PRE-PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT REQUIREMENTS

IMPORTANT: Since the required prerequisites for individual schools may vary from these recommendations, it is very important to review the requirements for schools you may choose to attend in the future.

Most PA programs require that applicants have a minimum of two years of college credits (60 semester hours) and some health care experience prior to admission. The amount of experience can vary from some experience recommended to several thousand hours or several years of patient contact experience required. In addition, many programs require applicants to take the GRE (Graduate Record Exam). A college degree is not always required; however, more than half of those who apply to physician assistant programs already have a bachelor's or a master's degree which implies that students ought to seriously consider pursuing an undergraduate degree. Each school has prerequisites that must be completed before acceptance. The specific courses vary widely from school to school. The American Association of Physician Assistants lists the following general areas of study that students should have had before applying (the BYU-Idaho courses listed along with the general areas will likely fulfill at least some of the prerequisite requirements):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Areas</th>
<th>BYU-I courses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>Biology 200; Biology 264/265 or Biology 460/461</td>
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<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>BYU-Idaho's Freshman and Junior English requirements</td>
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<tr>
<td>Humanities/Social Science</td>
<td>BYU-Idaho's GE Arts and Sciences electives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>Chemistry 105, 106</td>
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<tr>
<td>College Math</td>
<td>Math 110, 111</td>
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<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>Psychology 111</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Organic chemistry is sometimes listed as a requirement and often as being highly recommended. Each student should find out specific requirements at PA programs of interest to them.

Example of PA program requirements: Idaho State University-Pocatello Idaho (www.isu.edu/departments/PAprog/admissions.htm)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Idaho State University Requirements</th>
<th>BYU-I courses</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelors Degree</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>GRE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microbiology</td>
<td>Biology 221 w/lab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biochemistry</td>
<td>Chemistry 481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Anatomy and Physiology</td>
<td>Biology 264 &amp; 265 or 461 &amp; 462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abnormal Psychology</td>
<td>Psychology 342</td>
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<tr>
<td>Statistics</td>
<td>Math 221</td>
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<tr>
<td>Computer Literacy (either through coursework or experience)</td>
<td>IS 140</td>
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<tr>
<td>Familiarity with medical terminology</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Suggested Courses: upper level biology such as advanced anatomy, physiology, and endocrinology, and other health-related courses. Additional considerations for admission include: Maturity; Work and health experience; Evidence of the ability to achieve academic success in a rigorous academic program; Interpersonal skills and the ability to relate effectively with patients, peers, at a professional level; Evidence of a desire to practice primary care in Idaho, particularly among the medically underserved; Letters of reference. (ISU does not have required amount of health care experience.)
Physicians Assistant

Job Description and Worker Requirements:
Physician assistants (PAs) provide healthcare services under the supervision of physicians. They should not be confused with medical assistants, who perform routine clinical and clerical tasks. PAs are formally trained to provide diagnostic, therapeutic, and preventive healthcare services, as delegated by a physician. Working as members of the healthcare team, they take medical histories, examine and treat patients, order and interpret laboratory tests and x rays, make diagnoses, and prescribe medications. They also treat minor injuries by suturing, splinting, and casting. PAs record progress notes, instruct and counsel patients, and order or carry out therapy. In 47 States and the District of Columbia, physician assistants may prescribe medications. PAs also may have managerial duties. Some order medical and laboratory supplies and equipment and may supervise technicians and assistants.

Many PAs work in primary care areas such as general internal medicine, pediatrics, and family medicine. Others work in specialty areas, such as general and thoracic surgery, emergency medicine, orthopedics, and geriatrics. PAs specializing in surgery provide pre- and postoperative care, and may work as first or second assistants during major surgery.

Education: PA programs usually last at least 2 years. Most programs are in schools of allied health, academic health centers, medical schools, or 4-year colleges; a few are in community colleges, the military, or hospitals. Many accredited PA programs have clinical teaching affiliations with medical schools.

Employment: Physician assistants held about 58,000 jobs in 2000. The number of jobs is greater than the number of practicing PAs because some hold two or more jobs. For example, some PAs work with a supervising physician, but also work in another practice, clinic, or hospital. According to the American Academy of Physician Assistants, there were about 40,469 certified PAs in clinical practice as of January 2000. Almost 56 percent of jobs for PAs were in the offices and clinics of physicians, dentists, or other health practitioners. About 32 percent were in hospitals. The rest were mostly in public health clinics, temporary help agencies, schools, prisons, home healthcare agencies, and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Outlook: Employment opportunities are expected to be good for physician assistants, particularly in areas or settings that have difficulty attracting physicians, such as rural and inner city clinics. Employment of PAs is expected to grow much faster than the average for all occupations through the year 2010 due to anticipated expansion of the health services industry and an emphasis on cost containment. Besides the traditional office-based setting, PAs should find a growing number of jobs in institutional settings such as hospitals, academic medical centers, public clinics, and prisons.

Wages: Median annual earnings of physician assistants were $61,910 in 2000. The middle 50 percent earned between $47,970 and $73,890. The lowest 10 percent earned less than $32,690, and the highest 10 percent earned more than $88,100. Median annual earnings of physician assistants in 2000 were $64,430 in offices and clinics of medical doctors and $61,460 in hospitals.

According to the American Academy of Physician Assistants, median income for physician assistants in full-time clinical practice in 2000 was about $65,177; median income for first-year graduates was about $56,977. Income varies by specialty, practice setting, geographical location, and years of experience.

Special Requirement: Physician assistants need leadership skills, self-confidence, and emotional stability. They must be willing to continue studying throughout their career to keep up with medical advances.

Licensing/Certification Requirements: All jurisdictions require physician assistants to pass the Physician Assistants National Certifying Examination, administered by the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA)—open to graduates of accredited PA educational programs. Only those successfully completing the examination may use the credential "Physician Assistant-Certified (PA-C)." In order to remain certified, PAs must complete 100 hours of continuing medical education every 2 years. Every 6 years, they must pass a recertification examination or complete an alternate program combining learning experiences and a take-home examination.