

# M.S. IN PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT

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## Overview

The Physician Assistant (PA) is a healthcare professional who practices medicine with physician collaboration. As a member of the healthcare team, the PA provides a broad range of medical diagnostic, therapeutic, and health promotion/disease prevention services. Bethel offers a Christ-centered, values-based education preparing graduates to be physician assistants who are competent, compassionate, and confident medical practitioners.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, physician assistants are in great demand and will continue to be in demand in coming years, with the field expected to grow a significant 30% within the decade. The PA profession was recently listed as the number one best job in America, according to U.S. News & World Report. The M.S. in Physician Assistant program at Bethel University is ready to meet that need by preparing skilled practitioners who are trained for the challenges and responsibilities of patient care in clinics, hospitals, and other medical settings.

Students will become skilled in diagnosing diseases, treating patients, prescribing medications, and assisting with preventive care. Rotations in several specialties will further develop students' learning by applying medical literature to real-life practice.

Courses are taught from a Christian worldview by experienced Bethel faculty and practitioners. Faculty provide a strong foundation in the medical sciences coupled with the development of skills to think critically and to compassionately provide the best in patient care.

The PA program builds on Bethel's reputable undergraduate majors in biology, nursing, and other sciences, extending the university's commitment to outstanding healthcare programs.

## Accreditation Statement

The Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA) has granted Accreditation-Continued status to the Bethel University Physician Assistant Program sponsored by Bethel University. Accreditation-Continued is an accreditation status granted when a currently accredited program is in compliance with the ARC-PA Standards.

Accreditation remains in effect until the program closes or withdraws from the accreditation process or until accreditation is withdrawn for failure to comply with the Standards. The approximate date for the next validation review of the program by the ARC-PA will be September 2026. The review date is contingent upon continued compliance with the Accreditation Standards and ARC-PA policy. The program's accreditation history can be viewed on the ARC-PA website (<http://www.arc-pa.org/accreditation-history-bethel-university-mn/>).

Programs at Bethel University are accredited by the Higher Learning Commission, and the PA program is included in our list of approved programs with the HLC; the PA program is also registered with the Minnesota Department of Education.

## Program Details

- The program is a full-time master's-level program that meets all day, every day with some evening hours expected, as well as varying hours during clinical rotations, which begin in the second year.
- A supportive learning community is achieved through the cohort model—a small group of students progressing through a degree program together.
- Students participate in a systems-based didactic curriculum for the first 15 months (72 credits), preparing them to participate in 12 months of clinical rotations (40 credits) to complete the Bethel PA training experience (112 credits total).

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- Bethel University's Master of Science in Physician Assistant (PA) program is designed as a comprehensive curriculum, and all students are required to complete the prescribed didactic and clinical coursework. The PA program does not allow for exemption from courses, clinical skills, laboratories, or clinical education regardless of prior experience, degree, or credential. Students must matriculate through all aspects of the program and successfully complete all program requirements in order to graduate.

### Attendance

The Physician Assistant (PA) Program is committed to the development of PA professionals. Courses are designed to build upon previous knowledge as well as cover large volumes of material in a short amount of time. Because of these factors, attendance is mandatory. The PA Student Handbook will be reviewed with students at a mandatory program orientation and has more details about attendance including the policy on medical leave. The faculty does recognize that students have outside obligations, and that situations may arise that cause a student to be absent or tardy. Therefore, the following guidelines will serve as the basis for faculty actions:

1. Attendance on all class days and clinical days is expected. Tardiness, with rare exception, will not be allowed for professionalism issues.
2. It is expected that students will utilize term or rotation breaks for vacation and other personal needs such as weddings, trips, etc. Vacations are not permitted during class days.
3. It is understood that unscheduled absences during the program are possible, including illness and other unforeseen problems that prevent a student from attending clinical or class. Excessive absence, however, may be grounds for dismissal. Greater than 3 absences during Summer Session or greater than 5 absences during Spring Semester or Fall Semester will be referred to the PA program's Progress & Promotions committee for assessment of the situation and recommendations.

### Program Goals

Our program will promote excellence in:

- **Competence.** Our program will provide exceptional training in the knowledge and skills necessary for entry-level medical practice.
- **Compassion.** Our program will prepare graduates to provide patient-centered, ethical, and compassionate care.
- **Confidence.** Our program will prepare servant leaders who practice with integrity, following the example of Jesus.
- **Culture.** Our program will celebrate the diversity of God's kingdom by supporting students with an inclusive culture and preparing them to provide culturally humble care.

### Graduate Competencies

Graduates of the Bethel University physician assistant program will be able to:

#### Knowledge

1. Integrate knowledge of disease processes with individual medical case scenarios to optimize patient outcomes.
2. Accurately interpret clinical lab and imaging tests, and appropriately apply the results to the patient's situation.
3. Provide preventive care counseling and services based on established guidelines.

**Clinical and Technical Skills**

1. Take and document accurate and complete patient histories.
2. Perform and document comprehensive and organized physical examinations of patients using proper technique.
3. Perform procedural skills safely and effectively.

**Clinical Reasoning**

1. Develop and document appropriate plans for patients based upon their individual needs and differential diagnoses.
2. Critically analyze medical literature and apply findings to patient care.

**Interpersonal Communication and Collaboration**

1. Conduct and document patient education and counseling in an effective, empathetic, and patient-centered manner
2. Collaborate with other medical professionals to improve patient care.

**Professional Behaviors**

1. Formulate a personal approach to professional practice and development, integrating their personal worldview with the needs of patients.
2. Demonstrate understanding of the physician assistant profession, including ethical, legal, and regulatory guidelines for practicing within the larger healthcare system and community.

## Admission Requirements

The M.S. degree program in Physician Assistant will consider applicants who:

- Meet the general requirements (<https://catalog.bethel.edu/graduate/admission/admission-requirements/>) for admission to the Graduate School.
- Complete all required elements of the application via Central Application Service for Physician Assistants (<https://caspa.liaisoncas.com/applicant-ux/#/login>) (CASPA).
- Submit the Bethel University PA Questionnaire with \$100 non-refundable fee.
- Submit documentation of at least 500 hours of direct patient care experience (via CASPA).
- Submit two *Admission References* (via CASPA).
- Submit official transcripts (U.S. schools) or NACES, AICE, or CGFNS evaluations (international schools) from all undergraduate and graduate schools attended.
- Have earned a baccalaureate degree from an institutionally accredited (or internationally recognized as equivalent) institution.
- Have earned a cumulative GPA from all collegiate (undergraduate and graduate) coursework of 3.25 or higher on a 4.0 scale overall, and 3.25 or higher science GPA as calculated by CASPA at the time of application.
- Interview with representatives of the program, upon invitation. Bethel undergraduate students or graduates and U.S. Military and Veterans who meet all of the qualifications are guaranteed an interview, but are not guaranteed a seat in the program. Graduates from Dordt University with a GPA of 3.5 or higher and who meet the qualifications are also guaranteed an interview but are not guaranteed a seat in the program.
- Have completed college-level subject matter prerequisites from institutionally accredited U.S. higher education institution(s), with a grade of B- or higher. Each prerequisite course must be a minimum of 3 semester credits. Five of the eight prerequisites must be completed at the time of application. Any outstanding prerequisites must be completed with transcripts received at Bethel by March 1 in the year of matriculation.
- **Required:**

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- Human Anatomy (*taken within the last five years*)
  - Biochemistry
  - Genetics
  - Microbiology (*taken within the last five years*)
  - Organic Chemistry
  - Human Physiology (*taken within the last five years*)
  - Psychology
  - Statistics
- If Human Anatomy and Human Physiology are taken in combination through a two-course sequence, both courses must be taken at the same institution.
  - Meet program technical standards (see: M.S. in Physician Assistant Technical Standards Policy (<https://www.bethel.edu/graduate/academics/physician-assistant/how-to-apply/technical-standards.pdf>)).
  - Criminal background checks, drug screens, and fingerprinting are required by many hospital organizations before PA students can enter their facilities. PA licensure is dependent upon many or all of these (depending on the state). Therefore, it is the responsibility of PA students who are accepted into the Bethel PA program to complete items as requested by the program. If there is a positive result, depending on the degree of positivity, enrollment in the Bethel PA program may not occur and Bethel legal counsel will be notified for appropriate deliberations. The cost of such requirements is the responsibility of the student.
  - All students must complete a health screening and provide evidence of required vaccinations and current health insurance. Vaccination requirements are based on the CDC recommendations for healthcare workers and meet the requirements of our clinical rotation sites.

## International Applicants and Applicants with Higher Education from International Schools

- Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or International English Language Testing System (IELTS) or Pearson Test of English Academic (PTE Academic) examination score report is required of all international applicants and all applicants whose primary language is not English. A TOEFL minimum score of 100 (internet-based) or 10 (Essentials test). IELTS minimum score of 7 is required or a Pearson test of English Academic (PTE Academic) minimum score of 70 is required.

For more information regarding International PA program requirements, please visit the P.A. program website (<https://www.bethel.edu/graduate/academics/physician-assistant/how-to-apply/international-applicant-admissions/>).

## Post-Admission Enrollment Requirements

Accepted students will receive an official acceptance letter. Once admitted into the PA program, students must provide a nonrefundable \$500 deposit within 7 days of the acceptance offer. The \$500 is applied to the first term's fee.

## Degree Requirements

### M.S. in Physician Assistant

The required curriculum for the M.S. in Physician Assistant comprises a 112 semester credit sequence of courses over 27 months. The program requires four academic terms (15 months) of didactic training plus three academic terms (12 months) of clinical training. All biology (BIOL) courses must be passed with a grade of C or higher; all physician assistant (PHAS) courses must be passed with a grade of B or higher while maintaining a 3.0 GPA for all coursework.

Code	Title	Credits
BIOL 600	Human Gross Anatomy & Histology *	4
BIOL 600L	Human Gross Anatomy and Histology Lab *	2
BIOL 610	Human Medical Physiology *	3
BIOL 620	Pharmacology & Therapeutics I *	3
BIOL 621	Medical Pathophysiology I *	2
BIOL 630	Pharmacology & Therapeutics II *	4
BIOL 631	Medical Pathophysiology II *	2
BIOL 640	Pharmacology and Therapeutics III *	2
PHAS 601	Introduction to History and Physical Examination *	2
PHAS 601L	Introduction to History and Physical Examination Lab *	1
PHAS 602	Patient Assessment and Diagnostics I *	2
PHAS 602L	Patient Assessment and Diagnostics Lab I *	1
PHAS 603	Patient Assessment and Diagnostics II *	3
PHAS 603L	Patient Assessment and Diagnostics Lab II *	1
PHAS 604	Patient Assessment & Diagnostics III <sup>1</sup>	1
PHAS 604L	Patient Assessment and Diagnostics Lab III *	1
PHAS 611	Foundation to Clinical Medicine *	4
PHAS 612	Clinical Medicine I *	6
PHAS 613	Clinical Medicine II *	7
PHAS 614	Clinical Medicine III *	5
PHAS 620	Evidence-Based Medicine and Research I *	3
PHAS 625	Clinical Reasoning I *	2
PHAS 627	Clinical Reasoning II *	2
PHAS 630	Patient-Centered Care and Applied Medical Ethics *	3
PHAS 632	PA Professional Practice Issues *	2
PHAS 635	Clinical Rotation Skills and Orientation *	3
PHAS 640	Evidence-Based Medicine and Research II *	3
PHAS 710	Clinical Field Placements I *	12
PHAS 720	Clinical Field Placements II *	15
PHAS 730	Clinical Field Placements III *	9
PHAS 791	PA Capstone and Summative Exams *	2
<b>Total Credits</b>		<b>112</b>

\* Course must be taken for credit at Bethel.