

**AUGUSTA UNIVERSITY**

# **PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT DEPARTMENT**

**STUDENT HANDBOOK (A3.02)**



Changes and updates to this handbook may occur at any point during your enrollment with timely notification.

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## FACULTY INTRODUCTION

CONGRATULATIONS! Welcome to the Augusta University Physician Assistant Program!

This Physician Assistant Student Handbook has been published for your benefit. Please read it in its entirety. As a faculty, we have created an educational regimen designed to develop physician assistants with the knowledge and skills to practice in all aspects of medicine. The contents of this handbook outline the guidelines for that education, as well as the program rules, definitions, and expectations. It is required that each student be familiar with its contents. Clarification and explanation should be sought from the faculty if needed. It is expected that information in this book will be altered as is necessary and further information may be added periodically.

You are embarking on the final stage in your journey to becoming a physician assistant. As you grapple with the impact of that reality, be mindful of the efforts, skills and persistence that have culminated in creating the person that you are as you strive to make your dream a reality. Each effort, trial, failure, and triumph has imprinted its wisdom upon your character. That character is the base upon which your experience as a physician assistant student will grow.

The responsibility held by physician assistants is vast and immeasurable. In the words of our professional founders:

*“... (PAs) know patients; they are aware of the triumphs and failures of medicine; they know how doctors think and what they do with information collected about patients. For these reasons, they are in demand by all businesses that touch the medical profession. The world is open, and PAs are grasping their share.”*

-Eugene Stead and Frank Starmer

Gird yourself for the final leg of your journey, being ever mindful of the value and wisdom of your experiences that have carried you thus far.

The Physician Assistant Department faculty and staff welcome you and wish you great success!

Stevie Redmond and Kelly Reed  
Education Team

*“The majority of us lead quiet, unheralded lives as we pass through this world. There will most likely be no ticker-tape parades for us, no monuments created in our honor. But that does not lessen our possible impact, for there are scores of people waiting for someone just like us to come along... someone who will live a happier life merely because we took the time to share what we have to give. Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word... all of which have the potential to turn a life around. It's overwhelming to consider the continuous opportunities there are to make our love felt.”*

-Leo Buscaglia

## STUDENT INTRODUCTION

Dear Class of 2025,

Welcome to Augusta University's Physician Assistant Program! It is our joy and honor to walk with each of you as you begin the next step in your journey. The next 27 months will not only be a time of refinement of skills and knowledge, but also a time to make lifelong bonds, bolster your confidence, and make a difference in the Augusta community. Each of your unique experiences and perspectives are vital to the success of your class. As you prepare for your first day, continue to remind yourselves that you belong here. Our greatest hope is that you may approach this season graciously and humbly, viewing each new experience as a learning opportunity.

Three key factors that will contribute to your success will be your community, health, and your mentality. In building a community, your classmates will become like family during this time and the faculty will be instrumental in your journey as they will give a lot of time and energy into giving you the resources that you need for your path as a future provider. You will be amongst some of the most talented and brilliant individuals, motivating, learning, and supporting each other as you are pushed outside of your comfort zone in order to reach new heights.

The journey ahead will be challenging, so it is important to prioritize your mental health. Keep in mind that emotional reactions to PA school troubles are a normal response to an abnormal situation. Seek help, guidance, and encouragement from your peers, support group, or faculty if you need it. Remember why you chose this path and seek opportunities to strengthen that connection when faced with adversity.

Success and failure are inevitable in any pursuit, it is important to remember where your true values lie. See failure not as a defeat, but as a valuable opportunity to learn and grow. Moreover, embrace the pressure of this challenging path filled with humility and courage, and let your resilience shine through. The mentality you bring with you each day will greatly affect how you look back on this experience and the benefits of your hard work will not only be reflected in your self-fulfillment, but also in the quality of care you'll be able to provide for your future patients.

As you learn how to diagnose and treat your future patients as a provider, you will also be trained to be a respectful and competent colleague. Professionalism goes beyond how you act and look outwardly, but more so points to an inward posture of respect and humility. By the end of your time here at Augusta University, we trust that you all will carry yourselves with composure and be grounded in your position as health care providers and patient advocates.

Finally, we want to encourage each of you. You are far more capable than you realize. You will be stretched in PA school, but constantly amazed that you are able to rise to the challenge. Set the tone for your class and approach every opportunity with enthusiasm and determination. We cannot wait to see what each of you will accomplish in the next 27 months.

Best wishes,  
Kendrick R. De Castro & Sydney Ver Steeg  
President and Vice President  
AU PA Class of 2024

## **Augusta University Physician Assistant Department**

### **GENERAL PROGRAM INFORMATION**

The physician assistant is a skilled professional qualified by academic and clinical training to provide medical and health care services under the supervision of a licensed physician. In most settings, physician assistants obtain medical histories, perform physical examinations, order, and interpret laboratory and other diagnostic studies, assess and manage common illness, and perform minor procedures. Disease prevention and health promotion activities, including counseling and patient education, are important services also provided by physician assistants. Practice options for the certified physician assistant are as varied as the many disciplines within the field of medicine.

Established in 1972, the Augusta University Physician Assistant (PA) Program offers a comprehensive education that allows graduates to become employed in many specialty areas. Individually negotiated roles are determined by the needs of the medical practice and community, the interests and training of the supervising physician and the physician assistant, and local hospital and state regulations.

Physician assistants in the state of Georgia practice under the provisions of the Physician Assistant Act, the Rules of the Composite State Board of Medical Examiners, and an approved job description. Successful completion of the National Certifying Examination for Physician Assistants is required.

### **ACCREDITATION**

The Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA) is the accrediting agency that protects the interests of the public and PA profession by defining the standards for PA education and evaluating PA educational programs within the territorial United States to ensure their compliance with those standards. The Augusta University Physician Assistant Program is fully accredited by the Accreditation Review Committee on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA). Full accreditation status has been maintained throughout the program's history.

The ARC-PA encourages excellence in PA education through its accreditation process by establishing and maintaining minimum standards of quality for educational programs. It awards accreditation to programs through a peer review process that includes documentation and periodic site visit evaluation to substantiate compliance with the Accreditation Standards for Physician Assistant Education. The accreditation process is designed to encourage sound educational experimentation and innovation and to stimulate continuous self-study and improvement.

The American Academy of Family Physicians, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Physician Assistants, the American College of Physicians, the American College of Surgeons, the American Medical Association, and the Association of Physician Assistant Programs all cooperate with the ARC-PA to establish, maintain, and promote appropriate standards of quality for entry level education of physician assistants

(PAs) and to provide recognition for educational programs that meet the minimum requirements outlined in these Standards.

## **PURPOSE**

The Augusta University Physician Assistant Department (PAD) has as its purpose the enhancement and promotion of the physician assistant role in health care delivery through the preparation of qualified applicants to work as certified physician assistants.

## **MISSION**

The mission of the Augusta University Physician Assistant Department is to develop physician assistants with the knowledge and skills to practice in all aspects of medicine, to participate in scholarship in academia and medicine, and to promote the physician assistant profession through leadership, mentorship, and community services which will meet the diverse needs of society.

## **PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT DEPARTMENT POLICIES**

The policies outlined in this document (and in the clinical curriculum policy document) serve as the framework and guide for the processes and actions of the AU PA program and faculty. The AU PA program and faculty will adhere to these policies and processes in all circumstances, and with all students, unless a student situation involves a highly compelling indication for an exception. In the event of a highly compelling indication for an exception, a majority faculty vote will determine if an exception to policy is appropriate and warranted. Exceptions to policy will be an extremely rare occurrence.

General Complaint Procedures for Students:

In the event a student is unsure how to submit a complaint (*any complaint while a student is in the AU PA program*) or initiate an appeal or grievance; the student should notify the Office of Dean of Students in writing. [Augusta University Informal Student Complaint Form](#)

### **ABILITY AND TECHNICAL STANDARDS:**

#### **ABILITY**

Students with an ability limitation or in need of special provisions must inform the Director of Education prior to the beginning of didactic activity, or immediately upon obtaining the knowledge, awareness, or diagnosis of such a provision or need. See Section 7.1 Americans with Disabilities Act in the [Augusta University Student Manual](#).

#### **TECHNICAL STANDARDS**

The mission of the Augusta University Physician Assistant Program is to graduate knowledgeable, skilled, and effective physician assistants. It is the responsibility of the faculty to select applicants who are best qualified to complete the required training and most likely to become the best possible physician assistants. Applicants are selected based not only on their scholastic achievement and ability, but also on their intellectual, physical, and emotional capacities to meet the requirements of the curriculum, achieve the program defined competencies, and develop a successful career in medicine.

The following technical standards specify those attributes that are necessary for completing physician assistant training, enabling each graduate to subsequently enter clinical practice. These standards describe the essential functions that must be demonstrated in order to fulfill the requirements of physician assistant practice, and thus, are pre-requisites for entrance, continuation, promotion, retention, and completion of the Augusta University PA Program.

The Augusta University PAD will consider for admission any applicant who meets academic criteria and demonstrates the ability to perform or learn to perform the skills listed in this document, with or without reasonable accommodations consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act, Civil Rights Restoration Act, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Any applicant with questions about these technical requirements is strongly encouraged to discuss the issue with the Office of Student Affairs prior to the interview process.

The Augusta University PAD shall provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities otherwise qualified to complete the essential functions of the curriculum.



However, such essential functions must be completed by the student in a reasonably independent fashion. The safety and welfare of a patient shall never be put in jeopardy as a result of an effort to reasonably accommodate a disability.

More specifically, a student in the Physician Assistant Program must have adequate abilities and skills in the following five areas as detailed below:

1. **Observation:** The student must be able to observe demonstrations and conduct experiments in the basic sciences, including but not limited to chemical, biological, anatomical, and physiological sciences, microbiological cultures, and microscopic studies of microorganisms. A student must be able to observe a patient accurately at a distance and close at hand. Observation necessitates the functional use of the sense of vision and other sensory modalities. A student must be able to integrate all information visually and through the other senses.
2. **Communication:** A student must be able to communicate effectively, sensitively, and rapidly in English with patients and members of the health care team. A student must be able to elicit information from patients, perceive nonverbal communications, and describe changes in mood, activity, and posture. Communication includes not only speech, but writing, reading, interpreting graphs, and computer literacy.
3. **Sensory and Motor Function:** The student must have sufficient sensory and motor function to elicit information from patients by palpation, auscultation, percussion, and other diagnostic maneuvers. The student will be required to coordinate both gross and fine muscular movements, equilibrium, and functional use of the senses of hearing, touch, and vision.

More specifically, the student must be able to exercise such fine motor skills as to adequately perform laboratory tests, including but not limited to wet mount, urinalysis, and gram stain. The student must exercise such level of dexterity, sensation, and visual acuity as to accurately complete such processes as administering intravenous medication, making fine measurements of angles and size, measuring blood pressure, respiration and pulse, performing physical examinations, and performing therapeutic procedures such as suturing and casting.

The student must be able to hear sufficiently to accurately differentiate percussive notes and auscultatory findings, including but not limited to heart, lung, and abdominal sounds, as well as discern normal and abnormal findings using instruments such as tuning forks, stethoscopes, sphygmomanometers, and Doppler devices.

A student must be able to transport him or herself in a manner which provides a timely response in both general and emergency care situations. Moving patients and engaging in some procedures such as CPR will require a necessary level of strength.

4. **Quantitative Abilities:** A student must have the intellect necessary to quickly analyze and resolve problems. These intellectual abilities include numerical recognition, measurement, calculations, reasoning, analysis judgment, and synthesis. The student must be able to identify significant findings from the patient's history, the physical examination, and laboratory data; provide a reasoned explanation for likely diagnoses; and choose appropriate medications and therapy.

The ability to incorporate new information from many sources in formulating diagnoses and plans is essential. Good judgment in patient assessment, diagnostic, and therapeutic planning is primary. When appropriate, students must be able to identify and communicate the limits of their knowledge to others.

5. **Behavioral and Social Attributes:** A student must possess the emotional health required for full use of his or her intellectual abilities, the exercise of good judgment, and the prompt completion of all responsibilities attendant to the diagnosis and care of patients. The development of mature, sensitive, effective, and professional relationships with patients and members of the health care team is essential. Students must be able to tolerate physically and mentally taxing workloads and to function effectively under stress. They must be able to adapt to changing environments, to display flexibility, and learn to function in the face of uncertainties inherent in the clinical problems of many patients. In the event that a student displays behavior concerning to the faculty, the faculty can request that the student take a medical leave of absence for further evaluation by a licensed healthcare provider before returning to the program.

Compassion, integrity, interpersonal skills, interest, responsibility, accountability, and motivation are all personal qualities that are desired in a health professional and assessed during the admissions and education process.

The Technical Standards were adapted from *Competencies for the Physician Assistant Profession* NCCPA 2005.

## **SATISFACTORY PROGRESSION**

Students must enroll in all required Physician Assistant Department (PAD) didactic courses for each semester, maintain a 3.0 minimum GPA, and achieve a minimum grade of “C” in each required course in the didactic phase to continue with uninterrupted progress and satisfactory academic standing throughout the didactic phase of the curriculum.

Students must also meet the professional standards of the PA Program to continue with uninterrupted progress throughout the didactic phase of the curriculum.

There is no part-time student status allowed in the PA Program. Enrollment in a sequenced course requires the achievement of a passing grade in the required prerequisite course.

If a student meets any of the following criteria, the student will be recommended for dismissal from the PA Program:

- fails ***any didactic or clinical phase*** course while in the PA program
- accrues 5 major graded activity failures
- on academic probation and fails to meet requirements of probation
- fails to successfully remediate professionalism deficiencies
- incurs 7 professionalism violations
- commits an egregious professional act (*as determined by the faculty*)
- fails to pass or successfully remediate the summative evaluation components
- at the end of the curriculum but has failed to achieve program competencies (*as determined by a majority of the PAD faculty*)
- at the end of the curriculum but has failed to meet or remediate the academic, professional, or technical standards of the program (*as determined by the PA faculty*)

Any exception to this policy will only be considered in cases with highly compelling extenuating circumstances and must be agreed upon by a majority of the PAD faculty.

### **Promotion to the Clinical Phase:**

To be eligible for promotion to the clinical phase of the program, each student must meet the following requirements:

1. Have successfully passed or successfully remediated all major graded activities, labs, and any course items determined by the PAD faculty required for remediation during the didactic phase.
2. Have earned a satisfactory letter grade of A, B, or C for all required didactic courses.
3. Is considered to be in satisfactory academic standing OR determined (*by majority faculty vote*) to be sufficiently meeting the expectations and requirements of his/her/their academic probation to progress in the program. [*Students on academic probation at the time of promotion to the clinical phase may be issued an updated probation letter to outline expectations and requirements in regard to their probationary status in the clinical phase*].

4. Have satisfactorily completed American Heart Association Health Care Provider Courses “Basic Life Support” (BLS) and “Advanced Cardiac Life Support” (ACLS) before promotion to the clinical phase.
5. Sufficiently meeting the professional and technical standards of the program (*as determined by the PA faculty*) for a student at the end of the didactic phase

Any student who does not achieve all of these requirements will be recommended for dismissal from the PA program. If the PAD chair determines that circumstances in the student’s case warrant review, the PAD faculty will review the case and majority faculty vote will determine if the student:

- is recommended for dismissal, **OR**
- is allowed to remain in the program with a plan for remediation and progression as determined by the faculty [*student will be placed on academic probation if allowed to remain in the program*].

### **Promotion to Graduation:**

To be eligible for graduation from the PA program, each student must meet the following requirements:

1. Have successfully passed or successfully remediated all major graded activities, clinical training, and coursework as required by the PAD during the clinical phase
2. Have met the program defined benchmarks for patient encounters, technical skills, and clinical training hours
3. Remained in satisfactory academic standing throughout the clinical phase **OR** have met the expectations to be eligible for graduation outlined by the student’s academic probation
4. Maintained AHA BLS and ACLS certification for the entire clinical year.
5. Achieved program competencies (*as determined by the PA faculty*).
6. Successfully passed or successfully remediated all components of the summative evaluation.
7. Successfully met and/or remediated the academic, professional, and technical standards of the program (*as determined by the PA faculty*).

Any student who does not achieve all of these requirements **will not** be forwarded for graduation. If a student has reached completion of the curriculum and does not achieve all of these requirements, the PAD faculty will review the case and majority faculty vote will determine if the student:

- is recommended for dismissal, **OR**
- is allowed to remain in the program with a plan for remediation and progression as determined by the faculty; this will result in delayed graduation [*student will be on academic probation if allowed to remain in the program*].

## **PAD STUDENT WITHDRAWAL**

The policy regarding student withdrawal can be found at the following URL: [Student Withdrawal Health Sciences Campus](#).

The authority to withdraw a student for failure to comply with selected administrative policies and procedures rests with the Registrar. The Registrar may administratively withdraw a student for failure to pay tuition and fees, failure to meet the conditions of a provisional acceptance, failure to meet institutional requirements for immunizations, or failure to comply with other administrative requirements for admission or continued enrollment. Any withdrawal initiated by the Registrar shall be considered an administrative withdrawal. Students who are withdrawn by the Registrar may only be re-admitted when they provide documentation that they have complied with the administrative policy in question. Students may be readmitted by the Registrar as soon as the student demonstrates compliance with the policy or regulation in question.

## ADMINISTRATIVE SANCTIONS

In this document, an *administrative sanction* refers to a sanction imposed on a student by the department or program based on student's failure to meet the academic, professional and/or technical standards of the PA program. Such sanctions may include:

1. recommendation for suspension
2. recommendation for dismissal
3. change to probationary status (*placed on academic probation*)
4. requirement that a student repeat a given course, semester, or period of study

If the PAD makes an administrative decision which affects a student's standing or progression in the PA program, the student will be sent a letter with a signature sheet acknowledging receipt. The signature sheet will have a due date for return.

The student has the right to request an appeal of the administrative sanction with a formal hearing at the program level (*Academic Advisory Committee or Professional Advisory Committee*). The student must send a written request for this appeal to the PA Department Chair within five [5] business days of when the letter is provided to the student or by the date and time specified in the letter. If the letter is provided to the student by email (*sent to student's university email address*), the five [5] days begins on the date the email was sent to the student.

If the administrative sanction allows for student progression in the program without interruption (*such as with probation*) and the student has returned the signed signature sheet acknowledging receipt but does **NOT** provide written request for appeal at the program level **OR** withdraw from the program within five [5] business days of when the letter was provided to the student (*or by the date and time specified on the letter*), the PA program will accept that as the student's choice to agree and abide by the sanction without appeal. If the letter is provided to the student by email (*sent to student's university email address*), the five [5] days begins on the date the email was sent to the student.

If the student does not sign the signature page of receipt within the five [5] days (*or specified date and time in the letter*), then the program will accept that as the student's intent to withdraw from the program.

It is the student's responsibility to read, understand, and abide by policies regarding appeal of any program administrative decision/sanction or other appeal while a student is in the program. It is the student's responsibility to initiate the appropriate steps. Administrative decision/sanction letters, course director decisions, grading decisions, meetings with PA program representatives and other program communications do not need to include an overview of the appeals process as the student is responsible for this information.

### **Recommendation for Dismissal from PA program:**

A student who consistently and persistently fails to meet the academic, professional and/or technical standards of the Physician Assistant Program will be referred to the CAHS Dean for dismissal.

Only the CAHS Dean can dismiss a student from a CAHS program (*including the PA program*). If a student is dismissed by the CAHS Dean from the program, they will be ineligible to reapply to the program in the future.

The PA program will communicate the decision to recommend a student for dismissal to both the student and the CAHS Dean. The student will have five [5] business days to submit a written request for appeal at the program level; this request must be given by the student to the PA Department Chair. If no request for appeal or withdrawal from the program is received within the 5 business days, the PA Department Chair will notify the CAHS Dean to proceed with the recommendation for dismissal.

Once the PAD has recommended dismissal of a **didactic** student (*this decision will be communicated to the student in an official letter*), the student will be required to continue to attend class until one of the following occurs:

- student completes official withdrawal from the program
- student is dismissed from the program by the Dean of CAHS
- appellate process through the PAD level and CAHS level is completed and the Dean of CAHS has upheld the decision

If a student appeals a PAD administrative sanction at the PAD level and is not successful in the appeals process at the PAD level, the student has the option to appeal the decision at the college level. This appeal will be evaluated by an appointed College of Allied Health Sciences Review Body (CAHS-RB). The decision of the CAHS-RB will be communicated to the Dean of the CAHS. The student will be removed from their courses once the decision for suspension or dismissal has been upheld by the Dean of the CAHS. Any exception to this policy will be determined by the Dean of the CAHS.

If a student's attendance in class poses a potential safety risk to any involved parties (*i.e., the student, other students in the program, faculty, staff*), the program will determine if continued attendance is appropriate and allowed.

Once a recommendation for dismissal of a **clinical** student has been made by the PAD and communicated to the student, the clinical student will be removed from their course(s) and/or clinical rotation(s). The student will not be allowed to continue to participate at any clinical rotation site once a student has been notified of PAD decision to recommend for dismissal from the program. In the event a student appeals the recommendation for dismissal and is successful in appeal (*at any level*) such that reinstatement to the curriculum results, this may result in a delay of graduation.

If a student requests an appeal of program recommendation for dismissal based on failure to meet the **academic** standards of the program, this appeal will be evaluated in a hearing with the Academic Advisory Committee (AAC).

If a student requests an appeal of program recommendation for dismissal based on failure to meet the **professional** standards of the program, this appeal will be evaluated in a hearing with the Professional Advisory Committee (PAC).

## APPEALS PROCESS

It is the responsibility of the student to read, understand, and abide by the policies and processes of the AU PA Program, College of Allied Health Sciences (CAHS), Augusta University, and the Board of Regents including those policies and processes governing appeals and grievances.

All student appeals in the PA program must be made within 5 business days of the action/item being appealed.

### STUDENT APPEALS: General Guidelines

Any student in the PA Program may appeal a decision or action taken by the program. The student, in making an appeal, should adhere to the following process:

1. Contact and seek changes from the course coordinator (if course related) and/or the assigned student advisor.
2. If the request is denied by the course coordinator, contact the PA Department Chair requesting official appeal of the decision at the program level.

If the request is denied at the program level, the student should make a written request in accordance with the [CAHS Review Body Guidelines and Principles](#).

Should the student receive an adverse decision at the college level, they can seek further appeal at the institutional level and even appeal to the Board of Regents. [Augusta University Student Manual](#)

#### General Complaint Procedures for Students:

In the event a student is unsure how to submit a complaint (*any complaint while a student in the AU PA program*) or initiate an appeal or grievance; the student should notify the Office of Dean of Students in writing. [Augusta University Informal Student Complaint Form](#)

### STUDENT APPEALS: Administrative Sanctions

A student can appeal a program sanction (*such as probation or recommendation for dismissal*) that impacts the student's progression in the program if the student believes the sanction is not consistent with policies and processes as defined by the AU PA Student Handbook.

The student also has the right to withdraw from the program in lieu of making an appeal or proceeding forward with the program sanction.

The levels of appeal are as follows and must be pursued in this order:

1. **Program/department level:** If a student chooses to appeal an administrative sanction by the PA program, the appeal will first be reviewed by the AAC (*if due to failure to meet academic standards*) or PAC (*if failure to meet the professional standards*).



If the AAC/PAC upholds the program sanction, it will be forwarded to the CAHS Dean.

2. **College level:** If a student chooses to appeal the program sanction after it has been upheld by the AAC/PAC, the student must follow the CAHS guidelines for appeal at the college level.
3. **Institutional level:** If a student chooses to appeal the program sanction after it has been upheld by the CAHS Dean, the student must follow Augusta University guidelines for appeal at the university/institutional level.
4. **Board of Regents:** There is no appeal of the President's decisions except in cases where it is reasonably alleged that a decision against the student was based on discrimination with respect to race, sex, age, handicap, religion, or national origin. In this instance, the student should follow policies for the Board of Regents to appeal the decision.

Please see these links regarding the policy at the different levels of appeals:

- College of Allied Health Sciences: [CAHS Student Appeals Policy](#).
- Augusta University Student Manual: [AU Student Manual 2022-23](#)
- Board of Regents University System of Georgia: [Student Appeals](#).

### **Program/Department Level Appeal:**

If a student chooses to appeal a program sanction that impacts the student's progression in the program, the student must submit the request to appeal in writing to the PA Department Chair within five [5] business days (*or the date and time specified in the letter*) of being notified of the program sanction. It is the student's responsibility to gather evidence necessary to support the student's case and this evidence must be submitted to the PA Department Chair within two [2] business days of the original request for appeal.

The ACC/PAC hearing will be held as soon as feasibly possible once the student has made the written request for appeal to the PA Department Chair.

The burden of proof is on the student to show evidence that the program sanction is not consistent with policies and processes as defined by the AU PA Student Handbook.

Based on the merits of the case, the Academic Advisory Committee (AAC; *if sanction is for failure to meet academic standards of the program*) or Professional Advisory Committee (PAC; *if sanction is for failure to meet the professional standards of the program*) can:

- **Uphold the sanction:** the AAC/PAC can conclude that the program sanction is consistent with the policies and processes as defined by the AU PA Student Handbook, OR
- **Recommend Program Review:** the AAC/PAC can conclude that the program sanction is NOT consistent with the policies and processes as defined by the AU PA Student Handbook and recommend that the PA faculty review the student's case again and determine a path for progression in the program.

## **PROGRAM LEVEL APPEALS REVIEW COMMITTEES: Purpose and Composition**

### **ACADEMIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE (AAC)**

#### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of the Academic Advisory Committee (AAC) is to review student appeal of a program administrative decision for failure to meet the academic standards of the program and to make recommendation to the PA Department Chair regarding whether the sanction is consistent with policies and processes as defined in the AU PA Student Handbook.

#### **COMPOSITION**

The Education Team (*Director or Associate Director of Education for the PAD*) or other designated faculty will be responsible for arranging the AAC and selecting committee members. The AAC Chair will be either the Director or Associate Director of Education for the PAD or another designated PAD faculty member. The AAC Chair is a non-voting member of the committee. Three [3] to five [5] AAC voting members will be chosen from clinical Physician Assistants who are familiar with the AU PA program and/or Augusta University faculty from other departments. If individuals selected for the AAC have any connections to the student, those connections must be disclosed to the AAC Chair at the time of selection, an alternative individual may be selected for that seat on the AAC.

### **PROFESSIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PAC)**

#### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of the Professional Advisory Committee (PAC) is to review student appeal of a program administrative decision for failure to meet the professional or technical standards of the program and to make recommendation to the PA Department Chair regarding whether the sanction is consistent with policies and processes as defined in the AU PA Student Handbook.

#### **COMPOSITION**

The Professionalism Chair(s) or other designated faculty will be responsible for arranging the PAC and selecting committee members. The PAC Chair will be one of the Professionalism Chairs of the PAD or another designated PAD faculty member. The PAC Chair is a non-voting member of the committee. Three [3] to five [5] AAC voting members will be chosen from clinical Physician Assistants who are familiar with the AU PA program and/or Augusta University faculty from other departments. If individuals selected for the PAC have any connections to the student, those connections must be disclosed to the PAC Chair at the time of selection, an alternative individual may be selected for that seat on the PAC.

## **PROGRAM LEVEL APPEALS REVIEW COMMITTEES: Process and Proceedings**

The following policies apply to both the AAC and PAC, which will be referred to as “the committee” in this section.

### **SECRETARY AND RECORDS OF THE COMMITTEE**

The committee Chair will act as secretary of the hearing and will be responsible for record-keeping. No forms of electronic recording devices are permitted during the committee hearing. A record shall be kept of proceedings and the evidence provided by the student and program. All deliberations and materials shall be confidential except as otherwise provided by state and federal law. The committee’s final decision will be recorded in the student's file. *Academic and professional disciplinary action and sanctions are reportable to future employers, licensing boards, academic programs, and any other entities the student releases the program to complete forms/references for regarding the student’s tenure in the program.*

### **JURISDICTION**

The committee (AAC and PAC) shall have jurisdiction over all students comprising the Augusta University Physician Assistant Program to review the academic considerations as they relate to promotion and graduation or to disciplinary action. The committee’s review will be in accordance with departmental and school wide policies.

### **EVIDENCE**

It is the student’s responsibility to gather evidence necessary to support the student’s case and this evidence must be submitted to the designated program representative within two [2] business days of the original request for appeal. The burden of proof is on the student to show evidence that the program sanction is not consistent with policies and processes as defined by the AU PA Student Handbook.

The PA Program may also provide evidence for the committee to review in its deliberations as needed to respond to the student’s appeal. The evidence provided by the program will be made available to the student before the hearing.

### **STUDENT WITNESSES**

The student may request approval of witnesses to attend the hearing. The committee Chair will determine the date and time by which the witness request(s) must be made in advance of the hearing.

The witness(es) must have direct knowledge related to the student’s appeal that the administrative decision or sanction is not consistent with the policies and processes as defined by the AU PA Student Handbook. The student must define what direct knowledge the witness(es) will provide the committee when making a request to the committee Chair for approval. The witness(es) cannot be character witnesses who do not provide direct knowledge regarding the student’s appeal. The witness(es) cannot be lawyers. The witness(es) must disclose the nature of their relationship to the student and program in advance of the hearing. If

the witness(es) are connected to the AU PA Program, have served as clinical instructional faculty for the program, or have participated in any prior hearings related to students in the AU PA Program (*at any level*); the witness(es) must agree to uphold FERPA regulations forbidding discussion of any former or current student or previous appeal hearings.

The committee Chair will review the witness(es) requested by the student. The committee Chair may choose not to approve a witness if the witness does not have direct knowledge regarding the appeal or if the student has requested multiple witnesses and the direct knowledge provided is redundant. In the event witnesses are not approved by the committee Chair, the committee Chair may allow the student to submit an affidavit from the witness into evidence.

### **PROGRAM REPRESENTATIVE**

The PA program will select a faculty representative to respond to the student's appeal in the hearing. This representative must not be also serving as the committee Chair.

### **PROGRAM WITNESSES**

The PA Program may also request witnesses to attend the hearing. The committee Chair will determine the date and time by which the program witnesses must be requested in advance of the hearing. The program witnesses must have direct knowledge pertinent to the administrative sanction or student's appeal. The committee Chair will review the witnesses requested by the program and may approve or may not approve if testimony is redundant. If witnesses are not approved, the committee Chair may allow the program to submit an affidavit from the witness into evidence.

### **PROCEEDINGS**

The hearing will be held as soon as feasibly possible once the student has made the written request for appeal to the PA Department Chair. The hearing should be scheduled in a minimum 2-hour block of time.

The hearing may be held in person or virtually as needed for all parties to attend.

All parties in attendance at the hearing must sign a FERPA and confidentiality attestation prior to the hearing and must disclose the nature of their relationship to the student and program.

The student will have an opportunity to speak on his/her/their own behalf at the hearing. This information must be submitted to the committee Chair at least 48 hours before the scheduled date and time of the committee hearing in the form of a letter to the committee Chair.

The student will have an opportunity to bring **approved** witness(es) to support the appeal into the hearing to provide testimony. The witness will be allowed to give a brief (5 minute) statement. The witness can then be questioned by the student, the program representative and subsequently any committee members. The witness will leave the meeting after her/his/their questioning is completed.

The program representative will have an opportunity to question the student and present the program's response to the student's appeal. The program approved witness(es) will then be called to provide a brief (5 minute) statement and be questioned by the program representative, the student, and any committee members.

The committee members (including the chair) may also request testimony from any other individuals who may have direct knowledge of the case, and/or further documentation as needed to review and make a decision.

## **RESPONSIBILITY**

The responsibilities of the committee members are as follows:

1. Each committee member will be required to sign a FERPA policy and confidentiality agreement and abide by FERPA regulations.
2. Review all evidence provided by the student and program in advance of the hearing.
3. Attend hearing in-person or virtually.
4. Hear student's appeal, program representative's response to appeal, approved witness statements and questioning.
5. Question all parties involved in hearing as needed to obtain understanding of the case.
6. Request additional testimony from other individuals and/or documentation as needed to review the case.
7. Conduct closed meeting; attendance at hearings is by approval of the committee Chair and invitation of the committee only.
8. Submit individual decision to the committee Chair in writing within three [3] business days of the conclusion of committee deliberations. The deliberations of the committee should take no longer than two [2] business days.

## **OUTCOME**

Each committee voting member will be responsible for providing his/her/their decision to the committee Chair in writing within three [3] business days of completion of committee deliberations.

The decision may be to:

- **Uphold the sanction:** the committee can conclude that the program sanction is consistent with the policies and processes as defined by the AU PA Student Handbook, OR
- **Recommend Program Review:** the committee can conclude that the program sanction is NOT consistent with the policies and processes as defined by the AU PA Student Handbook and recommend that the PA faculty review the student's case again

and determine a path for progression in the program. This will include a remediation effort as determined by the faculty.

The outcome of the committee is by majority vote. The committee Chair will report that overall outcome to the PA Department Chair.

The PA Department Chair then submits the final decision to the Dean of the CAHS concurrent with notification of the outcome to the student. If the PA Department Chair is unavailable, the Program Director or committee Chair may submit the final decision to the Dean of the CAHS. The student will have five [5] business days from the day of receipt of the committee outcome - via campus email- to reply or appeal the outcome at the college level. If the student does not respond within five [5] business days of receipt by email of the committee outcome, then the recommended sanction will take effect.

# SCHOLASTIC STANDARDS

## EXAMINATION POLICY

Examinations are to be taken on the scheduled date and time and in the designated classroom unless the student has received permission to test in a separate location. To receive approval to reschedule an examination date, the instructor and the course director must be notified **prior to** the examination. The examination will be rescheduled at the discretion and convenience of the instructor. Students should contact the PAD immediately should they have a true **emergency-illness, bereavement or unforeseen event** -preventing their taking an exam or arriving at an exam on time. Students should be prepared to show documentation verifying the emergency, death, or unforeseen event. An inability to provide this documentation in a timely manner may lead to a zero [0] for the examination grade.

If classes are being conducted in a hybrid setting, students who have been assigned to take an exam virtually must have:

- working WIFI
- a quiet private room (*no one else is allowed to be in the room with the student and door must be closed*)
- an electronic device that supports the exam proctoring program (*such as smart phone*)
- laptop, if needed for the administration of the examination

If a student is assigned to face-to-face presence on the day of an exam, they cannot switch to a virtual setting unless there is a medical emergency or personal illness at which time they must receive approval from the course directors for the day and they must supply documentation from a health care provider within 48 hours. An inability to follow these guidelines will count as an unexcused absence.

If a student arrives late to an examination or arrives unprepared for the examination (missing privacy screen, missing computer or computer charger, or fails to download the exam, etc.), the course director and/or proctor will determine the appropriate steps.

An unexcused absence from an examination will result in a letter grade deduction for the first offense. Any subsequent unexcused absences from an examination will be assigned a zero [0] unless a majority of the PAD faculty agree to allow the student to make up the missed examination. In the event a majority of the PAD faculty agree to allow the student to make up the missed examination, a minimum of 1 letter grade will be deducted from the examination score. The amount of the deduction will be determined by majority faculty vote.

Students arriving late for an examination will not have the benefit of instructions or directions given at the beginning of the examination. Students will not be allowed to leave the room where the examination is being administered until they have completed their own exam and turned it in or shown evidence to the exam proctor that the exam has been completed. This includes leaving the room for a restroom break. Any exception to this must be approved by the course director.

If classes are being conducted in a hybrid setting, students who have been assigned to take an exam virtually must sign in virtually on time. Students signing in late for an examination will not have the benefit of instructions or directions given at the beginning of the examination.

Students will not be allowed to leave the room where they are taking their examination until they have completed their own exam and turned it in or shown evidence to the exam proctor that the exam has been completed. This includes leaving the room for a restroom break. Any exception to this policy must be approved by the course director.

Students are allowed to use a dry erase board during an exam in a virtual setting as a form of “scratch paper” but the dry erase board must be wiped clean and shown to the exam proctor before the student is excused to sign off in a virtual setting. If a student fails to bring their dry erase board to an exam, they will not be allowed to use paper and pen as a form of scratch paper in a virtual setting. The private room students use for virtual proctoring must be free of any material near or visible to the testing space that may be considered a resource. Bookbags, books, loose papers, folders, any study materials, anatomic models or other physical resources, posters, wall fixtures (such as dry erase boards, cork boards, etc.) that may contain content pertinent to the exam must be removed from the testing area or appropriately covered (*if unable to move*). Student must clarify with the proctor if unsure if an item should be removed or covered.

When a student is taking an exam in the classroom, the student will be given a piece of “scratch paper” by a faculty member or staff member at the beginning of the exam. This piece of paper must be turned into the exam proctor at the completion of the exam. Students must also use a computer monitor privacy screen when taking their exam. Failure to bring the privacy screen for the examination will result in a professionalism advisory or warning.

During an examination, students are allowed to have the following items on their desk:

- one beverage
- one laptop [*if needed for the administration of the exam*]
- privacy screen is **required** if examination utilizes laptop
- an approved means to jot notes during the exam
  - If proctored **virtually**: student is permitted to have a dry erase board with dry erase marker and eraser
  - If proctored **in-person**: student is permitted to have 2 writing utensils and the PA Department provided scratch paper

All other items must be removed from the testing area. Students are not allowed to eat any food, including snacks, during an exam. No food items, papers, personal items, bags, or other items are allowed to be on or under the desk during an exam. Students are **not** allowed to wear smart watches or any similar technology during examinations. Students must show ear plugs to the proctor for approval prior to examination. Noise cancelling attire that resembles headphones or is equipped with any technology is prohibited. Students must also comply with any additional instructions from the exam proctor during the examination. Failure to comply with these rules will at a minimum result in a professionalism advisory or warning.

Any action taken by a student during an examination that is in violation of the examination policy of the PAD or the Augusta University Student Manual Academic Standards and Procedures (including academic honesty policy) can result in the student being assigned a zero [0] for that examination.

Test item grievances should be submitted in writing directly to the faculty member responsible for coordinating the section or course. Grievances should be made within 24 hours after the administration of the examination. Rebuttals should include a citation of the reference book used to include page number and paragraph.



If a student has been granted testing accommodations from Testing and Disability Services (TDS), the student will be required to complete their exam at one of the Testing Center locations (either assigned to the Summerville Campus or location in the Greenblatt library). Students may be required to start their exam as early as 7:30 AM in order to minimize the amount of lecture time missed following the exam. Students receiving testing accommodations are also expected to take their exam at the date and time specified by the course director.

It is not the responsibility of the PA Program to remind students to renew testing accommodations prior to the start of each semester. In the case that the PA faculty believes that a student should pursue testing accommodations from the TDS office, the faculty can only *recommend* that the student pursue accommodations. It is the responsibility of the student to contact the TDS office if they wish to pursue testing accommodations.

If a student decides to decline testing accommodations granted by the TDS office, they must notify the designated PA faculty member in writing. If a student has declined testing accommodations and they incur a major graded activity failure, that grade will not be expunged.

If a student decides to reinstate testing accommodations granted by the TDS office and failure of a major graded activity occurs during the process of reinstating testing accommodations, that grade will not be expunged. It is the responsibility of the student to provide written reinstatement of the testing accommodations to the designated PA faculty member should they wish to reinstate testing accommodations.

### [Augusta University Testing and Disability Services](#)

#### **Final Exam Policy for Didactic Year**

During the second, third and fourth semesters of the didactic year there are clinical medicine series courses taught. At the end of each of these semesters a comprehensive exam will be given over the clinical medicine series courses presented that semester. The exam grade will comprise 10% of the final grade for each of the clinical medicine courses taught that semester. Failure of a comprehensive exam (grade < 75.00%) will count as failure of a major graded activity (*as tracked by the PAD throughout the curriculum*) and must be successfully remediated before that student can progress to the next semester.

#### **Reviewing Exams**

During the didactic component students may be allowed to review the questions they missed immediately following the exam while they are in a proctored setting and in a lock down browser **if** the course director allows. Any attempt to copy, record, or share exam questions is strictly prohibited; students are not allowed to make notes while reviewing their exam questions. Attempts to copy any exam items or otherwise compromise the integrity of exam content in any way is a violation of the Academic Honesty policy and will be considered an egregious act and the student will be recommended for dismissal (*see Augusta University Student Manual*).

#### **GRADING POLICY**

## Grading:

The grading scale for courses taught within the PAD is 90.00 - 100 A, 80.00 – 89.99 B, 75.00 – 79.99 C, < 75.00 F. The College of Allied Health Sciences (CAHS) grading scale is used **only** for out of PAD coursework (*examples: anatomy, epidemiology, and biostatistics*). The CAHS grading scale for course grades and calculating GPA is as follows: 100 – 90 A, 89 – 80 B, 79 – 70 C, 69 – 60 D, 59 – 0 F.

Students must pass or successfully remediate all major graded activities to progress within the PA Program. Activities that are not considered *major graded activities* may also require successful remediation; this is determined by the course director. The method and assessment of remediation activities are determined by the course director.

The minimum passing score for all numerically graded activities within PAD courses is 75.00%. Failure to achieve a 75.00% on a major graded activity requires remediation. In the didactic phase, this remediation is determined by the course director and is aimed at helping the student improve knowledge in missed areas. In the clinical phase, remediation requires demonstrating mastery of the material.

Major graded activities graded on a Pass/Fail system require achievement of “Pass” for continued progression within the PA Program. Failure to achieve a “Pass” on a major graded activity requires remediation.

**Any** Pass/Fail item (*not limited to major graded activities*) that requires remediation **may** result in a letter grade deduction from the overall course grade (*or grade deduction as defined in the course syllabus*). Any Pass/Fail major graded activity that requires remediation **will** result in a letter grade deduction from the overall course grade (*or grade deduction as defined in the course syllabus*).

**Failure of five [5] major graded activities within PHAS courses** (*any course in PAD curriculum whose identifier begins with PHAS*) **will result in a recommendation for dismissal from the PA program.** This is tracked by the PA program across all PHAS courses throughout a student’s tenure in the program. Once a student has accrued 5 major graded activity failures (*regardless of which PHAS courses these occurred in, and regardless of remediation performance*), the student will be recommended for dismissal from the PA program. **\*\* During the CPAR pilot study, a student reaching five [5] failures while in the clinical phase may be allowed to remain in the program; please see description in the Clinical Curriculum Policies.**

## ROUNDING

All individual course grade items will be scored to two [2] decimal places. Scores on individual graded activities will not be rounded to the nearest whole number for the purpose of determining mastery. In the calculation of final course grades, all grade items will be entered into the grading algorithm with two [2] decimal places. The final course grade will not be rounded and will be scored to two [2] decimal places. [*89.99 = B, for example*]

## REMEDIATION

The remediation process for any course component(s) will be at the discretion of the course director. Remediation is required by PAD policy when the score for an exam or other major graded activity is less than 75.00% or is failing on a Pass/Fail graded item. Remediation may also be required for other activities in a course as determined by the course director. The remediation method and requirements will be determined by the course director.

If the remediation requires a graded assessment, the student must demonstrate a minimum of 75.00% on the assessment to be considered successful. If remediation does not include re-examination, the course director will determine if the remediation attempt was successful.

Failure to successfully remediate a numerically graded activity or Pass/Fail activity will result in recommendation for dismissal from the PA Program. If the course director determines an exception to this policy should be considered, the PAD faculty will review the case and majority faculty vote will determine if the student:

- is recommended for dismissal, **OR**
- is allowed another remediation attempt [*in the event another remediation attempt is allowed, the student will be placed on academic probation with an improvement plan; additional grade deductions in the course may also be applied*].

## PAD ACADEMIC PROBATION

A student in the PA program will be placed on academic probation when any of the criteria below are reached:

1. If the student's overall GPA falls below 3.0. If a student has an overall GPA below 3.0 for two consecutive semesters, the PA faculty will recommend dismissal from the PA program.
2. If a student reaches 4 major graded activity failures. The student will remain on academic probation for their tenure in the program if they have 4 major graded activity failures.
3. If a student fails to successfully remediate any program activity and the PAD faculty have reviewed the case with majority vote to make an exemption to the policies governing remediation (*recommendation for dismissal*), the student may be allowed another remediation attempt but will be placed on academic probation.

*\*If a student is required to complete a remediation effort as part of their academic probation, this may result in a delay in graduation.*

**If a student accrues 5 major graded activity failures while in the didactic phase, the student will be recommended for dismissal from the PA program. A student who accrues 5 major graded activity failures (throughout the didactic and clinical phase) while in the clinical phase, may be eligible to participate in CPAR in lieu of recommendation for dismissal.**

The requirements, remediation, and expectations of the student in the academic probationary period will be communicated in an official letter to the student. Refer to the *Administrative*

*Sanctions and Appeals Process* sections for more guidance on policies governing administrative decisions/sanctions and appeals.

While a student is on academic probation, they will be ineligible to be inducted into an honor society and may lose other privileges, including class officer positions.

Probationary status ends with either CAHS Dean dismissal from the program or reinstatement to satisfactory academic standing.

Academic probationary status is reportable to future employers, licensing boards, academic programs, and any other entities the student releases the program to complete forms/references for regarding the student's tenure in the program.

### **Reinstatement to satisfactory academic standing:**

A student can be removed from academic probationary status in the following 2 ways:

1. When all of the following criteria are met during the curriculum:
  - a) The student has earned an overall GPA of 3.0 or greater in the appropriate timeframe.
  - b) The student has less than four [4] major graded activity failures throughout the program.
  - c) The student has fulfilled the requirements of her/his/their academic probation.
2. The student has reached the end of the curriculum and all of the following criteria are met:
  - a) The student has successfully passed or successfully remediated all program courses and program requirements.
  - b) The student has fulfilled the requirements of her/his/their academic probation.
  - c) The student has demonstrated that she/he/they can meet the academic standards of the program to the satisfaction of a majority vote of the PA faculty.
  - d) The student has demonstrated achievement of all program competencies as determined by a majority vote of the PA faculty.
  - e) The student has met criteria to be eligible for graduation.

A student who is on academic probation and has completed all program requirements and courses and has completed the following:

- a) The student has fulfilled the requirements of her/his/their academic probation or has demonstrated that she/he/they can meet the academic standards of the program to the satisfaction of a majority vote of the PA Faculty.

### **RECOMMENDATION FOR DISMISSAL** (for failure to meet the academic standards of the program)

A student will be recommended to the CAHS Dean for dismissal due to failure to meet the academic standards of the program when any of the following criteria are met:

- fails any didactic or clinical phase course while in the PA program

- accrues 5 major graded activity failures
- on academic probation and fails to meet requirements of probation
- fails to pass or successfully remediate the summative evaluation components
- at the end of the curriculum but has failed to achieve program competencies (*as determined by a majority of the PAD faculty*)
- at the end of the curriculum but has failed to meet or remediate the academic standards of the program (*as determined by the PA faculty*)

Any exception to this policy must be agreed upon by a majority of the PAD faculty.

Refer to the *Satisfactory Progression and Promotion* sections for more guidance on program criteria for recommendation for dismissal, policies regarding administrative decisions/sanctions and appeals process.

### **DIDACTIC PHASE ACADEMIC REMEDIATION PILOT STUDY (DPAR-PS): Fall 2023 – Summer 2025**

The AU PA Program has implemented a temporary alternative to recommendation for dismissal in the following cases:

1. Student who has failed a PHAS course in the didactic phase of the curriculum but has NOT reached 5 major graded activity failures and has NOT failed >1 course in the didactic phase.

A student meeting the above conditions will be reviewed by the AU PA faculty and a majority faculty vote will determine if the student is eligible for participation in the Didactic Phase Academic Remediation Pilot Study (*henceforth referred to as DPAR-PS*). DPAR-PS is an optional alternative to recommendation for dismissal if offered to a student. Students have the right to decline participation in DPAR-PS and either withdraw from the program or pursue appeal of program administrative action.

*[A student who experiences 5 major graded activity failures while in the didactic curriculum will be recommended to the CAHS Dean for dismissal, as determined by majority faculty vote. This temporary alternative is also only available for students who have experienced failure to meet the academic standards of the program. Any students who have failed to meet professional standards, resulting in a course failure or meeting any other criteria for recommendation for dismissal related to professionalism concerns, will not be eligible for DPAR-PS]*

DPAR-PS will be evaluated for efficacy over a 2 year period from Fall 2023 Summer 2025. If this academic remediation is determined to be ineffective at sufficiently improving student outcomes, it will be discontinued. The AU PA faculty may modify DPAR-PS as appropriate during the 2 year timeframe if warranted.

The purpose of DPAR-PS is to determine the effectiveness of a course remediation process for students experiencing significant academic challenges in a didactic PHAS course. The premise of this study is that students who qualify did not obtain sufficient didactic knowledge in the PHAS course but have potential to correct the deficiencies needed to ultimately be successful in the program and clinical practice. DPAR-PS is intended to provide students an opportunity to take time away from the program to improve study

habits and address obstacles to student success and return to the didactic phase to remediate the failed course demonstrating resolution of knowledge deficiencies and improvement in overall fund of knowledge.

DPAR-PS will interrupt didactic training for the student. This will result in delayed graduation and likely will also incur a financial impact to the student related to tuition, fees, housing and other expenses associated with an extended training program.

DPAR-PS components will be tailored to the student case as needed but will include the following at a minimum:

1. Student will meet with the AU Academic Success Center and follow the recommendations from this office, including follow-up visits if appropriate.
2. Student will meet with the AU Testing and Disability Services office to explore whether new or additional accommodations are warranted that may improve student outcomes.
3. Student will prepare a detailed study schedule to be implemented for remaining didactic course work.
4. Details of the DPAR-PS timeline and plan will be provided to the student in an official letter and the student must review, clarify, agree, and sign the official letter by the provided deadline to be eligible for DPAR-PS.
5. Student will complete the semester in which the PHAS course failure occurred and will continue in the didactic phase until all remaining didactic courses are completed. *[If the student reaches 5 major graded activity failures or fails another course in the curriculum, the student will no longer be eligible for DPAR-PS]*
6. The student will then return to the didactic phase with the next cohort in the appropriate semester the failed PHAS course is offered and retake the PHAS course that had been failed. If the course was a clinical medicine course, the student must audit the other clinical medicine courses and pharmacology courses offered that semester and take the clinical medicine final exam for that semester.
7. The student must pass the failed PHAS course on retake with a course grade of at least 75.00.
8. The original failing course grade will remain on the student's transcript and will not be replaced.
9. Once DPAR-PS has been successfully completed and the student has earned a passing grade for all courses in the didactic curriculum and has <5 major graded activity failures, the student may be promoted to the clinical phase of the curriculum.

If the student successfully completes all components of DPAR-PS and passes the failed course, the student will then be reviewed for progression to the clinical phase. The start time for the clinical phase for the student may be off-track and will depend on preceptor availability.

Some examples of potential timelines for DPAR-PS:

1. Student fails a fall semester PHAS course: Student completes the remainder of the didactic phase with their cohort and then goes into the fall didactic

semester with the next cohort. Clinical training may then begin in the spring semester after successful completion of the fall DPAR-PS.

2. Student fails a spring semester PHAS course: Student completes the remainder of the didactic phase with their cohort, then takes a semester away from the program to return in the spring semester with the next cohort. Clinical training may then begin in the summer semester after successful completion of the spring DPAR-PS.
3. Student fails a summer semester PHAS course: Student completes the remainder of the didactic phase with their cohort, then takes 2 semesters away from the program to return to the summer semester with the next cohort. Clinical training may begin in the fall semester after successful completion of the summer DPAR-PS.

Student should anticipate and prepare for the impact of delayed graduation and financial needs if the student chooses to participate in DPAR-PS. Students on financial aid need to meet with the program and the financial aid office at AU to ensure the student fully understands the impact of DPAR-PS on their eligibility for financial aid.

Any student who completes DPAR-PS and is reinstated into the curriculum will be expected to meet all program requirements and academic standards. If the student has any additional failures to meet program expectations ( $\geq 5$  major graded activity failures, failure of another course in the curriculum), the student will be recommended to the CAHS Dean for dismissal.

## **PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS**

Students are expected to exhibit appropriate professional behavior during all aspects of program participation. Professional behavior includes the approach to and interaction with patients and medical staff, cooperation and respect with instructors and guest lecturers, attendance, interest, responsibility, accountability, and reliability shown in assigned work, attitude toward fellow students and hospital personnel, as well as personal appearance appropriate for the circumstances. It is expected that students will be prepared to participate in class and will not be under the influence of any substance that would interfere with professional conduct or their learning. See [Augusta University Student Manual](#) .

## **UNIVERSITY CONDUCT AND HONOR CODE**

All students are expected to read, understand, and adhere to the Honor Code and student disciplinary policies and procedures as outlined in the [Augusta University Student Manual](#).

In addition to professional competence, the student's behavior, demeanor, and attitude will be considered in any decisions regarding acceptable performance and promotion. The PA Department Chair reserves the right to recommend dismissal of a student for non-academic reasons as authorized by the College of Allied Health Sciences and the student has the right to appeal that decision according [CAHS Student Appeals Policy](#).

“The authority to withdraw a student for disciplinary, academic, or other appropriate reasons resides with the dean of the college in which the student is enrolled. The dean may delegate this authority to one or more individuals within the college. Any withdrawal initiated by the dean or his/her designee shall be considered an administrative withdrawal. Students who are withdrawn as the result of disciplinary, academic, or other reasons may appeal the withdrawal. During the appeal process, students may or may not be allowed to attend courses at the discretion of the dean or his/her designee. In the case of an appeal, the student’s withdrawal date will be the last date of participation in academic activities.” [Withdrawal Policy](#)

## **PROPER USE OF PROGRAM RESOURCES**

Students are expected and required to only use program resources as intended and provided for their education and training. Resources available in the classroom, exam rooms, OR suite, student resource room, and other areas on campus are to be used only with permission and for intended purposes.

The classroom computer is off limits to students unless supervised by a faculty member and the intent is to teach a class related to our curriculum.

This computer is not to be used for any other activities. Out of respect for classmates and lecturers, cell phone notifications, vibration, ringers should ALWAYS BE OFF while in the classroom.



## COMMUNITY SERVICE

Attention to professional development individually, as well as to the development of the profession, exemplifies high professional standards. Volunteerism and community service are an essential part of the PA profession. **Students are expected to participate in four approved community service activities during the didactic phase of the curriculum.**

Failure to complete four approved activities will result in a professional advisory or warning and a student may not be allowed to progress to the clinical phase. Each student must complete one [1] volunteer activity at the Equality Clinic and one [1] volunteer activity another of the approved community clinics through AU such as La Clinica Latina. As these activities occur, they should be:

1. logged into One45 in the Service and Leadership Survey by the student, AND
2. recorded in JAGPULSE

## PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Participation in professional associations is expected. Students are encouraged to participate in the Georgia Academy of Physician Assistants and the Student Academy of the American Academy of Physician Assistants.

## AMOROUS RELATIONSHIPS

### **Board of Regents (BOR) Policy No. 8.2.18.6:**

*“A University System of Georgia (USG) employee, including a graduate teaching assistant, is prohibited from having a romantic or sexual relationship with any student or USG employee who the individual supervises, teaches, or evaluates in any way. Additionally, a USG employee is prohibited from having a romantic or sexual relationship with any student or USG employee whose terms or conditions of education or employment the individual could directly affect.”*

Note: External clinical instructional faculty are viewed as a proxy of the University System of Georgia’s employee policy and must comply as well.

Please consult the PAD clinical director or program regarding any questions specifically relating to university policies regarding this issue.

## ATTENDANCE

Attendance is an integral component of participation and professionalism and is accordingly considered a graded activity. A student officially enrolled in a course is responsible for the content as specified in the course syllabus and is required to attend all classes in the course curriculum. Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes, laboratories, and small group sessions. During the didactic phase, the PA Department Chair, the Program Director, the Director of Education, and the Associate Director of Education have the authority to grant an immediate excused absence to a student for the following circumstances:

- Death of an individual with whom the student had a close relationship. The student must contact pertinent course directors and program leadership to notify of the need for bereavement leave and to develop the plan for bereavement leave. Bereavement leave may include up to **3 days** of excused absence to allow for travel needs and funeral attendance. Students are required to provide a death certificate, obituary, funeral or memorial service program and complete and return the absence form within 48 hours of the absence. The student is responsible for all missed lecture material. Should bereavement leave occur on a day when a skills lab is scheduled, the student is responsible for communicating with the course director about a potential makeup day or makeup assignment.

*\*If an individual (with whom the student has a close personal relationship) has an acute life-threatening event or decline in health and bereavement is anticipated, the student can discuss with program leadership if time away from program activities can be approved for the student to see the loved one.*

*\*\* If the student requests medical absence/sick leave on a day flanking the bereavement leave, a school excuse from medical provider will be needed for approval.*

- Accident or unforeseen circumstances making it impossible for a student to attend a scheduled class. Documentation from a healthcare provider, law enforcement officer, or another form of approved documentation showing evidence of the accident or unforeseen circumstance is mandatory as well as the absence form within 48 hours of the absence. The student is responsible for all missed lecture material.
- Military leave – student will be required to provide orders with dates of leave signed by their commanding officer before they are approved for military leave.
- Court date – student will be required to provide documentation showing that a legal entity is requiring their presence in a court of law. The student is responsible for all missed lecture material.

If multiple absences occur due to the items listed above, the student will be required to meet with the Education Team and/or the Professionalism Committee. Additional absences may result in a need for the student to take medical or hardship withdrawal.

The student is responsible for emailing the instructor of the course(s) missed or to be missed that day, their advisor, the PAD Education Directors, the PAD Program Director, and the PAD Chair. Should there be evidence of impropriety or abuse of policy in the use of these allowances as determined by the faculty, the absences will be counted as unexcused. The penalty for unexcused absence will be incurred.

Students must complete and submit the absence form for all types of absences as soon as possible.

Students must also provide documentation to support the absence (medical/school excuse, note from police officer, etc.)

## MEDICAL LEAVE

**Note: The following description of medical leave is pertinent only to the didactic phase. The medical leave policies for clinical year students are structured differently and described in the *Clinical Curriculum Policies*.**

We strongly encourage students to schedule personal medical appointments and family medical appointments outside of class whenever possible. Each semester, students will be allowed to take a maximum of five [5] days of modified attendance for medical reasons, if needed. Students will be granted two [2] medical leave days per semester that can be used for personal health related appointments/illness or appointments/illness of a close loved one when the attention of the student is required. These days may also be used for mental health days (with some limitations). Documentation from a healthcare provider (school excuse) will be required for any medical leave requested: on a day when an exam, lab, IPE, or high priority program activity is scheduled; on a day flanking a holiday weekend or break; on a day flanking a personal day for the student; on a day flanking bereavement leave; on a day when 10% or more of the cohort has been approved to be on leave (*for any reason – bereavement, medical, or personal day*). School excuse will also be required for any medical leave that would keep the student away from program activity exceeding one [1] day. The program absence form must be completed for ALL absences within 48 hours of the absence; this is mandatory for it to be an excused absence. Students do not need to be present on Microsoft Teams during medical leave days but they should email all course directors, Education Directors, Program Director and Department Chair and their advisor notifying them of this absence.

Students may also be issued an additional three [3] virtual attendance days for medical reasons. Attendance is mandatory via Microsoft Teams during these three [3] days. The student's computer camera must be on during the entire length of lecture and the student must be in a quiet, non-public space with no distractions. Documentation from a healthcare provider (school excuse) may be required as above. The absence form is required within 48 hours of the absence; this is mandatory for it to be an excused virtual attendance day.

If one of the medical absence days occurs the same day as an IPE event or skills lab, the student may have the opportunity to complete a separate assignment in order to make up the missed activity.

If a student exceeds the number of allotted medical leave/virtual days during a particular semester, the faculty will meet to discuss the progression of the student and may consider withdrawing the student from course(s) due to excessive absences. It is the student's responsibility to get any missed material from a classmate. The course director(s) are not responsible for meeting with the student to tutor on any material that was missed when a student uses a medical absence day.

Any change in health status that will interfere with the student's long-term ability to perform during the didactic or clinical phases of the curriculum could lead to the need of the student to take a medical or hardship withdrawal. It will be the responsibility of the student to provide a letter from their healthcare provider addressing the specific restrictions and estimated duration of restrictions to the Dean of Students' Office. The student must notify their advisor and Program Director if they are pursuing any type of withdrawal through the Dean of Students' Office or Registrar. Please note that if a major graded activity failure(s) occurs or professionalism violation(s) occurs, the failure(s) or violation(s) will not be expunged from

the student's record. Thus, a student experiencing a health status change should communicate with program leadership and the Dean of Students' as soon as is possible to notify of the change and need to take a withdrawal. If any course failures occur prior to medical or hardship withdrawal, the course failure will not be expunged from the student's record. If a student returns to the curriculum after taking a medical or hardship withdrawal, all major graded activity failures and professionalism violations will remain on the student's record when they are reinstated to the program. The policy regarding student withdrawal can be found at the following URL: [Medical Withdrawal Policy](#)

A day of unexcused absence is counted as 2 or more hours missed in one day. Students who incur unexcused absences for any reason are subject to academic penalty of 5 (five) points per two-hour lecture or lab period missed from course final grade. Should a student miss a significant part of a lecture without first discussing their absence with the instructor, they will be counted as absent. Points will be deducted from the section or course grade. All instructors may regularly or randomly monitor student attendance. The Class Secretary will be responsible for tracking attendance during the didactic year.

If classes are being conducted in a virtual setting, students are expected to attend virtually with their cameras on for the entire lecture. Failure to do so will result in an unexcused absence. Students are expected to have working WIFI, a quiet workspace in a non-public setting, and a dependable working computer. All hands-on labs, clinical check-offs, student cases, and in person IPE events cannot be completed virtually unless specified otherwise.

The student is responsible for all coursework missed and must contact the course instructor(s) within two [2] days of returning to class to schedule any make-up work. An unexcused absence from an examination will result in a letter grade deduction for the first offense. Any subsequent unexcused absences from an examination will be assigned a zero [0] unless a majority of the PAD faculty agree to allow the student to make up the missed examination. In the event a majority of the PAD faculty agree to allow the student to make up the missed examination, a minimum of 1 letter grade will be deducted from the examination score. The amount of the deduction will be determined by majority faculty vote.

## **PERSONAL DAY**

Students will be granted one [1] personal leave day for the didactic phase and three [3] personal leave days for the clinical phase. The personal leave day should be requested at least two [2] weeks or ten [10] business days in advance of the requested date and must be approved by the faculty. Any approved personal day of less than or equal to four [4] hours is considered a half day of personal leave and greater than four [4] hours is considered a full day of personal leave. The leave request form must be submitted to the designated faculty member via email at least 2 weeks prior to the requested day. If any leave request has not been submitted at least 2 weeks prior to the requested date, the leave request may not be considered or approved. In addition, if for any particular date, leave requests from the cohort exceed 10% of the class attendance, requests may be deemed unexcused with a grading penalty as specified in the Student Handbook. The personal leave day cannot fall on the day of an exam or lab, the day that student's small group is meeting, day of an IPE event, MPA day, or the day of end of rotation examinations. The student is responsible for any course work missed when using their personal day. The student should ask a classmate for any material missed in lecture. Lectures will not be recorded for students when they use their personal day.

## **PROFESSIONAL APPEARANCE**

Professional appearance and demeanor are a demonstration of self-respect, respect for the patient and the profession. From the first day of enrollment, students are representatives of the PA profession. This appearance and demeanor should be maintained at all times.

Augusta University identification badges (picture IDs) must be worn at all times while on the Augusta University and VAMC campuses and while involved in program activities at any location, including all clinical experiences. Professional attire or approved scrubs is required at all Physician Assistant departmental classes and clinical activities unless specified otherwise.

In all settings, hair should be kept well-groomed and display a neat appearance. Mustaches and beards must be neatly trimmed. Nails should be trimmed sufficiently to ensure efficient work and cleanliness. Nail polish must be of the conservative variety. Blue jeans, shorts, T-shirts, low cut blouses, hats and exercise clothing are unacceptable. Shoes should be clean and well kept. Flip flops are unacceptable footwear.

During the didactic year, students are required to wear professional attire on designated days as determined by the faculty. Please refer to the general rules for guidance. When permitted, students are allowed to wear navy scrubs with the Augusta University logo embroidered on them. Scrubs must be pressed. If any hair is visible at the neckline on the student's back or chest, students must wear undershirts under the scrub top. Undershirts should only be white, black, or grey. Students are allowed to wear clean-appearing athletic shoes with scrubs. Students must refrain from wearing sweatshirts or hoodies; unless the program has approved a (non-hooded) class sweatshirt that can be worn in the classroom over scrubs. Students are allowed to wear white, grey, or black long sleeve shirts under the scrub tops as long as they don't have any print on them. Students may wear zip-up jackets over the scrub top as long as it does not have a hood. If a student is unsure about the required attire for the day, they should default to professional attire. Any violation of the professional appearance rules will result in a professional advisory or warning.

### **GENERAL RULES**

- No visible underclothes.
- Students must wear shoes appropriate for the professional adult in both class and clinic. Flats or heels with a closed toe are allowed, no sandals with exposure of toes in clinical settings. Heel exposure is permitted. Flip flops are unacceptable footwear. During surgery or labs "croc" with holes in the tops are not permitted.
- In all labs for Anatomy and Clinical Skills Integration and Application courses, lab coats and closed toed shoes are required.
- No shorts, jeans, or T-shirts.
- Approved "Dress-Down" day attire: nice jeans with a nice polo shirt/blouse or scrubs will be allowed.
- No exposed midriffs, even with stretching and bending.
- No "cut-out" or "cold shoulder" clothing
- No leggings, rompers, or shorts

- Body and Hair – washed, hair neatly combed, out of face, contained for bending and reaching (If it gets caught in your stethoscope, contain it), not malodorous; hair should be of naturally occurring colors.
- Neatly trimmed mustache and beard, except in designated hospital departments where this may be prohibited, and students must be clean shaven.
- Nails clean and well-groomed, no longer than ¼” beyond nail bed. No artificial nails in surgery.
- No heavy perfumes or after shaves.
- Complementary make-up, not overstated.
- Clothing washed, neatly pressed, in excellent repair.
- No visible body piercings (except ears and/or stud in nose).
- Tattoos do not need to be covered during the didactic phase of the curriculum (unless they could be considered offensive, offensive tattoos must be covered).
- During the didactic phase of the curriculum, piercings will be limited to ears and nose stud. Earrings must be limited to posts only – no bars or gauges. Nose piercings are allowed only to be small studs. Other facial piercings are not allowed. Spacers and placeholders are not allowed with facial piercings. \*
- During the clinical phase of the curriculum, piercings will be limited to ears with no more than two earrings in each ear and no longer than one inch below the ear lobe-this is subject to further restriction based on the clinical site. Earrings must be limited to posts only- no bars and gauges. Nose piercings and other facial piercings may not be allowed. Tattoos must also be covered during the clinical phase. \*
- No audacious or gaudy jewelry.
- Clothes should not expose or accentuate body contour.
- Head wraps and scarves as needed per religious custom or condition are permitted.
- Non-hooded class-sweatshirts that have been approved for use in class may be worn, no other sweatshirts are allowed.
- Students may wear a solid navy, black, white, or grey zip up jacket without a hood during class.
- Students may wear a solid navy, black, white, or grey zip up vest without a hood during class.
- Skirts must be no shorter than 3 inches above the knee when sitting.
- Slits in skirts must be no higher than 3 inches above knee when sitting.
- No exposed cleavage is permitted.
- Pantyhose with dresses/skirts is optional.
- When dressed in professional attire, shirts with collars or blouses are required
- When dressed in professional attire, no jeans or denim –type pants allowed even if in different color
- No leggings or tight pants with boots over them
- Only white, navy, grey, or black plain undershirts are appropriate under scrub tops (no printed t-shirts)

\*Medical exemptions and religious exemptions apply with appropriate documentation and approval from the faculty

## **CLASSROOM ATTIRE**

#### Professional Attire Examples:

- Shirt with collar (*polo style or button-up, but not athletic/golf shirt*) and slacks/nice pants (*not jeans*); tie optional
- Blouse with nice pants (*capri style pants are acceptable but must be a minimum of three inches below the knee*)
- Blouse with skirt, or Dress as long as appropriate length and meets general rules (see above)

*If unsure if an outfit meets program expectations, students should reach out to their advisor or other faculty member for approval before wearing it to class.*

Scrubs: tops and bottoms must match and be of approved color, with appropriate logo; well-fitting (not too tight); it is NOT acceptable to wear a T-shirt with scrub pants.

Students are NOT allowed to wear smart watches/wearable technology (i.e., the Apple Watch, Samsung Gear S2, etc.) with the exception of activity trackers during exams.

Name Badges will be worn with the picture facing out, clearly visible on collar/chest or on a lanyard (neck band) at all times while on campus.

#### **CLINIC ATTIRE**

Professional attire with white student coat is the default expectation. Some clinics may allow scrubs, in which case students should wear program approved scrubs or if in sterile setting, OR scrubs provided by the facility. Students should inquire to individual departments what attire is required or if there are any standards unique to that department. Exceptions will be made by faculty according to planned activities.

Name Badges will be worn with the picture facing out, clearly visible on collar/chest or on a lanyard (neck band) at all times while on rotations.

#### **PENALTY OF VIOLATION**

The faculty of the PA program has the right and is obligated to counsel any student who, in their opinion, is in violation of any of the above standards. A student may be asked to leave the classroom and return appropriately attired by the start of the next class. Any violation of the professional appearance rules may result in a professional advisory or warning.

Exercises or assignments missed because of enforcement of the PAD dress code will be deemed an unexcused absence. Any attendance penalty will be in addition to the dress code penalty.

#### **BACKGROUND CHECK**

All PA students will be required to undergo a mandatory background check during fall semester of the didactic program. Depending on small group assignments for CSIA II, students may also have to undergo urine drug screen testing. Students will be notified of the date and company to be used for background check and testing. Students will be responsible for the cost of the background check and any required testing.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA POLICIES/GUIDELINES**

Participation in social media and online activities such as blogging, tweeting, wiki, or any other form of online publishing is more the norm than the exception in our lives. As a future health care professional, you will be held to a higher standard of behavior regarding the use of these types of activities. The tenets of professionalism, good taste, and common sense should permeate every aspect of your social media interaction. If, as part of your activities online, you identify yourself as a student in the Augusta University Physician Assistant Program, you are now connected to every person in your class, your program, your group, and even those who will follow you as students. The following guidelines and policies are intended to help you make the proper choice as you engage in social media.

### **General Guidelines**

Be thoughtful about how you represent yourself on social networks. The line between private and public, personal, and professional typically blur in online social networks. Respect your colleagues and your audience. Recognize that your cohort, students at Augusta University in general, and the community as a whole represent diverse customs, values, and points of view.

Express your opinion, be yourself, but be respectful. This includes avoiding the use of obscenities, personal insults, ethnic, religious, or racial slurs, sexually harassing or inappropriate commentary, as well as topics that can be considered inflammatory or obscene. If you are unsure, ask for guidance from faculty. Respect the privacy of others, especially classmates, other students, faculty, and staff. If you disagree with anyone, it is rarely appropriate to air your differences publicly. Use sound judgment in considering anything you put into writing as it will be seen by others.

Also, any personal content posted from an Augusta University PA student cannot be presented as being a communication from the Physician Assistant Department at Augusta University. Final approval to communicate anything through Facebook as a representative of the PAD must be approved by the Department Chair or Program Director.

### **General Email Etiquette**

- Always address an email with an appropriate salutation (“Dear Professor Jones,” “Dear Ms. Watkins”).
- Always sign an email.
- Email for professional communication should not include the common abbreviations utilized in personal texting. Sentences should be complete and appropriate grammar should be used.
- Be judicious when cc’ing emails. “Reply to all,” is not always an appropriate action.
- It is your responsibility to check your school-related emails daily and respond as needed depending on the topic. If a faculty member emails you, it is expected that you will respond to them within 48 hours. Do not expect answers to emails from faculty late at night. Please understand email is not necessarily designed to provide unrestricted 24/7 access to the recipient.
- If you choose to craft an email about a subject you disagree with or are upset about, either as an original email or in response to an email from someone else, do not respond when you are angry or upset. This will often result in an email that is



unprofessional and emotional. Instead, consider what you wish to say, write it out, do not send it, and then return to it when you are less emotional. Reread your emails and ask a friend to read your email to ensure it is not interpreted as inappropriate or unprofessional. All emails you choose to send should be professional, appropriate, and polite at all times. In addition, anything you choose to say in an email you should feel comfortable and willing to say to an individual or group in a face-to-face meeting. Please remember tone can be misinterpreted in email so make sure you are writing all emails in a professional tone.

- Avoid SPAM. If you are concerned about an email being SPAM, click on Report Message at the top right in Outlook and select either “Junk” or “Phishing.” It will be forwarded to the Augusta University Information Technology Cyber Defense Team for handling.

### **Guidelines for Use of Social Media and the Internet during Class or Lab Time**

- Respect class time and your colleagues’ time. You should participate in personal social media conversations on your own time and not during scheduled class time or program activities.
- The use of social media, chat rooms, instant messaging and/or “surfing” the web during class when not engaged in sanctioned web-based course activity is unprofessional and inappropriate. If you are caught participating in any of the above, this is grounds for a professional advisory or warning.
- Refrain from using cell phones or any other type of technology besides a laptop to follow PowerPoint presentations or lectures during class.

### **Guidelines/Policy when Posting as a Member of Augusta University’s Community**

- Maintain confidentiality. Do not post confidential or proprietary information about your patients, their families, clinical facilities and staff, Augusta University, its students, or its alumni. Use good ethical judgment and follow College policies and federal requirements, such as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) of 1996 and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).
- In personal posts, if you identify yourself as a student or a member of the Augusta University community, be clear that you are posting your own views and not the views of Augusta University or your program. If you make a mistake, correct it.
- If you modify an earlier post, make it clear you are doing so. Rarely do you “speak on behalf of...” If you say it, it is yours to own.
- There is no protected or private speech on a social media site. Search engines turn up your words and pictures years later. Comments can be copied by others and forwarded.
- Respect copyright laws: You must have written permission before using any copyrighted or proprietary materials such as photographs, videos, texts, art, music, etc. In general, verbal or written permission must be obtained from individuals whose images are identifiable. However, written permission is always better.

- Do not post personally identifiable information: Information that can be used to locate someone offline, including phone numbers, addresses, birth dates, Email addresses, etc. should not be posted.
- Employers typically conduct web searches (including searches on Facebook and other social media) on job candidates before extending offers. Assume they will do this for you as well when applying for positions. Do not post commentary and other postings deemed to be copyright infringement, defamatory, proprietary, obscene, or dangerous on the web. Potential employers may see this content and disqualify you from an offer of employment.

### **Guidelines/Policy when Posting as an Individual**

- Be honest: Tell people who you are. In personal posts, you may identify yourself as a student at Augusta University College of Health Sciences. However, please be clear that you are sharing your personal views and are not speaking as a formal representative of Augusta University. If you identify yourself as a member of the Augusta University community, ensure your profile and related content are consistent with how you wish to present yourself to colleagues.
- Protect yourself: While you should be honest about yourself, do not provide personal information that scammers or identity thieves could use. Do not list your home address or telephone number. Do not use your Augusta University email address for social media sites.
- Do not use the Augusta University logo or make endorsements without permission:
- Do not use the Augusta University or MCG logo to endorse political candidates or endorse products or causes.
- Is your content appropriate? If the content of your message would not be acceptable for face-to-face conversation, over the telephone, or in another medium, it is not acceptable for a social networking site.

### **Specific Policies for Augusta University Physician Assistant Program**

- As a student at Augusta University Physician Assistant Program, you assume all responsibility related to the security, privacy, and confidentiality risks inherent in sending any content over the Internet. By its very nature, a website and the Internet cannot be absolutely protected against intentional or malicious intrusion attempts.
- Augusta University does not control the third-party sites and the Internet over which you choose to send confidential, personal, health information or other content and therefore, does not warrant any safeguard against any such interceptions or compromises to your information.
- Augusta University does not endorse any product, service, views, or content displayed on yours or other's social media site(s).
- If identifying yourself with Augusta University Physician Assistant Program, you may not provide any content to a social media site that contains any product or service endorsements or any content that may be construed as political lobbying, solicitation or contributions, or use the social media site to link to any sites of political candidates or parties or use the social media site to discuss political campaigns, issues or for taking a position on any legislation or law.
- This policy may be updated at any time without notice, and each time a user accesses a social networking site, the new policy will govern usage, effective upon posting.

All internet users are subject to state and federal laws regarding its use. (Adapted from the Student Handbook Murphy Deming College of Health Sciences and with their permission.)

- Please report any potential email SPAM by clicking on Report Message at the top right in Outlook and select either “Junk” or “Phishing.” It will be forwarded to the Augusta University Information Technology Cyber Defense Team for handling.

## **CLASS PARTICIPATION AND PROFESSIONALISM**

Each student will be assessed on professionalism during the entirety of the program. Examples of professionalism include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Being on time
- Being prepared for class
- Turning in assignments on time
- Being courteous to everyone, regardless of rank or position
- Appreciating the kindness of others and expressing that appreciation
- Making proper introductions
- Dressing appropriately
- Monitoring one’s own emotional expressions and responsiveness (e.g., showing interest in and being attentive during class and on rotations)
- Maintaining composure when challenged
- Being receptive to feedback and constructive criticism (e.g., a willingness to learn and improve)
- Awareness of personal responsibility as a listener or audience member
- Respecting others’ professional position, particularly those in authority (e.g., addressing people formally unless instructed otherwise)
- Eating or preparing food only during breaks
- Refraining from using electronic devices to text, check Facebook, and other non-class related activities during lectures and while on rotations. Electronics should only be used in support of the classroom experience.
- Respectful discussion of patients among students, clinical staff, and other healthcare professionals
- Recording accurate medical entries in regard to historical and physical findings for patients
- Consideration of the setting and/or environment for discussion of personal issues while in the classroom or clinical rotations
- Being respectful in dealings with colleagues and class officers
- Being respectful in dealings with PAD faculty and staff
- Being truthful in all interactions and communications
- Following through and being reliable
- Taking initiative and responsibility for knowing expectations, including deadlines and policies
- Students should always assume there is a deadline for any item related to the program and seek clarification as needed
- Signing letters and warnings issued by the faculty and the Academic and Professional Advisory Committee by the date requested.

- Register for classes on time.

## **DISCIPLINARY MATTERS**

The Board of Regents has adopted the following policy concerning institutional responsibility for the discipline of students.

"Admissions, discipline, promotion, graduation and formulation of all rules and regulations pertaining to students of institutions of the University System are matters to be handled by the institution within the framework of regulations of the Board of Regents. Students violating rules and regulations of an institution may be punished, suspended, excluded or expelled as may be determined by the institution." (BOR Policy 4.1.1)

As defined in the [Augusta University Student Manual](#) (Section 2: Student Code of Conduct) disciplinary matters are handled either within the PAD, referred to the College of Allied Health Sciences, or referred to the Augusta University Student Conduct Board. This will be determined by the type of infraction that has occurred.

## **PROFESSIONALISM VIOLATIONS**

These policies outline the handling of disciplinary matters within the PA program.

Students who violate any of the professional expectations of the PA program or Augusta University will be issued written advisories or warnings for that offense and each offense thereafter. There will be a required remediation effort specific to the violation. The faculty must vote, and the majority must agree with the professionalism violation before it is issued. The requirements for remediation are not negotiable. The remediation requirement may vary based on the offense and will be more extensive if a higher number of offenses is reached and/or the offense is more serious. It is the student's responsibility to clarify if they do not understand what the remediation effort or counseling on the violation includes. If a student is in violation of another professional standard before they complete the remediation effort for the previous professionalism advisory or warning, another advisory or warning may be issued, and the student will have additional remediation expectations or consequences.

The first two professional violation write-ups (*if not considered egregious by a majority of the faculty*) will be considered **professional advisories**. The advisories will be documented in the student's file, but this information will not be disclosed to future employers unless the student later accrues 4 or more violations total.

**Professional warnings** will be issued for any violation occurring after the first two advisories have been issued and for any violation considered *egregious* by a majority of the faculty (*even if no advisories have been issued*).

All professional violations (*advisories and warnings*) are documented in the student's file.

If a student is in violation of multiple professional standards at one time, the student is subject to multiple professional advisories and/or warnings at one time.

A student who has accrued 4 professional violations will be ineligible to be inducted into an honor society and may lose other privileges, including class officer positions.

Additionally, if a student has received 4 professional violations, this is reportable to future employers, licensing boards, academic programs, and any other entities the student releases the program to complete forms/references for regarding the student's tenure in the program.

Once a student has reached five [5] violations (2 advisories and 3 warnings, for example), the PA Program will make a recommendation to the Dean of the College of Allied Health Sciences for suspension. The length of suspension recommended will be determined by the program faculty and may vary depending on the case and circumstances.

A student who returns from suspension related to professionalism concerns is expected to demonstrate strong improvement in the identified professional deficiencies and not accrue additional violations. If the student continues to accrue violations and reaches a total of seven [7] violations (including those prior to the suspension), the student will be recommended to the Dean of the College of Allied Health Sciences for dismissal from the program.

If a **didactic** student accrues 7 professional violations while in the program or fails to successfully remediate professional deficiencies the PA faculty have identified in that student, he/she/they will be issued a letter grade "F" in the Clinical Skills Integration and Application (CSIA) course for that semester or the Genetics course (*if this occurs in the first semester of the curriculum*).

If a **clinical** student accrues 7 professional violations or fails to successfully remediate professional deficiencies the PA faculty have identified in that student, he/she/they will be issued a letter grade "F" in the corresponding clinical rotation/course. Refer to the Clinical Curriculum Policies for more information on professionalism expectations and policies during the clinical phase.

If a student commits an egregious act as determined by the faculty, the student will be recommended for dismissal from the PA program even if they have not accrued any professional advisories or warnings to date. The student will receive a letter grade of "F" in the corresponding CSIA course, genetics course, or clinical course. An egregious act may include but is not limited to the following:

1. Verbal or physical altercation or abuse of faculty, staff, student, preceptor, patient, or other community member
2. Violating the PAD or Institutional honesty policy (*See AU Student Manual*)
  - a. This includes cheating on any assignment or assessment.
  - b. This also includes the sharing of any assignment or assessment with other students.
  - c. This includes making false statements, verbally or in writing, or being dishonest to the faculty, staff, and clinical preceptors.
3. Committing malpractice, fraud, or an illegal act

*\*If a student is required to complete a remediation module that interrupts clinical training, this may result in a delay in graduation.*

## PROFESSIONALISM AMNESTY POLICY

The professionalism amnesty policy was implemented in Jan 2024 and will be retroactively applied to the co 2024 and co 2025 for any professionalism violations that meet criteria for this policy.

The goal of this policy is to foster an emphasis on growth and improvement in professionalism. The AU PA program must have professionalism policies and clear procedures for how violations will be handled, but the intention of the program is to help students identify areas in need of improvement and to foster growth in those areas.

If a student who has received a professionalism violation is able to demonstrate growth and improvement over a period of **8 months** (*demonstrated by no additional professionalism violations in that time-frame and successful completion of assigned remediation activities*), the professionalism violation (*or most recent if there were more than 1*) may be removed from the student's professionalism violation tally.

Documentation related to professionalism counseling and behaviors will remain in the program file for the student, but that instance will no longer be considered one of the violations tracked towards the 5 for suspension or 7 for dismissal. *Example 1: a student who receives 1 professionalism violation in August 2023, completes the remediation assignment successfully, and experiences no other professionalism violations as of end of April 2024, will be considered by the program to have zero [0] violations for professionalism tracking purposes at that time. Example 2: a student who accrues 4 professionalism violations by July 2024, completes all remediation assignments successfully, and receives no further violations by end of March 2025, will be considered to have only three [3] violations for professionalism tracking purposes. As long as this student receives no additional professionalism violations before graduation in Aug 2025, this will not cross the threshold for reportable to future employers at it drops back to 3 (instead of 4) violations.*

**Important Notes on this policy:** Each student is only allowed one [1] amnesty opportunity. A student who has received amnesty for a prior violation will not be eligible to receive it again. A student must complete a period of 8 months as an active student in the program with no violations to be considered for amnesty. If a student graduates before an 8-month window can be completed, the student is not eligible for amnesty for that violation.

**RECOMMENDATION FOR DISMISSAL** (for failure to meet the professional standards of the program)

A student will be recommended to the CAHS Dean for dismissal due to failure to meet the professional standards of the program when any of the following criteria are met:

- Fails to successfully remediate deficiencies identified in the student in meeting the professional and technical standards for a student at that level of training
- incurs 7 professionalism violations
- commits an egregious professional act (*as determined by the faculty*)
- failed to pass the summative evaluation components due to professionalism deficiencies

- at the end of the curriculum but has failed to achieve program competencies related to professionalism (*as determined by a majority of the PAD faculty*)
- at the end of the curriculum but has failed to meet or remediate the professional or technical standards of the program (*as determined by the PA faculty*)

Any exception to this policy must be agreed upon by a majority of the PAD faculty.

Refer to the *Satisfactory Progression and Promotion* sections for more guidance on program criteria for recommendation for dismissal, policies regarding administrative decisions/sanctions and appeals process.

## PATIENT CONTACT

The faculty and administration of the Physician Assistant Program feel strongly that health care providers must make every effort to function within the ethical and legal boundaries of their designated roles. Thus, the students are expected to show respect to patients and their families and co-workers at all times. Students who willfully misrepresent themselves or disobey other rules identified below will be issued an egregious professionalism warning and recommended to the CAHS Dean for dismissal from the program:

- A. At no time may a student see, treat or cause to be treated, or dismiss a patient without reviewing and discussing the patient's problem with the responsible physician, physician assistant or designated supervisor. If for any reason adequate supervision is not available, the student must discontinue interactions with patients.
- B. At no time may a student dispense, cause to be dispensed, or prescribe any medication without approval of the responsible physician or physician assistant and that supervisor's signature on the prescription.
- C. At no time may the student discuss a patient's physical or clinical status with that patient without prior discussion and approval from the responsible physician or physician assistant.
- D. At all times, the student will wear an identifying name tag and, when interacting with patients, will explain his or her unique role as a Physician Assistant **student** while completing program required activities
- E. At all times, the student will be responsible for following protocol or guidelines regarding PA utilization established by the responsible physician or physician assistant and the clinical facilities at each training site.

## SHADOWING

Shadowing refers to non-PAD-sanctioned or required clinical experiences that the student initiates independently of the PAD.

Medical providers and members of the health care workforce may not understand or reflect on the different levels of knowledge and skills students have at different time-points in their professional training. Often, when these individuals are working with "PA students" they are working with clinical year (senior) students who have completed all didactic, BLS, ACLS, and asepsis requirements. They may ask or expect a student to perform roles at the site beyond the scope of their training or ability due to this misunderstanding. Students are responsible for clarifying their role as a shadower/observer.

Even in the senior year, students are not covered by the institution's malpractice policy when shadowing and should refrain from any direct patient care.

Regardless of level of training, it is critical that when shadowing, students identify themselves as only observers and not act in any way beyond the scope of the observer role.



It is also the student's responsibility to ensure that they have clearance from the practice/hospital to be present at the facility in the observer role (outside of sanctioned program activities) and permission to be in any restricted areas that require additional clearance (such as critical care units, operating rooms, nursery, etc).

- A. I acknowledge that no white coat or AU name badge can be worn while shadowing – nothing to identify me with our institution or program.
- B. I acknowledge that I must identify myself as an observer.
- C. I acknowledge that I am NOT allowed to shadow in an OR or other scrub area UNLESS I have completed our asepsis program and have been signed off in that regard.
- D. I acknowledge that I am NOT allowed to shadow in an inpatient setting unless I have completed all credentialing required by that hospital/institution; that I as a student should typically only shadow in a private practice, outpatient setting.
- E. I acknowledge that shadowing is only OBSERVING – I cannot touch patients or talk to patients beyond a greeting and introducing myself as “Jane Doe.” *Taking patient histories, examining patients, administering shots/etc., discussing treatment plans, patient counseling and education, and all other medically related activities are off limits.*
- F. I acknowledge and understand that I am NOT covered by our malpractice insurance while shadowing which is why I should refrain from all patient contact, counseling, and discussion of any condition.
- G. I understand that this policy also applies to interviews for employment.
- H. I understand that it is my responsibility to clarify this policy and expectations with the Education Director, Program Director, and/or Clinical Director BEFORE attending a shadowing experience should I have any questions.
- I. I understand that the AU PA Program is not responsible or liable for any outcomes or actions related to my shadowing experiences or job interviews set up outside of program activities.

Should a student violate this policy guidance, the student bears all responsibility for those outcomes. As this is related to activities outside of the program curriculum (shadowing), violations of these policies are not monitored or addressed by the AU PA Program. This policy exists to provide guidance for students to help them ensure they are not putting themselves or their future career at risk for litigation.

## **STUDENT/FACULTY CONFERENCES**

### **DIDACTIC COMPONENT**

Upon entry to the program, students are assigned to a faculty advisor. Conferences are to be held at the request of either the student or advisor, or more frequently as is needed. If regular or routine advisor meetings are determined to be needed in a student's case, it is the student's

responsibility to contact their advisor to schedule the meetings. The objects of the student/faculty advisor conferences are to provide regular individual communication with each student, assist in the supervision of each student's progress in the program, identify individual strengths and weaknesses of the student, assist in the input phase of the program self-study process by periodic identification of program or course strengths and weaknesses and, assist the student in finding ways of strengthening their identified weaknesses.

The student and the faculty advisor will sign and date the advisory conference documentation form or the advisor may document an internal memorandum of the meeting as needed. Subsequent conferences will be documented in the same format.

## **WORK POLICY**

Students may not be used as regular staff in the Augusta University PA Program but may work in other areas of the institution. Outside employment is discouraged because of the intense nature of the program. Classes and clinical experiences generally occur Monday through Friday with assignments that often fill evening and weekend hours.

## **INCLEMENT WEATHER**

To determine whether or not to attend classes or your SCPE site during severe weather conditions or other emergencies, proceed according to the following guidelines: Go to <http://jagwire.augusta.edu/alert> and check announcements.

## **FUTURE EMPLOYER REQUESTS/REPORTABLE INFORMATION**

After graduating from the Augusta University Physician Assistant Program, employers or potential employers, licensing boards, other academic programs to which the graduate applies, or other entities may request information from the PAD. This information often includes, but is not limited to, the following items:

- Academic Performance
- Critical Thinking Skills
- Clinical/Technical Competencies
- Organizational Skills
- Interpersonal Skills
- Reliability/Dependability
- Professional Attitude and Behavior
- Appearance/Grooming
- Attendance/Punctuality
- Leadership Qualities
- Management of Multiple Complex Problems
- Communication Skills
- Physical or personal problems that may affect his/her ability to perform privileges
- Alcohol or Chemical Abuse
- Malpractice Problems
- Disciplinary Actions
- Licensure Problems
- Criminal Convictions

- Mental Health concerns that may affect his/her ability to perform privileges

This information is reportable from the PAD to future employers.

**NOTICE:**

Policies and programs presented in this Handbook are subject to change at any time. As changes occur in policies that affect students, you will be notified via email and the updated student handbook will be available on the program website.

## CURRICULUM

The curriculum of the Physician Assistant Department as presented below spans twenty- seven consecutive months. The program is conducted as a sequence of a didactic phase followed by a clinical phase. The didactic phase is the only period of training that is completed entirely on the Augusta University campus. The Physician Assistant program operates on a credit hour basis.

### **DIDACTIC CURRICULUM**

This phase of the curriculum consists of both basic science and clinically related didactic courses. It is provided during the first year plus one semester of the program. All courses are required and must be successfully completed prior to beginning clinical courses.

Summer		Credit Hours
CAHS 7400	Human Gross Anatomy	6
PHAS 7120	Human Physiology for the Clinician	5
PHAS 5125	Principles of Pharmacology for the Clinician	1
PHAS 5010	Medical Terminology	1
PHAS 5020	Genetics	1
<b>Semester Total</b>		<b>14</b>
Fall		Credit Hours
PHAS 5015	Medical Communication	2
PHAS 5140	Clinical Skills Integration and Application I	1
STAT 6300	Introduction to Epidemiology & Biostatistics	3
PHAS 5115	Physical Assessment	3
PHAS 5215	Pharmacotherapeutics I	2
PHAS 5137	Diagnostic Methods and Pathology	1
PHAS 5131	Orthopedics	3
PHAS 5132	Dermatology	2
PHAS 5133	Ophthalmology	2
PHAS 5134	Infectious Diseases	2
PHAS 5135	EKG Interpretation	1
PHAS 5136	Otolaryngology	2
<b>Semester Total</b>		<b>24</b>

Spring		Credit Hours
PHAS 5330	Surgery	2
PHAS 5300	Pharmacotherapeutics II	3
PHAS 5221	Cardiology	3
PHAS 5222	Pulmonology	3
PHAS 5223	Nephrology/Urology	2
PHAS 5224	Gastroenterology	2
PHAS 5227	Hematology/Oncology	2
PHAS 5226	BLS & Airway Management	1
PHAS 5314	Neurology	2
PHAS 5230	Clinical Skills Integration and Application II	1
Semester Total		21
Summer 2		Credit Hours
PHAS 5320	Emergency Medicine	2
PHAS 5400	Pharmacotherapeutics III	3
PHAS 5311	Pediatrics	2
PHAS 5312	Obstetrics and Gynecology	2
PHAS 5313	Endocrinology	2
PHAS 5228	Advanced Cardiac Life Support	2
PHAS 5200	Essentials of Psychiatry	2
PHAS 5100	Ethics and Professional Practice Issues	1
PHAS 5340	Clinical Skills Integration and Application III	1
PHAS 5360	Evidence Based Medicine	2
Semester Total		19

## APPENDICES

### Appendix I. STUDENT PEARLS

#### Election of Class Officers:

Careful thoughtful selection of class officers is vital to the morale of the PA class. The faculty encourage each class to wait to select class officers until the end of the first summer semester and no later than the beginning of the first fall semester. Class officers, especially those with greater responsibilities, must be students in excellent academic standing.

#### Class Officer Organization:

##### Class President

1. Develops agenda for class meetings
  - A. Monthly meetings with faculty member(s) if needed
  - B. Class organization/evaluation meetings
    - 1) Organize fund raising projects
    - 2) Set objectives for the year (Class dues, educational meetings)
  - C. Quarterly meetings with classmates
    - 1) Class president develops agenda
2. Monitors class morale
  - A. Identify and notify Program Director of the group's "mental health".
  - B. Informally meet with Program Director to assess class and program progress in goal attainment.
3. Represents the class
  - A. To the program faculty when the need arises.
  - B. On the School of Allied Health Sciences Class President Organization

##### Class Vice-President

1. Coordinate student involvement with interviewing process.
2. Represents the class *in* the absence of the President.
3. Assists the President *in* monitoring class morale.
4. Monitors and evaluates student support systems.
5. Implements directives from the President. Office

##### Class Secretary

1. Records and makes available minutes of class meetings.
2. Responsible for class correspondence as directed by the President or Program Director.
3. Responsible for keeping track of daily class attendance and reconciling with faculty member responsible for personal leave request once each month.

### Class Historian

1. Chronicles the history of the class.
  - A. Takes pictures of class activities.
  - B. Records brief descriptions of activities.
  - C. Submit photographs/materials for Augusta University Yearbook
  - D. Maintains student bulletin board.
2. Keeps photo album current.

### Class Representative to Student Government

1. Represents the PA Program to the Student Government.
2. Attends SGA meetings.
3. Reports to the class SGA functions and business.

### Georgia Association of Physician Assistants Student Representative

1. Attend GAPA Board Meeting as voting representative
2. Encourages student membership in GAPA
3. Submits items for GAPA Newsletter

### Minority Representative

1. Works with faculty Minority Academic Advisory Program (MAAP)
2. Attends all MAAP meetings
3. Assists faculty MAAP advisor in resolving class issues as necessary
4. Assists minority students individually and in groups on a regular basis (formally and informally).
5. Know minority students. In informal situations, get to know their names, family situation, financial/aid status.
6. Attend faculty/peer advisor's workshop(s). Notify and encourage peers to attend.
7. Help facilitate evaluation of MAAP programs.

### Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Officer

1. Works with DEI faculty representative and Program Director
2. Assists faculty and program in identifying DEI opportunities
3. Serves as leader in the class for promoting DEI among students
4. Help facilitate DEI feedback from students and applicants to the program

### Social Director/Class Host/Hostess

1. Responsible for obtaining funds from class treasurer to purchase refreshments for the class.
2. Coordinates class social events after class discussions.
3. Assures that clean-up of the break area and kitchen is conducted daily. Responsible for developing social activities for the class.

4. Assures that all guest lecturers, at a minimum, are asked if they would like refreshment during class breaks.

#### Volunteer Director

1. Organize all volunteer activities of the class.
2. Prepare and maintain the volunteer records.
3. Serve as a member of the Social Committee.
4. Make recommendations to the class for volunteering projects.
5. Coordinate all volunteer activities with the faculty.

#### **Amenities near the Classroom:**

Security Phones/Security Escort – several blue-lighted posts for on-campus security. Call (706) 721-2911 to be escorted to your car on-campus at night.

[Parking – Parking and Transportation Services](#)

#### **Intramural Activities:**

Previous PA classes have participated in three intramural sports: flag football, basketball, and softball. There are about twenty different intramural sports like billiards, badminton, soccer, table tennis, dodge ball to name a few. Most of the sports are coed teams but there are some sports in which men and women have their own teams. There is a small entry fee, usually paid for out of the class budget. T-shirts are awarded to the "champion" of each sport. All schools and departments are eligible for entry (Medicine, Dentistry, CAHS, Nursing, and Graduate Studies). Please go to the [Augusta University Intramural](#) website for more information.



## Appendix II. GRADING SYSTEMS

Grading system parallels the University of System of Georgia guidelines listed below (*from USG Board of Regents Policy Manual 305*):

All institutions of the University System of Georgia shall be on a 4.0 grade point average system. The following grades are approved for use in institutions in the determination of the Grade Point Average:

Grade	Grade Point Average
A Excellent	(4.0)
B Good	(3.0)
C Satisfactory	(2.0)
D Passing	(1.0)
F Failure	(0.0)
WF Withdrew	(0.0)

The following symbols are approved for use in the cases indicated but will not be included in the determination of the grade point average.

"I" This symbol indicates that a student was doing satisfactory work but, for non-academic reasons beyond his/her control, was unable to meet the full requirements of the course. The requirements for removal of an "I" are left to the respective institutions; however, if an "I" is not satisfactorily removed after three academic terms of residence, the symbol "I" will be changed to the grade "F" by the appropriate official.

"IP" These symbols indicate that credit has not been given in courses that require a "CP" continuation of work beyond the term for which the student signed up for the course. The use of these symbols is approved for dissertation and thesis hours and project courses. With the exception of Learning Support or Developmental Studies courses, and Regents' Test remediation courses, these symbols cannot be used for other courses. These symbols cannot be substituted for an "I."

"W" This symbol indicates that a student was permitted to withdraw without penalty. Withdrawals without penalty will not be permitted after the mid-point of the total grading period (including final examinations) except in cases of hardship as determined by the appropriate official of the respective institution.

“WA” – Withdrawal medical. This symbol indicates that a student was approved to withdraw for medical reasons.

“WF” Withdrawal failing grade. This symbol indicates that a student withdrew or was withdrawn after the published withdrawal deadline.

“WH” Withdrawal hardship. This symbol indicates that a student was approved to withdraw for hardship reasons.

"WM" This symbol indicates a student was permitted to withdraw under the Board of Regents policy for military service refunds. The use of this symbol indicated that this student was permitted to withdraw without penalty at any time during the term.

"S" This symbol indicates that credit has been given for completion of degree requirements other than academic course work. The use of this symbol is approved for dissertation and thesis hours, student teaching, clinical practicum, internship, and proficiency requirements in graduate programs. Exceptions to the use of this symbol for academic course work must be submitted to the Chancellor for approval.

"U" This symbol indicates unsatisfactory performance in an attempt to complete degree requirements other than academic course work. The use of this symbol is approved for dissertation and thesis hours, student teaching, clinical practicum, internship, and proficiency requirements in graduate programs. Exceptions to the use of this symbol for academic course work must be submitted to the Chancellor for approval.

"V" This symbol indicates that a student was given permission to audit this course. Students may not transfer from audit to credit status or vice versa. Students may register, however, on a credit basis for a course that has previously been audited.

"K" This symbol indicates that a student was given credit for the course via a credit by examination program approved by the respective institution's faculty. "K" credit may be provided for a course the student has previously audited if the institutional procedures for credit by examination are followed.

“NR” This symbol indicates a grade was not reported.

Institutions are permitted to use other than the Uniform Grading System for the purpose of grading student progress in Learning Support or Developmental Studies.

“Cumulative Grade Point Average” The cumulative grade point average in each institution of the University System of Georgia will be calculated by dividing the number of hours scheduled in all courses attempted in which a grade of A, B, C, D, F or WF has been received into the number of grade points earned on those hours scheduled. The cumulative grade point average will be recorded on the student's permanent record. Institutional credit shall in no way affect the cumulative grade point average.

Please refer to the following link: [Grades](#)

## **Appendix III. COUNSELING**

### **PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL**

Each student will be assigned an academic advisor. Academic assistance is available to any student either having or anticipating academic or personal difficulty. Students should contact their academic advisor and course coordinator as early as possible to obtain specific academic resources.

Students are invited to meet with the assigned student advisor, Program Director, or Director of Education of the PA Program to discuss general concerns, scholastic issues, and any issues relating to the PA profession.

Professional assistance and counseling is available through various departments on the campus and can be found in the [Augusta University Student Manual](#).

## **Appendix IV. RELEVANT WEBSITES**

**[FAMILY EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT \(FERPA\)](#)**

**[GEORGIA OPEN RECORDS ACT REFERENCE](#)**

**[BLOOD/BIOHAZARD EXPOSURE](#)**

**[EDUCATION AND EXPOSURE POLICY FOR HEALTH CARE STUDENTS](#)**

**[AUGUSTA UNIVERSITY STUDENT MANUAL](#)**

**[STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES](#)**

**[STUDENT INFORMATION](#)**

**[GEORGIA ASSOCIATION OF PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT](#)**

**[AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT](#)**

**[STUDENT ACADEMY AAPA](#)**

**[SEXUAL HARRASSMENT & TITLE IX](#)**

**[TESTING AND DISABILITY SERVICES](#)**

## **Appendix V. IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS**

Physician Assistant Department	(706) 721-3246 /3247
Registrar	(706) 446-1430 /1431
Business Office	(706) 737-1767
Financial Aid (Student Affairs)	(706) 737-1524
Student Housing	(706) 729-2300
Student Health	(706) 721-3448
Public Safety	(706) 721-2914 /2911
Parking Bureau	(706) 721-2953
Library	(706) 721-3441
Bookstore (JagStore)	(706) 737-1611

## **Appendix VI. PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT COMPETENCIES**

### **Competencies for the Physician Assistant Profession**

#### **Preamble**

In 2003, the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA) initiated an effort to define PA competencies in response to similar efforts being conducted within other health care professions and growing demand for accountability and assessment in clinical practice. The following year, representatives from three other national PA organizations, each bringing a unique perspective and valuable insights, joined NCCPA in that effort. Those organizations were the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA), the body that accredits PA educational programs; the Association of Physician Assistant Programs (APAP), the membership association for PA educators and program directors; and the American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA), the only national membership association representing all PAs.

The resultant document, *Competencies for the Physician Assistant Profession*, is a foundation from which each of those four organizations, other physician assistant organizations, and individual physician assistants themselves can chart a course for advancing the competencies of the PA profession.

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this document is to communicate to the PA profession and the public a set of competencies that all physician assistants regardless of specialty or setting are expected to acquire and maintain throughout their careers. This document serves as a map for the individual PA, the physician-PA team, and organizations that are committed to promoting the development and maintenance of these professional competencies among physician assistants.

The clinical role of PAs includes primary and specialty care in medical and surgical practice settings. Professional competencies for physician assistants include the effective and appropriate application of medical knowledge, interpersonal and communication skills, patient care, professionalism, practice-based learning and improvement, systems based practice, as well as an unwavering commitment to continual learning and professional growth, and the physician-PA team, for the benefit of patients and the larger community being served. These competencies are demonstrated within the scope of practice, whether medical or surgical, for each individual physician assistant as that scope is defined by the supervising physician and appropriate to the setting.

The PA profession defines the specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes required and provides educational experiences as needed in order for physician assistants to acquire and demonstrate these competencies.

## **Medical knowledge**

Medical knowledge includes an understanding of pathophysiology, patient presentation, differential diagnosis, patient management, surgical principles, health promotion, and disease prevention. Physician assistants must demonstrate core knowledge about established and evolving biomedical and clinical sciences and the application of this knowledge to patient care in their area of practice. In addition, physician assistants are expected to demonstrate an investigatory and analytic thinking approach to clinical situations. Physician assistants are expected to:

- Understand etiologies, risk factors, underlying pathologic process, and epidemiology for medical conditions
- Identify signs and symptoms of medical conditions
- Select and interpret appropriate diagnostic or lab studies
- Manage general medical and surgical conditions to include understanding the indications, contraindications, side effects, interactions, and adverse reactions of pharmacologic agents and other relevant treatment modalities
- Identify the appropriate site of care for presenting conditions, including identifying emergent cases and those requiring referral or admission
- Identify appropriate interventions for prevention of conditions
- Identify the appropriate methods to detect conditions in an asymptomatic individual
- Differentiate between the normal and the abnormal in anatomy, physiology, laboratory findings and other diagnostic data
- Appropriately use history and physical findings and diagnostic studies to formulate a differential diagnosis
- Provide appropriate care to patients with chronic conditions.

## **Interpersonal & communication skills**

Interpersonal and communication skills encompass verbal, nonverbal, and written exchange of information. Physician assistants must demonstrate interpersonal and communication skills that result in effective information exchange with patients, their patients' families, physicians, professional associates, and the health care system. Physician assistants are expected to:

- Create and sustain a therapeutic and ethically sound relationship with patients
- Use effective listening, nonverbal, explanatory, questioning, and writing skills to elicit and provide information
- Appropriately adapt communication style and messages to the context of the individual patient interaction
- Work effectively with physician and other health care professionals as a member or leader of a health care team or other professional group
- Apply an understanding of human behavior
- Demonstrate emotional resilience and stability, adaptability, flexibility, and tolerance of ambiguity and anxiety
- Accurately and adequately document and record information regarding the care process for medical, legal, quality, and financial purposes.

## **Patient care**

Patient care includes age-appropriate assessment, evaluation, and management. Physician assistants must demonstrate care that is effective, patient-centered, timely, efficient, and equitable for the treatment of health problems and the promotion of wellness. Physician assistants are expected to:

- Work effectively with physicians and other health care professionals to provide patient centered care
- Demonstrate caring and respectful behaviors when interacting with patients and their families
- Gather essential and accurate information about their patients
- Make informed decisions about diagnostic and therapeutic interventions based on patient information and preferences, up-to-date scientific evidence, and clinical judgment
- Develop and carry out patient management plans
- Counsel and educate patients and their families
- Competently perform medical and surgical procedures considered essential in the area of practice
- Provide health care services and education aimed at preventing health problems or maintaining health.

## **Professionalism**

Professionalism is the expression of positive values and ideals as care is delivered. Foremost, it involves prioritizing the interests of those being served above one's own. Physician assistants must know their professional and personal limitations. Professionalism also requires that PAs practice without impairment from substance abuse, cognitive deficiency, or mental illness. Physician assistants must demonstrate a high level of responsibility, ethical practice, sensitivity to a diverse patient population, and adherence to legal and regulatory requirements. Physician assistants are expected to demonstrate:

- Understanding of legal and regulatory requirements, as well as the appropriate role of the physician assistant
- Professional relationships with physician supervisors and other health care providers
- Respect, compassion, and integrity
- Responsiveness to the needs of patients and society
- Accountability to patients, society, and the profession
- Commitment to excellence and ongoing professional development
- Commitment to ethical principles pertaining to provision or withholding of clinical care, confidentiality of patient information, informed consent, and business practices
- Sensitivity and responsiveness to patients' culture, age, gender, and disabilities
- Self-reflection, critical curiosity, and initiative.



## **Practice-based learning and improvement**

Practice-based learning and improvement includes the processes through which clinicians engage in critical analysis of their own practice experience, medical literature, and other information resources for the purpose of self-improvement. Physician assistants must be able to assess, evaluate, and improve their patient care practices. Physician assistants are expected to:

- Analyze practice experience and perform practice-based improvement activities using a systematic methodology in concert with other members of the health care delivery team
- Locate, appraise, and integrate evidence from scientific studies related to their patients' health problems  
Obtain and apply information about their own population of patients and the larger population from which their patients are drawn
- Apply knowledge of study designs and statistical methods to the appraisal of clinical studies and other information on diagnostic and therapeutic effectiveness
- Apply information technology to manage information, access online medical information, and support their own education
- Facilitate the learning of students and/or other health care professionals
- Recognize and appropriately address gender, cultural, cognitive, emotional, and other biases; gaps in medical knowledge; and physical limitations in themselves and others.

## **Systems-based practice**

Systems-based practice encompasses the societal, organizational, and economic environments in which health care is delivered. Physician assistants must demonstrate an awareness of and responsiveness to the larger system of health care to provide patient care that is of optimal value. PAs should work to improve the larger health care system of which their practices are a part.

Physician assistants are expected to:

- Use information technology to support patient care decisions and patient education
- Effectively interact with different types of medical practice and delivery systems
- Understand the funding sources and payment systems that provide coverage for patient care
- Practice cost-effective health care and resource allocation that does not compromise quality of care
- Advocate for quality patient care and assist patients in dealing with system complexities
- Partner with supervising physicians, health care managers, and other health care providers to assess, coordinate, and improve the delivery of health care and patient outcomes
- Accept responsibility for promoting a safe environment for patient care and recognizing and correcting systems-based factors that negatively impact patient care
- Use information technology to support patient care decisions and patient education

- Apply medical information and clinical data systems to provide more effective, efficient patient care
- Utilize the systems responsible for the appropriate payment of services.

## Appendix VII. SIGNATURE PAGE

**I certify by my signature below that all of the following are true statements:**

*(Please initial next to each statement to certify you have read and agreed to the individual statement.)*

1. \_\_\_\_\_ It is my responsibility to read, understand, and abide by all of the policies and processes in the *AU PA Student Handbook* throughout my time as an Augusta University Physician Assistant Student.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ It is my responsibility to read, understand, and abide by all of the policies and processes in the *Clinical Curriculum Policies* while in the clinical phase of the curriculum.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ It is my responsibility to read, understand, and abide by all of the policies and processes in the *AU Student Manual* throughout my time as an Augusta University Physician Assistant Student. [Augusta University Student Manual](#)
4. \_\_\_\_\_ It is my responsibility to read, understand, and abide by the resources and policies provided by the College of Allied Health Sciences (CAHS) to students on the college webpage. [CAHS Current Students](#)
5. \_\_\_\_\_ I understand that all of these documents (*AU PA Student Handbook, Clinical Curriculum Policies, AU Student Manual, CAHS Student Policies and Resources*) will be updated during my tenure as a student and it is my responsibility to read, understand, and abide by the updated documents when released on the program, college, and/or university websites or provided to me by email.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ I have read and understand the academic, professional, and technical standards of the AU PA Program and agree to review these standards often to facilitate my own professional growth and achievement.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ I have read and understand the PA Program and NCCPA *Competencies for the Physician Assistant Profession* and agree to review these competencies often to facilitate my own growth and achievement.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ I agree that I have been informed of my rights and responsibilities as a student in the AU PA Program as provided to me in the above documents (*AU PA Student Handbook, Clinical Curriculum Policies, AU Student Manual, CAHS Student Policies and Resources*).

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Student (Print Name/Signature)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Chair/Program Director**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**