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**Technical Standards**

Physician Assistant Education is recognized as a broad-based process that requires the acquisition of general knowledge in all fields of medicine and of the basic skills required for the practice of medicine, regardless of specialty. The education of a PA in the Lenoir-Rhyne University Physician Assistant Program requires assimilation of knowledge, acquisition of skills, and development of judgment. This is accomplished through patient care experiences that prepare the student to make appropriate semi-autonomous decisions required of medical providers trained at this level. The current practice of medicine emphasizes a team approach to health care delivery with collaboration among physicians and other allied health care professionals as well as the patients and their families.

ARC-PA Standard, Fifth Edition (A3.13e) requires the Lenoir-Rhyne University PA program “to define, publish, consistently apply and make readily available to prospective students, policies and procedures to include any required technical standards for enrollment.” These non-academic requirements for participation in this PA educational program must be met by all candidates (applicants and students) in the Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies program for participation in and completion of the program and for entry into the profession. Our PA program is designed to prepare students to be entry-level PAs.

The Program’s standards and essential functions of medical education shape the requirements for admission, retention, and graduation of applicants and students. Students must be capable of meeting the Technical Standards described herein. Lenoir-Rhyne University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, citizenship, religion, political affiliation, age, marital status, sex/gender including sexual orientation and gender identity, physical or mental disability, genetic information, pregnancy, or veteran status in any university educational programs and/or activities, including admissions. Applicants and students, however, must be able to perform the essential job functions of the PA profession. Admission to the Program is competitive and is based on individual merit and performance within each applicant pool for a given academic year, and not on personal convictions or preferences.

The purpose of technical standards is to delineate the psychomotor, cognitive, and affective skills and abilities deemed essential for matriculation into, continuation in and graduation from this educational program. Technical standards are necessary to create specific expectations for student performance in the classroom, laboratory, and clinical education environments. Students are to familiarize themselves with these essential functions and determine whether they can perform the specified tasks. Technical standards must be met with or without reasonable accommodations consistent with The Americans with Disability Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

The Technical Standards, along with the Lenoir-Rhyne PA Program policies, procedures and process for the admission and education of PA students inform and guide the decisions of the Lenoir-Rhyne PA Program faculty. All students of medicine, including PA students, must possess those intellectual, ethical, physical, and emotional capabilities required to undertake the full curriculum and to achieve the levels of competence required by the faculty.

Applicants able to meet these standards sign a form indicating compliance. Students enrolled in the Program must continue to meet the Technical Standards, with or without reasonable accommodations consistent with The Americans with Disability Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, throughout the Program. Students not meeting this requirement will

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be referred to the Student Success Committee for further action.

For questions regarding reasonable accommodations within the PA Program, contact:

**Director of Disability Services**

Location: Rudisill Library, 2nd Floor, Room 202

625 7th Ave NE, LRU Box 7470

Hickory, NC 28601

[disabilityservices@lr.edu](mailto:disabilityservices@lr.edu)

828.328.7296

<https://www.lr.edu/student-life/health-and-wellness/disability-services>

The MSPAS (Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies) Program at Lenoir-Rhyne University has established the following technical standards required for admission into and graduation from the program:

**Observation and Cognitive Skills**

Observation, an essential component of evaluation and assessment for a MSPAS student, requires:

- Functional use of vision, hearing, smell, and somatic sensation including the ability to perceive position, pressure, movement, weight, and vibration. Learning is enhanced by the functional use of the senses. The candidate must possess adequate sensation of vision, hearing, equilibrium, smell, taste, touch, pain, temperature, position, pressure, movement, stereognosis, and vibration, particularly when gross and/or subtle changes in symmetry are present.
- The student must have the ability to master the coursework presented in the form of lectures, written material, and projected images. For many required tasks, observation necessitates the functional and mixed use of the sense of vision and other sensory modalities. Students must be able to perceive, using senses and cognitive abilities, the presentation of information through small group discussions and presentations, large-group lectures, one-on-one interactions, demonstrations, laboratory experiments, patient encounters, diagnostic findings, procedures, and written material and audiovisual materials presented virtually or in-person.
- The student must have the cognitive abilities necessary to master relevant content in basic science and clinical courses at a level and pace deemed appropriate by the faculty. These skills may be described as comprehending, memorizing, analyzing, and synthesizing material.
- The ability to demonstrate the following observational skills: examination of non-verbal patient and family communication, skin integrity, radiographic findings, graphic representations of data, changes in body position/movement, gauges on medical instruments, and to perform inspection, auscultation, and palpation techniques during the physical examination
- The ability to, in the classroom, independently observe and participate in laboratory virtual dissection and model use, the microscopic analysis of substances, and lecture and laboratory demonstrations in all courses.

- The student must also be able to discern and comprehend dimensional and spatial relationships of structures by observation and to develop reasoning and decision-making skills appropriate to the practice of medicine.

Representative examples of materials/occasions requiring perceptual abilities in the first and second year include, but are not limited to: books, diagrams, discussions, photographs, x-rays, clinical case presentations, patient interviews (verbal communication and non-verbal cues) and physical examinations (examinations with stethoscopes, otoscopes, ophthalmoscopes, sphygmomanometers, and reflex hammers, as well as rectal and pelvic exams), completion of cognitive and skills requirements for CPR, ACLS (Advanced Cardiac Life Support) and PALS (Pediatric Advanced Life Support) certification, and performance of suturing, casting, splinting, gowning, gloving, surgical scrubbing and establishing/maintaining sterile fields in the operating room setting.

Additional examples from the second (clinical) year include, but are not limited to: clinical patient physical exams (examinations with stethoscopes, otoscopes, ophthalmoscopes, sphygmomanometers, and reflex hammers as well as rectal and pelvic exams on clinical patients); verbal communication and non-verbal cues (as in taking a patient's history or working with a medical team); live and televised surgical procedures; assisting at surgery and female exams/childbirth; x-rays, MRIs (Magnetic Resonance Imaging), and other diagnostic findings; online computer searches; use of EHRs (electronic health record); and, responding to a wide variety of urgent and/or emergent patient presentations.

### **Communication Skills**

The MSPAS student must demonstrate effective and sensitive verbal, non-verbal, and written forms of communication to:

- Elicit information by taking a medical history (in English) and perceive the signs of disease or distress as manifested through the physical examination so these findings can be communicated verbally or in writing or both.
- Describe changes in mood, activity, and posture
- Assess non-verbal communications and immediate assessment of information provided to allow for appropriate, well-focused follow-up inquiry.
- Effectively and efficiently transmit information to patients, fellow students, faculty and staff, and all members of the health care team (in English) in an attentive and sensitive manner
- Accurately complete, skillfully process, and succinctly but comprehensively communicate medical information regarding the patient's status in a timely manner to their clinical supervisors and all other members of the health care team, even in settings in which the time available is limited.
- Be capable of responsive, empathetic listening to establish rapport in a way that promotes openness on issues of concern and sensitivity to potential cultural differences and includes interacting therapeutically with psychiatric patients. In essence, this requires that the student be able to function, often in a fast-paced environment, to:

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- Elicit information
  - Convey information
  - Clarify information
  - Create rapport
  - Develop therapeutic relationships
  - Demonstrate competencies
  - Make a correct judgment in seeking supervision and consultation in a timely manner, particularly in urgent and emergent situations.

This may include, but is not limited to, participating in communication for didactic assignments, clinical rounds and conferences, oral presentations to faculty, physicians, advanced practice providers or other members of the healthcare team, written or dictated patient assessments, and writing prescriptions.

### **Psychomotor Skills and Stamina**

An individual must possess the gross and fine motor skills needed to meet the responsibilities of an MSPAS student in a wide variety of educational and clinical settings which is required to properly care for all patients. Specific aptitudes include:

- Able to perform the motor movements required to provide general and emergency care to all patients. These demands include reasonable endurance, strength, equilibrium, and precision. Moving patients and engaging in some procedures requires the level of skill, strength, and endurance necessary to perform the procedure(s) quickly, safely, effectively and for a reasonable period, often in a stressful environment.
- Possess the physical and emotional stamina to maintain a high level of function in the face of taxing workloads and stressful situations involved in the study and ongoing practice of medicine
- Have sufficient motor function to elicit information from patients by palpation, auscultation, percussion, diagnostic maneuvers, and procedures in a safe and effective manner
- The candidate must demonstrate adequate locomotor ability to allow him/her to be able to sit, stand, and move within a classroom, laboratory, examination room, treatment room, emergency room, and operating room for lengthy periods of time
- Have sufficient coordination to move about patient care environments, and sufficient dexterity to use common medical instruments
- Able to arrange for transportation between educational and clinical settings

Examples include the ability to quickly respond in emergency situations such as preventing a patient's fall. Students must be able to safely and effectively manipulate or maneuver another person's body and/or body parts to perform examination and intervention techniques and emergency procedures (e.g., transfers, gait training, positioning, mobilization, exercise, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, use of tools such as stethoscope, blood pressure cuff, ophthalmoscope, otoscope, tongue blades, needles, intravenous equipment, gynecologic speculum, scalpel, suture needle, etc.). Students must be able to perform physical examination and intervention procedures in a manner that is consistent with the Physician Assistant Competencies as defined by the four PA organizations.

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**Intellectual, Conceptual, and Integrative Abilities**

To effectively solve problems, a MSPAS student must demonstrate the ability to:

- Measure, calculate, conceptualize, reason, analyze, rationalize, organize, integrate, and synthesize information orally, written, or diagramed in a timely and ethical manner
- Comprehend three-dimensional relationships and understand the spatial relationships of structures
- Synthesize knowledge and integrate relevant aspects of the patient history and examination findings using sound judgement
- Understand diagnostic testing and its results, and treatment regimens to develop an accurate diagnosis
- Determine an effective treatment plan within reasonable time constraints imposed by the needs of the patient, the facility, and the standards of care

**Affective, Behavioral, and Social Capabilities**

An MSPAS student must possess empathy, compassion, integrity, honesty, concern for others, good interpersonal skills, interest, commitment, and motivation. A student must possess adequate mental and emotional health necessary for:

- The full utilization of his/her intellectual abilities
- The exercise of good judgment
- Academic honesty
- Maintenance of patient confidentiality
- The prompt completion of all responsibilities that are attendant to the care of patients and course assignments
- The development of mature, sensitive, and effective relationships with patients and others.
- Tolerating taxing workloads
- Functioning effectively under stress
- Adapting to changing environments
- Displaying flexibility
- Learn to function in the face of uncertainties inherent in clinical situations
- Accept and reflect upon appropriate suggestions and critiques and, if necessary, respond by modifying personal behaviors
- Conduct him/herself at all times in a manner consistent with the American Academy of Physician Assistants “Guidelines for Ethical Conduct of the Physician Assistant Profession” <https://www.aapa.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/16-EthicalConduct.pdf>

Students will be evaluated on compliance by using Preceptor Evaluations, Faculty Observation, Professionalism Assessment Tools, and other means determined case-by-case by the program.

If a candidate or student is limited or prevented from performing the requested technical standards noted above due to temporary injury, illness or pregnancy, the candidate must request that his/her health care provider provide a letter to the Director of Disability Services at the University. The letter must outline

the candidate's current limitations and the expected timeframe of the limitations (if temporary). Each individual situation will be evaluated to determine whether the student can be accommodated (short term and/or permanent) and able to continue in the didactic/clinical portion of the curriculum. If unable to continue due to temporary issues, a plan will be discussed regarding your options within the PA Program. The Director of Disability Services will notify the PA Program Director of the needed accommodation and timeframe, if limited.

### **Testing Accommodation Provision to the Program's Technical Standards**

Students with university approved testing accommodations will receive appropriate testing accommodations, such as extended time for testing on timed multiple choice and written test assessments including timed in-person paper/pencil tests or timed virtual tests through CANVAS or other online formats.

However, students with these approved testing accommodations do not typically receive extended time for timed practicals, skills assessments, or simulations in the PA program, such as the OSCEs (objective structured clinical examinations), skills evaluations, and clinical simulations which are conducted in-person or virtually. This is due to the integrative, hands-on nature of these assessments within the program and profession and typically are considered a fundamental alteration for these assessments and extending the time allowed would lower the academic standards required within the program. Graduates from the PA program must have the ability to complete these assessments in a timely manner with timing and speed in the application of these assessments and skills being fundamental to the future PA practitioner and simulating the work environment for a graduate PA. Each student request for accommodations is evaluated on a case-by-case basis by the Office of Disability Services.