# Physician Assistant

## Nature of the Work

For descriptions of this profession see:

- *Admissions* section of the Physician Assistant Education Association (PAEA) website ([www.paeaonline.org](http://www.paeaonline.org))
- ([www.explorehealthcareers.org](http://www.explorehealthcareers.org))

## Course Requirements

- Requirements vary by school
- Check the *Physician Assistant Programs Directory* ([www.paeaonline.org](http://www.paeaonline.org))
- Generally, course work should include general biology, general chemistry and sometimes organic chemistry, human anatomy and physiology, microbiology, statistics, social sciences, and humanities

## Application Timeline

Physician assistant school directly after Gettysburg College:

- Required courses completed by end of senior year (although preference may be given to applicants that complete the required courses sooner)
- Apply summer between junior and senior years

## Standardized Test

- Usually Graduate Record Exam (GRE) revised General Test ([www.ets.org/gre](http://www.ets.org/gre))
- Given year-round at computer-based test centers
- Length ~ 4 hours
- 3 sections: Verbal Reasoning (score 130-170), Quantitative Reasoning (score 130-170), Analytical Writing (score 0-6)
- Register on-line ([www.ets.org/gre](http://www.ets.org/gre))
- Free and low-cost preparation materials ([www.ets.org/gre](http://www.ets.org/gre))
- Unofficial scores on test day, official scores in 10-15 days

## Application Service

- Most physician assistant programs participate in the Central Application Service for Physician Assistants (CASPA) ([www.caspaonline.org](http://www.caspaonline.org))
- Available ~ mid-April
- Each school selects an application deadline
- For physician assistant programs that do not participate in CASPA, apply directly to the school
- APPLY EARLY!!! Do not wait until application deadlines!
| Admissions Criteria                                                                 | • GPA (check the *Physician Assistant Programs Directory* for #’s)  
|                                                                                    | • GRE scores (check the *Physician Assistant Programs Directory* for #’s)  
|                                                                                    | • Written statement  
|                                                                                    | • Letters of evaluation  
|                                                                                    | • Health-related experience (type and amount varies greatly by school; check the *Physician Assistant Programs Directory*)  
|                                                                                    | • Interview |
| Length of Program                                                                 | • Varies by school (check the *Physician Assistant Programs Directory*)  
|                                                                                    | • Typically ~ 2 years |
| Degree                                                                           | • Most award a master’s degree |
| Additional Resources                                                             | • Physician Assistant Education Association ([www.paeonline.org](http://www.paeonline.org))  
|                                                                                    | • American Academy of Physician Assistants ([www.aapa.org](http://www.aapa.org))  
|                                                                                    | • PA Shadow On-line ([www.pashadowonline.com](http://www.pashadowonline.com)) |