

The University of Texas –Rio Grande Valley

Physician Assistant Department

Technical Standards

Purpose

This description defines the capabilities that are necessary for an individual to successfully complete the Physician Assistant (PA) curriculum.

Introduction

Physician Assistant training is recognized as a broad-based process requiring the acquisition of general knowledge in all fields of medicine and of the basic skill requisite for the practice of medicine regardless of specialty. The education of a PA requires assimilation of knowledge, acquisition of skills, and development of judgment through didactic learning and patient care experience in preparation for semi-autonomous and appropriate decisions required in practice. The current practice of medicine emphasizes collaboration among physicians, other allied health care professionals, and the patient.

Policy

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) Physician Assistant Department (PAD) endeavors to select students who have the ability to become highly competent PAs. The PAD at UTRGV will adhere to the guidelines promulgated by the Technical Standards and Typical Demands set forward in this document. Within these guidelines, UTRGV has the freedom and ultimate responsibility for the selection of students, the design, implementation, and evaluation of its curriculum. Evaluation of decisions are based not only on prior satisfactory academic achievement but also on non-academic factors which serve to ensure that the student can complete the essential functions of the academic program required for graduation.

The PAD has the responsibility to the public that its graduates can become fully competent PAs, capable of fulfilling the PA Oath “to benefit and do no harm.” Thus, it is important that students possess the intelligence, integrity, compassion, humanitarian concern, and the physical and emotional capacity necessary to practice medicine.

Americans with Disabilities

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the Student Accessibility Office for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Texas – Rio Grande Valley to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course requirements. To receive accommodation services, students must be registered with the Student Accessibility Office, University Center #108, 665-7005 or accessibility@utrgv.edu.

Technical Standards

Technical Standards refer to those physical, cognitive, and behavioral abilities required for satisfactory completion of all aspects of the curriculum, and the development of professional attributes required by the faculty of all students at graduation. The essential abilities required by the curriculum include observation, communication, motor, intellectual, conceptual, integrative, quantitative ability, behavioral, social attributes, and ethics.

PA students must have the functional use of the following senses: vision, hearing, equilibrium, and smell. Their exteroceptive senses (touch, pain, and temperature) and proprioceptive senses (position, pressure, movement, stereognosis, and vibratory) must be sufficiently intact to enable them to carry out all activities required for a complete PA education. Students must have motor function capabilities to meet the demands of PA education and the demands of total patient care. All students in the PAD must have the intellectual ability to learn, integrate, analyze, and synthesize data.

PA students must possess the following abilities and skills:

Observation: Students must possess sufficient visual, auditory, and tactile sensation to receive appropriate information in the classroom, laboratory, and other educational and clinical settings. Sensation must be satisfactory to receive verbal and nonverbal communications from patients and others, and to perform inspection, auscultation and palpation techniques during the physical examination. Students must be able to observe patients accurately and completely, both at a distance and closely. This ability requires functional vision and somatic sensation and is enhanced by a sense of smell.

Communication: Students must be able to communicate effectively, efficiently, and sensitively in written and verbal forms with faculty, patients, and members of the health care team in order to elicit information from patients, perceive nonverbal communications, and describe changes.

Motor: Students should have sufficient strength and coordination to perform the activities required of a PA, including performing a physical examination utilizing diagnostic instruments and techniques in palpation and percussion. Students must have sufficient stamina to sit, stand, and/or move within classroom for long periods of time, laboratory, examination rooms, treatment rooms, operating rooms, emergency departments, hospitals, and to travel to assigned clinical sites. The student must have sufficient coordination to move about patient care environments and sufficient dexterity to use common medical instruments in order to care for patients in emergent and non-emergent situations.

Intellectual-Conceptual, Integrative & Quantitative Abilities: Problem solving is a critical skill demanded of PAs which requires all these abilities. The student must be able to comprehend three dimensional relationships and the spatial relationships of structures. The student must be able to make rapid rational clinical decisions.

Behavioral and Social Attributes: Students must be flexible and cognizant of the above stated characteristics of PA education. Students must have the emotional health to fully use his/her intellectual ability, exercise good judgment, and complete all responsibilities attendant to the diagnosis and care of patients. Students must be able to develop mature, sensitive, professional, and effective relationships with patients, colleagues, faculty, and staff. Increased levels of mental stress are common in PA education. Long and irregular hours of both study and performance beyond the required and assigned times are often necessary to acquire mastery of knowledge, skills, and/or behaviors. He/she must have the emotional stability to function effectively under stress and adapt to an environment, which may change rapidly without warning, and/or in unpredictable ways. He/she must have a high level of compassion for others, motivation to serve, integrity, and a consciousness of social values. A candidate must possess sufficient interpersonal skills to interact positively with people from all levels of society, all ethnic backgrounds, and all belief systems.

Ethics: The student must be able to understand the basis and content of medical ethics. He/she must possess attributes, which include: compassion, empathy, altruism, integrity, responsibility, and tolerance.

Typical Demands of Physician Assistant Students

Typical Mental Demands:

PA students must possess the ability to:

- Process, retain, comprehend, integrate, analyze, synthesize, and apply large volumes of data related to science and medicine, including legal, ethical, and moral concepts.
- Be present during long hours in the following settings: classrooms, laboratories, examination rooms, hospitals, emergency departments, operating rooms, hospitals, and self-directed study situations.
- Respond appropriately and timely to constructive feedback from faculty and preceptors
- Use verbal and written communication effectively
- Participate in educational activities, including examinations, practicals, quizzes, demonstrations, simulations, presentations, written communications, and frequent and exacting evaluations.
- Demonstrate the ability to gather patient data and report, perform the physical examination, conduct patient assessment and evaluation, formulate a treatment plan, and perform patient education.

Typical Physical Demands:

PA students must possess:

- Manual and finger dexterity, eye-hand coordination, and sufficient range of body motion to assist in patient movement and care in both emergent and non-emergent situations
- Normal visual and hearing acuity (with or without correction)
- Physical capacity to sit for long periods during classroom and laboratory experiences
- Physical capacity to stand and walk for extended hospital and clinic visits
- Capability to work in physically and mentally stressful situations with long and irregular hours and with exposures to communicable diseases and body fluids
- Strength to perform life supportive measures
- Strength and endurance to assist in surgery
- Ability to respond quickly in emergent situations

Typical Working Conditions:

PA students must be able to work in:

- Work in classroom and clinical environments with possible exposure to communicable diseases, toxic substances, ionizing radiation, medicinal preparations, hostile individuals, and other such conditions common to the medical and surgical environments
- Interact with diverse patient populations of all ages with a range of acute and chronic medical and surgical conditions.

Student Performance Requirements:

PA students will be required to perform in the following situations:

- Medical, surgical pediatric, obstetric/gynecologic, emergency room, psychiatric, and other primary care settings, including in-patient and out-patient locations
- Didactic and clinical education and training
- Invasive and non-invasive procedures
- Pre-, intra-, and post-operative activities
- Emergency care

Re-evaluation:

Any PAD student who develops a condition which may impair their ability to meet the Technical Standards must be evaluated by a US licensed medical provider in the appropriate field, as determined by the Department Chair or Medical Director, to determine the student's readiness to return to rigorous medical studies. The medical provider must submit written documentation to the PAD. The PAD reserves the right to require a second opinion of medical readiness. The cost of the second opinion is assumed by the student. After review of the available information, the Department Chair may terminate a student's enrollment if the student does not meet the Technical Standards.

I have read the Technical Standards and Typical Demands of Physician Assistant Students. I agree to abide by the outlined policy.

Student Signature

Date

Student Name (Printed)