

**SAINT FRANCIS UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF HEALTH SCIENCES
AND EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF PA SCIENCE**



**MASTER OF PA SCIENCE (MPAS)
PROGRAM POLICY MANUAL
2025-2026**

Table of Contents

Program Personnel and Contact Information	3
Program Information	4
Introduction	4
Mission Statement and Vision	5
Program Goals and Program Learning Outcomes	5
Progression and Technical Standards	6
Technical Standards	6
Progression Standards	8
Student Rights and Responsibilities	13
Student Rights.....	13
Performance Review Committee	14
Due Process.....	15
Student Grievance and Mistreatment.....	15
Student Responsibilities	16
Vehicle Policy.....	17
Technology Requirements	17
Student Advising and Support	18
Student Advising.....	18
Student Support	20
Academic Accommodations.....	20
Personal Support	21
Academic Policies and Procedures	22
Student Learner Characteristics	22
Classroom Environment.....	22
Testing Procedures	23
Academic Honesty	24
Utilization of Plagiarism Prevention Service	25
Causes for Disciplinary Action or Dismissal from the Program	26

Appealing a Grade	27
Remediation and Deceleration	27
Class Attendance	27
Audio or Video Taping of Lectures	32
Program and Personal Policies and Procedures	32
Transfer Credit Policy	32
Withdrawal, Change of Major, Leave of Absence	32
Professionalism	34
Core Elements of Professionalism	34
Dress Code for Clinical Experiences/Rotations	36
Health Requirements	38
Health Requirements for Clinical Experiences (Didactic and Clinical Year)	38
Infectious and Environmental Hazard Exposure	39
Insurance Coverage Policy	40
Health Experiences.....	40

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Program Information

Introduction

Saint Francis University offers a robust Physician Assistant (PA) program through its School of Health Sciences and Education. The program is designed to prepare students for a rewarding career as physician assistants, with options for both undergraduate and graduate pathways.

Undergraduate Pathway:

Bachelor of Science in Health Science: This 3+2 accelerated pathway provides foundational knowledge in medical sciences, clinical reasoning, and professional development. It includes hands-on experiences in simulation labs and collaborative learning environments leading to Master of Physician Assistant Science degree.

Graduate Pathway:

Master of Physician Assistant Science (MPAS): This pathway is available for students who have completed their bachelor's degree. It focuses on advanced knowledge, clinical skills, evidence-based practices, and compassionate healthcare delivery.

The Physician Assistant Program Student Policy Manual is intended to provide the student with guidelines regarding the Saint Francis University Physician Assistant Program. It is to be viewed as a supplement to the rules, regulations and guidelines that govern you as a student at Saint Francis University. We encourage every student to become familiar with guidelines listed in the University's Student Handbook and the Physician Assistant Policy Manual. Any questions regarding policies contained within the Policy Manual should be directed to the Chair of the Department of Physician Assistant Science. Although every effort has been made to make this manual as complete and up-to-date as possible, it should be recognized that circumstances will occur that the manual does not cover. Changes in the manual will also be necessary due to changes in the Department of Physician Assistant Science. Students will be notified of any changes or additions and when they will take effect.

When a circumstance is not covered by the manual or the interpretation is ambiguous, the Chair of the Department will make the necessary decision or interpretation. The fact that written policies are not in the manual should not be interpreted as an absence of a policy or regulation. If students have questions regarding a situation, they should discuss it with the Chair of the Department of Physician Assistant Science.

The policies and guidelines in this Manual are not intended to supersede the policies of Saint Francis University. When an apparent conflict exists, the student is advised to contact the Department Chair for clarification

As stated in the Introduction of the Accreditation Standards for Physician Assistant Education: “The role of the PA demands intelligence, sound judgment, intellectual honesty, appropriate interpersonal skills, and the capacity to react to emergencies in a calm and reasoned manner. An attitude of respect for self and others, adherence to the concepts of privilege and confidentiality in communicating with patients, and a commitment to the patient's welfare”

Mission Statement and Vision

Our Mission

To educate individuals as physician assistants to provide competent, compassionate, and comprehensive health care as expressed through the Franciscan tradition.

Our Vision

Our faculty, graduates, and students will:

- ◇ Strive for excellence in all academic and professional endeavors
- ◇ Provide for the health care needs of all
- ◇ Provide service to others, especially to the poor and needy
- ◇ Have a reverence for all life
- ◇ Have respect for the uniqueness of individual persons

Program Goals and Program Learning Outcomes

Medical Knowledge

Goal Statement: Graduates will possess comprehensive medical knowledge to provide competent and comprehensive health care.

Learning Outcomes:

- Graduates will accurately diagnose and manage common medical conditions using evidence-based practices.
- Graduates will apply biomedical and clinical sciences knowledge to patient care through investigatory and analytic thinking.

Clinical Competence

Goal Statement: Graduates will provide ethical, compassionate, and collaborative clinical care across diverse populations.

Learning Outcomes:

- Graduates will demonstrate proficiency in performing clinical procedures and technical skills necessary for patient care.
- Graduates will exhibit strong clinical reasoning and problem-solving abilities to deliver equitable and efficient patient-centered care.

Interpersonal and Communication Skills

Goal Statement: Graduates will possess interpersonal and communication skills for effective information exchange with patients, families, physicians, and other health professionals.

Learning Outcomes:

- Graduates will effectively communicate with patients and their families to ensure understanding and compliance with treatment plans.
- Graduates will collaborate with healthcare teams using clear and concise verbal, nonverbal, and written communication.

Professionalism

Goal Statement: Graduates will demonstrate appropriate academic and professional skills, attributes, attitudes, and behaviors necessary to function as physician assistants.

Learning Outcomes:

- Graduates will adhere to professional standards in all aspects of patient care and professional interactions.
- Graduates will understand health policies and delivery systems to lead and address community and professional challenges, providing service in line with the Franciscan tradition.

Progression and Technical Standards

Technical Standards

Technical standards are the essential non-academic qualifications that all candidates and students must meet to successfully complete a Physician Assistant (PA) program and enter the profession. These standards ensure that students possess the physical, cognitive, and behavioral capabilities necessary to provide safe and effective patient care across diverse clinical settings.

Students in the PA Program must be able to meet the Program Technical Standards, with or without accommodation in order to matriculate through the Program.

General Characteristics: The role of the physician assistant demands intelligence, sound judgment, intellectual honesty, appropriate interpersonal skills, and the capacity to respond to emergencies in a calm and reasoned manner.

The student needs to:

- have an attitude of respect for self and others, adherence to the concepts of privilege and confidentiality in communicating with patients, and a commitment to the patient's welfare
- have the mental capacity and physical abilities to assimilate large amounts of complex information and apply that information in an interpreted fashion to solve clinical problems and formulate therapeutic and diagnostic plans in an accurate and efficient manner
- remain calm and reasoned in a high stress environment and respond quickly and appropriately in emergencies
- consistently display honesty, integrity, empathy, and compassion
- function effectively under stress, making use of available resources to proactively maintain both physical and mental health

History Taking: Initially approach a patient of any age group in any setting to elicit an accurate, detailed history (appropriate to the situation) and record that data in an acceptable fashion.

The student needs to:

- be able to speak and understand English with a fluency level adequate to navigate most patient situations
- have the ability to adjust their level of communication to the patient's level of understanding
- demonstrate interactive verbal and proficient written communication skills
- be able to read and process information from a computer screen and enter information into a computer

Physical Examination: Perform a comprehensive or focused physical examination of a patient of any age, gender or condition in any setting.

The student needs to possess:

- adequate auditory acuity to accurately use a stethoscope, tuning forks, etc.
- adequate visual acuity for inspection techniques and the use of an ophthalmoscope
- adequate depth perception for surgical/technical procedures, and the accurate use of an oto/ophthalmoscope and microscope
- keen tactile sensation for palpation techniques

Diagnostic Skills: Identify, perform, order, and/or interpret, at least to the point of recognizing deviations from the norm, common laboratory, radiologic, cardiographic, and other routine diagnostic procedures used to identify pathophysiologic processes.

The student needs to possess:

- accurate visual and auditory acuity for the interpretation of diagnostic procedures
- the ability to reason through a patient's problem in an orderly fashion
- competency in the integration of didactic skills, as demonstrated by written and practical examinations
- ability to record diagnostic and other findings accurately, efficiently, and clearly

Therapeutic Skills: Performing routine procedures such as injections, immunizations, suturing and wound care, managing simple conditions produced by infection or trauma, assisting in the management of more complex illness and injury, and taking initiative in performing evaluation and therapeutic procedures in response to life-threatening situations.

The student needs to demonstrate:

- flexibility, dexterity, and strength of his/her extremities for use in surgical/technical procedures
- degree of coordination in motor skills is needed to respond to emergency situations quickly and appropriately

Saint Francis University is committed to the principle that no qualified individual, on the basis of disability, be excluded from participation in or denied the benefits or services, programs or activities of the University, or be subjected to discrimination by the University as required by the

Americans with Disability Act. The Physician Assistant Sciences program adheres to the policies for academic accommodation as determined by the Center for Academic Success. The Center's Office of Disability Services assists eligible students in receiving basic services as determined by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disability Act. Every effort is made to arrange appropriate academic accommodations for students who experience physical or mental disabilities. Students are required to provide appropriate documentation to the accessibility coordinator upon request of the accommodation.

Progression Standards

Standard A3.15a b- The program must define, publish, consistently apply and make readily available to students upon admission academic performance and progression information to include: ... any required academic standards...requirements for progression in...the program.

Progression in the Saint Francis University Master of Physician Assistant Program is determined by both academic performance and the demonstration of personal and professional competencies essential to PA practice. In addition to meeting academic requirements for admission to the 3+2 or graduate phase of the program, students must satisfy the Program's Technical Standards, with or without reasonable accommodations, meet academic progression standards and comply with the policies outline in the program policy manual.

General Progression Standards for Freshman-Junior Years

1. A maximum of two (2) repeated courses are permitted in the total curriculum of the Physician Assistant Program in the freshman-junior year years.
 - a. A student may repeat up to two (2) courses; however, no course may be repeated more than once. A third repeat of the same course will not be calculated into the student's cumulative or major/science QPA for the Physician Assistant Program.
 - b. If a student passes a science course with a "C" or better grade and elects to repeat it to increase the major/science QPA, the repeated course will count toward the total repeated course limit.
 - c. A withdrawal from ANY course, which a student registers for again in a subsequent semester, will count as a repeated course and will count toward the total repeated course limit. A student who withdraws from courses due to an approved Departmental leave of absence will not have any of the courses from that semester count towards the total repeated course limit.
 - d. A course which is a prerequisite course for a more advanced course in the same discipline may NOT be repeated after a more advanced course has been successfully completed.
2. Receipt of a final grade of an "F" in ANY course is a cause for dismissal from the Physician Assistant Program.

Progression Standards for Each Year

Freshman (Year 01 - These requirements pertain to Fall and Spring semester)

In addition to the Progression Standards for Freshman-Junior Years outlined above, all freshman students must maintain the following academic standards to progress into the sophomore year as a Physician Assistant major:

- 1) Obtain a minimum 3.00 cumulative QPA at the completion of the spring semester of freshman year, and
- 2) Earn a minimum grade of "C" in all science* courses

Upon completion of the fall semester (freshman year), any student with a cumulative QPA below 3.00 will automatically be placed on one semester of Physician Assistant Program Academic Probation. If a student fails to obtain a minimum "C" grade in any science* courses during the freshman year, or at the completion of the spring semester (freshman year) falls below the minimum 3.00 cumulative QPA, the student will be dismissed from the Physician Assistant Program.

Sophomore (Year 02 - These requirements pertain to Summer, Fall and Spring semester)

In addition to the Progression Standards for Freshman-Junior Years outlined above, all sophomore students must meet the following academic requirements to progress into the junior year as a Physician Assistant major:

- 1) Maintain a minimum 3.00 cumulative QPA each semester during the sophomore year, and
- 2) Earn a minimum grade of "B" in all major** courses each semester, and
- 3) Earn a minimum grade of "C" in all science* courses each semester and
- 4) Obtain a minimum 2.666 QPA ("B-") average in a combined QPA of BIOL 205/205L and BIOL 206/206L, if taken during the sophomore year and
- 5) Obtain a minimum 3.00 cumulative QPA for all major** and science* courses by the completion of the spring semester of the sophomore year

If a student fails to obtain a minimum "B" grade in a major** course, minimum "C" grade in a science* course during the sophomore year (including summer), or at the completion of either the fall or spring semester (sophomore year) falls below the minimum 3.00 cumulative QPA, the student will be dismissed from the Physician Assistant Program.

Additionally, any student who fails to obtain a minimum 2.666 QPA ("B-") average in a combined QPA of BIOL 205/205L and BIOL 206/206L, if taken during the sophomore year, will be dismissed from the Physician Assistant Program. Upon completion of the spring semester (sophomore year), any student with the major**/science* courses cumulative QPA below 3.00 will be automatically placed on one semester of Physician Assistant Program Academic Probation.

Junior (Year 03 - These requirements pertain to Summer, Fall and Spring semester)

In addition to the Progression Standards for Freshman-Junior Years outlined above, all junior students must maintain the following academic requirements to progress into the didactic year as a Physician Assistant major:

- 1) Obtain a minimum 3.20 cumulative QPA at the completion of the spring semester of the junior year, and
- 2) Obtain a minimum 3.00 cumulative QPA for all major** and science* courses by the completion of the spring semester of the junior year, and
- 3) Earn a minimum grade of "B" in all major** courses each semester, and
- 4) Earn a minimum grade of "C" in all science* courses each semester, and

- 5) Obtain a minimum 2.666 QPA (“B-”) average in a combined QPA of BIOL 205/205L and BIOL 206/206L and
- 6) Provide documentation of 100 hours of health care experience (40 of which must be spent directly shadowing a PA in clinical practice) by the last day of class before final examinations start.

Upon completion of the fall semester (junior year), any student with a cumulative QPA below 3.20 or the major**/ science* courses cumulative QPA below 3.00 will be automatically placed on one semester of Physician Assistant Program Academic Probation. If a student fails to obtain a minimum “B” grade in a major** course, minimum "C" grade in a science* course during the junior year (including summer), or at the completion of the spring semester (junior year) falls below the minimum 3.20 cumulative QPA or the major**/science* courses cumulative QPA is below 3.00, or fails to meet the minimum 2.666 QPA average (“B-”) in a combined QPA of BIOL 205/205L and BIOL 206/206L, the student will be dismissed from the Physician Assistant Program.

Any junior student who does not provide documentation of 100 hours of health care experience by the end of spring semester (junior year) will be delayed in entering the didactic year by at least one year.

Dismissal from the Physician Assistant Program, during the freshman through junior years, may also result from any of the Causes for Disciplinary Action as listed in the Academic Policies and Procedures section of the policy manual.

A student dismissed from the Physician Assistant Program as a freshman, sophomore or junior will need to contact the Center for Academic Success to be assigned another major. No seat in the didactic year of the Physician Assistant Program is guaranteed for students who do not meet the minimum progression standards.

All core, science*, introductory physician assistant major**, prerequisite, and professional elective courses must be satisfactorily completed before the student is allowed to progress into the didactic year.

- * Science courses: Chemistry 121, Chemistry 122, Biology 111/111 lab, Biology 205/205 lab, Biology 206/206 lab, Biology 214/214 lab
- ** Major courses: PA 200, PA 201, PA 202, PA 301, PA 302, and PA 303
Prerequisite courses: Psychology 101 and three credits in Mathematics (at least MATH 110 or higher) or any Statistics course

General Progression Standards Didactic and Clinical Year

Didactic and Clinical year students who receive one "D" or "F" in a letter-graded PA course or an “F” in a pass/fail PA course must appear before the Physician Assistant Program Performance Review Committee (PRC). The PRC will review the students’ case and contract with the student the terms of Physician Assistant Program probation. The student will be allowed to repeat the course/rotation in question once, based on a schedule decided upon by the PRC. Students who do

not achieve a passing grade ("C" grade or better in a letter-graded PA course or a "P" in a pass/fail PA course) on their retake course will be dismissed from the Physician Assistant Program. Students should realize that repeating a course may cause a delay in starting rotations and graduation.

Dismissal from the Program may result from any of the Causes for Disciplinary Action listed in the Academic policies and procedures section of the policy manual.

Progression Standards for Each Year (Didactic and Clinical)

Didactic Year (Summer, Fall, Spring)

During the didactic 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 2.75 cumulative QPA in the didactic phase course work by the end of the spring semester, and
- 2) Complete each letter-graded Physician Assistant course with a minimum grade of "C" and
- 3) Complete each pass/fail Physician Assistant course with a grade of "P."

Didactic year students who receive a "D" or "F" in a letter-graded PA course or an "F" in a pass/fail PA course will be required to complete interventional remediation as soon as the course grade is finalized.

Any didactic phase student who receives two non-passing (below a "C" grade in a letter-graded PA course or an "F" in a pass/fail PA course) grades during the same semester or who gets a second non-passing grade in a letter-graded or pass/fail PA course in any subsequent semester through graduation will be dismissed from the Physician Assistant Program. Dismissal may occur at any time throughout the didactic or clinical year, as soon as course grades are finalized.

If at the end of the summer or fall semester, the cumulative didactic phase QPA is less than 2.75, the student will be placed on Physician Assistant Program Academic Probation for one semester and be required to complete interventional remediation. If the 2.75 cumulative didactic phase QPA is not met after one semester of PA Program academic probation, the student will be dismissed from the Physician Assistant Program. If the student falls below the 2.75 cumulative didactic phase QPA at the end of the spring semester, the student will be dismissed from the Program.

Requirements for progression to the clinical year:

- Completion of all didactic year courses meeting progression standards.
- Possession of a valid Driver's License and access to a vehicle, OR ability to make own transportation arrangements for clinical rotations.
- Successful completion of Basic Life Support (BLS) and Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS) certification.

- Completion of all health data and obtain medical clearance.
- Completion and clearance for PSP and Federal background checks, child abuse clearance, and Older Adult Protective Services Act clearance for non-Pennsylvania residents.
- Provide documentation of medical insurance.

Clinical Year (Summer, Fall, Spring)

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

- 1) Maintain a minimum 2.75 cumulative combined didactic and clinical phase QPA at the end of the summer, fall and spring semesters, and
- 2) Complete each letter-graded Physician Assistant course, including all clinical rotations, with a minimum grade of "C."

Clinical year students who fail to maintain a 2.75 cumulative combined didactic and clinical phase QPA will be dismissed from the Physician Assistant Program.

If the Physician Assistant Program is notified about unsatisfactory academic or behavioral performance of a clinical year student on a rotation, the student will be required to appear before the PRC.

Requirements for Completion of the Program and Graduation (A3.15b)

A candidate for graduation must satisfy the following requirements:

- Complete degree and course requirements for the program;
- Meet all progression standards for the program;
- Successful completion of a summative evaluation and a Master's capstone;
- Achieve a cumulative didactic and clinical grade point average of 2.75 or better;
- Complete MPAS curricular requirements within 36 months of initial matriculation into the didactic year of the program;
- Submit a completed Application for Degree form at least one semester prior to graduation date; and
- Satisfy financial obligations to the University.

Calculation of Grade Point Averages (GPAs)

GPAs (also referred to as QPAs) are calculated out two places beyond the decimal point and then truncated. QPAs will **NOT** be rounded. For example, a QPA of 2.74999 will be represented as 2.74, and will not be rounded up to 2.75. This will be uniform across all years of the program.

Student Rights and Responsibilities

Student Rights

A. Basic Rights

Enrollment in the Physician Assistant Program provides the student with some basic rights.

1. The student has the right to competent, knowledgeable instructors who conduct themselves in a professional manner in their interactions with students in the work setting. Students who have an issue with any faculty member or course should follow the procedures as outlined under the Student Grievance Process in the Student Rights section of the manual.
2. Classrooms should be able to provide the proper educational environment for student learning. These classrooms or other appropriate facilities should also have available current instructional materials and modern equipment that meets the technical training needs of the physician assistant student, as outlined in the Standards.
3. A classroom environment that is conducive to and compatible with learning must be maintained during all educational activities. If a student continues to engage in disruptive behavior, disciplinary action may be initiated.

B. Rights to Privacy

1. Students are provided privacy of records, which are protected from access and release by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974. The program follows University policies and procedures published in the University policy handbook, policy title: Privacy of Student Records and Release of Information, accessible on my.francis.edu
2. Students are granted access to their own files after completion of a formal request as outlined in the University policy. Students may inspect and review files in the Department of Physician Assistant Sciences office during regular office hours. At no time will information be removed from a student's permanent file. Students will also NOT be allowed to copy, photograph, or otherwise duplicate information found in their file. All evaluations and minutes of meetings such as the Performance Review Committee, become part of the student's permanent record. Students who wish to challenge content of records may submit a written letter to be placed in the student file indicating the student's objection(s) to an entry in their record.
3. PA students and other unauthorized persons do not have access to student academic records or other confidential information (A3.18). Release of student records by the Program (i.e. to potential employers) is granted only upon completion of an Authorization to Release Education Records form available on the [my.francis](http://my.francis.edu) portal or an external Authorization Release form.

4. Department faculty, Saint Francis University employees, and others who have direct involvement with the educational process of the student are provided access to student file information, as appropriate. Such persons may review student records without written consent of the student at the discretion of the Department Chair.

Performance Review Committee

The Performance Review Committee (PRC) typically convenes to discuss issues regarding a student's ability to meet Program standards. Maintenance of Program standards is important to not only protect the integrity of the Program, but more importantly, safeguard the welfare of patients. Generally, the PRC may be convened at the request of the Department Chair or other faculty to review a student's academic or professional performance, as it relates to their role as a PA student. Students may also be required to appear before the PRC for any University mandated leave of absence/ withdrawal even if only for one semester. Examples of outcomes of the PRC may include dismissal from the PA major, academic probation, deceleration, and/or other alterations of the student's curriculum plan.

A student may also request an appearance before the Performance Review Committee for the following reasons:

- If the student has concerns about their academic or professional performance. This process would then allow discussion to occur in relation to options the student may have to alter their current curriculum plan.
- To appeal their dismissal from the PA Program. The PRC will heavily weigh the existence of extenuating circumstances that occurred and adversely impacted the student's ability to meet progression standards. Students who have not met the progression standards to move into either the didactic or clinical years of the Program, if readmitted to the PA major, will be required to decelerate at least one year and meet the progression standards prior to progression into the next phase of the Program.
- For didactic year students: After dismissal anytime during a semester for consideration to be allowed to continue with the current semester courses as a non-PA major. This option would be in order to complete the credits needed to graduate with a University sanctioned degree.

To request a review before the PRC, a student must submit to the Department Chair a written request outlining the reasons why a review is necessary. The PRC would then attempt to meet within five business days of receipt of the written appeal.

All PRC meetings are confidential in nature. The PRC consists of the Department faculty, a university faculty member external to the PA department, and other appropriate members, as deemed necessary by the Department Chair. The student will appear before the PRC to discuss the case. Additional attendees, including parents, lawyers or other persons, unless directly involved in the case, will not be allowed to attend the PRC meeting.

All decisions rendered by the PRC will be final and binding. Students may choose to appeal the final PRC decision to the Dean of the School of Health Sciences and Education utilizing the “Student Appeal to the Dean” form available from the Department. This appeal must be made and received in the Dean’s Office within five (5) business days of notification of the appeal being denied by the Department.

Any student requesting readmission to the PA Program following dismissal from the major will be considered a new applicant and will need to complete the appropriate admission process.

<https://my.francis.edu/ics/>

Due Process

Any student who wishes to appeal (A3.15g) dismissal due to extenuating circumstances may request in writing to the Department Chair to appear before the Physician Assistant Performance Review Committee (PRC). Appeals must be received in the Department Office within five (5) calendar days after the student receives notification from the Department regarding action as discussed above. Dismissed didactic year students may also request an appearance before the PRC for consideration to be allowed to continue with the current semester courses as a non-PA major in order to complete the credits needed to graduate with a Bachelor’s degree.

All decisions rendered by the PRC will be final and binding. Students may choose to appeal the final PRC decision to the Dean of the School of Health Sciences and Education utilizing the “Student Appeal to the Dean” form. This form will be provided to all students who have an adverse decision upheld by the PRC. This appeal must be made and received in the Dean’s Office within five (5) business days of notification of the appeal being denied by the Department.

Students who have not met the progression standards to move into the clinical year of the Program, if readmitted to the PA major, will be required to decelerate and repeat all or some of the didactic year curriculum and successfully meet the progression standards prior to progression into the clinical phase of the Program.

Student Grievance and Mistreatment

Problem Resolution Processes (A3.15f, A3.15g)

To ensure effective conflict resolution and maintain smooth operations, students are expected to follow the steps below when addressing concerns related to courses or required experiences. This protocol outlines the process for reporting grievances and instances of mistreatment within the department.

1. Self-Assessment
Reflect on the issue. Can it be resolved by adjusting your approach or considering alternatives? Clearly define the problem.
2. Direct Communication
Speak directly with the faculty member or course coordinator responsible for the course

or experience. Clearly explain the issue and propose or request potential solutions. Most concerns can and should be resolved at this level.

3. Advisor Consultation

If unresolved, consult your academic advisor. Share the steps you've taken and the outcomes. Your advisor may offer additional strategies.

4. Escalation to Program Leadership

If the issue persists, contact the Department Chair. While they may suggest further options, note that per University policy, the course instructor has final authority over course-related matters.

5. Formal Appeal

If the departmental resolution is unsatisfactory, you may submit a formal appeal to the Dean of the School of Health Sciences using the “Student Appeal to the Dean” form, available in the Department office. Appeals must be submitted within five (5) business days of the final departmental decision.

Students should also refer to the Saint Francis University policy on student complaint resolution, as outlined in the Student Catalog and Policies, for broader institutional procedures including processes and procedures regarding grade appeals, academic policy violation, non-academic complaints, harassment or discrimination, affirmative action, Title IX and criminal activity.

Student Mistreatment Procedure (A3.15f)

Any accusation of mistreatment of a student is a serious matter and will be investigated fully. The Department follows the University’s rules for processing any complaints of student mistreatment. Please check the University’s Student Handbook for the policy on student mistreatment under student complaint resolution which is available for review on my.francis.edu

Student Responsibilities

Drug and Alcohol Policy

Students are held to the Universities drug and alcohol policy as published in the student policies on . Additionally, physician assistant students will be held accountable to the policies, procedures and testing processes of the School of Health Science and Education Drug and Alcohol Policy.

School of Health Science and Education Drug and Alcohol Policy

Those employed in the field of healthcare are entrusted with the safety, health, and welfare of patients and work in settings which require that sound ethical behavior and good judgment be exercised.

The use of illicit drugs, non-prescribed drugs or impairment due to alcohol consumption can diminish the student’s ability to learn in the classroom as well as their ability to provide adequate and appropriate care in the clinical setting. Therefore, the use of illicit drugs, non-prescribed drugs and / or being under the influence of alcohol in the classroom or clinical setting will not be tolerated.

Clinical facilities that serve as educational and training sites for students require that every department verifies that each student has a negative drug and / or alcohol screen prior to scheduling students at their facility. Additionally, many licensing agencies require individuals to pass a drug screen as a condition of licensure and / or employment.

The policy will be provided to each student at the beginning of the freshman year and again at the beginning of the didactic year and is posted in the PA student center in the learning management system. Students will be required to sign a policy contract and consent form.

Students must have negative drug screens and medically cleared in order to attend clinical experiences/rotations.

Vehicle Policy

Students in both the didactic and clinical years of the Saint Francis University Physician Assistant Program are responsible for their own transportation to all required program activities. Throughout the didactic year, students are expected to attend clinical conferences and participate in community-based clinical experiences. Throughout the clinical year, students will complete clinical rotations, requiring travel different geographic sites. Transportation to hospitals, clinical sites, and other program-related events will be the responsibility of the student and must be arranged using their own personal vehicle or through personal transportation arrangements.

All students are therefore expected to:

- Maintain a valid driver's license, or
- Make reliable personal arrangements for transportation to all required experiences.

Failure to secure appropriate transportation may impact a student's ability to meet program requirements and could affect academic progression.

Technology Requirements

To ensure academic success and maintain the integrity of assessments, all students enrolled in the Saint Francis University Physician Assistant Program are required to meet the following minimum technology standards.

Minimum Technology Requirements:

Students must have access to a University issued or personal laptop that meets or exceeds the minimum system requirements for secure external testing platforms used by the program, including:

- [ExamSoft \(Exemplify\): Exemplify Minimum System Requirements](#)
- [Surpass: Surpass System Requirements](#)

These platforms are essential for administering secure, standardized assessments and require specific hardware and software configurations to function reliably. Failure to meet these requirements may result in the inability to complete required examinations.

University-Issued Laptop Recommendation:

Students are strongly encouraged to purchase a Saint Francis University-issued laptop. These devices are pre-configured to meet all program and testing platform requirements and ensure compatibility with university systems. Additionally, students using university-issued laptops will have full access to:

- On-campus technical support
- Troubleshooting assistance
- Hardware replacement services (as applicable)

Personal Laptop Policy:

Students who choose to use a personal laptop must ensure their device meets the minimum technology standards published by Saint Francis University and the specific requirements for ExamSoft and Surpass. It is the student's responsibility to maintain their device in working condition and ensure compatibility with all required software.

Please note: **The SFU Technology Help Desk is unable to service or troubleshoot issues on personal laptops.** Students using personal devices assume full responsibility for resolving any technical issues that may arise, including those that interfere with testing or coursework.

Student Advising and Support

Student Advising

Student Advising Policy

Each student will be assigned to a faculty advisor within the Department. In keeping with the mission of the University, the goals for academic advising include: clarification of life and career goals, development of suitable educational plans, selection of appropriate courses and other educational experiences, interpretation of institutional requirements, increasing student awareness of educational resources available, evaluation of student progress toward established goals, development of decision-making skills and referral to and use of other institutional and community support services, where appropriate.

The advisor is also available to discuss individual progress in meeting Program requirements. It is suggested that the student take advantage of this service at least once per semester to map their progress. Advisors will make students aware of opportunities to meet, usually around the mid-semester time frame. Students or advisors may schedule meetings at any time, as needed, to deal with situations in a timely fashion. Students must meet with their advisor, in person or virtually, in order to be cleared to register for the upcoming semester. Those students who are spending the semester abroad may communicate with their advisor via an alternative or electronic medium.

A. Faculty Advisor

Each student is assigned a faculty advisor during each year of the Program. The purpose of the advisor is to:

1. Provide communication between the student and faculty.
2. Assist the student in meeting the educational objectives of the Program and University.
3. Identify additional faculty member(s) or University personnel that will be accessible if a student wishes to discuss a problem of a personal or professional nature.
4. Enable the student to identify materials or services which may help them to achieve the educational objectives of the Program.

Student input is critical for the success of this process. Each person in the Program, advisee and advisor, will have specific responsibilities.

B. Student Responsibilities

1. Honestly discuss areas of strengths and areas for improvement with the advisor.
2. Honestly complete the self-evaluation form, when required.
3. Help plan a course of action to remediate deficiencies and capitalize on strengths.
4. Meet with advisor at least once per semester at a mutually arranged time.
5. Meet with advisor on an as needed basis when issues arise.
6. Make an honest effort to follow the plans devised from the session.

C. Advisor responsibilities

1. Honestly discuss areas of strength and areas for improvement with the student.
2. Help plan a course of action to remediate deficiencies and capitalize on strengths.
3. Offer to meet with student at least once per semester at a mutually arranged time.
4. Meet with student on an as needed basis when issues arise.
5. Apprise students of their options in a given situation.
6. Collect and review appropriate data on student prior to advising session.
7. Document meeting events for student file.
8. Initiate referrals for academic, clinical and/or emotional support to facilitate the student's academic success.
9. Notify appropriate support personnel, as deemed necessary, to safe-guard the health and welfare of everyone involved.

D. Example of Output from Advising Sessions (Not Comprehensive)

- Referral to Center for Academic Success
- Referral to Center For Wellbeing
- Referral to Student Health Services
- Recommendation to change study habits
- Education on behavior modification
- Development of a specific remediation program

- Arrangement of meeting with program or university tutor
- Make recommendations or referrals to University services like Financial Aid, Writing Center, Resident Life, etc..
- Recommendation to begin exercise program or other stress reducing activities
- Reexamination of career goals

The advisor will NOT:

1. SOLVE YOUR PROBLEMS. That is up to you. They will discuss your problem, help you clarify options and help you devise a plan of action.
2. ACT AS YOUR MEDICAL PROVIDER. It is inappropriate for any of the Department of Physician Assistant Sciences faculty to provide a student health care. If you have a medical problem, see the University Student Health Service or the outside provider of your choice, as appropriate to your situation.
3. ACT AS A COUNSELOR. If you have problems that require counseling and need the help of a professional counselor, the Center for Wellbeing is available.
4. ACT AS A PARENT. It is your responsibility to see your advisor and schedule a mutually convenient time for midsemester advising. The advisor will not "track down" any student who does not make an appointment after initial notification by the PA Program. It is also your responsibility to act on the plan devised during the session.

Student Support

Academic Accommodations

To request accommodations for medical or academic needs, students must contact Accessibility Services in the Center for Academic Success (CAS), 814-472-3024. Students seeking accommodations based on documented disabilities will meet with a staff member in CAS to complete the process according to University protocol. Once accommodations have been granted, the student must meet privately with the course coordinator if an undergraduate student, the Academic Coordinator if in the didactic year, or their academic advisor if in the clinical year to make arrangements for the accommodations. Any request for accommodations should be made at the beginning of the semester or as soon as a student is aware of the need. Although accommodations can be initiated at any time during the semester, please be aware that no evaluative measures completed in a course before proper instructor/coordinator notification of need for accommodations will be allowed to be repeated. Additionally, individual courses may have specific requirements regarding the use of accommodation. Students should refer to the appropriate course syllabus for more information.

Personal Support

The Saint Francis University Physician Assistant (PA) Program is committed to supporting the academic and personal well-being of its students. In alignment with the university's mission and values, the program ensures timely access and appropriate referral to support services for students experiencing personal issues that may impact their academic progress or professional development (A3.10).

Procedures:

1. Faculty Advising and Early Intervention

Each PA student is assigned a faculty advisor who serves as a primary point of contact for academic and professional guidance. While advisors are not formally trained to diagnose or treat personal distress, they may be the first to notice signs of concern and are will assist in the referral to appropriate university support services.

2. Referral to University Support Services

Students may be referred to the following resources based on individual needs:

- Center for Academic Success (CAS): Offers academic advising, tutoring, testing accommodations, and accessibility services. Students may contact the Center for Academic Success at cas@francis.edu or (814) 472-3176 for more information or to request support services.
- Counseling Services: Provides confidential mental health counseling, crisis intervention, and referrals to external providers.
- Health Services: Delivers basic medical care and health education to support physical well-being. Faculty staff are unable to participate as health care providers for students except in an emergency situation. (**Standard A3.09**)
- Career Services: Assists with career planning, resume development, and job placement.
- Student-Athlete Support Services: Offers academic and leadership development for student-athletes.
- Campus Ministry: Provides spiritual guidance, pastoral counseling, and opportunities for reflection, service, and community engagement in alignment with the Franciscan mission of the university.

3. Confidentiality and Professionalism

All referrals and discussions regarding personal issues are handled with strict confidentiality in accordance with university policies and applicable laws. Students are encouraged to seek help without fear of stigma or academic penalty.

4. Accessibility and Responsiveness

The PA Program and university support offices are committed to ensuring that services are accessible and responsive to student needs. Faculty and staff will make every effort to facilitate timely appointments and follow-up care.

Academic Policies and Procedures

Student Learner Characteristics

Students who successfully accomplish the competencies / learning outcomes of each of the PA courses, including clinical experiences, will share the following characteristics:

- Reporting to all classes, labs, critical thinking/simulation sessions, clinical experiences and scheduled events on time and appropriately prepared to participate in the scheduled activity.
- Completing research on topics utilizing appropriate instructional objectives, prior to lecture, lab, critical thinking/ simulation sessions or clinical experiences.
- Completing all assignments on time and in a thorough manner.
- Utilizing current and evidence-based medicine resources to augment classroom and clinical learning experiences and accomplish learning outcomes.
- Actively participate in the learning process by asking questions to provide clarification of concepts (as needed), solving problems and providing answers to questions posed during scheduled activities.
- Anticipating that all Program sponsored learning experiences are subject to evaluation by written and/or practiced examinations.
- Reviewing performance on written examinations to identify areas of weakness.
- Accepting criticism in a constructive fashion.
- Maintaining a professional demeanor in interactions with university personnel, faculty, lecturers, student peers and clinical preceptors.

Students admitted as freshman PA majors must meet the Program Progression Standards for Freshman through Junior Years, including the technical standards, to remain in the major. While it is expected that all required course work will be completed in the three years prior to the didactic year, extenuating circumstances may exist causing a student to request an extension. A written request must be submitted to the Department Chair for approval. Approval of such requests will be made on a case-by-case basis.

Classroom Environment

To foster a respectful and effective learning environment, students are expected to adhere to the following guidelines. Additional expectations may be outlined in individual course syllabi. Please consult the course instructor or coordinator with any questions.

- Use of Technology: Electronic devices are to be used solely for course-related activities. Non-academic use, including web browsing, messaging, or social media—is prohibited during class.

- Classroom Attendance: Breaks are scheduled before and after class sessions. Students should remain in the classroom for the duration of the session, except in rare, unavoidable circumstances.
- Partial Attendance: Students unable to attend the full session must notify the instructor in advance. The instructor may advise the student not to attend and may classify the absence as unexcused unless proper documentation is provided.
- Tardiness: Arriving late disrupts the learning environment and reflects poor professionalism. Repeated tardiness may result in referral to the Performance Review Committee and potential dismissal from the program.
- Cell Phone Use: Phones must be silenced or set to vibrate. Calls should not be taken during class. In exceptional cases, students may request prior permission to step out for urgent calls. Texting during class is not permitted.
- Classroom Conduct: Children and pets are not allowed in class. Students should refrain from side conversations and direct questions to the instructor during class to benefit all participants.
- Engagement: To ensure equitable participation, students are encouraged to ask questions during class rather than waiting until after the session.

Testing Procedures

Undergraduate testing procedures will be outlined and documented within the syllabi of each course.

The following guidelines will be upheld regarding administration of examinations within didactic and clinical year courses:

- Tests will be administered via paper and/or utilizing a secure testing environment on the student's laptop computer.
- All active programs on the student's laptop should be exited prior to entering the secure testing browser (i.e. IM, Post-its, etc.)
- Only distributed test materials, pencils, erasers or other test-related materials specifically authorized by the Course Coordinator or Instructor are permitted in the direct vicinity of the student testing. Any math calculation required will be uncomplicated and can be completed on paper provided, or a calculator will be provided.
- Each student is to remove all paper, sticky pads and any written material from their personal space in the classroom. Anything not removed by the student may be removed by faculty or staff prior to the start of the exam and may not be available to be returned to the student.
- Entry to the testing area will be made in an orderly and quiet fashion. All textbooks, class notes and personal articles will be deposited in a designated area prior to the start of the exam.
- Student personal items are to be stored in the lockers provided. It is ultimately the student's responsibility to secure the locker when there is anything in it. The University and PA Program are not responsible for any lost or stolen items from the lockers. Students may use lockers only during the didactic year and must remove their locks by

the last day of spring final exams, or they will be cut off at the student's expense to prepare for the next academic year.

- Hats of any sort are not permitted to be worn in the classroom during testing.
- Cell phones and other portable electronic media are not permitted to be in the immediate vicinity of students during an exam. These devices should be stored in bags or coat pockets in an area that will be designated prior to the exam. Any student found having a cell phone in their direct possession (to include in a pocket), or in their immediate vicinity while testing may receive a score of zero on that exam. Any use of electronic devices (other than laptop for testing) during windows of testing will be considered academic dishonesty. Examples of electronic devices include, but are not limited to, cell phones, computers, electronic headphones, electronic watches.
- All examinations will be scheduled for a specific block of time, and all components of the exam must be completed by the end of that block. The ending time of the examination will be announced at the start of each examination. Students are urged to carefully manage their time so as to allow for completion of all exam components. Once the individual exam is submitted, the student forfeits the right to retrieve it for any purpose even if there is additional test time left.
- No additional time will be allowed for students arriving late for the exam. Answers not finalized prior to submission of the test will not be used in calculating grades.
- Students temporarily withdrawing from the examination room (i.e. to utilize the rest rooms) must place their paper face down or partially close the laptop. Only one male and one female may be out of the testing classroom at a time.
- Students' allotted examination time will not be extended for time lost during temporary withdrawal.
- All students may be required to remain in the classroom for the entire testing time. Moving around the classroom or being distracting to others who are still taking the test should be avoided.
- If a student is unable to take an examination at the scheduled time due to a class absence, the student will need to inform the PA Department prior to the start time so arrangements for a make-up exam can be made. The Testing Center may be utilized for make-up examinations. Please refer to the Department Policy Manual for further information regarding excused and unexcused absence on an exam day.

Academic Honesty

The Department of Physician Assistant Sciences adheres to the academic honesty policy outlined by Saint Francis University, as detailed in the Student Handbook available on the SFU website.

In alignment with University policy, the Department emphasizes that honesty is a fundamental expectation of the physician assistant profession. Integrity is essential in all forms of communication—written, verbal, and interpersonal—and is critical to the delivery of ethical and competent patient care. Academic honesty is an extension of professional integrity and reflects a student's commitment to uphold the highest ethical standards throughout their training.

Violations of academic honesty are considered unethical, unprofessional, and incompatible with the moral values of Saint Francis University. In addition to following University policy on

reporting academic dishonesty, violations will be addressed within the program and can result in serious consequences, including but not limited to:

- Appearance before the Performance Review Committee,
- A score of zero on the relevant assignment, quiz, or exam,
- Failure of the course, and/or
- Immediate dismissal from the Program.
- Temporary removal from class during the adjudication process.

Examples of Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following behaviors (additional examples are provided in the University Student Handbook):

1. Unauthorized Collaboration: Working with others on assignments meant to be completed individually or collaborating with other groups on group assignments without instructor approval.
2. Sharing Coursework: Distributing completed or graded assignments to other students currently enrolled in the same or future courses.
3. Reproducing Test Items: Memorizing and reproducing exam questions.
4. Plagiarism: Using another individual's or organization's material without proper citation, regardless of copyright status. Using reports/work from other classes including resubmitting assignments when repeating a course.
5. Exam Content Disclosure: Discussing written or practical exam content with students who have not yet taken the exam.
6. Misuse of Electronic Devices:
 - Taking photos of exam materials
 - Storing or transmitting exam content via phone or smartwatch
 - Accessing unauthorized files or websites during an exam
 - Searching the internet for answers during an exam
7. Use of Cheat Sheets: Possessing or using unauthorized notes during an exam.
8. Unauthorized Access: Accessing programs, files, or websites during an exam without permission.
9. Pre-Exam Access: Obtaining exam materials before the scheduled administration.
10. Concealed Notes: Writing notes on body parts, clothing, or other items brought into an exam.
11. Copying or Enabling Cheating: Copying from another student's exam or allowing another student to copy from yours.

Utilization of Plagiarism Prevention Service

Saint Francis University's course management system utilizes an online tool to help students and instructors analyze, evaluate, and provide feedback on written papers and assignments. The service encourages original writing and proper citation practices by cross-referencing submitted materials with an archived database of journals, essays, newspaper articles, books, and other published works, including Internet-based material. Any previously submitted student work through the service will also be included in the database.

The Master of PA Science Program utilizes this tool as a pedagogical tool for developing effective citation skills. It may be used to analyze final versions of papers within individual courses in the curriculum for similarities to other works, including a student's own previously submitted work.

Additional course specific criteria regarding paper submissions and the utilization of the plagiarism prevention tool can be found in individual course syllabi.

Causes for Disciplinary Action or Dismissal from the Program

Additional causes for disciplinary action or dismissal from the program (A3.14) can include, but not limited to the following:

- Cheating or plagiarism.
- Forgery; altering or misuse of Department and/or medical documents or knowingly furnishing false information.
- Misrepresentation of oneself as a graduate of the Program or in a capacity which exceeds the student's level of training.
- Obstruction or disruption of the educational process or other University functions while on or off University property.
- Physical or verbal abuse or the threat of physical violence against a University member or member's family.
- Entry into an unauthorized area of University property or the property of a University member.
- Theft or non-accidental damage to University property.
- Possession of explosives, dangerous chemicals, or deadly weapons on University property without proper authorization.
- Engaging in lewd, indecent, or obscene behavior on University property or at a University sponsored event or clinical site.
- Improper use, possession, sale or provision to others of controlled or unlawful substances.
- Soliciting or assisting another to do any act which could subject a student to discipline as cited in this section.
- Presenting a danger to patients due to severe deficiencies in patient care.
- Exhibiting behaviors that do not reflect the philosophy of the Department and that are considered by the faculty to be actions unbecoming of a St. Francis University Physician Assistant student.
- Violating the University's or Department's Policy on Academic Honesty.
- Suspension by the Office of Student Development.

Appealing a Grade

The Department follows the University's rules for appealing a grade. The steps necessary to appeal a grade can be found in the University catalog under the Academic Policy section on my.francis.edu.

Remediation and Deceleration

Remediation (A3.15c) is a structured, program-defined process to address and correct deficiencies in a student's knowledge or skills. The following policy on remediation and deceleration applies to students in the didactic phase of the program.

Interventional Remediation

Students in the didactic phase will be placed on interventional remediation if they meet any of the following criteria:

- First non-passing grade in any course (letter-graded or pass/fail)
- End-of-semester GPA below 2.75 (Summer or Fall)
- GPA below 2.75 in Medicine Module courses (Summer or Fall)
- Academic probation due to cumulative GPA below 2.75 at the end of Fall semester

Requirements can include:

- Mandatory tutoring for Medicine Modules (peer, faculty, or PA graduate tutors as appropriate)
- Evaluation by the Center for Academic Success (CAS), including learning style inventory and review of study skills, time management, and other academic strategies
- Student-developed study plan, reviewed and adjusted as needed by the academic advisor or course coordinator
- Biweekly meetings with the academic advisor (more frequent if necessary)
- Signed remediation contract outlining expectations; non-compliance may negatively impact PRC evaluations

Content specific remediation policies are outlined in each PA course syllabi.

Deceleration (A3.15c) refers to a student leaving their original cohort while remaining enrolled in the program. This may result from a PRC decision or a leave of absence.

Class Attendance

In keeping with Saint Francis University's policy on class attendance, students enrolled in the Physician Assistant Program are required to attend all scheduled classes, laboratories, clinical experiences, small group sessions, and other required course activities as an academic obligation. This expectation reflects the professional standards of the PA profession and the rigorous nature of the program's curriculum.

Consistent attendance is essential for academic success and professional development. Being present for educational activities, completing assignments on time, preparing adequately for

class, and actively participating in discussions are foundational to mastering the complex medical knowledge and clinical skills required of a competent physician assistant. These habits also foster collaboration, critical thinking, and accountability—qualities that are indispensable in clinical practice.

Faculty members are not inherently obligated to provide make-up opportunities for missed sessions. Make-up work is granted only at the discretion of the instructor, based on the nature of the absence or if it qualifies as a University-approved absence. Students are therefore expected to communicate proactively and responsibly regarding any unavoidable absences.

Attendance is not merely a program requirement—it is a reflection of a student’s commitment to their education, their peers, and the patients they will one day serve. The PA Program at Saint Francis University upholds this standard to ensure the development of knowledgeable, ethical, and practice-ready healthcare professionals.

Undergraduate (Freshman, Sophomore, Junior) Attendance Policy:

Students are to refer to the PA course syllabi regarding attendance policy for each course.

Didactic Year Attendance Policy

The following general rules of attendance will be enforced:

- The Program expects each student to attend all classes and designated activities as part of the course requirements.
- Punctuality and being prepared for each day’s class develops professional attributes that will be necessary to future development as a health care provider.
- Students are expected to be present at the scheduled time ready to begin class participation. Faculty reserve the right to deny access to the classroom for any student that is late to class and to count it as an unexcused absence.
- Tardiness is disruptive to the classroom environment and demonstrates a lack of professionalism. Repeated incidences of tardiness may lead to the student being required to appear before the Performance Review Committee and potential dismissal from the PA Program.

Students should be aware that scheduled University breaks begin and end the calendar day that is designated by the University. ***It is required that students be present for all activities as scheduled the day immediately before and after a break.*** Travel plans should be made accordingly. Any class time missed by a student due to scheduled travel not related to a University-excused absence will be considered as an unexcused absence.

Clear communication between the student and course instructor/coordinator about absences from class is imperative. Absences are separated into two categories, excused absences and unexcused absences. Any student who adopts a pattern of chronic absenteeism may be required to appear before the Program’s Performance Review Committee, and ultimately may be dismissed from the MPAS program.

1. Excused Absences

University-Approved Absence

If a student needs to miss class for a military obligation, hospitalization, or medical absence due to a documented disability, they must notify the Director of the Center for Academic Success as well as the program. For consideration of a university-approved absence, the student must present appropriate verification to the Center for Academic Success. All University approved absences are considered excused absences.

For University-approved absences, it is the responsibility of the student to contact the individual instructors regarding requests to live-stream and/or record class. All requests are to be made *at least 24 hours* prior to class, if possible, to allow faculty to make proper arrangements.

Examples of University Approved Absences

1. Military obligations
2. Serious personal illness or injury with prescribed orders not to attend class*
3. Medical absence due to a documented disability*
4. Death of a member of the student's immediate family (defined only as parent, legal guardian, sibling, child, spouse or life partner, grandparent and grandchild)
5. Athletics participation approved through the SFU Athletics Department
6. Participation in a professional conference or meeting

* An absence due to any medical condition of three days or longer must be documented in writing by the student's health care provider to include medical clearance to return to classes and clinical experiences, as applicable.

Planned Absences

While regular attendance is important at all scheduled Program classes and requirements, the Department recognizes that, at times, a student may need to be absent. Any student requiring a planned absence must complete and submit for approval the Program's 'Notification of Absence' form. If a student will be missing a scheduled examination, notification of a planned absence must be made at least two weeks prior to the exam; whenever possible. The Academic Coordinator will determine when the exam is to be made up. Once this is determined, it is the student's responsibility to make arrangements with the Testing Center for the make-up examination. The Department will also assess the length of the planned absence, on a case-by-case basis, and make a determination if a leave of absence may be more appropriate.

Students are allotted three days of planned absences that are not University approved absences during the Didactic Year. If a student exceeds three days of planned absences, the student will be required to meet with their academic advisor and the Academic Coordinator. The student may be required to appear before the Program's Performance Review Committee.

Planned absences that require only a brief absence from a portion of class activities will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis but may warrant the use of "half a day" of planned absence

that is counted towards the allotted 3 days. This will be determined by the Academic Coordinator.

For planned absences, it is up to the individual instructor to consider requests, on a case-by-case basis, to live-stream or record class. It is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor at least 24 hours in advance, when possible, if they wish to make such a request. The choice by a faculty member to live-stream or record class for a planned absence is solely at their discretion, as there is no requirement to accommodate a request.

Examples of Planned Absences

- Scheduled appointments (dental, medical, legal, etc.)
- Illness of an immediate family member (spouse, parent, child)
- Death of a family member not included in the University-approved absences; death of anyone other than family (i.e. close friend) will be addressed on an individual basis
- Absence due to special religious holidays
- Attendance at a wedding, graduation, etc.

* An absence due to any medical condition of three days or longer must be documented in writing by the student's health care provider to include medical clearance to return to classes and clinical experiences, as applicable.

A planned absence without a medical excuse will be considered unplanned absence.

Unplanned Absences

Unplanned excused absences from class, including labs, small group sessions, or examinations, may occur as long as a student who will be late and/or absent from class contacts the Department office each day of their tardiness or absence **prior** to the start of class at (814) 472-3130. Please leave a message in the event that no one is available to take the call personally. All recorded messages left are automatically "time and date" stamped. The message should indicate a reason for tardiness or absence and detail all scheduled activities for which the student will be late or absent so that faculty can be notified.

Any absence or tardiness impacts negatively on the student's educational experience. The student remains fully responsible for mastering any missed material. A student who is late for or misses an examination (either due to acute illness or tardiness) has the responsibility to communicate with the Academic Coordinator to complete the exam as soon as they return. Excessive tardiness, which is defined as *three* incidents, regardless of whether the student notified the PA Department, may require the student to appear before the Program's Performance Review Committee.

For unplanned absences, it is up to the individual instructor to consider, on a case-by-case basis, requests to live-stream or record class. It is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor to make such a request. Faculty are not required to live-stream or record class for unplanned absences.

Examples of Unplanned Absences

- Acute medical illness that is reported prior to the start time

- Tardiness to class that is reported prior to the start time
- Other circumstances beyond the student's control such as weather or transportation-related issues that is reported prior to the start time.

2. Unexcused Absences

An unexcused absence is defined as any tardiness or absence from **each hour of class** without prior approval from the course instructor/coordinator and/or lack of proper notification from the student in relation to the absence as noted above. Any class time missed by a student due to scheduled travel not related to a University-excused absence will be considered as an unexcused absence.

Didactic Year students will be counseled by their academic advisor or the Academic Coordinator after one unexcused absence. At that time a plan will be developed to ensure there are no further incidents. *Three* unexcused absences within the Didactic Year will result in lowering of the current medicine module final grade by one letter grade (A to A-; A- to B+, etc), however the grade will not be reduced if a C or below. The student may also be required to appear before the Performance Review Committee and may face subsequent dismissal from the MPAS Program. Such lapses in professionalism may also be reflected in Department recommendations of the student or graduate for employment or further educational opportunities, such as fellowships.

Unexcused Absences involving Examinations

- If a student has an unexcused absence from any other class or scheduled activity on the day of an examination or graded evaluation, they will be penalized 10% of the total possible points (rounded to the appropriate whole point) for the examination or graded evaluation.
- If a student does not notify the PA Program office regarding being late for or missing an examination, they will be penalized 10% of the total points possible on that exam.
- Students may request an appeal of a penalty if there are extenuating circumstances that occurred. The student must submit to the Program Director or their designee a written request outlining the reasons why they are requesting a waiver from the penalty. Letters of appeal are due within three business days of the written examination or graded evaluation score being posted. All decisions rendered by the Program in relation to this appeal process are final.

Clinical Year Rotation Attendance

Students are expected to work approximately 40 hours per week, plus any on-call or weekends as scheduled by the preceptor. Students may take the same time off as their preceptors for holidays, **ONLY** if there is no other preceptors available or if the site is closed. Students must notify the Department prior to the time off. It is the responsibility of the student to be proactive to ensure obtaining the required 40 hours per week of clinical work. See the clinical year handbook for detailed attendance requirements.

Audio or Video Taping of Lectures

Any student who desires to audio or video tape a lecture must ask permission of the instructor that is presenting the material. It is the instructor's individual prerogative whether to allow any taping of the session that is being presented. Any material that an instructor allows to be recorded is for the express use of the students in that class, and must not be posted or otherwise be made available to those outside of the class unless permission to share it is granted by the instructor.

Program and Personal Policies and Procedures

Transfer Credit Policy

Freshman- Junior Years

A student who enters Saint Francis University directly from high school may transfer credits from other institutions such as College in High School, Advanced Placement Tests, CLEP, PEP and Armed Forces Course Equivalencies as approved by the University. Such credits do not count toward the student's quality point average at Saint Francis University.

Once a student has matriculated as a freshman in the PA major, the student is not permitted to take any collateral/ prerequisite or professional elective courses required by the PA Program at another institution. All major and collateral/prerequisite and professional elective courses must be taken through Saint Francis University. This also applies to any repeat of a major or collateral/prerequisite or professional elective course. Any course that is not a major, collateral/prerequisite or professional elective course may be taken at another institution; however, requires permission to do so from the appropriate Department prior to enrolling in the course. Please refer to the University policy in relation to "Transfer of Outside Courses into Saint Francis University" under the Academic Policy section as outlined in the University catalog found on my.francis.edu.

Professional Phase (Didactic and Clinical Years)

The graduate program neither accepts advanced placement credits nor grants advanced placement within the program (A3.13c).

Withdrawal, Change of Major, Leave of Absence

Withdrawal from the University (A3.15d)

Students contemplating voluntary withdrawal from the University should follow the steps as outlined in the University catalog under the Academic Policy section found on my.francis.edu. The official withdrawal process includes the completion of the official withdrawal form, and clearing of all financial obligations. Any student requesting readmission to the Program following voluntary withdrawal will be considered a new applicant and will need to complete the appropriate admission process to be considered for readmission.

Students who are mandated by the University to withdraw for any length of time from the University must notify the Department Chair in writing of the circumstances surrounding the involuntary withdrawal within three days of the departure from campus. The Program will review such cases and determine if a leave of absence from the Program or appearance before the Program's Performance Review Committee is warranted.

Change of Major

Students who desire to change their major should contact their academic advisor and complete the required form. The process and policy regarding change of major can be found in the University catalog under the Academic Policy section found on my.francis.edu.

Leave of Absence

A leave of absence from the Physician Assistant Program is not recommended; however, the Department does recognize that some personal circumstances may give students few options. These are considered by the Department Chair and faculty on an individual basis. Any requests for a leave of absence must be directed to the Department Chair in writing for approval. A leave may be granted for up to one year in length. Students should outline the circumstances for the leave and the duration of the leave to include such items as, first day of absence and expected date of return. If the leave of absence is required for medical reasons, a medical clearance from a health care provider will be required prior to the student's return. If the leave of absence is due to a military obligation, a copy of the military orders should be attached to the leave request.

If a student requests a leave of absence which is approved by the Department, all requirements for the leave of absence and return to the Program will be outlined in writing for the student. Students that are granted a leave of absence may be required to demonstrate competency on a Program exam upon their return and/or repeat course work. The student will be asked to sign acknowledging their understanding of these requirements prior to the granting of the leave. Please understand that this does not excuse the student from completing the University leave of absence process or excuse a student from observing the University's policy on withdrawal from courses/withdrawal from the University.

It will be the student's responsibility to notify the Department Chair in writing of their intent- to-return date and to fulfill any other requirements as outlined in their original leave of absence agreement.

Any student who does not return on their expected date or does not notify the Department of their intention to return in writing, will be considered withdrawn from the Program and forfeit their seat in the class. If an extension of the return date is needed, the student must submit in writing a request to the Department Chair. The Department faculty will review the request and decide whether to allow the extension. Students are advised to consider all academic and personal factors that will be affected by a leave of absence prior to making a request, including financial aid and the University's policy on withdrawal from courses/withdrawal from the University.

Refund of Tuition and Fees (A1.02k)

All students who withdraw from a class or withdraw from the University are subject to payment refunds as outlined in the University catalog found on my.francis.edu. Please refer to the University catalog for specifics regarding the percentage of refund based on time of withdrawal.

Student Employment (A3.15e, A3.04, A3.05 a&b)

- Outside employment during the didactic and clinical phases is strongly discouraged due to the demands of the MPAS Program. Program requirements will not be adjusted for work schedules, and employment must not interfere with academic or clinical responsibilities.
- Students are discouraged from working at their clinical rotation sites.
- Students are not required to work for the PA Program. Volunteering as a peer tutor is allowed, but students may not replace faculty, staff, or administrators.
- Students may not perform duties of licensed PAs or staff during clinical rotations. Any such request must be reported immediately to the Clinical Education Coordinator for review and action.

Professionalism

Professionalism is a foundational attribute of the physician assistant (PA) profession, encompassing a commitment to ethical and legal standards, intellectual integrity, and compassionate patient care. It requires the demonstration of sound judgment, emotional maturity, and the ability to respond to clinical situations with calm and reasoned action. PAs are expected to uphold the principles of respect, confidentiality, and accountability, consistently prioritizing the welfare of patients and populations. This professional conduct reflects a deep responsibility to maintain trust, ensure quality care, and contribute positively to the healthcare environment.

Professionalism is a cornerstone of success in PA education and clinical practice. It reflects a student's readiness to become a competent, ethical, and trustworthy healthcare provider. In the academic setting, professionalism is demonstrated through behaviors that show respect, responsibility, integrity, and a commitment to excellence.

Core Elements of Professionalism

1. Intellectual Honesty and Academic Integrity

PA students are expected to uphold the highest standards of honesty in all academic work.

- Example: Never plagiarize or cheat on exams or assignments..
- Example: Accurately report clinical hours and patient encounters—falsifying logs is a serious breach of trust.

2. Accountability and Responsibility

Being dependable and taking ownership of your learning and actions is essential.

- Example: Submit assignments on time and communicate proactively if you're struggling to meet a deadline.

- Example: Attend all required classes, labs, and clinical rotations, and notify faculty in advance if you must be absent.
- Example: Arrive to lectures, labs, exams and experiences on time and ready to begin.

3. Respect for Faculty, Peers, Staff and Patients

Professionalism includes treating everyone in the academic and clinical environment with courtesy and respect.

- Example: Engage respectfully in class discussions, even when opinions differ.
- Example: Avoid disruptive behavior during lectures, such as using your phone, talking during presentations, entering a lecture late, making trips in and out of a lecture, leaving lectures early.
- Example: Maintain confidentiality of patient information, do not share stories of encounters with classmates, family or friends from any clinically related experiences (Undergraduate shadowing experiences, didactic clinical experiences and clinical rotations).

4. Professional Communication

Clear, respectful, and appropriate communication is key in both academic and clinical settings.

- Example: Use professional language in emails and correspondence to faculty, staff, peers, clinicians and patients.
- Example: Accept feedback with maturity.

5. Commitment to Learning and Self-Improvement

PA students should demonstrate a strong work ethic and a desire to grow.

- Example: Seek out additional resources or tutoring if you're struggling with a subject.
- Example: Reflect on feedback from faculty and preceptors to improve your academic and clinical performance.
- Example: Demonstrate flexibility with an openness to change in the academic schedule and willingness to stay late or adjust schedules during clinical experiences.

6. Ethical Behavior in Group Work

Teamwork is a vital part of PA education and practice.

- Example: Contribute equally to group projects and respect deadlines.
- Example: Don't take credit for others' work or exclude team members from collaboration.

7. Professional Appearance and Conduct

Even in academic settings, how you present yourself matters.

- Example: Dress appropriately for labs, simulations, and guest lectures.
- Example: Follow the clinical sites dress code, including wearing your ID badge
- Example: Maintain a calm and respectful demeanor during stressful academic and clinical situations.

Professionalism Evaluation in the Freshman, Sophomore and Junior Years:

Physician Assistant students are held to high standards both on and off campus. Though undergraduate students are not formally evaluated, any lapses in professionalism may warrant review and evaluation by a course instructor, course coordinator, or academic advisor. Egregious violations may result in the student being required to appear before the Program's Performance Review Committee and may result in dismissal from the PA program.

Professionalism Evaluation in Didactic and Clinical Years:

During the didactic year, students will be evaluated through the use of a professionalism rubric at mid semester during academic advising sessions. Each student will be expected to meet or exceed expectations necessary to demonstrate professionalism in the following areas:

- Integrity/Academic Honesty
- Respect
- Learning community
- Flexibility
- Attendance/Punctuality
- Attire/Appearance

Didactic-year preceptors will also evaluate student professionalism during each half-day clinical experience.

Professionalism during the clinical year will be evaluated through

- Faculty evaluation once per semester utilizing the professionalism rubric
- Preceptor evaluation at both mid-rotation and end of rotation
- Clinical experience site visit.

Unprofessional behavioral concerns at any point within the didactic or clinical year may result in appearance before the Program's Performance Review committee and could result in dismissal from the PA program.

Dress Code for Clinical Experiences/Rotations

Students representing Saint Francis University (SFU) and the PA profession in any off-campus setting—including clinical sites, meetings, and special events—must maintain a professional appearance. This includes being neatly dressed, well-groomed, and adhering to the following standards:

Identification (A3.06)

Students must wear their SFU PA Student photo ID badge at all times while on clinical experiences/rotations. ID must be always worn above the waistline/chest level on either the lab coat or clothing with the name and photo visible.

Clothing

- Permitted:
 - Men: Dress pants, shirts, and ties.
 - Women: Dresses, dress pants or skirts with blouses, dress shirts, or sweaters.
- Not Permitted:
 - Jeans, leggings, sweatpants, shorts, cut-offs
 - Sweatshirts, hoodies, T-shirts, tank tops, halter tops, off-the-shoulder or strapless tops
 - Clothing that is tight, short, low-cut, or exposes the trunk with movement
 - Clothing with rips or tears
 - Hats (unless required by the clinical site)

Lab Coat

- A short white lab coat must be worn at all times unless otherwise directed by the preceptor.

Shoes

- Required: Closed-toe dress shoes
- Not Permitted: Tennis shoes, clogs, sandals, flip-flops, or shoes with heels over 2 inches

Jewelry

- Watches, wedding bands, and/or engagement rings are acceptable.
- No excessive bracelets or necklaces.
- Earrings: No more than two per ear; no dangling or oversized earrings.
- No ear lobe stretching (gauging).
- No other visible body piercings.

Nails

- Fingernails must be trimmed and free of nail polish.

Tattoos

- Must not be visible; tattoos must be covered during work hours.

Fragrance

- No excessive or heavy perfumes, after-shaves, or colognes.

Hair

- Must be clean, well-groomed, and a natural color.
- Hair should be arranged to avoid interference with patient care.

Conduct and Electronics

- Prohibited:
 - Gum chewing
 - Use of tobacco products (including e-cigarettes)
 - Personal use of electronic media (e.g., cell phones, iPads) in the clinical setting
- Permitted:
 - Medical use of electronic media only with preceptor approval

Site-Specific Policies

- If a clinical site has its own dress code, the site's policies take precedence over SFU's.

Enforcement

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 appear before the PRC, which could possibly interfere with completion of the Program and/or graduation.

Health Requirements

Health Requirements for Clinical Experiences (Didactic and Clinical Year)

To participate in clinical experiences during both the didactic and clinical years of the Saint Francis University Physician Assistant Program, students must meet all health requirements as outlined by the program in accordance with current Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations and state-specific mandates (A3.07a).

General Requirements:

Prior to beginning any clinical experience, students must complete and submit documentation for the following:

- Required immunizations
- Laboratory tests and titers
- Health and Urine drug screenings
- Physical examination

These requirements are reviewed and updated annually. Students will receive the most current list of health requirements prior to the start of their clinical experiences each academic year.

Submission and Confidentiality:

- All health documentation must be submitted to and maintained through MyHealth@School, the university's secure student health portal.
- Physician Assistant Program faculty and staff do not have access to individual student health records. The program will only receive confirmation of whether a student has been cleared to participate in clinical activities (A3.19).
- It is the student's responsibility to ensure all health requirements are completed and submitted by the specified deadlines.
- Students are responsible for all costs associated with meeting health requirements.

Additional Clinical Site Requirements:

- Students will be required to sign a release of confidential information authorizing the disclosure of clearance documentation to clinical sites, including access to personal health records, background check results, and drug screening outcomes, as necessary (A3.19).
- Clinical Sites may have additional requirements and each student is responsible for completing and submitting these to MyHealth@School by the required deadline.
- Students must have negative background checks, a negative urine drug screen, and full health clearance to be eligible for clinical placement.
- Failure to meet these requirements by the designated deadlines may result in delays in progression, ineligibility for clinical placement, or delayed graduation.

Policy Compliance:

The Physician Assistant Program adheres to the School of Health Science and Education Drug and Alcohol Policy. Compliance with this policy is mandatory for all students throughout the duration of the program.

Infectious and Environmental Hazard Exposure

Students may be exposed to infectious and environmental hazards during clinical experiences. To ensure student safety and compliance with accreditation standards, the following policies and procedures are in place (A3.08).

Prevention and Education (A3.08a)

- Preventive strategies, including the use of personal protective equipment (PPE), standard precautions, and site-specific safety protocols, will be reviewed during the didactic year and reinforced during the orientation to clinical year rotations.
- Students are expected to adhere to all safety policies and procedures of both the University and clinical sites.

Procedures Following Exposure (A3.08b)

- Notify their supervisor or occupational health staff immediately,
- Follow the clinical site's protocol for exposure, and
- Call into MyHealth@School (814) 472-3008, within 24 hours of exposure

Upon contacting MyHealth@school students will be follow the policies and procedures of the University under the DiSepio Institute for Rural Health and Wellness, Health Science Student Blood Borne Pathogen Exposure Policy.

Financial Responsibility (A3.08c)

- Students are not covered by worker's compensation insurance at clinical sites or by the University, as they are not employees.
- Students must carry personal health insurance to cover any medical expenses resulting from exposure or injury.
- A Student Accident and Sickness Insurance Plan is available through the University's Business Office. Students must either enroll in this plan or provide proof of comparable coverage.
- All costs related to evaluation, treatment, and follow-up care for infectious or environmental exposures are the student's financial responsibility.

Impact on Academic Progress

- Acquisition of an infectious or environmental disease may affect a student's ability to participate in clinical or classroom activities.
- Students must continue to meet all published health requirements to remain eligible for participation in the program.
- Based on the nature and severity of the exposure or illness, a student's progression in the program may be delayed or interrupted.

- Decisions regarding continued participation will be made in accordance with CDC guidelines, clinical site policies, and University health protocols through MyHealth@School.

Safety and Reporting

- Students must remain vigilant regarding their personal safety and report any safety concerns to the Program and Clinical site.

Insurance Coverage Policy

Saint Francis University provides malpractice insurance for all health professional students; therefore, students are not required to purchase separate coverage.

However, students are not covered by worker's compensation insurance at clinical sites or by the University, as they are not employees. As such, students must maintain personal health insurance to cover any medical expenses resulting from injuries or exposures during clinical experiences. The Department is not responsible for these costs.

The University requires all students to have active health insurance. A student health insurance plan is available for purchase, or students must provide proof of comparable coverage.

Health Experiences

State Authorization Information for Clinical Experiences

All States require post-secondary educational institutions to be legally authorized to provide regulated activities in their jurisdictions. Many states require post-secondary educational institutions to be legally authorized to offer activities such as internships, clinical or fieldwork experiences in their state. Saint Francis University is in a continuous process to monitor regulations in states in which it "operates."

Saint Francis University has been approved by the Pennsylvania Department of Education to participate in the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA). As a SARA-approved institution, Saint Francis University is authorized to offer internships, clinical or fieldwork experiences that occur in other SARA states for students enrolled in the University's academic programs (with some limitations).

Additional information on SARA and the Universities state authorizations can be reviewed on the University website under state authorization and regulatory compliance. Students should consult with the program's clinical coordinator before initiating any contact with any clinical site outside of Pennsylvania. Consult the State Authorization Status List for specific information regarding state authorization to find out whether opportunities for internships, clinical or fieldwork experiences are permitted in your home state.

Freshman-Junior Year Health Care Experience/Shadowing Requirements

All students are required to provide documentation of a minimum of 100 hours of healthcare experience by the end of their junior year in the program, at least 40 of the required hours must be spent shadowing a physician assistant. For information regarding the specific guidelines for the remaining 60 hours of shadowing with healthcare professionals, see the PA Student Center on Shadowing Requirements.

Obtaining Undergraduate Shadowing Hours

Students are required to obtain the minimum shadowing hours by the spring of their junior year; however, healthcare facilities are not obligated to accommodate these requests. Begin obtaining your shadowing hours early to ensure timely completion and diversify your experiences across multiple settings to build valuable professional connections that may support future clinical rotations or employment opportunities. If you are unable to arrange shadowing hours, contact your academic advisor or a PA program faculty member, as the Department may be able to assist in securing local opportunities.

Students are held to professionalism standards including dress code standards during their shadowing experiences. See professionalism section of the policy manual.

- Be on time/early for all experiences. Park in designated areas, not in patient areas near main entrance.
- Dress appropriately. Refer to the PA Program dress code for clinical experiences/sites.
- No foul language or harassment (physical, sexual, verbal or emotional)
- Do not use cell phones or other electronic devices in the clinical setting unless approved by the preceptor.
- Do not take or post pictures of medical findings or post any patient information or experiences on social media.