

## Physician Assistant Program FAQs

We appreciate your interest in the Quinnipiac University School of Health Sciences Physician Assistant Program. In an effort to make the application process easier, we've compiled a list of common questions and answers about the graduate physician assistant program. This includes questions about

- general admissions
- academic and experience prerequisites
- the application process
- admission decisions
- competitive applicant profile
- program/curriculum and general information

Please review the information prior to making inquiries to the Office of Graduate Admissions.

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**General Admission Questions**

**Do you offer a bachelor's/baccalaureate degree program?**

The PA program is a 27-month full-time graduate program culminating in a master of health science physician assistant. The University offers an entry-level master's physician assistant program (ELMPA). Students must be accepted into this program during their senior year of high school and enter the highly competitive program as freshman. Students earn a bachelor's degree in health science studies and then continue on to complete the graduate PA program. ELMPA does not accept transfer students.

**Can I transfer into the program and/or transfer credits?**

No. The program does not offer advanced standing or accept graduate transfer credits. All students must complete the entire series of academic courses and clinical rotations. Prerequisite courses such as microbiology, anatomy, chemistry, etc. are not actually transferred into the program, but rather necessary to be eligible for admission consideration.

**What credentials will I have upon completion of the program?**

Upon completion of the program, students earn a MHS (Master of Health Science) degree and a certificate of completion as a physician assistant. Graduates of the PA program are eligible for the PANCE exam and certification as a clinical PA.

**How many spots do you have available in your PA program?**

We have 54 spots available each year. Of the 54 spots, a percentage of those spots come from Quinnipiac's pre-PA program known as the entry level master's physician assistant program (ELMPA). Students who have successfully completed all requirements of the ELMPA program, as well as the admissions requirements, will also be granted admission to the master of health science physician assistant program.

**What is the approximate cost of the PA program?**

Estimated Tuition and Fees for the 2020-2021 Academic Year  
Graduate Tuition per Credit Charge \$1,075

	Summer/Fall	Spring/Summer	Fall/Spring	Summer
Tuition	\$36,550	\$32,250	\$22,575	\$9,675
Fees*	\$1,420	\$1,145	\$100	\$135
Total	\$37,970	\$33,395	\$22,675	\$9,810

\*Estimated Fees do not include medical insurance or indirect costs not billed by Quinnipiac University.

The QU PA program follows the QU Graduate and Part-Time Refund Policy.

## Academic and Experience Prerequisites

### **What are the admission requirements?**

The admission requirements include completion of a baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited institution in the United States or a nationally recognized institution as well as academic and clinical prerequisites. All academic course prerequisites must be completed in the United States or Canada.

### **Is Anatomy & Physiology I enough to meet your requirement?**

No. To complete the six to eight required credits in anatomy and physiology, students must take either one semester of human anatomy (with lab) and one semester of human physiology or two semesters of combined anatomy and physiology (i.e., A & P I and II with labs)

### **What satisfies the three semester college-level mathematics requirements?**

This can be accomplished by taking any ONE of the following courses: statistics, pre-calculus or calculus.

### **What if my prerequisites don't include a lab?**

Prerequisite courses in biology and chemistry require a lab. Classes without a lab will not be considered for admission.

### **If I have prerequisites in progress, can I still apply?**

Applicants who have one to two prerequisites pending in the summer/fall can be considered for admission, provided that all prerequisite coursework is completed by December 31. Winter or spring courses are too late. If this is the case, please make sure to list the pending course(s) on the CASPA application and have a final transcript sent to the Office of Graduate Admissions upon completion of the course.

### **Is there a time expiration on prerequisites?**

The most competitive applicants have completion of prerequisites within the last 10 years. So for some applicants it may be wise to retake/refresh certain prerequisites as the more current your human sciences and hands-on experience, the better.

### **Where can I take my prerequisite courses?**

Prerequisite courses can be completed at any regionally accredited college or university in the United States, or nationally recognized Canadian institution. Community college courses are accepted. Completion of prerequisites on campus is preferred over online courses and all labs must be taken on campus.

**Can foreign graduates apply to the program?**

Foreign graduates must complete all course prerequisites from a regionally accredited college or university in the United States or nationally recognized institution in Canada to be considered for admission. Significant direct patient care experience in the United States or Canadian healthcare system is also required.

**What classifies as direct patient care experience?**

We accept a wide range of direct patient care experience: EMT, CNA, patient care technician/patient care assistant, medical assistant, RN, PT aide, pharmacy technician, phlebotomist, etc. to name a few. It does not have to be paid to count as direct patient care, but the more medically skilled, medically related and medically intensive the better. A key to getting direct patient care experience is to gain a skill or certification as this enables you to work directly with patients. If you have questions regarding the patient care experience requirement and what may fulfill this requirement, please email [PAadmissions@qu.edu](mailto:PAadmissions@qu.edu).

**If I am still an undergraduate, how do I get 2,500 hours of direct patient care experience?**

We recommend candidates have significant direct patient care experience. This is often difficult to obtain while enrolled as a full-time undergraduate. Therefore, many of our candidates wait to apply until they have had an opportunity to gain more direct patient care hours. The average age in our program is 26. However, as an undergraduate you may wish to begin looking into options for obtaining a certification and/or direct patient contact, while in school or over the summer and breaks.

**Are the recommended 2,500 hours counted at time of application or time of enrollment?**

Hours are counted based on those documented at the time of application. Unfortunately, we are not able to count hours that a candidate intends to do. We recognize that this is a long admission cycle and most applicants will continue accruing hours right up until the start of the program. Therefore, the 2,500 hours is an average of what the most competitive applicants possess, not a hard cut off.

**If I have only 1,500 hours can I still apply?**

Significant direct patient care experience is strongly recommended prior to admission. The more direct patient care experience that one has, the greater the ability to understand abstract concepts in clinical medicine. Our most competitive applicants have an average of 2,500 hours at the time of application. However, there is clearly a range as some candidates have more and others a bit less.

**Do volunteer (unskilled/unpaid) hours count?**

It does not have to be paid experience to count as direct patient care. A good example of this is a volunteer EMT position, which is direct patient care and unpaid. However, volunteer work that is primarily observation is a great way to "get your foot in the door" at a health care setting but it is not direct patient care. A key is to look into receiving a certification or a skill, as the more hands-on and intensive the patient care experience the better.

### **Do you accept medical scribe as direct patient care?**

Working as a medical scribe is good experience and allows for great exposure to a medical setting but is not considered direct patient care experience for our program. We would categorize it under "Related Health Care Experience" on the CASPA application. However, if you have other duties in addition to your position as scribe, you are welcome to email a job description to [PAadmissions@qu.edu](mailto:PAadmissions@qu.edu) for the admissions committee to review.

### **Application Process**

#### **How do I apply?**

Quinnipiac participates in CASPA, the Central Application Service for Physician Assistants. This is a Web-based centralized application process, a service of the Physician Assistant Education Association (PAEA), which allows a candidate to apply to multiple PA programs. CASPA will verify your application for accuracy, electronically process it, and once verified, release your materials to the programs you designate.

#### **What is the application deadline?**

Quinnipiac's application deadline for a complete application is **Sept. 1**. A complete application is defined by CASPA when an application is e-submitted and all transcripts, payments, and at least two letters of reference have been received by CASPA and attached to the application. Documents should be sent several weeks prior to this date to ensure items arrive on time.

#### **Do you require a supplemental application in addition to CASPA?**

Yes, a supplemental essay is required. Please contact PA Admissions if you have any additional questions regarding the supplemental essay.

In addition, if you have courses in progress at the time of your application to CASPA, you may have a transcript sent electronically (preferred) after completion of the course to [PAadmissions@qu.edu](mailto:PAadmissions@qu.edu) or to the following address: Quinnipiac University, Office of Graduate Admissions NH-GRD, 275 Mt. Carmel Ave., Hamden, CT, 06518-1940 or fax (203) 582-3443).

#### **What is the application processing time-line with CASPA?**

The process begins when applications are complete and verified by CASPA. Quinnipiac will review verified applications, conduct interviews and make final admission decisions. Submitting materials early will ensure timely processing and help avoid delays. The average duration of time for CASPA to verify and process applications is three weeks, so please plan accordingly.

#### **How do I check the status of my application?**

Applicants are responsible for monitoring the status of their CASPA application on a regular basis. Notifications are not sent for any missing items. To help you keep track of your application and all materials, click **Check Status** at the top of the application dashboard. [CASPA Applicate Help Center](#)

## **Are GRE or MCAT scores required and will it help to submit them?**

Scores from the Graduate Records Examination (GRE) or MCAT are not required in the admission process. If you are applying to other PA programs that require standardized tests, your scores will be listed on the CASPA application so admission committee members may see them, however, since they are not required at Quinnipiac, the score does not factor into our admission decisions.

## **How are GPA/QPA's (Quality Point Averages) determined?**

In reviewing applications, we do not recalculate grade point averages, but use the GPA calculated by CASPA. This GPA is summarized by academic year (freshmen through senior), post-baccalaureate and graduate and also includes an overall GPA and science GPA.

## **What is required for letters of reference?**

You are required to request at least 3 and may request a maximum of 5 evaluations as part of the CASPA application. The evaluations must be submitted electronically by evaluators using the Evaluator Portal on CASPA. CASPA will verify your application as long as two out of your three references are completed. Once your third reference is received by CASPA, it will be accessible online to the schools you have applied to.

We don't have specific requirements regarding who submits your references. Common choices include supervisors/managers at work, professors, PA/MD's, and other health care providers, etc. Ideally, at least two letters of reference should come from healthcare professionals who can speak to your work with patients.

## **Admission Decisions**

### **When are interviews held and does everyone get interviewed?**

Top candidates are invited for on-campus interviews. These are typically held in the fall semester (September - December). If invited, you will be assigned one of these dates. Invitations are typically sent out via email at least two weeks prior to the interview date.

### **When can I expect to receive an admission decision?**

Applicants are notified of an admission decision as early as October, following our first round of interviews and as late as February. Upon acceptance, a \$500 non-refundable matriculation deposit is required to secure your spot in the program.

### Competitive Applicant Profile

#### **How competitive is the program?**

Admission for the 54 spots available each year is highly competitive. For the 2019–2020 admission cycle, we received approximately 1500 applications, which is 50 applications for every one spot. Meeting or exceeding the requirements does not guarantee admission.

#### **What is your competitive applicant profile?**

The strongest candidates typically have a strong academic background with a cumulative and science GPA of 3.3 (average GPA of 3.5) as well as a minimum of 2,500 hours of direct patient care experience. In addition, candidates should also have a solid knowledge of the PA role and shadowing PAs is recommended. We also encourage community service/volunteer work.

#### **What type of academic background and/or degree is likely to enhance my potential for success in the program?**

We receive applicants from a variety of academic majors, degrees and backgrounds. This is welcomed as the program values diversity. Regardless of specific major or degree, the key is that applicants must complete at least the minimum admission prerequisites (both academic and clinical) to be considered for admission.

### Program & Curriculum Questions

#### **Where are classes and labs held?**

Our students learn and practice their skills in the new 325,000 square-foot, state-of-the-art Center for Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences located on our North Haven Campus. The North Haven Campus is designed for collaborative learning for students pursuing degrees in medicine, nursing, law, education and the health professions.

The facility features 24 teaching laboratories, including an orthopedics lab, a rehabilitative sciences lab, a clinical skills lab, an intensive care unit, a health assessment lab, a physical exam suite, a physical diagnostics lab, a motion analysis lab, and other special amenities that set it apart from other universities offering health sciences programs. The Center for Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences also features an operating room suite with two additional high fidelity simulation rooms, 48 pro-section stations, 16 standardized patient rooms, multiple team study rooms, student lounges and a vending area, an expanded health sciences library, a 350-seat auditorium, 17 additional classrooms and 10 seminar rooms that seat from 12 to 150 students. Read more about the facility. <https://www.qu.edu/schools/health-sciences/centers-resources.html>



**How is the curriculum organized?**

The program begins with an intensive four-semester didactic phase of covering the core medical and clinical sciences. Students then enter the clinical education phase consisting of 7 core and 2 elective clerkships. The program concludes with a final semester of comprehensive review and evaluation.

**Are there clinical experiences during the first year?**

During the first year, students are introduced to the clinical aspects of their training by being paired with a licensed healthcare provider one day a week. These pre-clinical clerkships enable students to strengthen their clinical skills (history, physical, written and oral presentations) and knowledge acquired in the classroom to the actual care of patients early in the program.

**What can I expect in terms of clinical rotations?**

Clinical rotations include seven core rotations of six weeks duration in the following areas: family practice/primary care, internal medicine, pediatrics, psychiatry, obstetrics/gynecology, general surgery and emergency medicine. In addition, there are two four-week electives where students may choose to gain additional experience in one of the above areas or a sub-specialty of interest. The clinical rotations are done within an extensive network of fieldwork experiences, which includes hospitals, medical centers, clinics, extended-care facilities and nursing homes.

**If I am accepted at Quinnipiac, can I select any of my own rotations during the clinical year?**

The PA program faculty determine the clinical placements for the seven core rotations. Students have the opportunity to designate a "wish list" for the two four-week elective rotations. This may include further experience in a core rotation, a sub-specialty of interest, and/or placement in a desired geographic area.

**Where are the clinical rotations?**

The six-week clinical residencies are done predominantly in Connecticut, with a limited number in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Placement is determined by PA program clinical faculty that customizes rotations to best complement a student's academic and clinical experiences, expertise and personality. Each student will do rotations in health care institutions of various sizes, populations, settings and resources to ensure positive and diverse clinical experiences.

**How are the employment opportunities for Quinnipiac Physician Assistant Graduates?** Two sets of statistics help to emphasize the outstanding employment opportunities for physician assistants. In 2019 the PA profession was ranked by U.S. News and World Report as the #1 best healthcare job. In addition, in the 2016-2017 *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, the Bureau of Labor Statistics listed physician assistants as one of the top occupations with the highest percent change of employment in the next decade, with a predicted increase in jobs of 37 percent between 2016-2026. More information on job outlook is available at <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/#tab-6>



**How are employment opportunities for Quinnipiac physician assistants?**

Looking specifically at Quinnipiac PA graduates, 100 percent of the Class of 2019, who responded to our employment survey, were employed in their jobs of first choice within seven months of graduation. It's important to keep in mind that graduates determine when they take the PANCE exam, therefore affecting employment dates. The mean salary of Quinnipiac graduates is higher than the mean for new PA graduates nationwide. Quinnipiac graduates are employed throughout the United States as our program has a strong reputation nationally. Graduates go into all areas of practice, with the largest percentages going into emergency medicine or critical care, primary care, surgery and internal medicine.

**Technical standards for the program?**

The physician assistant certificate/master of health science degree signifies that the holder is prepared for entry into the practice of medicine. Students in the Quinnipiac University Physician Assistant Program must possess ability, aptitude and skills in these areas: observation, communication, motor, intellectual, behavioral/social and physical demands. The technical standards for the QU PA program can be accessed on the website.

**What are your NCCPA board passage rates?**

In 2019, the Physician Assistant Program at Quinnipiac University had a NCCPA PANCE pass rate of 98% for first-time takers. Quinnipiac PA students consistently perform successfully on the PA national certifying exam (PANCE), with a 99.2% first-time taker pass rate in the last five years.

**What are some of the strengths unique aspects of the Quinnipiac PA program?**

A number of our strengths can be summarized in the PA program mission statement that includes:

- **Clinical Competence** -Developing highly qualified health care providers who demonstrate an investigative and analytic approach to clinical situations and provide care that is effective, safe, high quality and equitable.
- **Professionalism** - Providing care with respect, compassion and integrity with a commitment to excellence and on-going professional development.
- **Interprofessionalism** – Preparing students for a team-based care system through interprofessional education.
- **Leadership** - Working effectively with health care professionals as a member or leader of a health care team or other professional/community group. Mentoring and developing future leaders within the profession and the community.
- **Community outreach** - Demonstrating responsibility and accountability to patients, society and the profession through active community involvement and volunteerism.
- **Cultural humility** - A state of openness toward understanding and respecting important aspects of other people's cultural identities. This requires an awareness of one's personal and professional beliefs, biases, attitudes, and actions that affect patient care and a commitment to ongoing professional development. (PAEA Core Competencies for New Physician Assistant Graduates, 2019)

Nationally known for its community service, the Quinnipiac University PA program has annually made the maximum contribution to the CT Physician Assistant Foundation, which provides scholarship money to qualified students in a CT PA program. The Quinnipiac University PA Student Society has also received numerous awards from both state branches of the National Kidney Foundation and American Lung Association.

Another unique aspect of our program is the national-involvement of Quinnipiac University PA faculty. Many of the program faculty members are involved in state and/or national leadership positions, including members who have served nationally with the AAPA and PAEA. William Kohlhepp, a current faculty member and the former Dean of Health Sciences at Quinnipiac University is the past President of the PAEA (Physician Assistant Education Association).

### General Information

#### **What is the approximate cost of the program?**

Tuition for graduate programs is based on a per credit-hour tuition rate. For the 2020-2021 academic year, the tuition and fees (estimated direct costs to the University, not counting books, supplies, transportation, living expenses and miscellaneous items) for the 27-month program is approximately \$103,850. See above for the breakdown of tuition and fees.

#### **What options exist for financing the program?**

We recognize that students may need to rely on a variety of resources to assist them in paying for their educational expenses. Subsequently, at Quinnipiac we offer a number of educational loan options, including federal subsidized and unsubsidized loans as well as private alternative loans. We also offer an opportunity for full-time graduate students with the highest demonstrated need to be considered for institutional grant aid. A separate application form in conjunction with the FAFSA is required to apply. All PA applicants are also considered for a limited number of institutional merit scholarship awards. No additional application is required.

#### **Will I be able to work full-time while I am in the program?**

No. Given the full-time and intensive nature of the academic and clinical requirements, students are generally not able to work while enrolled in the program. The program requires a full-time commitment with day, night and weekend requirements. Those students desiring to work six to eight hours a week must meet with the program director for prior approval.

#### **Do you give preference to Connecticut residents in the application process?**

All applicants are considered equally in the admission process as we work to achieve a diverse class, balancing educational and career experiences and backgrounds. As a private institution, tuition is the same for both in-state and out-of-state students.

#### **How can I find a PA to shadow?**

We recommend candidates have a solid knowledge of the PA role and to shadow a PA. We do not provide a shadowing service. If you don't already know a PA, you may consider asking a local health care provider, local medical office or area hospital to recommend a practicing PA.

Just make sure to first obtain permission from the physician assistant and be aware that you may also need permission from the hospital or clinic, as there are strict patient privacy (HIPPA) issues involved.

**Is on-campus housing available?**

The Office of Residential Life and Graduate Student Affairs keeps a listing of off-campus rental properties for graduate students. For further information, please contact 203-582-3542 or e-mail [residentiallife@qu.edu](mailto:residentiallife@qu.edu). The PA department also coordinates a Facebook page, roommate matcher and other resources which help incoming students find local Realtors, housing options and roommates.

**Can you recommend other resources to consider?**

A wonderful book for more information on the PA profession and preparing for it is "So You Want to be a Physician Assistant: Your Guide to a New Career," by Beth Grivett, PA-C.

**Questions Not Answered**

**Can I meet/speak with someone regarding admission?**

Every semester we hold information sessions on our graduate programs. These are a wonderful way to learn more about graduate life in general at Quinnipiac and about the physician assistant program in particular.

For additional information or questions not answered, please feel free to contact Kristin Parent, senior associate director of graduate health sciences admission, at 203-582-3639 or via e-mail at [PAadmissions@qu.edu](mailto:PAadmissions@qu.edu).