed and well groomed exemplifies a professional appearance.

EACH STUDENT IS REQUIRED TO FOLLOW THE DRESS CODE AS OUTLINED BELOW:

- **CLOTHING** - CLOTHING SHOULD ALLOW FOR ADEQUATE MOVEMENT DURING PATIENT CARE, AND SHOULD NOT BE TIGHT, LOW CUT OR EXPOSE THE TRUNK WITH MOVEMENT.

Students are NOT to wear such items as jeans, tennis shoes, shorts, cut-offs, T-shirts, hats, or clothing with rips/tears. Women are NOT to wear short skirts.

Men are to wear dress shirts and ties.

Short white lab coat will be worn at all times unless directed otherwise by the preceptor.

- **JEWELRY** - Watches, wedding bands and/or engagement rings are permissible as appropriate.
No excessive bracelets or necklaces.
Earrings - no more than two earrings per ear, no dangling or oversized earrings.
No other visible body piercings permitted.
- **NAILS** - Fingernails should be kept trimmed without nail polish.
- **TATTOOS** - Students may not exhibit offensive tattoos.
- **PERFUMES OR AFTER-SHAVE** - No excessive or heavy perfumes or after-shaves.
- **HAIR** - Hair should be clean and arranged so as not to interfere with providing patient care.
- **NAMETAGS** - Which identifies you as a SFU/PA student is **mandatory** at all times, and must be worn on either your lab coat or clothes while at the clinical site. Failure to comply with this legal requirement will necessitate your removal from the clinical site and subsequently may result in your failure of the assignment or clinical experience.
- **NO GUM CHEWING OR USE OF TOBACCO PRODUCTS WILL BE ALLOWED IN THE CLINICAL SETTING.**

*If the clinical site has established policies and practices regarding dress, the site's policies supersede those of SFU PA Department.

CLINICAL SUPERVISORS, PRECEPTORS, OR PA DEPARTMENT FACULTY RESERVE THE RIGHT TO ASK A STUDENT WHO IS NOT APPROPRIATELY DRESSED TO LEAVE THE CLINICAL SITE. THIS MAY RESULT IN THE STUDENT BEING REQUIRED TO HAVE A PRC WHICH COULD POSSIBLY INTERFERE WITH COMPLETION OF THE PROGRAM AND/OR GRADUATION.

REQUIREMENTS FOR SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF THE FIRST PROFESSIONAL YEAR

1. Follow all rules and regulations published by Saint Francis University and the Department of Physician Assistant Sciences.
2. Fulfill all tenets of the Professional Phase Progression Standards.
3. Maintain a professional demeanor as a physician assistant student, as evidenced by such things as attending and actively participating in all classes, lectures, seminars and clinical experiences as designated by the Department.
4. Assume responsibility for learning. Students are advised to keep a copy of all assignments/paperwork that they submit.
5. Participate in a comprehensive examination as formulated by the Department.
6. Undergo and submit documentation of a complete physical examination and required health information including labs, immunizations and titers to establish a health data base as well as appropriate background checks and pediatric clearance before starting first year professional clinical experiences and second year professional clinical rotations.

REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATION

1. Successfully complete all aspects of the Requirements for Completion of the First Professional Year as listed above.
2. Successfully complete all aspects of the Requirements for Completion of the Second Professional Year as listed in the Clinical Year Handbook.
3. Successfully complete all requirements of Saint Francis University as listed in the University catalog.

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