

Qualifications for Master of Physician Assistant Studies Degree updated July 2017

Qualifications for Medical School Admission, Continuation, and Graduation

Prior to matriculation, all incoming students must read and submit the Qualification Admissions, Continuation, and Graduation below.

I. Introduction

The Liaison Committee on Medical Education, which accredits the School of Medicine, has recommended that all medical schools develop technical standards to assist them in determining whether applicants for admission to the School of Medicine or candidates seeking the degree of Doctor of Medicine are qualified to pursue a career in medicine. This document, "Qualifications for Medical School Admission, Continuation and Graduation" (Qualifications), contains the technical standards of the University of Utah School of Medicine and the procedures a candidate must follow to establish the existence of a disability and to request reasonable accommodation from the School of Medicine. The technical standards are based on guidelines produced by the Association of American Medical Colleges. This document is also published in the Student Handbook and is available to all medical students. All School of Medicine applicants who reach the interview stage are required to read the Qualifications and attest that to the best of their knowledge they are able to meet these standards, with or without reasonable accommodation, if they were to become a candidate at the University of Utah School of Medicine. The signed citation is kept as a permanent part of the record of all matriculating candidates. **The University of Utah Physician Assistant Program, as a part of the School of Medicine, requires that physician assistant students meet the same technical standards.**

II. Policy Statement

The School of Medicine has determined that a broad-based, undifferentiated and patient-oriented curriculum is critical for developing the knowledge and skills of future physician assistants. The School of Medicine seeks to graduate students with the tools necessary to function in a broad variety of clinical settings and the ability to render a wide spectrum of patient care.

Medicine is a physically and mentally demanding profession in which practitioners are asked to place the interests of their patients above their own. It requires commitment to a life of service and dedication to continuous learning. The rigorous Physician Assistant (PA) curriculum is where candidates begin to develop the qualities necessary for the practice of medicine. It is during this period of undergraduate medical education that the candidate acquires the foundation of knowledge, attitudes, skills and behaviors that he or she will need throughout his or her professional career. During this period, it is critical for the School of Medicine to evaluate whether the candidate is qualified to receive the degree of Master of Physician Assistant Studies (MPAS). The School of Medicine has a responsibility to society to train PAs competent to care for their patients with critical judgment, broadly based knowledge and well honed technical skills. The abilities that PAs must possess to practice safely are reflected in the technical standards that follow. Thus, applicants and candidates must be able to meet these standards and successfully complete all identified requirements to be admitted to the School of Medicine, to progress through the curriculum and ultimately, to receive the MPAS degree from the University of Utah School of Medicine.

The School of Medicine is supportive of the philosophy underlying Section 504 of the 1973 Vocational Rehabilitation Act, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 2008 (collectively referred to as the "ADA"), and seeks to provide opportunities for qualified individuals with disabilities. In order to be a qualified applicant or candidate an individual must meet these technical standards with or without reasonable accommodation. The standards have been established to ensure that an applicant or candidate has the ability to perform the requirements of the School of Medicine academic curriculum and to practice medicine safely and responsibly.

III. Technical Standards

Candidates for the degree of Master of Physician Assistant Studies must be capable of performing in five areas: Observation; Communication; Motor; Intellectual-Conceptual, Integrative and Quantitative Abilities, and Behavioral and Social Abilities. Students must also successfully meet curricular requirements, pass tests and evaluations, and successfully participate in clinical experiences, with or without reasonable accommodation. Faculty has the right to assess any student at any time. Students must be able to demonstrate they can perform the technical standards upon matriculation through graduation from PA school. Any student claiming a disability and seeking an academic adjustment or reasonable accommodation must follow the procedures outlined below.

Observation

Candidates must be able to observe and participate in experiments in the basic sciences. (For example, physiologic and pharmacologic demonstrations and microscopic studies of microorganisms and tissues.)

In order to make proper clinical decisions, candidates must be able to observe a patient accurately. Candidates must be able to acquire information from electronic media, written documents, films, slides or videos. Candidates must also be able to interpret X-ray and other graphic images, and digital or analog representations of physiologic phenomena, such as EKG's, with or without the use of corrective or assistive devices. Thus, functional use of vision, receptive communication and sensation is necessary.

Communication

Candidates must be able to communicate effectively and sensitively with patients in order to collect relevant information, describe changes in mood, activity and posture, perceive non-verbal communications, and convey necessary medical information. Candidates must also be able to communicate effectively and efficiently with other members of the health care team. Communication includes not only speech or face-to-face communication but reading and writing. In emergency situations, candidates must be able to understand and convey information essential for the safe and effective care of patients in a clear, unambiguous and rapid fashion. In addition, candidates must have the ability to relate information to and receive information from patients in a caring and confidential manner. Since the health care team communicates in English, the candidate must be able to communicate effectively and efficiently in English, in speech or other face-to-face communication, reading and writing.

Motor

Candidates must possess the motor skills necessary to perform palpation, percussion, auscultation, and other diagnostic maneuvers. Candidates must be able to execute motor movements reasonably required to provide general and emergency medical care such as airway management, placement of intravenous catheters, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, and application of pressure to control bleeding. In addition to general and emergency care, different types of specific medical procedures and treatments must be performed depending on the course or clinical rotation, and candidates are expected to perform all of the procedures and treatments as may be required by a particular course or clinical rotation. These skills require coordination of both gross and fine muscular movements, equilibrium and integrated use of the senses of touch and vision. In addition, these skills often require a candidate to maneuver his or her own body depending on the location and positioning of the patient (for example, a patient might be lying on the floor, on an exam table, on an operating table, or in any number of other positions depending on the condition of the patient).

Intellectual-Conceptual, Integrative and Quantitative Abilities

In order to effectively solve clinical problems, candidates must be able to measure, calculate, reason, analyze, integrate and synthesize in a timely fashion. In addition, they must be able to comprehend three-dimensional relationships and to understand the spatial relationships of structures. Candidates must have the ability to remain awake and alert.

Behavioral and Social Abilities

Candidates must possess the emotional health required for the full utilization of their intellectual abilities, for the exercise of good judgment, for the prompt completion of all responsibilities attendant to the diagnosis and care of patients, and for the development of effective relationships with patients and colleagues. Candidates must possess qualities of compassion, integrity, concern for others, commitment and motivation. Candidates must develop mature, sensitive and professional and effective relationships with patients of all genders, ages, races, lifestyles, sexual orientations, religious beliefs or practices, and cultural backgrounds, as well as with their families, with other health care providers, and with all members of the learning and working community. Candidates are expected to accept and assimilate appropriate suggestions and criticism and, if necessary, respond by modifying their behavior.

The unpredictable needs of patients are at the heart of becoming a physician assistant. Academic and clinical responsibilities of students may require their presence during day and evening hours, any day of the week, at unpredictable times and for unpredictable durations of time. Candidates must be able to tolerate physically and mentally taxing workloads and function effectively under stress. They must be able to adapt to changing environments, display flexibility and learn to function in the face of uncertainties inherent in the clinical problems of patients.

Curriculum Requirements

In addition to the abilities specified above, candidates must be able to successfully complete, with or without reasonable accommodation, all required components of the curriculum. Candidates are expected to attend and participate in all learning experiences in classroom, hospital, clinic and community settings.

Tests and Assessments

In order to evaluate the competence and quality of candidates, the School of Medicine employs periodic assessments as an essential component of the PA school curriculum. Successful completion of these assessments is required of all candidates as a condition for continued progress through the curriculum. If required by the ADA, reasonable accommodation will be made in the administration of these assessments.

Clinical Assessments

Demonstration of clinical competence is of fundamental importance to the career and curriculum progression of the candidates. Therefore, the process of faculty assessment of the clinical performance of candidates is an integral and essential part of the curriculum. If required by the ADA, reasonable accommodation will be made, however, participation in clinical experiences and the evaluation of that participation is required.

IV. Disability, Inclusion and Accommodations

The University of Utah is fully committed to policies of equal opportunity and nondiscrimination. University policy prohibits any form of discrimination, harassment, or prejudicial treatment on the basis of age, race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, color, national origin, religion, status as a person with a disability, or status as a veteran.

V. Definitions and Procedures

The following are the procedures of the University of Utah School of Medicine for a candidate or student to identify a disability and seek a reasonable accommodation. In compliance with the ADA, information about an individual's disability and request for accommodation will be kept confidential and shared only as necessary to process the accommodation request. Retaliation against an individual for requesting a reasonable accommodation for a disability or for engaging in the accommodation process is strictly prohibited. The PA program can only accommodate students that have followed the outlined procedures to qualify for accommodations.

A. Definitions

For purposes of this policy, a matriculated candidate becomes a medical student on the first day of class. The first day of Orientation Week is the first day of class.

The definition of disability can be located in the Americans with Disabilities Act of 2008, with the exclusions as referenced in the Act. That definition is as follows, "an individual is disabled if he or she, 1) has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the individual's major life activities; or 2) has a record of such an impairment; or 3) is regarded as having such an impairment."

B. Procedures

1. In order to establish the existence of a disability and to request a reasonable accommodation, candidates must contact the University's Center for Disability and Access ("CDA") (801-581-5020), info@disability.utah.edu. The candidate must then follow the procedures of the CDA to document the existence and nature of the disability. The CDA will interact with the SOM regarding possible accommodations but will not share the student/candidate's information with SOM faculty or administration.
2. Once the need for reasonable accommodations has been established, the CDA, in consultation with the candidate and the SOM, will determine the appropriate accommodations and these accommodations will be specified in a written document, signed by all parties. Documents relating to the candidate's disability will be placed in a confidential file separate from his/her academic records. The School of Medicine will then direct the appropriate course masters to provide the accommodation.

Candidate's Request for Accommodations

1. If a candidate refuses a reasonable accommodation that is offered through this procedure and subsequently experiences academic difficulty, the candidate will be treated as any other candidate who experiences academic difficulty.
2. A candidate may seek to establish a disability and request reasonable accommodation at any time before or after matriculation.
3. A candidate should claim and establish the existence of a disability prior to the onset of academic problems. The School of Medicine shall have no obligation to remediate an academic failure resulting from a claimed disability that was not brought to the attention of the School of Medicine and addressed in a timely fashion.
4. University policy and state and federal law prohibit retaliation against an individual for requesting an accommodation for a disability.
5. All claims and proceedings under this provision will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law and University policies. Dissemination of information related to the existence of a disability will be restricted to University administrators with a legitimate need to know this information; except as provided by law, no mention of the candidate's disability will appear in any School of Medicine correspondence with external agencies unless the candidate specifically requests such disclosure in writing.

The University of Utah has designated the following individual as its ADA/Section 504 Coordinator:

Director, Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action
201 South Presidents Circle, Rm 135
Salt Lake City, UT 84112
Telephone: (801)581-8365 Email: oeo@uemail.utah.edu

If you have questions regarding this policy or University nondiscrimination policies, please contact the Office of Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action at 801.581.8365.

Seeking Accommodations for a Disability

The School of Medicine seeks to educate students with the foundation of knowledge, attitudes, skills and behaviors so that they can render a wide spectrum of patient care and can function in a broad variety of clinical settings. The abilities that medical students must possess are defined in the Qualifications for Medical School Admission, Continuations and Graduation/Technical Standards above and course and course-specific technical standards published in the syllabi. Medical students must be able to meet these standards and successfully complete all curricular requirements and receive the degree of Master of Physician Assistant Studies.

Students seeking accommodations for a disability must contact the University's Center for Disability and Access (CDA). The student must follow the procedures of the CDA to document the existence and nature of the disability and to request accommodations. <http://disability.utah.edu/>