

PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT CURRICULUM COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

DIDACTIC COURSES YEAR 1

PHAS 5101 Studies in the PA Profession

Course Description: This course includes instruction about the PA profession, historical development, and current trends. PA licensure, credentialing, laws and regulations regarding professional practice, patient safety, quality improvement, prevention of medical errors, and risk management are introduced topics in this course. In addition to the PA practice, students will receive instruction in the roles and responsibilities of various health care professionals, emphasizing the team approach to patient centered care beyond the traditional physician-PA team approach.

Prerequisite: Admission into the Physician Assistant Studies Program.

PHAS 5116 Electrocardiography Seminar

Course Description: This seminar covers implementation and interpretation of electrocardiograms (ECG). The ECG interpretation section provides students with a systematic method of interpreting a 12-lead ECG with respect to rate, rhythm and blocks, electrical axis determination, hypertrophy, ischemia, injury, infarction, and miscellaneous drug, electrolyte, disease, and pacemaker effects.

Prerequisite: Admission into the Physician Assistant Studies Program.

PHAS 5201 Human Anatomy & Radiology I

Course Description: This course is the first in a two-course series. It provides students with a comprehensive and advanced review of gross anatomy using a regional systematic approach to the human body. Basic and advanced radiographic interpretation is correlated with anatomical structure. Lecture and laboratory components of this course emphasize the clinical relevance of each area considered. Human cadavers and computer-assisted learning modules are utilized in the laboratory setting. Clinical correlations support concurrent modular coursework involving the diagnosis and treatment of disease.

Prerequisite: Admission into the Physician Assistant Studies Program.

PHAS 5306 Medical Physiology & Pathophysiology I

Course Description: This course is the first in a three-course series. It reviews the basic physiologic regulatory mechanisms responsible for maintenance of homeostasis in the normal human and introduces the pathophysiologic alterations which occur in these mechanisms leading to specific disease processes. It also presents a molecular and genetic basis for disease. Clinical correlations support concurrent modular coursework involving the diagnosis and treatment of disease.

Prerequisite: Admission into the Physician Assistant Studies Program.

PHAS 5326 Patient Encounter I

Course Description: This course is the first in a two-course series. It provides students with an introduction to medical history-taking and physical examination. Emphasis is placed on the normal adult patient. A patient-centered philosophy of health communication is used as a framework for obtaining the medical history. Physical examination of the patient is approached using a systematic model. Basic principles of documentation and presentation of subjective and objective findings in professional

healthcare settings is introduced. The laboratory setting employs clinical scenarios, case studies, simulated patients, and role-play situations as opportunities to practice the application of skills and techniques. Incremental course content builds a foundation for the development of clinical reasoning skills necessary to formulate differential diagnoses. Students are assessed using written, verbal, and practical exercises.

Prerequisite: Admission into the Physician Assistant Studies Program.

PHAS 5328 Pharmacology I

Course Description: This course is the first in a three-course series. It presents a broad survey of the general principles of pharmacology. Included are the principles of pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics, the mechanisms of action, toxicities and interactions of specific drugs and drug groups, and an introduction to medical therapeutics. The physiologic basis and clinical characteristics of disease states relative to pharmacologic therapy will also be discussed. The objective of the course is to lay cognitive foundation in pharmacology and therapeutics that can be refined and applied in clinic practice. Promotes the ability to recognize untoward side effects of medications. Enables the student to calculate dosages, write prescriptions, discuss pharmacokinetics, and determine the appropriate medication for a particular disease. Emphasis is placed on pharmacotherapeutics of disease.

Prerequisite: Admission into the Physician Assistant Studies Program.

PHAS 5401 Clinical Medicine I

Course Description: This is the first of three didactic clinical medicine courses. The course will concentrate on the etiology, pathophysiology, clinical presentation, diagnosis, treatment, management, and prevention of disease across the human life span; organized into an organ system modular approach. The course will also provide opportunity for students to demonstrate, in preparation for the major clinical year, the ability to work collaboratively, to apply their knowledge and solve clinical problems. Instructional methods include lectures to provide the core knowledge, case-based small group discussions, team-based learning exercises, and independent readings. The course structure and content is closely related and aligned to the concurrent courses in the curriculum. Problem solving and medical decision-making skills will be emphasized.

Prerequisite: Admission into the Physician Assistant Studies Program.

CLSC 5227 Clinical Laboratory Methods

Course Description: Lecture and laboratory course that introduces the student to the medical laboratory. Emphasizes appropriate laboratory studies for specific disease, normal laboratory values and procedures for obtaining samples. Students are given the opportunity to perform routine lab studies.

Prerequisite: Admission into the Physician Assistant Studies Program.

PHAS 5114 Research & Statistical Methods

Course Description: This course will provide instruction to prepare students to search, interpret and evaluate the medical literature with the application to individualized patient care. Topics include fundamentals of research, sampling methods, and interpretation of basic biostatistical methods. The use of common medical databases to access medical literature is also included in this course.

Prerequisite: Admission into the Physician Assistant Studies Program.

PHAS 5202 Human Anatomy & Radiology II

Course Description: This course is the second in a two-course series. Clinical correlations support concurrent modular coursework involving the diagnosis and treatment of disease. This course is a continuation of PHAS 5201, Medical Human Anatomy I.

Prerequisite: Admission into the Physician Assistant Studies Program.

PHAS 5307 Medical Physiology & Pathophysiology II

Course Description: This course is the second in a three-course series. Clinical correlations support concurrent modular coursework involving the diagnosis and treatment of disease. This course is a continuation of PHAS 5306, Medical Physiology and Pathophysiology I.

Prerequisite: Admission into the Physician Assistant Studies Program.

PHAS 5327 Patient Encounter II

Course Description: This course is the second in a two-course series. It extends students/basic knowledge of history-taking and physical examination to more complex levels of understanding and application. Emphasis is placed on special populations and the abnormal patient with patient-centered systematic frameworks. Patient education is introduced as an important part of health literacy and patient empowerment. Implications of culture, religion, adversity, and difficult situations on both subjective and objective data collection from the patient are discussed. Students continue to develop more advanced levels of clinical reasoning by applying concepts to real patients in clinical assignments followed by documenting, presenting, and practicing clinical decision-making in an apprentice format. The laboratory setting employs clinical scenarios, case studies, simulated patients, and role-play situations as opportunities to practice the application of skills and techniques. Students are assessed using written, verbal, and practical exercises. This course is a continuation of PHAS 5326, Patient Encounter I.

Prerequisite: Admission into the Physician Assistant Studies Program.

PHAS 5329 Pharmacology II

Course Description: This course is the second in a three-course series. Clinical correlations support concurrent modular coursework involving the diagnosis and treatment of disease. This is a continuation of PHAS 5328, Pharmacology I.

Prerequisite: Admission into the Physician Assistant Studies Program.

PHAS 5402 Clinical Medicine II

Course Description: This is the second of three didactic clinical medicine courses. This course is a continuation of PHAS 5401, Clinical Medicine I.

Prerequisite: Admission into the Physician Assistant Studies Program.

PHAS 5109 Medical Physiology & Pathophysiology III

Course Description: This course is the third in a three-course series. Clinical correlations support concurrent modular coursework involving the diagnosis and treatment of disease. This course is a continuation of PHAS 5308, Medical Physiology and Pathophysiology II.

Prerequisite: Admission into the Physician Assistant Studies Program.

PHAS 5230 Pharmacology III

Course Description: This course is the third in a three-course series. Clinical correlations support concurrent modular coursework involving the diagnosis and treatment of disease. This course is a continuation of PHAS 5329, Pharmacology II.

Prerequisite: Admission into the Physician Assistant Studies Program.

PHAS 5262 Clinical Clerkship

Course Description: This course covers the indications, contraindications, step-by-step procedures, and potential complications of multiple hands-on skills that are commonly performed by physician assistants in clinical practice.

Prerequisite: Admission into the Physician Assistant Studies Program.

PHAS 5403 Clinical Medicine III

Course Description: This is the third of three didactic clinical medicine courses. This course is a continuation of PHAS 5402, Clinical Medicine II.

Prerequisite: Admission into the Physician Assistant Studies Program.

PHAS 5112 Health Policy & Health Management

Course Description: This course will survey the U.S. health care delivery system and review the economic and policy issues that face our system. Particular focus will be on those issues that directly affect the practicing physician assistant. The student will undertake an in-depth review of managed care, reimbursement and other economic/financial issues and policies.

Prerequisite: Admission into the Physician Assistant Studies Program.

PHAS 5117 Evidence Based Medicine & Research Design

Course Description: This course introduces students to the concepts of evidence-based medicine and medical research design, while stressing the examination of evidence from clinical research as a basis for clinical decision-making. Physician assistant students learn how to construct well-built clinical questions based on patient problems and to perform medical literature searching strategies that yield optimal results. Methods for critically appraising the medical literature are emphasized throughout the course, as well as strategies for keeping up with new medical findings beyond physician assistant school. Basic techniques of medical writing are also discussed in relationship to the physician assistant student's development of a master's project upon graduation.

Prerequisite: Admission into the Physician Assistant Studies Program.

PHAS 5118 Legal & Ethical Issues

Course Description: Explores medical jurisprudence and licensing. Students will be introduced to the dynamics of the legal system, moral problems in health care, and the impact of both on professional and institutional interactions with patients. Students will be given opportunity to demonstrate 1) an understanding of ethical principles and legal factors which impinge upon health care, and 2) the ability to apply ethical and legal concepts to the analysis of the roles and responsibilities of the health professional.

Prerequisite: Admission into the Physician Assistant Studies Program.

PHAS 5137 Preventive Medicine & Community Health

Course Description: This course is designed to provide students with a general background in public health issues at a national, state and local level; especially issues that are unique to the Rio Grande Valley (RGV). Focus is placed on the acquisition of basic knowledge of prevention, community health education concepts, and knowledge from prenatal care to the elderly and to the possible solutions of community health problems.

Prerequisite: Admission into the Physician Assistant Studies Program.

CLINICAL COURSES YEAR 2

PHAS 6431 Pediatric Medicine

Course Description: This core clinical rotation provides students with exposure to the principles and practice of pediatric medicine. This supervised clinical practice experience enables students to assess neonates, infants, children, and adolescent patients seeking medical care in the pediatric medical setting. This rotation is intended to provide the opportunity to refine techniques of history-taking and physical examination specific to the pediatric population. This rotation aims to expose students to illnesses and injuries that are unique to the pediatric patient. This clinical rotation will enable the student to provide care as an entry level physician assistant upon graduation.

Prerequisite: Successful completion of the didactic (pre-clinical) PHAS professional curriculum.

PHAS 6433 Women's Health

Course Description: This core clinical rotation provides students with exposure to the principles and practice of women's health, obstetrics, and gynecology. This core rotation provides students with experience in managing common women's health prevention and diseases. This clinical rotation enables students to assess adolescent, adult, and elderly female patients seeking medical care with an emphasis on menarche, family planning, childbearing, peri-menopause, menopause, and post-menopause. Prevention, recognition, and treatment of prenatal, gynecologic care, sexually transmitted diseases, and cancers, will also be addressed. This clinical rotation will enable the student to provide care as an entry level physician assistant upon graduation.

Prerequisite: Successful completion of the didactic (pre-clinical) PHAS professional curriculum.

PHAS 6435 Surgery Rotation

Course Description: This core clinical rotation provides students with exposure to the principles and practice of surgery. This supervised clinical practice experience enables students to assess patients seeking medical care across the life span with an emphasis on caring for adults and elderly patients with surgically manageable diseases in the operating room and outpatient setting. This rotation is intended to provide the opportunity to refine techniques of history-taking and physical examination specific to the patient population in surgical settings. This rotation aims to expose students to pre-operative evaluation and preparation of the patients for surgery, assisting during the intra-operative period, and the post-operative care of surgical wounds. This clinical rotation will enable the student to provide care as an entry level physician assistant upon graduation.

Prerequisite: Successful completion of the didactic (pre-clinical) PHAS professional curriculum.

PHAS 6440 Family Medicine

Course Description: This core clinical rotation provides students with exposure to the principles and practice of family medicine. This supervised clinical practice experience enables students to assess patients seeking medical care across the life span with an emphasis on caring for the acutely and chronically ill infant, child, adolescent, adult, and elderly patients in an outpatient primary care medical setting. This rotation is intended to provide the opportunity to refine techniques of history-taking and physical examination specific to the family medicine patient population. This rotation aims to expose students to illnesses and injuries that are unique to the family medicine patient. This clinical experience will enable the student to provide care as an entry level physician assistant upon graduation.

Prerequisite: Successful completion of the didactic (pre-clinical) PHAS professional curriculum.

PHAS 6441 Internal Medicine

Course Description: This core clinical rotation provides students with exposure to the principles and practice of internal medicine. This supervised clinical practice experience enables students to assess patients seeking medical care across the life span with an emphasis on caring for the acutely and chronically ill adult and elderly patients in an outpatient medical setting. This rotation is intended to provide the opportunity to refine techniques of history-taking and physical examination specific to the internal medicine patient population. This rotation aims to expose students to illnesses and injuries that are unique to the internal medicine patient. This clinical experience will enable the student to provide care as an entry level physician assistant upon graduation.

Prerequisite: Successful completion of the didactic (pre-clinical) PHAS professional curriculum.

PHAS 6442 Emergency Medicine

Course Description: This core clinical rotation provides students with exposure to the principles and practice of emergency medicine. This supervised clinical practice experience enables students to assess patients seeking medical care (in the emergency department) across the life span with an emphasis on caring for the acutely ill patient. Students will gain exposure to the triage, evaluation, and management of patients in the emergent medical setting. Emphasis is on students assessing patient acuity, disease state, and appropriate management within the confines of the emergency medicine department. This clinical experience will enable the student to provide care as an entry level physician assistant upon graduation.

Prerequisite: Successful completion of the didactic (pre-clinical) PHAS professional curriculum.

PHAS 6443 Clinical Elective

Course Description: This elective rotation provides students with opportunities to gain additional experience in one of the foundational core rotations or within a subspecialty/discipline of medicine. Students will be given the opportunity to understand and manage problems in the discipline chosen. This clinical experience will also enable the student to provide care as an entry level physician assistant upon graduation.

Prerequisite: Successful completion of the didactic PHAS professional curriculum.

PHAS 6444 Psychiatry

Course Description: This core clinical rotation provides students with exposure to the principles and practice of psychiatry, behavioral, and mental health. This supervised clinical practice experience enables students to assess patients seeking medical care across the life span with an emphasis on caring for the child, adolescent, adult, and elderly patient with a psychiatric illness, behavioral, or mental health disorder. This rotation is intended to provide the opportunity to refine techniques of history-taking and physical examination specific to the behavioral health patient population. This rotation aims to expose students to illnesses and injuries that are unique to the behavioral health patient population. This clinical experience will also enable the student to provide care as an entry level physician assistant upon graduation.

Prerequisite: Successful completion of the didactic (pre-clinical) PHAS professional curriculum.

PHAS 6101 Special Topics I, II, III, IV

Course Description: This seminar course is delivered in alignment with all clinical rotations during the clinical phase semesters. Seminars focus on supplemental material and may include hands-on learning, workshops, distinguished speakers, etc. Topics will change every semester. The course must be repeated four times for credit.

Prerequisite: Successful completion of the didactic (pre-clinical) PHAS professional curriculum.

CAPSTONE COURSES YEAR 3

PHAS 7204 Capstone Research Experience

Course Description: This course is designed to enable graduate-level physician assistant students to apply knowledge, concepts, and skills learned in previous education (PHAS 5117-Evidence-Based Medicine & Medical Research Design). Physician Assistant students research and prepare a written paper on a topic of relevance to clinical medicine using the principles of evidence-based medicine. Students utilize data gathered during PHAS 7401, PHAS 7402, and PHAS 7403 to plan, formulate, write and report their findings. This course experience will also enable the student to graduate from the program with the skills and practical skills necessary to become an inquisitive entry level physician assistant upon graduation that is able to critically appraise and apply the medical literature to stay abreast of the latest developments in medicine, while also encouraging them to pursue future scholarly works on areas of research and clinical interests.

Prerequisite: Successful completion of the didactic and clinical year PHAS professional curriculum.

PHAS 7205 Capstone Review

Course Description: This course offers the physician assistant student a seminar designed for the synthesis of didactic and clinical education and training as it applies to preparation for the Physician Assistant National Certification Examination (PANCE). Test-taking skills, and strategy are discussed. Students are evaluated using a simulated PANCE examination. Students must successfully complete the simulated PANCE examination in order to be certified to take the PANCE examination. This course experience will also enable the student to graduate from the program with an overview of the medical content and task categories knowledge necessary to pass the PANCE and become a board-certified entry level physician assistant upon graduation.

Prerequisite: Successful completion of the didactic and clinical year PHAS professional curriculum.

PHAS 7401 Capstone Clinical Track I

Course Description: This course is the first in a three-course series. This is an advanced clinical course designed to both augment and update the existing clinical skills and knowledge of the graduating physician assistant student. Application of physician assistant core competencies to clinical practice in the selected clinical track is examined.

Prerequisite: Successful completion of the didactic and clinical year PHAS professional curriculum.

PHAS 7402 Capstone Clinical Track II

Course Description: This course is the second in a three-course series. This is an advanced clinical course designed to both augment and update the existing clinical skills and knowledge of the graduating physician assistant student. Application of physician assistant core competencies to clinical practice in the selected clinical track is examined. This is a continuation of PHAS 7401, Capstone Clinical Track I.

Prerequisite: Successful completion of the didactic and clinical year PHAS professional curriculum.

PHAS 7403 Capstone Clinical Track III

Course Description: This course is the third in a three-course series. This is an advanced clinical course designed to both augment and update the existing clinical skills and knowledge of the graduating physician assistant student. Application of physician assistant core competencies to clinical practice in the selected clinical track is examined. This is a continuation of PHAS 7402, Capstone Clinical Track II.

Prerequisite: Successful completion of the didactic and clinical year PHAS professional curriculum.

BRIDGE TO MASTER'S COURSES

PHAS 7415 Bridge Clinical Track I

Course Description: This is an advanced clinical course designed to augment and update the existing clinical skills and knowledge of the primary care Physician Assistant. Learning objectives will focus on increasing the core competencies for the PA profession with focus on the medical knowledge competency in the area of medical concentration track the student has chosen.

Prerequisite: Acceptance to Bridge program. Note: Only Bridge program students are eligible for this course.

PHAS 7416 Bridge Clinical Track II

Course Description: This is an advanced clinical course designed to augment and update the existing clinical skills and knowledge of the primary care Physician Assistant. Upon completing this course, students will be able to understand and clinically apply the core competencies of interpersonal and communication skills as well as patient care in the area of medical concentration track the student has chosen. Evaluation of advanced case studies and discussions highlight this area of concentration.

Prerequisite: Acceptance to Bridge program. Note: Only Bridge program students are eligible for this course.

PHAS 7417 Bridge Clinical Track III

Course Description: This is an advanced clinical course designed to augment and update the existing clinical skills and knowledge of the primary care Physician Assistant. Upon completing this course, students will be able to understand and clinically apply practice base and system base practice competencies in the area of medical concentration track the student has chosen. Evaluation of “best practice” case studies and discussions highlight this area of concentration.

Prerequisite: Acceptance to Bridge program. Note: Only Bridge program students are eligible for this course.

PHAS 7418 Bridge Research Experience

Course Description: This course acquaints the student with the philosophy and principles of the research process with emphasis on scientific methods of inquiry. Students will have the opportunity to evaluate current literature from the medical journals in light of research design and data collection. This course introduces student to the concepts of evidence-based medicine and medical research design, while stressing the examination of evidence from clinical research as a basis for clinical decision-making. Physician Assistant students learn how to construct well-built clinical questions based on patient problems and to perform medical literature searching strategies that yield optimal results. As a capstone, students research and prepare a written paper on a topic of relevance to clinical medicine using the principles of evidence-based medicine.

Students utilize data gathered during their clinical Track I, II, and III senior capstone (PHAS 7415, 7417, and 7418) to plan, formulate, write and report their findings.

Prerequisite: Acceptance to Bridge program. Note: Only Bridge program students are eligible for this course.