

Completing the CASPA Application: ***Quick Guide for Applicants to Physician Assistant Programs***

Resources

- CASPA Instructions and FAQs page - Your first stop for detailed answers to CASPA esoterica.
 - <https://portal.caspaonline.org/caspaHelpPages/frequently-asked-questions/>
- CPHA Questions Box - We're here to help and we check this every day.
 - questions@prehealth.wisc.edu
- CASPA Customer Service Assistance - Have your CASPA ID ready! Staffed by nice people who've seen it all!
 - 1-617-612-2080 available 9-5 EST Monday through Friday.
 - caspainfo@caspaonline.org

Organizational Overview

PAEA – The Physician Assistant Education Association represents the administration, faculty, and students of all of the physician assistant programs in the United States. PAEA coordinates the application to apply to PA programs (CASPA).

CASPA - The Central Application Service for Physician Assistants is a centralized application used by most U.S. physician assistant programs. The application collects personal and academic information in one place and forwards this to the list of schools selected by you.

Components of the CASPA: CASPA opens in April.

1. Personal Information

- Biographical and Contact Information: Legal name, alternate names, birth & sex, and contact information
- Citizenship Information/Race and Ethnicity
 - Note: legal residence is determined at the time of application
- Other and Family Information: Language proficiency, military experience, felony/misdemeanor convictions, license infractions, academic infractions, “environmentally and economically disadvantaged”, and family information
 - Race and Ethnicity and Environmentally and Economically Disadvantaged data is collected for statistical purposes only; there is no essay or prompt to answer.
 - Check with Office of Dean of Students to see if they have to report anything about you as part of background check. If so, you will need to note this in the “Academic Infraction” section.

2. Academic History

- Enter your high school and all colleges you have attended
 - See instructions for Canadian, foreign and U.S. institutions abroad
- Request official transcripts from the registrar for all institutions where you received college credit.

- For UW-sponsored study abroad, mark the coursework as “study abroad” and list it with the rest of your coursework; do not list the foreign institution. For non-UW-sponsored programs, coursework is marked as “study abroad” but a separate transcript is needed. See instructions for additional details.
- Coursework for professional certification programs should be included in this section.
- When entering coursework:
 - Add courses exactly as they appear on your transcript. Use the instructions to designate the subject of each course.
 - Test credits (including AP) awarded by the university should be entered for your first semester of college. Dual enrollment credits are listed under the college that awarded credit.
 - Future coursework is entered as “Planned” or “In-Progress”.
 - Enter your course work chronologically and in the order they appear on your transcript! (see instructions)
 - CASPA offers a professional transcript entry service for an additional fee, but note that this service adds extra time to the completion of your application.
- Your GRE scores are sent electronically to CASPA but you must designate each individual school that you wish to receive your score using their unique CASPA GRE code (These codes can be found in the CASPA instructions). CASPA also accepts MCAT scores, but the MCAT is not required for PA school. It is also possible to self-report future test dates and to update the test score section after you have submitted.

3. Supporting Information

- You can upload up to 5 letters and each school to which you apply will see all five. You are required to have at least three letters. The Center for Pre-Health Advising recommends getting letters from at least one faculty member and one health care professional.
- CASPA does not put a limit on the number of experiences you can enter. Your experiences will be designated as belonging to one of the following categories: Patient Care Experience, Health Care Experience, Employment, Shadowing, Research, and Volunteer (see instructions).
- The character limit for experience statements is 600. Be direct and tell the reader what you did, what your role was and how you grew/what skill you developed.
- Logistics: organization details, supervisor information, start/end dates, title, estimated hours. You NEED a contact for every experience.
- You **cannot** include experiences that you will start after submission, but you can update your experiences after submitting. If you will continue with an experience, only include completed hours. Do not project future hours.
- There is a separate section for listing awards and honors as well as health-related certifications (like CNA or Phlebotomy). If you took courses for a health certification, they should be listed in the coursework section.
- **Prepare statements in a Word document so it is easy to share and edit, but copy/paste this into a notepad/txt file to remove formatting before pasting into the application!**

4. Personal statement

- The personal statement is a narrative statement to address the question, “Why PA?”

- You may use personal experiences as a “springboard” for the ways in which you have explored the field and developed skills to be good at the role of physician assistant. Help the committee learn about you and let them “hear” your voice in your writing.
- The statement is limited to 5000 characters. The Center for Pre-Health Advising and the UW Writing Center are happy to help!
- **Prepare statement in a Word document so it is easy to share and edit, but copy/paste this into a notepad/txt file to remove formatting before pasting into the application!**

5. Program Materials

- The “Program Materials” section is new for the 2015-2016 application cycle and is unique to each school to which you choose to apply. Some schools may not use this section at all, while others will use it to replace the supplemental application (see below). Others may use this section in addition to the supplemental application.
- This section will provide information specific to each program. Otherwise, this section may ask you to upload additional information (like a resume, licenses, military papers, etc.) or to document coursework that meets the program’s unique pre-requisite requirements. This section may also provide a space to respond to essay prompts.
- Information uploaded to this section of the application is unique to each school and cannot be viewed by the other schools to which you apply.

6. Schools

- We recommend that students meet with the Center for Pre-Health advising to discuss their transcript in relation to school requirements and criteria in selecting schools.
- The Center for Pre-Health Advising maintains a database of UW-Madison alumni. Ask us about contacts at programs you are considering!
- The initial application fee of \$175 includes one PA program. Additional schools may be added for a fee of \$50 and may be added after submission. CASPA offers a fee assistance program.

7. Previewing and submitting

- Print a copy of your application and review it before submitting. Save a PDF version for yourself.
- You will have to verify statements about the veracity of the document before submitting.

8. Monitoring your application

- You can submit the application prior to CASPA receiving your transcripts and letters, but the application will not be verified until transcripts, payment, and at least two letters have been received.
- It takes 2-4 weeks to verify your application. Once verification is complete, schools will access to your application, but they may not access it immediately. **IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY** to monitor the status of your application.

9. Changes after you submit

- CASPA will allow you to change some contact information, update coursework, add new test scores, experiences, and achievements, delete incomplete references and add schools. You can change program materials for schools to which you have not yet submitted.

Application Timing

Submit early to programs that use rolling admissions, but focus on creating a document that is polished and complete. It's better to submit a stronger application in the middle of June than a sloppy one on the first day! Also, be aware that schools may vary in their expectations for which materials need to be submitted by the deadline—some only require the application while others may require more (letters, test scores, transcripts, etc.).

Planning your application year

Fall semester the year you apply	Talk to letter writers; work on essays
Spring semester the year you apply	Talk to letter writers; work on essays; prep for GRE
April	Application opens and submission begins. Fee assistance program opens.
July-January	Individual school deadlines

What happens after I submit?

- CASPA will verify that the coursework you entered matches your transcripts and will calculate your GPAs.
- Schools may require supplemental applications...**YES, TELL ME MORE!!**
 - Supplemental applications are additional essays that are specific to the program.
 - Schools using supplemental applications outside of CASPA may send supplemental applications:
 - immediately after you submit your application (they want your money)
 - OR...after your application has been verified
 - OR...ONLY if you meet certain pre-screening criteria
 - Supplemental essays are usually 250-1000 words (words, not characters)
 - Typical categories of supplemental essays:
 - Why do you want to go to this school?
 - How will you contribute to the diversity of this program?
 - Does your academic record (or GRE) reflect the work you think you can do?
 - Are there academic, personal or professional challenges that have shaped you?
 - You might get an ethical scenario, or asked to fill in a table of classes that meet a school's requirements or asked if you have applied to their program before.
- You will be invited for an interview! Contact the Center for Pre-Health Advising for a mock interview!
- The application cycle ends March 1.