



**PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT
STUDIES**

Physician Assistant Studies Program

Gregg Wadley College of Science and Health Professions

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES HANDBOOK

Revised and updated February 2024

**Physician Assistant Studies Program
Northeastern State University
Gregg Wadley College of Science and Health
Department of Health Professions**

Program Information

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**GREGG WADLEY COLLEGE OF SCIENCE AND HEALTH PROFESSIONS
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS
PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT STUDIES PROGRAM**

Policies and Procedures Handbook and Agreement to Abide

I have read the policies, rules and regulations found in this latest version of the Northeastern State University Physician Assistant Studies Program Policies and Procedures Handbook and agree to abide by them.

I understand the academic standards of the Physician Assistant Studies Program. I also understand **I must maintain a minimum 3.0 GPA** each semester to remain in good academic standing with the institution and have a 3.0 at the conclusion of the course of study to be eligible for graduation.

NAME (Signature): _____

NAME (Print): _____

DATE: _____

Accreditation Statement

The ARC-PA has granted **Accreditation-Provisional** status to the **Northeastern State University Physician Assistant Studies Program** sponsored by **Northeastern State University**.

Accreditation-Provisional is an accreditation status granted when the plans and resource allocation, if fully implemented as planned, of a proposed program that has not yet enrolled students appear to demonstrate the program's ability to meet the ARC-PA *Standards* or when a program holding Accreditation-Provisional status appears to demonstrate continued progress in complying with the *Standards* as it prepares for the graduation of the first class (cohort) of students.

Accreditation-Provisional does not ensure any subsequent accreditation status. It is limited to no more than five years from matriculation of the first class.

Mission Statement

The mission of the NSU PA program is to produce qualified, compassionate and competent physician assistants for medically underserved populations of northeastern Oklahoma and the surrounding region. Although the NSU PA program endeavors to care for all underserved Oklahomans, populations that have historically been the focus of our mission include American Indians, as well as rural and Black communities in Oklahoma.

Program Goals

The goals of NSU's Physician Assistant Studies Program are as follows:

- 1. Provide students the knowledge, skills and competencies required for entry-level clinical practice.**

This goal will be met by maintaining PANCE pass rates above or consistent with national averages and achieving 100% initial employment of NSU PA graduates.

- 2. Provide students with exposure to diverse patient populations with an emphasis on underserved patients.**

This goal will be met when the program maintains 50% or more of the program's clinical rotation sites among underserved patient communities (American Indian, rural, veteran and Black communities).

- 3. Empower graduates to provide healthcare to the underserved communities of Oklahoma.**

This goal will be met if 25% or more of every cohort is employed working for underserved populations in Oklahoma within the first year after graduation.

Program Competencies

At the time of successful completion of all elements of the curriculum, and when the degree of Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies is conferred by the university, graduates will be able to accomplish the following:

- 1) Medical knowledge. Physician assistants are expected to understand, evaluate, and apply the following elements of medical knowledge in the clinical setting:
 - a) etiologies, risk factors, underlying pathologic process, and epidemiology for medical conditions
 - b) signs and symptoms of medical and surgical conditions
 - c) appropriate screening and diagnostic studies
 - d) interventions for prevention of disease and health promotion/maintenance
- 2) Interpersonal skills. Physician assistants are expected to:
 - a) use effective communication skills to elicit and provide accurate information
 - b) demonstrate compassionate and respectful behaviors when interacting with patients and their families
 - c) counsel and educate patients and their families
 - d) work effectively with physicians and other healthcare professionals to provide patient-centered care
- 3) Clinical and technical skills. Physician assistants are expected to:
 - a) accurately and adequately document information regarding care for medical, legal, quality, and financial purposes
 - b) locate, appraise, and integrate evidence from scientific studies to support patient care decisions and patient education
 - c) perform an appropriate medical history and physical exam
 - d) perform medical and surgical procedures essential to the specialty
- 4) Professional behaviors. Physician assistants are expected to:
 - a) recognize and appropriately address personal biases, gaps in medical knowledge, and physical limitations in themselves and others
 - b) effectively interact with different types of medical practice and delivery systems
 - c) advocate for quality patient care and assist patients in dealing with system complexities that contribute to health care disparities regardless of socioeconomic status, gender, race, intellect, sexual orientation, or ability to pay
 - d) demonstrate emotional resilience and stability, adaptability, flexibility, and tolerance of ambiguity and anxiety
 - e) commitment to ethical principles
- 5) Clinical reasoning and problem-solving abilities. Physician assistants are expected to:
 - a) interpret history and physical findings and diagnostic studies to formulate differential diagnoses and implement patient management plans
 - b) manage general medical and surgical conditions to include pharmacologic and other treatment modalities
 - c) apply knowledge of study designs and statistical methods to the appraisal of clinical literature and other information on diagnostic and therapeutic effectiveness
 - d) apply the concepts of population health to patient care

Program Faculty and Staff

Program Director

Mark Perdue MHS, PhD (c) PA-C earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Tulsa where he studied religion and philosophy, as well as life science. In 2003, he graduated from the University of Oklahoma Physician Associate program in Oklahoma City. As a recipient of an Indian Health Scholarship, Perdue began his clinical work at the Northeastern tribal health system where he focused on internal medicine and pediatrics. After returning to Tulsa in 2006, he worked in the emergency medicine departments of St. Francis and the St. John health system. Perdue joined the OU Tulsa PA program in 2014 and has lectured on numerous topics in clinical medicine and served as the associate program director. Perdue is currently completing a PhD in Biomedical science education from the University of Oklahoma. His doctoral research focuses on developing a curriculum in diagnostic excellence.

Medical Directors

Vishal Mundra MD

Dr. Vishal Mundra started as Medical Director for the NSU PA school in 2023. He graduated from Maulana Azad Medical College, Delhi University in India in 2006. He moved to the US to pursue his internal medicine residency and graduated in 2011 from prestigious Cleveland Clinic Florida. He served as a chief resident and was recipient of several awards. He started as a hospitalist at St. John Medical Center in Tulsa. He worked in Tulsa for over a decade. He also served important roles in several committees in St. John Medical Center. In addition, he was also Chief of Medicine for St. John Owasso hospital. Earlier this year, Dr. Mundra joined Stroud Regional Medical Center as Medical Director and Chief of Staff. Currently, he is also pursuing Masters of Business Administration and Masters of Health administration at Oklahoma State University. He wants to further improve his expertise in administrative and clinical medicine. He loves to teach and has been teaching at OU PA school and OSU students for the last several years.

Kavita Shah MD, DipACLM

Dr. Shah earned her combined BA/MD degree from the 6 year medical program at University of Missouri at Kansas City and graduated medical school in 2006. She completed her residency in internal medicine and pediatrics through Banner Good Samaritan Hospital in Phoenix, Arizona. After graduation in 2010, she moved to Tulsa, OK where she worked as a hospitalist at St John's Medical Center. Dr. Shah also worked as a hospitalist at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas. In 2016, she focused her practice towards inpatient glycemic management. Through this, Dr. Shah found her passion in lifestyle medicine, food as medicine, and diabetes management. Dr. Shah became board certified in lifestyle medicine in 2020. Dr. Shah is currently a diabetes fellow through the University of Colorado.

Principal faculty

Kelsey Riebel, MHS, PA-C serves as the Director of Outreach and Student Support. She graduated summa cum laude from Pittsburg State University with a bachelor of science in biology degree. During this time, she was a KINBRE scholar and participated in undergraduate research with her academic advisor. In 2016, she graduated from the OU-TU School of Community Medicine Physician Assistant Program and went on to practice hospital medicine at Ascension St. John Jane Phillips. She always intended to serve the

American Indian population and in 2018 she took an opportunity to do that by offering primary care services for Osage Nation. After a period of time serving abroad in South America, she was thrilled to accept the Clinical Assistant Professor position at Northeastern State University.

Kelly Gilcrest, MPAS, PA-C

Kelly was born and raised in Northeastern Ohio. She attended Ashland University and received her Bachelor's degree in Biology with a minor in Chemistry. Kelly attended the PA School at Alderson-Broaddus College in West Virginia. She graduated cum laude in 1999 with a Bachelor's degree in Medical Science (PA studies). It was at AB that she met her husband, Tim Gilcrest (also a PA). Tim was offered a job in Tulsa upon graduation and that is how Oklahoma became their new home. There were not a lot of PA jobs in the Tulsa area in early 2000 but Kelly ended up obtaining a job with the State of Oklahoma working in correctional medicine at Eddie Warrior Correctional Facility, a minimum-security women's prison. She joined the Army National Guard as a PA in February 2001 and was the Officer in Charge of the Troop Medical Clinic at Camp Gruber for over 8 years and ended up with the rank of Captain. She went back to school and received her master's degree in PA Studies (MPAS) from the University of Nebraska in 2005. She went on to work at various Primary Care Clinics such as VA Tulsa Clinic, OU Health at Work Clinic, RSU Student Health and TU Student Health and even worked at a private Primary Care clinic that also had an Urgent Care. Kelly and Tim live in the Tulsa area and have 4 children with the youngest 2(twins) being Juniors in college. Since she always had a love for animals, they currently have 4 dogs and 3 cats at home—all rescues. She looks forward to educating excellent Physician Assistants through the NSU PA Program.

David Dubé, DHSc, PA-C

Dr. Dubé earned a bachelor's degree in biology from Southwestern Oklahoma State University and later becoming a Board-Certified Physician Assistant after graduating from the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center in 1997. Dr. Dubé worked providing emergency medical care in rural Oklahoma and later, in the field of Neurology, providing care to Multiple Sclerosis (MS) patients. During this time, he obtained a Master of Science degree in the field of Kinesiology, and conducted balance and gait research, as well as participating in multiple clinical trials involving new therapies for the treatment of MS. Dr. Dubé worked in the pharmaceutical industry as a Medical Science Liaison where he assisted in the development of clinical trials, as well as MS patient management to providers throughout the United States. Prior to joining Northeastern State University, Dr. Dubé worked at Kansas State University where he was the Clinical Director and Assistant Clinical Professor for the K-State Physician Assistant Program.

Jayme Myers, MHS, PA-C serves as Director of Didactic Education for the PA program. A former Razorback, Myers earned a BSE in Pre-Professional Kinesiology at the University of Arkansas and then continued her education at the University of Oklahoma Physician Associate program in Oklahoma City. She has a special interest in providing care for the underserved and vulnerable populations. She has precepted for several students in her clinical practice and has always enjoyed training the next generation of PAs. She currently practices part-time providing primary and acute care for her hometown community in Checotah, OK

Instructional faculty

The non-clinical curriculum during the didactic year will be conducted by Northeastern State University faculty with expertise in their discipline. Additional instruction will be provided by physicians, physician assistants, and other health care providers.

Administrative support

Salida Huerta serves as the administrative assistant to the Department of Physician Assistant Studies. Ms. Huerta is a native of northeast Oklahoma. She has five children ages 3 through 20 and is an avid camper and traveler. Her previous work experience included ten years as Second Deputy County Clerk for the Muskogee office and serving as lead for the production department and head of the quality department at Optronics International.

Clinical preceptors

Each student will be assigned a clinical preceptor for each Supervised Clinical Practice Experiences (SCPE) during the second calendar year of the program. Students are not required to obtain clinical rotation sites or acquire their own structured clinical practice experiences (SCPE). Structured clinical practice experiences (clinical rotations) are provided by the program as components of the clinical education curriculum.¹ Preceptors are physicians in their particular field, physician assistants, or other program-approved licensed health care providers. For a complete list of clinical preceptors, please contact the director of clinical education

¹ ARC-PA *Standard* A3.03

Technical Standards Required for Admission to the Physician Assistant Studies Program at NSU

Physician Assistant Students, in addition to their academic achievements, exam scores, and fund of medical knowledge, must also be able to demonstrate adequate physical, emotional, and behavioral capabilities to be successful in achieving the Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies degree as well as in their future practice. While some accommodations can be made for persons with some disabilities, it is expected that students enrolled in this program can adequately perform the five technical standards listed below:

Observation

All PA students must be able to adequately observe all demonstrations and lectures within the lecture hall or the laboratory setting. The student must have proficient sensory function to be able to observe a patient from a distance and up close and have the sensory skills to be able to perform an appropriate physical examination of a patient. Sensory skills required for observation include intact vision, hearing, sense of smell, and tactile sensation.

Communication

It is expected that all students admitted to the Physician Assistant Studies Program are able to communicate effectively and sensitively to faculty, staff, patients, and all members of the healthcare team. Communication requires the student to be able to speak clearly so that the student may be understood by others, and that the student possesses the ability to read and write effectively. Communication also requires that the student be proficient in interpreting non-verbal cues such as changes in mood, behavior, activity, or posture.

Motor function

Physician Assistant Students must have adequate strength, gross and fine motor coordination, balance, and functional use of the senses of touch and vision to be able to perform maneuvers and procedures to provide both general and emergent care. It is expected that the student has adequate motor function in order to perform a physical examination which requires the ability to palpate, percuss, auscultate, and perform other diagnostic maneuvers. Examples of actions reasonably required include performing CPR, administering IV medications, applying appropriate pressure to stop hemorrhage, suturing of simple wounds, performing obstetric maneuvers, and opening of airways. It is also expected that a student be able to sit and stand for long periods of time as required in the classroom, laboratory, or clinical setting.

Conceptual and analytical thought and reasoning

It is expected that all students admitted to the Physician Assistant Studies Program have the ability to critically analyze and interpret information from medical literature, laboratory testing, imaging studies, and from the physical examination quickly and effectively, even under high stress situations. It is expected that the student be able to interpret three-dimensional relationships and understand the spatial relationships of anatomical structures. The student must have good critical thinking skills as would be required in the practice of medicine.

Behavioral and social attributes

The Physician Assistant Studies student will have the emotional health to allow him or her to function in a rigorous academic environment. The course of study to become a PA is intense and will require the student to be able to handle high stress situations. It is expected that all students are able to approach

patients with sensitivity and empathy and to work well with all members of the healthcare team. It is expected that all students have the ability to adapt to changing environments as well as deal with the uncertainties inherent in clinical practice. If a candidate has any spiritual, ethical, personal or constitutional objection to physical contact with any gender identity or expression, such objection may not interfere with the candidate's ability to perform full physical examinations of patients, which is necessary to fulfill the requirements of clinical competence and graduation. Students will also be required to practice and perfect physical examination skills on each other (with the exception of examinations of the genitalia). Candidates shall be able to adapt to changing environments, to display flexibility and to learn to function in the face of uncertainties in the clinical problems of many patients. Because disease recognizes no holiday or day of the week, candidates must be willing to perform in the clinical setting as required by their designated preceptor. Compassion, integrity, concern for others, interpersonal skills, interest and motivation are all personal qualities that are assessed during the education process.

Physician Assistant Studies Program Course Curriculum

Didactic Year Begins October 2023

Fall Semester 2023 – 11 credit hours

Second 8-week session

- PAS 5015 Clinical Anatomy
- PAS 5023 Medical Physiology
- PAS 5003 PA Practice, Policy, and Ethics

Spring Semester 2024 – 22 credit hours

- PAS 5218 Clinical Medicine I
- PAS 5213 Lab Medicine and Radiologic Principles I
- PAS 5253 Pharmacology and Pharmacotherapeutics I
- PAS 5611 Pathophysiology I
- PAS 5113 Clinical Assessment and Counseling I
- PAS 5551 Interprofessional Education
- PAS 5333 Diversity and Population Health

Summer Semester 2024 – 20 credit hours

- PAS 5226 Clinical Medicine II
- PAS 5223 Lab Medicine and Radiologic Principles II
- PAS 5273 Pharmacology and Pharmacotherapeutics II
- PAS 5631 Pathophysiology II
- PAS 5123 Clinical Assessment and Counseling II
- PAS 5313 Medical Practice Mgmt.
- PAS 5551 Interprofessional Education

Fall Semester II 2024 – 22 credit hours

- PAS 5238 Clinical Medicine III
- PAS 5233 Lab Medicine and Radiologic Principles III

- PAS 5293 Pharmacology and Pharmacotherapeutics III
- PAS 5651 Pathophysiology III
- PAS 5133 Clinical Assessment and Counseling III
- PAS 5501 Advanced Clinical Procedures
- PAS 5302 Evidence-Based Medicine & Research
- PAS 5551 Interprofessional Education

PAS 5910 Special Studies for Physician Assistant Students-Didactic (1-8 credit hours) * (offered each semester)

Didactic Year: 75 credit hours/25 courses

Clinical Year: 35 credit hours/9 courses required

Total Credit Hours: 110 credit hours

*Enrollment needed as part of a remediation plan.

Clinical Year Begins Spring 2025

Spring Semester II 2025 – 12 credit hours

- Clinical Rotation
- Clinical Rotation
- Clinical Rotation

Summer Semester II 2025 – 8 credit hours

- Clinical Rotation
- Clinical Rotation

Fall Semester III 2025– 15 credit hours

- Clinical Rotation
- Clinical Rotation
- Clinical Rotation
- PAS 5993 – Summative Seminar

PAS 5920 Special Studies for Physician Assistant Students-Clinical
(1-4 credit hours) * (offered each semester)

*Enrollment needed as part of a remediation plan.

<p>Six-Week Rotations (offered each clinical year semester)</p>
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- PAS 5704 - Internal Medicine Rotation
- PAS 5714 - General Surgery Rotation
- PAS 5724 - Pediatrics Rotation
- PAS 5734 - Women's Health Rotation
- PAS 5744 - Behavioral Health Rotation
- PAS 5754 - Emergency Medicine Rotation
- PAS 5764 - Family Medicine Rotation
- PAS 5804 - Elective Rotation

Resources Available on the Main Campus

The following resources are headquartered on the main NSU campus in Tahlequah. The resource does not maintain a full-time office on the Muskogee campus. Each office is staffed and is available to answer questions by phone or email. During certain times of the year, the program will arrange for a representative from various departments to have a physical presence on the Muskogee campus for your benefit. Contact the program office if you experience difficulty in accessing a needed service.

Services headquartered on the NSU Tahlequah campus

1. Registrar
2. Financial Aid
3. Physical building for the NSU library
4. Office of the Graduate College

Library Resources

A [Resource page](#)² has been specifically created for use by PA program students and faculty. Several medical databases, journals, e-books and other research materials are available on the [PA Resource](#) page.

ONLINE LIBRARY:

The Physician Assistant Medical Library Resource is online and linked through NSU's main library website and within our NSU Physician Assistant website. This online portal contains medical databases such as Access Medicine, Up-to-date, Clinical Key, Cochrane Systematic Reviews and MEDLINE. It contains various eBook versions through Clinical Key, Books@Ovid, R2 Digital Library, Science Direct, Access Medicine and Library eBooks purchased by NSU. The students will have access to various online journals through Clinical Key, Science Direct, journals@Ovid and Library e-journals purchased by NSU.

Muskogee Campus:

The main library provides a document delivery service from the Tahlequah collection and the Internet based collections that are available to all students.

NSU's PA Program also supplies a hard copy of the required and preferred textbooks for our didactic and clinical year curriculum available to PA students in the PA study lounge. Copies of various medical journals are also kept in the study lounge.

Broken Arrow Campus:

The library facilities on the Broken Arrow campus offer NSU students an environment that is conducive to individual or group study and research. The library houses a growing collection of print and electronic information resources as well as access to all library materials physically housed at other NSU campuses. In addition to individualized reference services, librarians provide library instruction classes in the library's computer labs.

² <https://library.nsuok.edu/home>

The library on the BA Campus is located at 3100 E. New Orleans, Broken Arrow, OK. 74014. This library is available to all NSU students and faculty. This on-campus library is located 33 miles from the Muskogee Campus. Reference librarians are available to meet individually with NSU students, faculty, and staff to provide assistance with research projects. The library hours are 8:30am – 9:00pm M-Th, 8:30am – 5:00pm Fri/Sat.

Tahlequah Campus

The John Vaughan Library at the Tahlequah campus is a three-story, 120,000 square foot facility. It contains over 1.2 million physical items including approximately 435,419 books, bound periodicals, and cataloged Government Documents; 3,277 un-cataloged Government Documents; 3,960 cartographic items; 56,838 graphic materials; 3,971 computer files; 13,487 audio-visual materials; 764,157 microforms; and 5,760 print subscriptions. The library houses a special collection of Native American heritage materials and an archival collection of local, county, and university records and historical photographs.

The library on the Tahlequah Campus – John Vaughn Library is located at 600 N. Grand Ave., Tahlequah, OK. 74464. This library is located 30 miles from the Muskogee Campus. The hours are Mon - Thurs 8:30 a.m. - 9:00 p.m., Fri 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Sat. Closed, Sun Closed.

Textbooks

The program provides for each enrolled student a subscription to *Access Medicine*. This web-based data bank contains over 125 medical texts and other resources available to students 24/7 and from any location. Students may opt to purchase hard copies of certain texts and instructors may recommend a specific text not in the *Access Medicine* library. However, the broad sampling of texts available through *Access Medicine* will hopefully reduce the financial burden to students while maintaining an extensive online personal library.

Required Items

- Stethoscope
- Otoscope
- Ophthalmoscope
- Reflex hammer
- Laptop computer
- NSU Scrubs (approved by the PAS program)
- White consultation jacket (approved by the PAS program)

Facilities

Print quota updates

Print quotas maintained by Information Technology Services (ITS) are generally as follows: initial 24-hour quota is 30 pages with no single print job over 20 pages, a limit of 2MB per job.

Individuals may call the Service Desk at 918-444-5678 or email help@nsuok.edu to have their print quota updated. On the Muskogee campus, print quotas are in place in Admin 116 and Synar 205.

Program Policies

This handbook and all policies apply to all students, principal faculty, and the Program Director regardless of location. (A signed clinical affiliation agreement or memorandum of understanding may specify that certain program policies will be superseded by those at the clinical site.³

³ ARC-PA *Standard* A3.01, A3.02

Professional conduct

Northeastern State University Physician Assistant Studies Program, as a graduate program in the health sciences, has the mission to educate practitioners responsible for the health and welfare of the public. The program has the obligation to graduate only those students who demonstrate clinical competence and professional integrity. Students in the program must, therefore, meet rigorous clinical and professional standards in addition to the program's academic standards. Students are subject to expulsion if they fail to meet the professional standards and each PA student has the responsibility to report alleged academic dishonesty or unprofessional behavior exhibited by another student to either the appropriate faculty member or to the Program Director.⁴

Unprofessional conduct is defined as any action to, or against, a fellow student, faculty, staff, or patient that is generally deemed professionally inappropriate or which is not in keeping with the expectations as delineated for students in the [NSU Student Handbook](#).⁵

It is not possible to qualify all forms of misconduct that can arise in a health professional education environment. However, some examples of unprofessional conduct that would be highly unacceptable in an academic or clinical setting include:

- Illegal acts
- Unethical acts
- Immoral acts
- Failure to follow the Guidelines for Ethical Conduct for the PA Profession established by the American Academy of Physician Associates
- Falsifying clinic data or records
- Lying
- Excessive unexcused absences
- Excessive unexcused tardiness
- Sexual harassment
- Disrespectful behavior
- Improper demeanor or attire
- Inappropriate hygiene standards
- Failure in a clinical setting to identify self as a student PA
- Disregard for patient welfare
- Failure to follow clinic guidelines as specified in the Clinical Education Handbook
- Unauthorized entrance to clinic or other restricted areas
- Any conduct for which a reasonable person in the same or similar circumstances would recognize as dishonest or improper in an academic or patient care setting
- Excessive noise and vulgar or crude language
- Undue familiarity with patients, faculty, other students, or staff
- Smoking in clinical areas
- Abuse of equipment

Everyone with whom the student comes into contact should be treated with respect and concern.

⁴ ARC-PA *Standard* A3.15 d

⁵https://offices.nsuok.edu/studentaffairs/StudentServices/ConductandDevelopment/Handbook/default.aspx?_ga=2.75037653.639417202.1696339046-1471510025.1633707611

Students alleged to have violated recognized ethical or professional behavior standards of the program, the college, the university, or the profession will be referred to the Student Progress Committee.

Faculty are responsible for ensuring that graduates of the program are capable of providing quality health care to the public. At all times, faculty are responsible for the decisions related to patient care and student education. Students and faculty members are expected to exhibit professional behavior based on integrity, ethical principles, and honor. This includes the expectations of class attendance, being on time to classes and clinics, and not leaving class or clinic unless dismissed. Attention to on-going class proceedings and courtesy in class are expected. Each student is responsible for his or her own education. It is the role of the faculty member to facilitate the learning process through teaching.

Attire

A professional appearance is required of all students enrolled in the PA program while on campus and during SCPE experiences. Students will be expected to adhere to the program's dress code. Additionally, students will abide by the policy expectations of the clinical site/agency/institution in which they are participating in a SCPE. Any violation of the dress code will result in the student being sent home from class and/or clinic. Continued violation of the dress code may result in a review by the Student Progress Committee and could result in disciplinary action per university policy.

During regular class hours and any time that the student is on campus, the student will be expected to wear business casual attire or scrubs. Some classes will invite guest speakers to lecture and the student should present to class wearing NSU scrubs on those days.

- Students must present with a clean, professional appearance and be well-groomed.
- Tattoos must be covered as well as not be visible through clothing. Additional requirements regarding tattoos may be necessary to comply with the specific policy of a clinical facility.
- One pair of small earrings may be worn. No other piercings (nose, tongue, eyebrow, or any other visible piercings) may be worn.
- Clothing and/or scrubs must be modest, non-revealing, well-fitting, sized appropriate, clean and in good repair (no holes, rips, stains, or tears).
- Undergarments must not be visible through or underneath clothing, visible above waistline or openly visible.
- Hair, nails, beard and/or mustache must be neatly groomed. No artificial nails may be worn. Hair must be of a natural color (no pink, blue, purple, green, etc.).

Picture identification

- An identification badge bearing the student's photograph will be created for each student upon matriculation into the PA program.
- The student ID badge must be worn to every clinical experience and the picture, name, and title of physician assistant student are to be clearly visible. In addition, some clinical sites/agencies/institutions may issue temporary student identification cards to be worn in accordance with their policy. The student will be responsible for adhering to each site/agency/institution policy.⁶

Professional business attire

- Well-pressed dress slacks or suit. Pants must not be long enough to touch the floor
- Skirt or dress with a length that falls just below the knee to just above the floor (should not touch the floor)

⁶ ARC-PA *Standard A3.06*

- Well-pressed shirt, blouse or sweater. For male students, dress shirt must be tucked in and worn with a tie
- Closed-toe, closed-heel dress shoes

Business casual attire

- NSU approved scrubs
- Shirt, sweatshirts with no design logos, political or religious affiliation logos other than NSU
- Blouse, sweater
- Dress or skirt (not shorter than just below knee length)
- Pants, jeans or denim that are in good repair with no holes, rips, stains, or tears
- No yoga pants, no tight-fitting exercise type pants, no shorts

Lab attire

- No open-toed shoes are allowed
- Scrubs required
- Lab coat (optional)

Clinical attire

- Professional Business Attire with white lab coat
- Clean, maintained tennis shoes and institution-issued scrubs may be worn for some SCPE experiences

As a medical professional, students should ask themselves if they are dressed in a manner that warrants professionalism and respect from patients and other health care providers. It is expected that students attending SCPEs will dress in a professional manner at all times. Specific clothing choices for the clinical phase will be included in the *Clinical Education Handbook*.

Exception to policy

The program also recognizes that comfort serves a significant role in student learning. Therefore, the program will leave it to the student's discretion to achieve comfort with clothing in accordance with room environments presented to them. This includes the ability to don well-kempt shorts, yoga pants, and t-shirts as necessary. This exception to policy does not apply during in-person presentations by guest lecturers or any setting involving simulated or actual patients.

Blood-borne pathogen (BBP) exposure prevention and treatment

The best way to prevent exposure to a BBP, is to be informed. Needlesticks and mucus membrane exposures to biologic fluids occur approximately 800,000 times each year in the United States (CDC data). Important steps you can take to prevent disease include the following:

- Wear gloves.
- Never recap - if you must, use the one-handed technique.
- Take your time.
- Dispose of contaminated needles immediately in puncture-resistant containers.
- Make sure sharps containers are accessible.
- User safer sharps devices (if available).

The program will require students to complete blood-borne pathogen training during orientation at matriculation and prior to the start of the clinical phase.⁷

⁷ ARC-PA Standard A3.08 a,b

Copays, coinsurance, and any additional financial obligations will be the student's responsibility. Regarding other exposures, students will be covered by their mandatory health insurance policy.⁸

OSHA and environmental hazards prevention and treatment

At the time of matriculation, students will receive a presentation on the federal laws overseen by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. The presentation will also deliver content identifying environmental hazards present in the medical workplace and how/when to get treatment if exposure to such a hazard is encountered.

Absenteeism

Attendance is **expected** for all lectures, classes, and academic-related activities. PA program course coordinators will monitor daily attendance and report absences to the Directors of Didactic or Clinical Education. Attendance is a demonstration of professionalism and is a criterion used for recommendation for promotion to the clinical year and graduation. It is required that students observe the following policy:

****COVID-19****

- NSU policies regarding COVID-19 are continually being updated based on current CDC guidelines and trends happening within the state of Oklahoma. Any current policy that is published by NSU Administration, [on the NSU website](#), will be strictly adhered to and students and faculty are expected to seek ways to make necessary accommodations.

Absences in the didactic phase of the program

- All absences from class must be excused by the didactic director or their designee.
- All unanticipated absences due to illness, accident, or other unexpected events **must** be reported to the program within 24 hours. Please report via phone and email to the didactic director.
- Due to the intense nature of the curriculum, students are strongly encouraged to schedule personal appointments outside of class activities to avoid class conflicts whenever possible.
- All requests for anticipated absences must be submitted to the didactic director in writing at least two weeks prior to the proposed absence. Requests will be considered on an individual basis, and written notification of approval or disapproval will be provided to the student in a reasonable amount of time once a decision has been made.
- If the student absence is unexcused, the student will be responsible for all missed content. Missed examinations and assignments, if unexcused, will receive a zero with no opportunity for makeup.
- If the student absence is excused, the program will work with the student to satisfy all content, assignment, and examination material.

Absences for university or program-approved functions may be permitted only after the activity sponsor has received authorization. This approval does not excuse students from fulfilling assignments and tests in the course, but authorizes them to receive reasonable accommodations from the instructor in fulfilling the assignments. It is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor prior to the event to make arrangements for any information make-up requirement.

The program has an important obligation to maintain a positive rapport with guest speakers, clinical sites, preceptors, and other health care professionals who make an essential contribution to the curriculum of the program. The relationships are vital to the ongoing success and development of the

⁸ ARC-PA Standard A3.08 c

program and its ability to provide a quality didactic and clinical education. The program will not tolerate individuals jeopardizing these relationships by displaying unprofessional and discourteous behaviors. Prompt attendance at all program activities is a minimum demonstration of this commitment. Attendance and preparation for all seminars, small group discussions, lectures, and clinical activities designated by the program faculty and preceptors is expected.

Absences in the clinical phase of the program

Unexcused absences are not permitted in the clinical phase of the program. Details of the absentee policy regarding supervised clinical practice experiences is provided in the *Clinical Education Handbook*.

Leave of absence

Only under the most severe circumstances will a leave of absence be considered by the Program Director. A leave of absence, if granted, will be for a period of time no longer than one academic year under one of the following types: medical, military, or personal. A leave of absence requires formal permission to delay progression through the PA program, but does not excuse the student from any course requirements.

A leave of absence that extends the student's academic program beyond the usual 27 consecutive months will require the assignment of a new program completion date, new graduation date, and may require assignment to a new class. The new graduation assigned will depend on the length of the leave and the official University graduation dates. In addition, it should be understood that a new completion date will delay eligibility for taking the NCCPA PANCE examination and will delay the temporary or permanent licensing process in various states.

For all leaves of absence, the following will apply:

- The student will be responsible for the financial consequences of taking a leave of absence. Students must review their financial arrangements with the business office and the office of financial aid prior to finalizing the leave of absence.
- When a leave of absence is granted, the program may require that the student meet additional academic requirements for effective and safe reintegration into the classroom or clinic and/or submit specific documentation (e.g., medical release to return to class).
- For medical, personal, and military leave of absences, the student request must be made in writing and addressed to the Program Director. The reason for the request should be clearly stated in the letter. The student should continue to attend class, take examinations and fulfill any other class obligations as possible until leave has been formally granted.
- When a leave of absence is granted, students must notify the course coordinators of all classes in which they are enrolled of their withdrawal from course work, or the clinical preceptors of any SCPEs in which they are enrolled of their withdrawal from clinical activities.
- A student who has been granted a leave of absence is responsible for notifying the Program Director in writing of his or her intention to return to class on the appointed date no later than two months before the start of classes. Without this notification, the student's place in the class will be forfeited. Re-entry into the program will then require re-application through the usual admissions process of the program.
- Upon re-enrollment following a leave of absence, the student will be subject to all rules and regulations which pertain to the new class.
- A leave of absence will not be granted for academic failure or to avoid academic failure.
- An approved leave of absence will result in the student re-entering the curriculum following the last completed semester.

Student health

Physician Assistant students are required to maintain health insurance throughout the program as agreed and verified by the student with post-acceptance requirements.

Students needing acute health care during the program may access student health services through the following [options](#):

- NEO Health at NSU Tahlequah 918-444-2126. All student tests and office-visit copays will be paid by NSU.
- NEO Health in Muskogee 918-683-0470. All tests and office-visit copays will be paid by NSU.

Principal faculty, the Program Director, and the medical director may not provide healthcare for students except in cases of an emergency. A preceptor will not see a student as a patient while assigned to them except in case of an emergency.⁹

NSU Physician Assistant Studies immunization policy

Upon admission, students will be required to submit proof of immunization for hepatitis B and MMR in accordance with University policy. Additionally, the program requires that all students maintain immunizations as recommended by the CDC for healthcare providers. Therefore, all PA students must have proof of immunization to the recommended CDC vaccine preventable illnesses, to include Hepatitis B, influenza, MMR, varicella, tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis, on record with the program prior to matriculation. Immunizations and health screenings must be updated prior to direct patient contact, before starting the clinical year of the program, and yearly thereafter for any student extending enrollment in the program.¹⁰

- Though not an immunization, students must have a two-step PPD (with negative results) documented within the last year; in addition, a negative PPD will need to be current for the entire duration of the program. This documentation OR a negative chest X-ray must be supplied to the Physician Assistant Studies Program. The QuantiFERON Gold TB blood test may be used as an appropriate substitution in lieu of the two-step PPD (and annually thereafter) and for students having previously been vaccinated with BCG.
- Although the meningococcal (meningitis) vaccine is not required by the PA program, it is *required* by the State of Oklahoma for students living in college-owned and operated residence halls. Therefore, students must either provide written documentation of meningitis immunization or sign a waiver to indicate they have been informed about this disease and vaccine and have chosen not to be immunized if they are living on the Tahlequah campus. This form is provided by Student Health Services. Otherwise, the meningococcal vaccine is only for those who are routinely exposed to isolates of *N. meningitidis*.
- Flu vaccines will be expected to be completed at the appropriate time of each year the student is enrolled in program.
- Students will also need to show completion of vaccination against COVID-19 prior to the start of the clinical phase. This requirement is mandated by rotation sites and if not properly vaccinated, will prevent a student from being assigned to that site. The program will not guarantee that a student will satisfy requirements for completion of the degree without this and other vaccinations.

Facilities and hospitals may require additional immunizations and titers which students must obtain prior to starting SCPEs at those sites. Information regarding these additional requirements will be made available to students on the student SCPE tracking site.

⁹ ARC-PA *Standard* A3.09

¹⁰ ARC-PA *Standard* A3.07 a

Failure to comply with the immunization policy for the Physician Assistant Studies Program or any additional immunizations and titers for SCPEs will result in the inability to enter, continue with, or complete the program.

All costs incurred in complying with this policy are the *responsibility of the student*.

The immunization policy is subject to change at any time in order to comply with ARC-PA *Standards*, Northeastern State University, hospital policies, or the CDC guidelines. The NSU Physician Assistant Studies Program will make every attempt to notify its students of these changes in a timely manner.

Social media

Use of social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter have become a part of everyday life. While this technology allows for instant widespread sharing of information, basic privacy and information security requirements applicable to NSU confidential information apply. Sharing confidential NSU, HIPAA, or other SCPE site information, including protected health information on personal social networking websites is STRICTLY PROHIBITED. Examples of prohibited disclosure include:

- Any reference to a patient or patient care event, even if the patient's name is not included. Under HIPAA, such information is still considered protected health information.
- Photographs of patients at NSU or any clinical site attended while enrolled as a student at NSU, even if the patient or his/her legal guardian give a copy of the picture to a staff member. Patient photographs are also protected health information under HIPAA, and signed written HIPAA authorization is required before disclosing them.
- Sharing any confidential NSU business with others who do not have a need to know to perform their assigned duties on behalf of NSU.
- Under HIPAA, NSU students can be determined to be liable, in either a criminal or civil manner, for privacy and information security violations. All monetary damages incurred as a result of a violation of HIPAA is the sole responsibility of the student. Any student found violating confidentiality will be subject to corrective action up to and including dismissal as determined by the Student Progress Committee.
- Due to the professional nature of this career, it is the program's recommendation to limit any personal pictures or posts that could be considered inappropriate to the public.

Statement of non-discrimination

Northeastern State University (NSU) does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, disability, genetic information, or status as a veteran, and to the extent allowed by Oklahoma law, marital status, sexual orientation and gender identity in its programs and activities. These protections extend to employment with and admission to NSU, as well as, participation in university-sponsored programs. NSU policies and procedures regarding allegations of discrimination may be found at the [Title IX page of the NSU website](#).

Student grievances

The Physician Assistant Studies program follows the university's policy regarding student grievances or harassment.¹¹ These policies are consistent with Title IX in the Education Amendment of 1972, and are provided to students on NSU website at [Student Affairs](#):

- *Conduct and Development*

¹¹ ARC-PA Standard A1.02 i,j

- *Student grievance procedures*¹²

Criticism of colleagues

Professional relations among all members of the medical community should be marked with civility. Thus, scholarly contributions should be acknowledged, slanderous comments and acts avoided, and each person should recognize and facilitate the contributions of others to the community. The PA student will deal with all members of the health care team in a cooperative and considerate manner.

Personal safety and security

Student safety and security is of utmost importance while on the NSU campus and at assigned SCPE sites. The program conducts routine site visits to evaluate the safety of students and faculty at clinical sites. If an incident occurs where you feel you are in danger, clearly communicate your distress by any means possible, remove yourself from the situation, and call 911. If on a SCPE you feel unsafe for any reason, you are to immediately contact the Director of Clinical Education or Program Director by phone or email.

Students should exercise situational awareness while on SCPEs. Please practice the following common-sense measures:

- Leave laptops, iPads, and other valuables at home, unless required at a clinical site.
- Do not carry large amounts of money or credit cards.
- Always watch where you are going. Avoid shortcuts through isolated areas. Be alert to your surroundings. If you still have concerns, call campus or hospital security for an escort. If you see unusual activity or someone loitering, call security immediately.
- Park in well-lit areas and do not walk alone to/from parking areas at night. Use the escorts/shuttles provided by the hospitals.

For the NSU Muskogee campus, the appropriate contact number for security is 918-444-5010.

Drugs, tobacco, and alcohol use NSU

Use of illegal drugs, and the illegal use of alcoholic beverages, is identified as “conduct which adversely affects the university community.” University regulations prohibit any unlawful possession, use, distribution, or sale of alcohol and other drugs by University students, faculty, staff, or guests to the university, on university-owned property and at all University sponsored activities. NSU students are also prohibited from the illegal use of drugs and alcohol whether on or off campus.

The legal age for the consumption of alcohol in Oklahoma is 21 years of age. Any underage student consuming alcohol is violating standards for student conduct. Additionally, excessive alcohol use can lead to additional violations, such as driving while intoxicated or public intoxication.

NSU is designated as a tobacco-free environment. Smoking and the use of all tobacco products are prohibited.

The penalties for misconduct range from warning to expulsion. Typically, students who have violated the student code of conduct will be referred to the Student Health Services for assessment and Hawk Reach Services to complete an individualized education plan.

Local, state, and federal laws provide for a variety of legal sanctions and penalties for the unlawful possession or distribution of illicit drugs and alcohol. These sanctions include, but are not limited to, incarceration and monetary fines. Furthermore, a charge or conviction of a drug or alcohol related offense may prohibit the PA graduate from obtaining licensure.

¹² ARC-PA *Standard A3.15 f,g*

Drug screen

Hospitals, clinics, or other facilities used by the PA program as clinical education sites may require students undergo a drug screen prior to the start date of the clinical rotation. The cost of drug screening will be the responsibility of the student. If a student is unable to provide a negative drug screen to the satisfaction of clinical sites, the PA program may be unable to acquire enough clinical rotations to satisfy requirements of the degree and in no way will accept responsibility should such an occurrence arise.

Criminal background checks

Criminal background checks are mandatory to enhance the health and safety of patients, students, faculty, and staff in the academic and clinical environments, and to adhere to applicable healthcare regulations. Once a student has been offered a position within the PA program and has submitted their deposit and matriculation information, they must obtain their criminal background check. The offer of admission is conditional upon results and review of the background check. Information on how to access the PA program sanctioned criminal background check vendor site will be provided to the student two to four months prior to matriculation into the program.

The criminal background check is a mandatory component of the program. If the student does not submit for the background check or it is not completed by the program-provided deadline, their seat in the program will be relinquished and offered to another student. Once completed, the criminal background check report is issued directly to the student and a designated PA program administrator and stored electronically with the NSU approved background check vendor. The program administration reviews all PA student background checks.

Final acceptance into the program is contingent upon a successful criminal background check and clearance. The University and Physician Assistant Studies Program retain the right to decline a student's admittance or continuance in the program for criminal activity found in any background check that may preclude training, certification and/or licensing of the student. Following the initial background check, students are required to provide certification relating to any convictions, guilty pleas, or no contest pleas to any criminal offense, other than traffic violations annually. While enrolled, repeat background checks may be conducted as requested by a clinical facility. If the student does not submit for the background check in a timely manner, the student will not be permitted to attend the SCPE and will be administratively withdrawn from the program.

Students should be aware that based on certain criminal convictions, clinical affiliates may not accept a student for a clinical assignment or may rescind a previous acceptance. In such an event, and depending on the circumstances, the student may be unable to complete a required clinical experience and consequently the program curriculum requirements. Students who are unable to complete the PAS program curriculum requirements are subject to dismissal from the PA program.

Students should be aware that a prior criminal background could restrict the ability to obtain professional state licensure. Acceptance into the PAS program and successful completion does not imply or guarantee that a student will be able to obtain such licensure upon graduation.

Prospective students who are concerned about a criminal conviction are urged to contact the relevant state and/or federal agency to inquire whether their criminal record may adversely affect the issuance of the credentials needed to practice as a physician assistant.

Policy on student work

Students are advised against spending regular time at a job while a student in the PAS program due to the time commitment necessary to succeed in the program.¹³

In order to avoid practices that might conflict with the professional and educational objectives of the PAS program, and to avoid practices in which students are substituted for regular staff, the following policy shall be in effect with regard to service work:

- Students will not be required to work for the program.¹⁴
- Students may not substitute for or function as primary instructional faculty. Students with specific prior knowledge, experiences and skills may assist faculty in demonstration and laboratory sessions to share their knowledge and skills.¹⁵
- Students may not be hired as employees for any private or public practice, clinic, or institution to perform any medical services during any time they are part of the Physician Assistant Studies Program including during the time the student is under the sponsorship of a specific practice, clinic, or institution during a SCPE.¹⁶
- Students may not take the responsibility or place of qualified staff (administrative or clinical) in any medical setting.¹⁷
- Students may not be given any payments, stipends or other remuneration for medical services performed as part of the Physician Assistant Studies Program.
- Students may volunteer their medical services to charitable, humanitarian or community services organizations on their own time. Such activities are not to be considered a component of the curriculum. Students may not represent themselves as PA students of NSU, and NSU accepts no liability from such activities. The student malpractice insurance does not cover non-curricular activities.

Faculty advisors

The PA program assigns a faculty advisor to each student of the entering class. The faculty advisor assists with academic and non-academic problems and acts as a liaison between the advisee and other faculty members. The program recommends students meet with their advisors on a monthly basis, but it ultimately is the student who determines the full amount of interaction between him/her and their advisor.

The responsibilities of the faculty advisor include:

- Serving as the student's advisor and academic/professional counselor;
- Overseeing and monitoring the academic progress and professional growth of the student;
- Assisting the student in seeking academic and personal counseling services provided by the institution;
- Serving as an advocate for the student and
- Counseling the student during his/her selection of career within the profession.

¹³ ARC-PA *Standard A3.15 e*

¹⁴ ARC-PA *Standard A3.04*

¹⁵ ARC-PA *Standard A3.05*

¹⁶ ARC-PA *Standard A3.15 e*

¹⁷ ARC-PA *Standard A3.05*

Student *NSU Counseling Services*

Student Counseling Services is available for assistance in addressing personal issues which may impact a student's progress in the PA program.¹⁸

During regular office hours any student can make an appointment by calling 918-444-2042. The student can call or walk-in to make an appointment that accommodates their schedule. During non-working office hours, students can contact the CREOKS Behavioral Health Service Hotline (24 hours): 918-207-0078, call 911, or report to the closest hospital emergency room.

Services offered include one-on-one confidential counseling, referrals to campus and community resources, educational programs, and crisis intervention.

Additional information may be found through [NSU Counseling Services](#).¹⁹

Reasonable accommodations for disabilities

NSU is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all students with disabilities. Students with disabilities who require accommodation in a course are requested to speak with the course coordinator as early in the semester as possible. Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact [Student Disability Services](#)²⁰ at (918) 444-2042 or email Student Disability Services at sdsba@nsuok.edu.

¹⁸ ARC-PA Standard A3.10

¹⁹ <https://offices.nsuok.edu/studentaffairs/Student-Services/HawkReach-Counseling-Services>

²⁰ <https://offices.nsuok.edu/studentaffairs/Student-Services/Student-Disability-Services>

Academic Policies

Overall evaluation of student performance

The faculty of the PAS program are charged with the responsibility to determine the clinical and professional capabilities of every student. Throughout the program, formative and summative evaluations are performed to measure the student's competence and identify areas of weakness. Faculty advisors give support and advise the student to help achieve success based on individual evaluations.

The faculty, who are represented by the Student Progress Committee, are required to identify any student's failure to comply with published University and program policies and requirements deemed necessary for professional competency and make recommendations to the Program Director.

In addition to academic evaluations, the student's professional behaviors will be considered as part of the overall evaluation of student performance in the clinical setting. Specifically, each SCPE syllabus identifies and defines professional behaviors as an assessment on the mid- and end-of-rotation evaluations by the preceptor. Thus, training in professional behavior is integral to the education of the PA student. Poor evaluations indicating a problem in a student's professional behavior will be considered as academic issues and will be referred to the Student Progress Committee for action, up to and including dismissal.²¹

Student progress committee

The Student Progress Committee (SPC) is a standing committee of the Physician Assistant Studies Program. It has the responsibility for the evaluation of student academic and professional progress and to make recommendations for action to the Program Director.

The SPC may recommend to the Program Director a formal acknowledgement of a student's success such as any of the following recommendations:

- Continue academic progression
- Academic warning
- Academic probation
- Academic dismissal
- Academic deceleration (aka "recycle")
- Disciplinary probation
- Disciplinary dismissal
- Voluntary withdrawal
- Leave of absence
- Remediation plans
- Recommendation to enter the clinical phase
- Recommendation for graduation

The chair of the committee is the Medical Co-Director or his/her designee. The SPC periodically reviews the academic and professional achievement of students who are pursuing a Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies. The chair of the committee will obtain the name, grades, and GPA of the student in academic difficulty or professional conflict and will share this information with the members of the committee. After reviewing the student's achievement or performance records, the SPC will recommend actions based upon the program's policy and procedure guidelines and the professional judgment of the faculty.²²

²¹ ARC-PA *Standard* A3.15 c, d

²² ARA-PA *Standard* A3.15 c, d

Students in the PAS program are expected to make satisfactory academic and professional progress toward completion of the degree requirements. Failure to comply with the program's standards will result in action by the SPC. All student appearances before the committee will be arranged by the committee chair and confirmed in writing prior to the meeting.

Under extreme breaches of normal behavior, the Program Director may suspend a student from participating in didactic or clinical activities until such time as the SPC is able to convene and formally consider the matter.

Appeal of an SPC decision may be made in accordance with the NSU Student Affairs appeal policy.

Grade appeal policy

Students wishing to appeal a course grade should follow the [NSU grade appeals process](#).²³ An exception to the NSU grade appeals process is that the Program Director must be consulted prior to taking the issue to the dean of the college of science and health professions.

Student responsibilities

Students in the PAS program are responsible for the following:

- Attending all scheduled activities associated with the PA program unless prior approval is obtained from the Program Director.
- Understanding and meeting all established program academic requirements and standards as described in the course syllabi, this manual, *University Catalog*, and *Student Handbook and Clinical Handbook*.
- Self-monitoring of their academic performance in all required courses using Blackboard.
- Completing all course-related requirements in a timely and satisfactory manner.
- Seeking assistance if encountering academic difficulty.
- Contacting the appropriate faculty member, Program Director and/or course coordinator when performance has been unsatisfactory.
- Checking email daily for information concerning educational programs.

Technology in the classroom

Because class participation and professionalism are paramount to student success, cell phones and other communication devices must be turned off during class. Exceptions may be made for use in specific classroom activities at the discretion of the instructor. Laptop computers and tablets will only be allowed for the purpose of taking notes. Students are instructed to give family/friends the main office phone number (918-444-5464) for emergencies. The staff will go to the classroom to notify the student in the event of an emergency. Students will not be allowed to send text messages, surf the internet, check email, or check social media. Students can access their technology during scheduled breaks. Violations of this policy will be referred to the Student Progress Committee for consideration.

Statement on the use of Artificial Intelligence:

To ensure that students are not substituting artificial intelligence for critical thinking or research skills, unless explicitly directed otherwise, the use of artificial intelligence is not to be used for any assigned work, formative assessments, or summative assessments. If discovered that students are using this

²³ <https://offices.nsuok.edu/Portals/39/GradeAppeals-99.pdf>

platform without explicit permission from the Program Director or a faculty member, they will be presented to the Student Progress Committee for disciplinary action.

Examination decorum

Students are expected to maintain a decorum and demeanor that are consistent with accepted academic and professional standards during examinations. No cell phones, tablets, iPods or other digital audio devices, smart watches, books or bags are allowed into the examination site. Coats and other personal items must be placed in the back of the examination room. Hats, caps, and sunglasses cannot be worn during any examination. Any student wearing a hat or sunglasses will be asked to remove it. Failure to comply with this or any other reasonable request of a proctor will result in the immediate dismissal of the student from the examination. In such instances, the student will receive no credit for the examination.

Students will not be permitted to leave the room during the examination other than for an emergency or a documented medical condition. Documentation of medical conditions should be submitted to the Program Director before the scheduled examination. If a student leaves under any other circumstances, the examination will be considered complete and will be turned in for final grading. The student will not be granted re-entry into the testing site until all other students have completed the examination.

For PA program course examinations, students may be given assigned seating at the discretion of the faculty.

Any student engaged in academic misconduct during an examination is subject to disciplinary action as described in the [Northeastern State University Student Handbook](#).²⁴

Missed examinations and papers

Testing dates and deadlines in the PA program are non-negotiable. Course coordinators set all deadlines for examinations, papers, and practicum. The following are the academic policies of the PA program for students missing any examination, paper, or practicum:

- Students must notify the didactic or clinical director prior to missing an exam session. In case of an emergency, the student must notify the program as soon as possible after missing an examination.
- Permissible emergencies and other absences from an exam include illness of the student, an accident involving the student on the way to take the exam, hospitalization of the student, funeral or tragedy of an immediate family member, or any extreme circumstance presented to the didactic or clinical director for consideration. Verification of the circumstance may be required. Examples of non-permissible activities include weddings, funerals of distant relations, scheduled appointments, religious/family/community recognitions or celebrations, and issues involving pets.
- The didactic or clinical director will consider each request for retake of a missed examination on its individual merit. The student may petition the Program Director to appeal the didactic or clinical director's decision.
- All decisions for approval or denial of a retake examination by the Program Director will be final.
- Denials will be treated as a "zero", which is subject to appeal according to the NSU Academic Appeals Policy.
- All rescheduled examinations will be given on a date and time determined by the didactic or clinical director.

Examination procedures

- No questions will be answered after an examination begins.

²⁴https://offices.nsuok.edu/studentaffairs/StudentServices/ConductandDevelopment/Handbook/default.aspx?_ga=2.75037653.639417202.1696339046-1471510025.1633707611book.aspx

- Students will not be allowed to temporarily leave an examination after the first student completes the examination and leaves the testing site. Bathroom breaks during the examination are highly discouraged.
- All exams are closed and students are not permitted to view exam material.
- Performance statistics for each test item will be analyzed by the course coordinator and other faculty as available. Questions flagged as a variance may be removed from the test, multiple answers accepted, or re-keyed. Note that, depending on the disposition of the aberrant test question, an individual's score may improve, decline, or remain the same.
- Within a reasonable timeframe, examination scores will be posted after all students have completed taking the examination and the question analysis has been conducted.
- No grading adjustments will be made for mismarked answers.
- The final course grade will be forwarded to the registrar and entered into NSU records.

Evaluation of student academic work

Letter graded evaluation

All didactic phase courses will be evaluated by a letter grade according to the following grading scale. Each letter grade is worth a corresponding number of numerical points that factor into the grade point average. The grading scale is as follows:

- A** – Excellent, 4 grade points each semester hour
- B** – Above Average, 3 grade points each semester hour
- C** – Average, 2 grade points each semester hour
- D** – Below Average, 1 grade point each semester hour
- F** – Failure, 0 grade points each semester hour
- I** – Incomplete
- W** – Withdrawal
- AW** – Administrative Withdrawal
- P/F** – Pass/Fail
- N** – Grade not submitted

All clinical phase courses will be evaluated by a letter grade according to the following scale. Each letter grade is worth a corresponding number of numerical points that factor into the grade point average.

- A** – Excellent, 4 grade points each semester hour
- B** – Above Average, 3 grade points each semester hour
- C** – Average, 2 grade points each semester hour
- F** – Failure, 0 grade points each semester hour
- I** – Incomplete
- W** – Withdrawal
- AW** – Administrative Withdrawal

Standards of academic progress

Physician assistant education is competency-based which means that students must achieve an acceptable final grade in each course. Every student is expected to meet the following standards of academic progress in each semester and/or enrollment period in order to be designated as making satisfactory academic progress in the program and to be considered “in good standing” in the program.²⁵

²⁵ ARC-PA Standard A3.15 a

Failure to meet all standards in any semester will result in consequences described in the following section.

- To remain in good academic standing, students must maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.0.
- Academic performance less than 3.0 in any given semester will also be addressed by the Graduate College.
- Any final course grade below a “C” will be considered a failure of that course or SCPE.
- Every student must achieve a “Pass” or “Satisfactory” evaluation on all non-letter graded assignments and projects designated as required.
- Any exam or assignment grade a student receives below a “C”, will constitute a failing grade and will result in a consultation with the assigned faculty advisor. The exam or assignment may require remediation.
- A course grade of “F” cannot be remediated, but must be corrected by retaking the course at the discretion of the Student Progress Committee.

PACKRAT exam

The PACKRAT exam is a 225-question, multiple-choice examination that allows for student self-assessment and program evaluation. This examination is created by PA educators and exam experts and provides data to students and the program on student progress and how they compare with their peers. The examination provides reports by student, by class, by topic and task, including national comparative statistics. This examination is given at the conclusion of the didactic phase and again near the end of the clinical year. Completing the exam is mandatory, but will not be used in determining any student grade or as a component of the program’s summative evaluation process.

Supervised clinical practice experience evaluation

During the clinical phase of the program, students are evaluated using a number of instruments to assess medical knowledge, interpersonal skills, clinical and technical skills, professional behaviors, and clinical reasoning and problem-solving abilities. Evaluation instruments include, but are not limited to, preceptor evaluations, patient logs, end-of-SCPE examinations, essay questions, and observed structured clinical exams (OSCEs). Detailed information regarding assessment and evaluation during the clinical phase is outlined in the *Clinical Education Handbook*.

Incomplete grades

The grade of Incomplete (I) will be approved only when circumstances occur, such as serious illness that prevent the student from completing course work or when there is an unavoidable delay in receiving a course grade due to remediation. Inability to get assignments in on time will not constitute a reason for the grade of “I”. To remove a grade of “I” the student must complete the coursework within one year from when the “I” was given. If a student does not complete the required course work within the prescribed time period, the grade “I” will automatically convert to a letter grade of “F”.

In the clinical phase, a student who fails to complete all requirements of a supervised clinical practice experience will receive an incomplete “I”. The incomplete will revert to a satisfactory letter grade once all requirements have been completed or a failure if SCPE requirements are not satisfactorily met.

Depending on the circumstance that led to the incomplete grade, the Student Progress Committee may be involved in the decision-making process.

Completion deadlines

The didactic phase is designed to be completed in four semesters. A student required to remediate components of the didactic phase may delay entry into the clinical phase by one or more rotations. All didactic courses must be completed prior to starting supervised clinical experiences.²⁶

The clinical phase consists of seven core SCPEs and one elective SCPE. Each SCPE is six weeks in duration. A Senior Seminar course will be taken during the final four months of the curriculum and will serve as a summative examination process.

All curricular components must be completed within three months of the university graduation date in order to participate in the graduation ceremony with the current cohort.²⁷ Delays beyond three months will require the student to participate in the graduation ceremony for the next cohort.

The length of any approved leave of absence will be considered by the Program Director on a case-by-case basis. During the didactic phase, leaves of up to one year may be expected with each course only offered one semester each year. Leaves approved during the clinical phase will consider the needs of the student and availability of SCPEs remaining to be completed. A leave of absence for personal reasons including student health issues may be approved for multiple periods.

Academic/professional misconduct

The hallmark for all physician assistant students is professional and academic integrity. The administration and faculty adhere to these standards and believe it is the obligation and responsibility of the program to impart these values to the student as an emerging professional. As such, the program enforces [NSU's Policies for Academic Misconduct](#)²⁸ and expects that the student is responsible for being familiar with and adhering to the requirements for academic integrity and classroom conduct.

Academic probation, readmission, dismissal, remediation, and deceleration

Academic probation

Academic probation is a formal notification from the Student Progress Committee of unsatisfactory academic progress and occurs when a student fails a course by receiving a final course grade lower than a "C" during the academic program and/or obtains a cumulative GPA below the minimum 3.0 GPA during any semester of the academic program. Academic probation ends when a student successfully remediates the failed course and/or achieves the required minimum GPA of 3.0 for the probationary period.²⁹

Please note that for any student who has been placed on academic probation and is recommended to decelerate for academic reasons, that student will remain on continuous academic probation with the PA program for the duration of their enrollment and will be subject to regular review by the Student Progress Committee. Once the student's cumulative GPA reaches the retention standard of 3.0, they will be in good academic standing with the institution.

²⁶ ARC PA Standard A3.15 b

²⁷ ARC-PA Standard A3.15 b

²⁸

https://offices.nsuok.edu/studentaffairs/StudentServices/ConductandDevelopment/Handbook/default.aspx?_ga=2.75037653.639417202.1696339046-1471510025.1633707611book.aspx

²⁹ ARC-PA Standard A3.15 a

Program completion requirement

A student is required to complete all elements of the PA curriculum and be eligible for graduation within 48 months of the student's initial date of matriculation. If a student is decelerated (aka recycled), the 48-month window begins at the new matriculation date.³⁰

Readmission/dismissal

If a student becomes inactive for one academic year (three semesters) due to dismissal, the student may apply for readmission. For information on dismissals and refunds, consult the [NSU Student Handbook](#)³¹ and the NSU [refund policy](#) published on the website.^{32,33}

For a GPA below 3.0

At the end of the probationary period, if the cumulative GPA continues below the minimum GPA of 3.0, the Student Progress Committee may make a recommendation to the Dean of the Gregg Wadley College of Science and Health Professions to dismiss the student from the PA program. Recommendation for dismissal may also occur if the student's semester GPA falls below 3.0 during any subsequent semester of the program or if the student fails a PA program course.³⁴

Remediation for a failed course - Didactic

Students are expected to perform at a very high level in this intensive and fast-paced professional program. The Student Progress Committee reserves the right to require an individualized remediation plan for students who do not meet academic or professional expectations.³⁵

A remediation plan may consist of, but is not necessarily limited to:

- A requirement to retake a failed examination or course.
- Referral to student services for further evaluation (e.g., counseling for evaluation of learning methods or deficiencies).
- Pursuit of self-directed learning and/or tutoring at the expense of the student.

When a student fails a course during the didactic phase, the Student Progress Committee will place the student on probation and may require the student to remediate the subject matter at the end of the didactic phase. Students requiring remediation will be enrolled in *PAS 5910 Special Studies for Physician Assistant Students – Didactic* and will receive a separate grade for this course. The newly earned grade will replace the previous grade in accordance with the Graduate College's Academic Forgiveness policy on repeated courses. The Student Progress Committee will lift the probationary status after the student demonstrates a satisfactory performance.

A student who fails a combined three didactic curricular courses before the completion of the didactic phase will be dismissed or decelerated (aka "recycled").³⁶ All didactic courses must be successfully completed prior to the student beginning the clinical phase of the program.³⁷

³⁰ ARC-PA Standard A3.15 b

³¹

https://offices.nsuok.edu/studentaffairs/StudentServices/ConductandDevelopment/Handbook/default.aspx?_ga=2.111089986.639417202.1696339046-1471510025.1633707611

³² <https://offices.nsuok.edu/financialaid/FinancialAidPolicies/RefundPolicyWithdrawalPolicy.aspx>

³³ ARC-PA Standard A1.02 k

³⁴ ARC-PA Standard A3.15 d

³⁵ ARC-PA Standard A3.15 c

³⁶ ARC-PA Standard A3.15 c,d

³⁷ ARC-PA Standard A3.15 b

When a student is placed on academic probation or suspension, it is noted in the student's academic file and on the student's transcript. To return to good academic standing, a student must correct deficiencies and incur no further failures. Subsequently, when the student is returned to good academic standing, this is also noted in the student's file and on the transcript.³⁸

Dismissal entails the removal of the student from all academic courses and the University. Dismissal may or may not be preceded by suspension and is noted on the student's transcript. The student who has been dismissed can re-apply for admission, but is not guaranteed re-entry into the PA program.

Information related to performance in the clinical phase is found in the *Clinical Education Handbook*.

Deceleration/voluntary withdrawal

A student unable to progress forward in the program due to academic failure may be decelerated (aka "recycled") with approval from the Student Progress Committee by withdrawing from the program and restarting the program with the next cohort. The student who has been decelerated for a failed course or unsatisfactory GPA does not have to re-apply for admission and is guaranteed re-entry into the first year of the program, contingent upon all other program requirements being met. Upon re-entry to the academic program, the student is routinely placed on continuous academic probation. A student may be given only one opportunity to restart the program. Any student who decelerates (aka recycles) will be required to retake all courses, even courses having been previously passed.³⁹ The student must consult with financial aid regarding the tuition/fees of courses previously passed.⁴⁰

When decelerating, up to 9 hours may be repeated per the Graduate College Academic Forgiveness Policy. When calculating cumulative GPA, the average of the course grades will be taken into account. Take note, while the cumulative GPA may remain above a 3.0, a student who has decelerated for academic reasons may be subject to dismissal by the Student Progress Committee if any subsequent semester GPA falls below a 3.0.

Any student who has been decelerated for academic reasons will be ineligible for any honorific awards, ineligible for scholarships through the PA program, ineligible for leadership positions in the student society, and ineligible for student funded travel.

Deceleration *is not* the process of allowing students to reduce the number of courses taken per semester. Decreasing the academic workload is not allowed at the NSU program. The Student Progress Committee will determine on a case-by-case basis if a student having taken a leave of absence will be required to repeat courses.

A student who voluntarily withdraws from the program for any reason must re-enter the admissions process. Requests to re-enter the program following a voluntary program withdrawal will be determined by the Admissions Committee. All medical and emergency withdrawals will follow NSU's policy.⁴¹

Student success program

The student success program has two components: the didactic component and the clinical component. Below are the procedures for each component.

Didactic Student Support Procedures

³⁸ ARC-PA *Standard* A3.17 e

³⁹ ARC-PA *Standard* A3.15 c

⁴⁰ ARC-PA *Standard* A1.02 k

⁴¹ <https://policies.nsuok.edu/StudentAffairs/MedicalorEmergencyWithdrawal.aspx>

Goals:

1. Identify students who need extra support based on exam performance within each clinical medicine system module
2. Create a remediation plan to address the concepts that were misunderstood based on missed exam items
3. Document the interaction

Plan:

1. The system or module coordinator will identify students whose test scores indicate they could benefit from extra support in the system or course.

Action Plan:

- a. Students will be identified using ExamSoft generated "At-Risk Students" which includes the students who scored in the bottom 20% of the cohort for a particular exam.
 - b. Students in the bottom 20% who score 80% or above on the exam will not be identified as needing extra support.
2. Those students will be offered an opportunity to review their Strengths and Opportunities report (includes missed exam items) with the system or module coordinator.

Action Plan:

- a. Students will meet within 7 days of the exam.
- b. The system coordinator will not compromise the integrity of the exam by revealing the question and stem verbatim, but rather will discuss main themes and main concepts that require review and clarification.

3. Documentation

Action Plan:

- a. The system or module coordinator will document the encounter using the student encounter form.
 - b. The form will be stored in the student's electronic file.
4. Special circumstances
 - a. Student failure of exam/Remediation of Clinical Medicine exams
 - i. If a student is identified as an "At-Risk Student" and fails a clinical medicine exam with a score of 69.4% or below, the student will need to remediate the exam.
 - ii. The student will meet within 1-2 days of the exam to determine what topics need reviewed using the Strengths and Opportunities report.
 - iii. Within 7 days of the exam, the student will be expected to complete an oral exam.
 - iv. A passing score will be determined by answering correctly the number of questions the patient failed the exam by.
 1. Example: If a student got a 65%, then they would need to answer correctly 5% of the questions they missed on the exam.

- v. The maximum score students may get on the remediation exam will be 70%.
- b. Confidentiality
 - i. We will strive to maintain confidentiality of student performance as well as integrity of the exam.
 - ii. The students will be emailed privately regarding their student support.
 - iii. Students will only be allowed to participate in this program if they are “identified as a student who can use additional support” as defined by #1 above.

Clinical Student Support Procedures

Goals:

1. Identify students, at several stages of their education, who may be struggling with specific topic areas
2. Create a remediation learning path to strengthen those topic areas as soon as they are identified
3. Reassess the student’s performance to ensure the information has been learned
4. Identify and ameliorate areas of the didactic and clinical curriculum that need improved based on student performance data

Plan:

1. Identify students, at several stages of their education, who may be struggling with specific topic areas
 - a. End of Curriculum Exam: score of <1400 indicates “limited medical knowledge” (“End of Curriculum™: Scoring and Interpretation | PAEA”)
 - b. Preclinical PACKRAT: score <110 (Pasquini)
 - c. End of Rotation Exam: score <70% on any one exam (benchmark set by department)
 - d. Post Clinical PACKRAT: score <145 (Stream)
2. Create a remediation learning path to strengthen those topic areas as soon as they are identified
 - a. Any student identified as “at-risk” based on their scores on the aforementioned exams will be entered into a remediation path as outlined below.
 - i. Topic areas of knowledge gaps identified
 1. Use the “Feedback by Keyword” section to identify specific topic areas that need reinforcement for the following exams:
 - a. End of Curriculum Exam
 - b. Preclinical PACKRAT
 - c. End of Rotation Exam
 - d. Post-clinical PACKRAT
 - ii. Customized learning path created in Lecturio platform based on identified knowledge gaps. May consist of:
 1. Assigned custom content review paths with associated assessments
 2. Assigned videos targeting specific knowledge gaps with associated quizzes
 - a. Spaced repetition for long-term retention
3. Reassess the student’s performance to ensure the information has been learned

- a. Review data collected on Lecturio platform from quizzes and assessments to ensure the information has been learned
 - i. “Risk Score” data point – based on student rated confidence when answering quiz questions and number of quiz questions correct (scale 0-30; higher = more at risk)
 - ii. Accuracy of quiz question answers
 - iii. Scores on assessments from content review paths
 - b. If the student continues to struggle in a specific content or topic area
 - i. Student Progress Committee meeting will be held to discuss next steps
4. Identify and ameliorate areas of the didactic and clinical curriculum that need improved and revised based on student performance data
- a. Use data from exams in item number one to identify areas in the curriculum (didactic or clinical) that need improved, revised, and otherwise bolstered
 - b. Use course and end of rotation evaluations to identify areas in the curriculum that need improved

Graduation requirements

In order to graduate from the PAS program, each student must satisfactorily complete all of the following:

- All didactic coursework
- All Supervised Clinical Practice Experiences (required and elective)
- Patient logging rubric
- All assignments required by the program including any remediation
- A summative evaluation of medical knowledge, interpersonal skills, clinical and technical skills, professional behaviors, and clinical reasoning and problem-solving abilities. The summative evaluation will consist of a comprehensive objective examination and OSCE skill performance exercises.

“Satisfactorily complete” means completing all didactic courses, SCPEs, and summative evaluation with a letter grade of “C” or higher and maintaining a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher.

Standards for completion of any course are determined by the instructor or course coordinator of the course. The instructor or course coordinator determines the criteria for earning each letter grade. Course syllabi will outline the evaluation methods and the required performance scale which will be used. Standards for completion of any SCPE are based on preceptor evaluations, end-of-SCPE examination results, completion of essay questions, performance on an OSCE, and patient logging requirements. Standards for completion of the summative evaluation are described in the syllabus for the Senior Seminar. Students are notified in advance of all performance criteria.

Students who have successfully completed the PA program curricular requirements are recommended for graduation by the Program Director to the Dean of the Gregg Wadley College of Science and Health Professions.⁴²

Credentials awarded

NSU Physician Assistant Studies program graduates are awarded a Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies (MS-PA). Program graduates are qualified to sit for the Physician Assistant National Certifying Examination administered by the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants.

⁴² ARC-PA *Standard A3.15 b*

Record release

Students will be asked during orientation to sign, “Student Consent and Release for use of Picture and Select Data” form for the purposes of record release to committees and agencies directly related to the PA program. These agencies include the Student Progress Committee, Operations Committee, ARC-PA, PAEA, NCCPA, and AAPA. Student academic information will not be released in response to any other inquiry, unless an explicit release is obtained from the student. For more information on your right to privacy as a student, please see the [NSU policy](#)⁴³ on privacy of student records.

⁴³ <https://www.nsuok.edu/Administration/UniversityPolicies/FERPA.aspx>

Student Response to Covid-19

This addendum is as of August 7, 2020. Please keep up-to-date with frequent visits to:
<https://offices.nsuok.edu/studentaffairs/Coronavirus>

