

Program Policies of Interest to Prospective Students

Effective: February 13, 2026

Revised: April 2, 2026

Related ARC-PA Standards:

A3.08 – A3.14

UC San Diego

School of Medicine

Atkinson Physician Assistant Education Program

Program Policies of Interest to Prospective Students

<p>PURPOSE</p> <p>To achieve its goals and fulfill its mission, the University of California San Diego School of Medicine Atkinson Physician Assistant Education Program is committed to transparency, accuracy, and consistency in the information provided to prospective and enrolled students.</p> <p>The purpose of this policy is to define, publish, and make readily available program policies of interest to prospective students that address clinical site procurement, health and immunization requirements, program communications, admissions and enrollment practices, academic progression, and student rights and responsibilities, in accordance with <i>ARC-PA Accreditation Standards for PA Education, Sixth Edition, Standards A3.08-A3.14</i> and all associated substandards.</p>	<p>A3.08</p> <p>The program publishes, makes readily available to current and prospective students, and consistently applies a policy stating that PA students are not required to provide or solicit clinical sites or preceptors.</p> <p>A3.09</p> <p>The program publishes, makes readily available to current and prospective students, and consistently applies policies based on current CDC health professionals' recommendations and applicable state or country mandates for:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> minimum immunization and health screening of students international travel (for programs offering international curricular components) <p>A3.10</p> <p>The sponsoring institution and program's announcements and advertising accurately reflect the program offered.</p>	<p>A3.11</p> <p>The program publishes and makes readily available to enrolled and prospective students current program information, including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> the program's ARC-PA accreditation status as provided to the program by the ARC-PA evidence of its effectiveness in meeting its goals the current annual "NCCPA PANCE Exam Performance Summary Report Last 5 Years" listing pass rates at each distant campus individually provided by the NCCPA through its program portal, when complete or no later than April first (4/1) of each year all required curricular components and the delivery method academic credit offered by the program estimates of the total cost of enrollment program-defined competencies for entry level practice which services and resources are only available, or differently available, to students and faculty on the main campus when the program is offered at a geographically distant campus location current annual student graduation rate information, on the table provided by the ARC-PA, no later than April 1st (4/1) of each year 	<p>A3.12</p> <p>The program publishes, consistently applies, and makes readily available to enrolled and prospective students any admission and enrollment practices that address:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> avored or preferred characteristics, individuals, or groups (if applicable) prior education awarding or granting advanced placement required work experience required technical standards for enrollment. <p>A3.13</p> <p>The program makes student admission decisions in accordance with clearly defined and published practices of the institution and program.</p> <p>A3.14</p> <p>The program publishes, consistently applies, and makes readily available to enrolled and prospective students:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> any required academic standards to maintain enrollment and progress in the curriculum requirements and deadlines for completion of the program policies and procedures for remediation policies and procedures for deceleration policies and procedures for withdrawal policies and procedures for dismissal policies and procedures for student grievances policies and procedures for student appeals policy for student employment while enrolled in the program policy for student travel to required rotation sites
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Readily Available Standards

(Enrolled & Prospective Learners)

Standard	Policy Information
A3.08	SCPE Placements
A3.09a	Health Requirements Certified Background Check Drug Screening & Substance Abuse
A3.09b	Not applicable
A3.10	http://paeducation.ucsd.edu
A3.11a	https://medschool.ucsd.edu/education/physician-assistant/about-us/accreditation-outcomes.html
A3.11b	https://medschool.ucsd.edu/education/physician-assistant/about-us/strategic-plan.html
A3.11c	https://medschool.ucsd.edu/education/physician-assistant/about-us/accreditation-outcomes.html
A3.11d-e	https://medschool.ucsd.edu/education/physician-assistant/academics/index.html https://medschool.ucsd.edu/education/physician-assistant/academics/didactic-curriculum.html
A3.11f	https://medschool.ucsd.edu/education/physician-assistant/admissions/cost-of-attendance.html
A3.11g	https://medschool.ucsd.edu/education/physician-assistant/academics/plos-competencies.html
A3.11h	Not applicable
A3.11i	https://medschool.ucsd.edu/education/physician-assistant/about-us/accreditation-outcomes.html
A3.12a	https://medschool.ucsd.edu/education/physician-assistant/admissions/requirements.html
A3.12b	https://medschool.ucsd.edu/education/physician-assistant/admissions/requirements.html
A3.12c	https://medschool.ucsd.edu/education/physician-assistant/admissions/requirements.html
A3.12d	https://medschool.ucsd.edu/education/physician-assistant/admissions/requirements.html
A3.12e	https://medschool.ucsd.edu/education/physician-assistant/admissions/technical-standards/index.html
A3.13	https://medschool.ucsd.edu/education/physician-assistant/admissions/admissions-process/index.html
A3.14a	Degree Completion Timeline Academic Standards Grades & Grading Models Progression to Clinical Phase
A3.14b	Graduation Requirements
A3.14c	Reexamination & Addressing Learning Gap (RLG)
A3.14d	Deceleration Policy
A3.14e	Withdrawal, Reinstatement, and Readmission Leave of Absence
A3.14f	Academic Dismissal
A3.14g-h	Grievances & Appeals Grade Appeals
A3.14i	Learner Work & Work Hours
A3.14j	SCPE Placements

SCPE Placements

Effective: January 22, 2023

Revised: February 13, 2026

Related ARC-PA Standards:

A1.10 | A3.08 | A3.14j

UC San Diego

School of Medicine

Atkinson Physician Assistant Education Program

Clinical Placements (SCPEs)

PURPOSE

The Atkinson Physician Assistant Education Program ensures that every learner is provided with a high quality educational clinical experience. To do so, the Program employs policy and rules to achieve success.

The purpose of this policy is to define, publish, and make readily available program and student responsibilities for clinical site recruitment.

Travel

Students may be required to travel up to 120 miles from campus for any given SCPE, however, the PA program will maintain a majority of SCPE sites within a 50-mile radius of campus. All travel expenses related to SCPEs are the student's responsibility.

Policy

Learners may not enter a clinical site as a representative of UC San Diego unless a legal Atkinson Physician Assistant Education Program Affiliation Agreement exists with both the site and preceptor(s). These agreements address liability, malpractice, and site-specific considerations. The Program maintains sufficient agreements to ensure clinical experiences meet program learning outcomes and ARC-PA requirements.

All SCPE assignments are made by the Program's clinical team and published in the EXXAT platform. Every effort is made to match learners with appropriate sites and preceptors; however, assignments may change at any time due to the nature of clinical training. Learners should expect schedule adjustments, will be notified as soon as possible, and must respond with flexibility, professionalism, and a positive attitude.

Prospective and enrolled learners may not arrange their own clinical experiences or contact sites/preceptors to request rotations. Preferences may be considered but are not guaranteed. The Director of Clinical Education has final authority over all SCPE times, sites, and activities. Learners wishing to suggest a site may submit a SCPE Request Form, allowing 3–6 months for evaluation and contractual arrangements. The Program may decline to pursue sites outside the UC San Diego Health network, those accommodating only one learner, or those creating undue administrative burden.

Core SCPEs occur within the program's target area. Elective/Selective SCPEs may also occur in the target area or, with adequate notice, may be arranged outside the target area following full program vetting and completion of contractual agreements. The program will not assist with securing housing; learners are responsible for arranging and paying for their own accommodations, except for courtesy housing provided in Imperial County. Learners may decline courtesy housing and arrange their own accommodations. Inability to secure housing in Imperial County does not exempt learners from rotation requirements in that area. All transportation and housing costs are the learner's responsibility for the entire duration of the curriculum.

Learner SCPE Placement Rules

- Under no circumstances may a learner exchange a rotation site assignment with another learner.
- Learners should notify the Director of Clinical Education when an assigned site switches preceptors to obtain approval.
- Learners will not be assigned to preceptors/sites that present any conflict of interest; i.e., family members, previous employers, etc.

Health Requirements

Immunization

Vaccination

Tuberculosis Testing

Health Information

Health Insurance

Effective: January 1, 2023

Revised: February 13, 2026

Related ARC-PA Standards:

A3.09a-b | A3.16b | A3.18

UC San Diego

School of Medicine

Atkinson Physician Assistant Education Program

Health Requirements Policy & Procedure

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to define, publish, and make readily available health requirements for matriculation and continuous enrollment in the program.

The health requirements were developed by faculty and staff in collaboration with the School of Medicine, the Office for Students with Disabilities, and consultation with representatives from the Docs with Disabilities Initiative. This policy is informed by and continually updated according to current recommendations from the [Centers for Disease \(CDC\) Control and Prevention for Health-care Personnel](#).

Related Forms

- [SOM/SOP Immunization Form](#)
- [SOM/SOP Tuberculosis Testing Form](#)
- [Medical Exemption Request Form](#)

POLICY

This policy defines the health requirements for an individual to successfully matriculate into and complete the Atkinson Physician Assistant Education Program curriculum. The health of the individual can affect the health of the campus community, and UC San Diego is committed to protecting the well-being of all of its learners. All incoming and re-admitted graduate and undergraduate students are required to meet the UC San Diego Immunization and Tuberculosis (TB) Screening Requirements.

PROCEDURES

The following procedural guidelines ensure ongoing evaluation and continuous improvement of the program's Health Requirements policy.

Acceptance

At the time of acceptance to the program, learners are provided with a copy of the Health Requirements policy to review. Immunization and TB testing records are due prior to matriculation.

Matriculation

Prior to or during matriculation week, learners receive an instructional session focused on the Health Requirements policy. The instructional session includes opportunities for learners to discuss and clarify policy details. By the end of the session, learners will be asked to acknowledge and attest to their understanding of the policy.

Progression to Clinical Phase

During the Didactic Capstone, learners receive an instructional session focused on the Health Requirements policy. The instructional session serves as a refresher/updater and includes opportunities for learners to discuss and clarify policy details and any changes made to the policy since matriculation. By the end of the session, learners will be asked to re-acknowledge and re-attest to their understanding of the policy.

Feedback and Continuous Improvement

The Health Requirements policy will be periodically reviewed and updated. Feedback will be actively collected from the program's learners, faculty, and staff. Any changes made to the policy will be communicated to learners in writing and published in the Learner Success Handbook.

Inquiry

Questions about this policy should be directed to the Associate Dean/Program Director.

Immunization & Vaccination

Required Immunizations	Required Data PLEASE UPLOAD ALL LABORATORY REPORTS
<p>Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis)</p> <p>Td or Tdap boosters are required every 10 years</p>	<p>One adult Tdap (after the age of 11). If last Tdap is more than 10 years old, provide last date of Td and Tdap (required)</p> <p>Tdap Dose date: ____/____/____ Td Dose date: ____/____/____</p>
<p>Measles (Rubeola) Mumps Rubella</p> <p>2 doses of MMR vaccine OR 2 doses of Measles 2 doses of Mumps and 1 dose of Rubella OR Serologic proof (blood titer) of immunity for Measles, Mumps and/or Rubella</p> <p>If vaccination is required, first dose must be completed prior to the first day of classes.</p>	<p>MMR Immunizations</p> <p>Dose 1 date: ____/____/____ Dose #1 must be on or after first birthday Dose 2 date: ____/____/____ Dose 3 date: ____/____/____ (if titer negative) Dose 4 date: ____/____/____ (if titer negative) : OR</p> <p>Measles: 2 doses of vaccine OR positive serology</p> <p>Positive Measles IgG Antibody titer</p> <p>Titer date: ____/____/____ (a positive titer meets requirement)</p> <p>Measles Vaccine Doses x 2</p> <p>Dose 1 date: ____/____/____ Dose 2 date: ____/____/____</p> <p>Positive Mumps IgG Antibody titer</p> <p>Titer date ____/____/____ (a positive titer meets requirement)</p> <p>Mumps Vaccine Doses x 2</p> <p>Dose 1 date: ____/____/____ Dose 2 date: ____/____/____</p> <p>Positive Rubella IgG Antibody titer</p> <p>Titer date ____/____/____ (a positive titer meets requirement)</p> <p>Rubella Vaccine Doses x 2</p> <p>Dose 1 date: ____/____/____ Dose 2 date: ____/____/____</p> <p>If you have a negative or indeterminate titer, obtain one dose of vaccine and repeat titer 4-6 weeks post vaccination. If titer is still negative, receive a second dose of vaccine and repeat titer 4-6 weeks later. Vaccine doses must be at least 28 days apart.</p>

Related Forms

- [SOM/SOP Immunization Form](#)
- [Medical Exemption Request Form](#)

Immunization

Disclaimer

By failing to provide proof of immunity, a learner's clinical placements may be limited due to the requirements for vaccination by clinical affiliates. In these circumstances, the program cannot guarantee clinical placement and may limit the learner's ability to successfully complete and graduate from the program.

Re-Entry

Learners who take leaves of absence of any duration and for any reason may be required to update the following to return to the program:

- Immunization status
- Tuberculosis screening
- Influenza vaccination
- COVID-19 vaccinations
- Drug testing
- Criminal background check

Related Forms

- [SOM/SOP Immunization Form](#)
- [Medical Exemption Request Form](#)

Requirements

Prior to matriculation, learners must submit certification of immunizations or proof of immunity. Failure to maintain current immunizations can prevent a learner from progressing in the program and may also prevent learners from participating in clinical rotations at locations that require such immunizations. Physician assistant education learners must meet all incoming UC San Diego graduate student immunization requirements in addition to specific healthcare occupation-related requirements required by the UC San Diego School of Medicine.

Follow the hyperlinks to the forms for more detailed information about required doses, etc.

Required Immunizations

[SOM/SOP Immunization Form](#)

- Measles, Mumps, Rubella
- Tetanus-Diphtheria-Pertussis
- Meningococcal Vaccine
- Varicella (Chicken Pox)
- Hepatitis B Series

Required Vaccines (*see next page*)

- Influenza Vaccine
- COVID-19 Vaccine

If a learner is unable to present proof of immunity and/or receive vaccinations, they will need to follow the institution's policy for exemption. The [Medical Exemption Request Form](#) must be completed and submitted to Student Health Services prior to matriculation to avoid delays in enrollment.

Vaccination

Disclaimer

By declining influenza and COVID-19 vaccinations, a learner's clinical placement may be limited due to the requirements for influenza AND COVID-19 vaccination by clinical affiliates. Some affiliates do not accept medical and/or religious exemptions. In these circumstances, the program cannot guarantee clinical placement and may limit the learner's ability to successfully complete and graduate from the program.

Re-Entry

Learners who take leaves of absence of any duration and for any reason may be required to update the following to return to the program:

- Immunization status
- Tuberculosis screening
- Influenza vaccination
- COVID-19 vaccinations
- Drug testing
- Criminal background check

Influenza

All UC San Diego learners who will be living on campus or coming to campus for work or learning are required to document the receipt of a flu vaccine.

- If you have received the vaccine outside of UCSD Student Health and outside of UCSD Health, you need to attest that you have received the vaccine and input the date it was administered.
- Please go to your [MyStudentChart](#) Home Page, go to Health -> Preventative Care-> Scroll to find the Influenza Vaccine -> Click Mark as Complete -> enter the date you received the vaccine and Accept. Vaccine is marked as completed (you may need to refresh your browser to see this).
- If you are requesting an exemption for the flu vaccine for a medical/disability or religious exemption, please fill out the following form: [Student Influenza Vaccination Exemption Form](#).

COVID-19

For the safety and well-being of the entire university community, the [UC-wide Vaccine Mandate](#) requires that all students be vaccinated against COVID-19 or have an approved exemption/deferral in order to be physically present on campus. To start the process of [requesting an exemption](#), visit Return to Learn to read more about the types of exemptions and deferrals that best suits your case. Please note, all exemptions and deferrals are only for the COVID-19 Vaccine.

Failure to be compliant with the mandate will result in an administrative hold being placed on one's record—preventing enrollment. Non-compliant students will also be referred to the Office of Student Conduct and may be subject to progressive disciplinary action. To submit proof of status, please use [MyStudentChart](#) and upload your vaccination documents.

Please direct any clinical or medical questions to the ASK A NURSE function in your MyStudentChart. This is only for health-related information. Please direct any questions about the exemption process or how to become compliant with the UC COVID-19 Mandate to ucsdtha@ucsd.edu.
(*STRICTLY NO HEALTH INFORMATION should be sent to this email address*)

Tuberculosis Testing

Disclaimer

Learners who decline initial tuberculosis testing or do not complete the proper testing needed when indicated (*see Steps 3 & 4*) will not be permitted to matriculate into the program. Subsequently, the offer of admission will be rescinded.

Learners who decline tuberculosis re-testing may have limited clinical placement options due to the requirement for TB testing by clinical affiliates. In these circumstances, the program cannot guarantee clinical placement which may limit the learner's ability to successfully complete and graduate from the program.

Re-Entry

Learners who take leaves of absence of any duration and for any reason may be required to update the following to return to the program:

- Immunization status
- Tuberculosis screening
- Influenza vaccination
- COVID-19 vaccinations
- Drug testing
- Criminal background check

Related Forms

- [SOM/SOP Tuberculosis Testing Form](#)

Requirement

All incoming physician assistant learners are required to undergo TB testing. Please begin this process early to avoid delays. Present the [SOM/SOP Tuberculosis Testing Form](#) to your healthcare provider for completion.

This form must be completed and signed by a licensed healthcare provider and must be received by UC San Diego Student Health via Health Record upload via PDF or image to: [MyStudentChart](#).

Testing must be performed within three (3) months of matriculation and repeated yearly until program completion.

See next page for TB testing requirements.

Tuberculosis Testing

1. SYMPTOMS: No current symptoms

Does your patient have any of the following symptoms? (check any that apply)

- Cough for greater than 4weeks Coughing up blood Unexplained Chest pain Persistent fever/chills/night sweats
 Persistent, unexplained fatigue Unexplained weight loss

2. IGRA-TB BLOOD TEST

QUANTIFERON - Interferon Gamma Release Assay – IGRA

Date of QTF Test: _____

Result: Negative Positive (If positive, proceed to CHEST X-RAY)

Upload laboratory result

Indeterminate (If Indeterminate, repeat test or proceed to chest x-ray)

(IF POSITIVE, PROCEED TO CHEST X-RAY)

3. CHEST X-RAY REQUIRED if Quantiferon/IGRA + or symptoms are positive or previous treatment for TB or latent TB

YOU MUST ATTACH WRITTEN RADIOLOGY CHEST X-RAY REPORT IN ENGLISH (DO NOT SEND FILMS/CD of the x-ray)

Any abnormal result, including scars and old granulomatous changes – MUST PERFORM SPUTUM TESTING

Date of Chest X-ray: _____ Result: Normal Abnormal

(Results submitted without chest x-ray report will NOT be accepted.)

4. TB SPUTUM

Results (AFB smear and cultures x 3 are **REQUIRED** if the Chest X-ray is read as ABNORMAL)

1. Date: _____ AFB: _____ Culture: _____
2. Date: _____ AFB: _____ Culture: _____
3. Date: _____ AFB: _____ Culture: _____

5. SIGNATURE

MD/PA/NP/RN
Licensed Health Care Provider Name Signature Date (MM/DD/YYYY)

6. Upload PDF or image to: [MyStudentChart.ucsd](https://mystudentchart.ucsd.edu) go to Menu > Immunizations & Screening > TB

Related Forms

- [SOM/SOP Tuberculosis Testing Form](#)

Health Information & Confidentiality

Health Examination & Provider

A pre-participation health examination is not required for matriculation or continuous enrollment in the program.

Except for in emergency situations, program faculty cannot participate as healthcare providers for learners enrolled in the program and do not have access to health information other than that defined in this policy. Program faculty can help to augment the referral process to a healthcare provider in the community but cannot serve directly as the learner's healthcare agent.

Principal faculty, in their role as advisors, are likely to be privy to personal and confidential health information shared by learners in confidence. And although faculty cannot make diagnoses or treat any learner for any ailment, they are able to offer "advice" as an advisor, especially about seeking care for concerns a learner may have voluntarily disclosed.

In cases of mental health emergency or life or death emergency while in advising session or in the classroom or laboratory, principal faculty may intervene by offering Good Samaritan treatment, first aid, and emergency referral to the emergency department by ambulance (call 911) and/or alerting campus health and/or counseling services of an immediate need for diagnosis and treatment.

Documentation & Release of Records

All learner healthcare related material is kept on file at Student Health Services. In addition, the learner's health information is also kept on file the Student Health Services' HIPAA-compliant electronic medical record (MyChart). For more information about medical records at Student Health Services, go to: <https://shwadmin.ucsd.edu/medical-records/index.html>.

Learners are required to provide an Authorization for Release of Information that authorizes the program to:

- Maintain a copy of their health information in their program record.
- Release copies of this information to EXXAT APPROVE and assigned clinical training sites.
- Documentation of health records will be kept in the learner's file in accordance with the Program and Learner Files policy.

EXXAT APPROVE

The program contracts with EXXAT, Inc. APPROVE HIPAA-compliant collection and storage service online. The EXXAT APPROVE service collects learners' criminal background checks, drug screen reports (after independent Medical Review Officer review), TB testing results, and immunization/vaccination records and reviews them on a regular basis. The service notifies learners of any deficiencies and learners are responsible for ensuring that all health requirements are up-to-date in EXXAT APPROVE. Participation in EXXAT APPROVE cannot be declined.

Clinical Training Sites

Some clinical training sites require a copy of the learner's immunization/vaccination history and tuberculosis testing results. To meet credentialing requirements, this health information will be shared only with clinical training sites assigned to the learner.

HIPAA

For Health Portability and Accountability Act confidentiality policies, please refer to the Privacy and Confidentiality Policy.

The Program complies with UC San Diego's Notify of Privacy Practices – HIPAA.

https://studenthealth.ucsd.edu/_files/about/Privacy-Practices_English.pdf

Health Insurance

UC SHIP

All learners must maintain current, continuous health insurance valid for the entire 29-month course of training or until they complete the program. Physician assistant learners are automatically covered by the UC Ship – Student Health Insurance Plan as required by all enrolled graduate students. UC SHIP can be waived if adequate/comparable health insurance coverage is approved via waiver by Student Health Services. The UC RAFT – Reduced Access Fee for Tritons program by itself is not acceptable health insurance coverage. The program highly recommends UC RAFT supplementation for learners who waive UC SHIP only.

Due to the program's June start date every year, learners who opt for UC SHIP are required to purchase Early Start UC SHIP coverage.

Early Start

<https://shwadmin.ucsd.edu/uc-ship/summer-success.html>

Student Health Services

Healthcare services are primarily provided by [Student Health Services](#). For more information about the UC Ship – Student Health Insurance plan including costs, go to: <https://shwadmin.ucsd.edu/uc-ship/index.html>.

Waiving UC SHIP

<https://shwadmin.ucsd.edu/uc-ship/waive/index.html>

Emergency Care

<https://studenthealth.ucsd.edu/resources/emergency-care/index.html>

California Benefits

Learners may choose to apply for Medi-Cal to use either in conjunction with their UC SHIP insurance or as their primary insurance *with approval* for themselves and their dependents. Qualified learners may also choose to apply for other state programs like Cal-Fresh (food assistance) and Cal-Works (cash assistance), etc.

Apply for Medi-Cal, Cal-Fresh, Cal-Works

<https://benefitscal.com/StudentCenter/Home>

Medi-Cal Recipients

<https://shwadmin.ucsd.edu/insurance-other/med-cal.html#Can-I-keep-both-SHIP-and-Medi-C>

Medical Care Outside the UCSD Area

<https://shwadmin.ucsd.edu/uc-ship/outside-area.html>

CalHOPE

<https://www.calhope.org>

CoveredCalifornia

<https://www.coveredca.com>

Certified Background Check

Effective: January 5, 2023

Revised: February 13, 2026

Related ARC-PA Standards:

None

UC San Diego

School of Medicine

Atkinson Physician Assistant Education Program

Admissions Policy

PURPOSE

The Atkinson Physician Assistant Education Program is responsible for ensuring that learners meet the minimum background screening requirements for participation in supervised clinical practice experiences and legal requirements to be eligible to obtain license for physician assistant practice and employment.

The purpose of this policy is to define, publish, and make readily available the requirements for undergoing pre-qualifying screening, including a certified background check prior to matriculation into the program and before beginning clinical rotations.

These policies are overarching policies applying to all forms of conduct applicable to learners:

UC San Diego Standards Of Conduct Summary

https://studentconduct.ucsd.edu/_files/policies-process/prior-years/standards-of-conduct.pdf

Policies Applying to Campus Activities, Organizations and Students (PACAOS)

<https://policy.ucop.edu/doc/2710530/PACAOS-100>

ARC-PA Standards:

None

Admissions Policy

Several states have passed "Ban the Box" laws for higher education, which prohibit post-secondary institutions from asking applicants about their criminal history during the admissions process. The law further prohibits offering an applicant provisional acceptance to a program subject to a criminal background check. In 2020, California became the fifth state to enact this type of law (Cal Educ. Code 66024.5).

The Atkinson UC San Diego Physician Assistant Education Program does not require a criminal background check prior to matriculating into the program and will not have access to criminal background data submitted to CASPA for programs outside the state of California. However, applicants should review the following:

- An admitted learner's ability to complete the program successfully and gain the appropriate licensure could be negatively impacted by their criminal history.
- Supervised clinical practice experiences (SCPE) are a critical part of the program's requirements for graduation. Many clinical sites will not place a learner on a clinical rotation unless they have successfully passed a criminal background check. Background check results that limit the program's ability to secure SCPEs may prevent a student from progressing or graduating from the program.
- As a part of the licensing process, many states require that graduates undergo a comprehensive background investigation. This process requires graduates of the program to disclose all past criminal convictions, even if they have been set aside or expunged.

Applicants who have questions about criminal background checks should email the program prior to application at paeducation@health.ucsd.edu.

Background Check Requirements

PURPOSE

The Atkinson Physician Assistant Education Program is responsible for ensuring that learners meet the minimum background screening requirements for participation in supervised clinical practice experiences and legal requirements to be eligible to obtain license for physician assistant practice and employment.

The purpose of this policy is to define, publish, and make readily available the requirements for undergoing pre-qualifying screening, including a certified background check prior to matriculation into the program and before beginning clinical rotations.

These policies are overarching policies applying to all forms of conduct applicable to learners:

UC San Diego Standards Of Conduct Summary

https://studentconduct.ucsd.edu/_files/policies-process/prior-years/standards-of-conduct.pdf

Policies Applying to Campus Activities, Organizations and Students (PACAOS)

<https://policy.ucop.edu/doc/2710530/PACAOS-100>

ARC-PA Standards:

None

Policy

Learners must undergo a certified background check at the time of matriculation after they have accepted the admissions offer and again before starting clinical rotations. A background check revealing information that prohibits a learner from participating in clinical rotations or prevent medical licensure may deem learners ineligible to enter the program.

- Learners who have been offered and accepted a seat in the program will receive a notification by email on how to access the approved vendor site (Certiphi). The email will include submission deadlines for completion of the background screening prior to matriculation.
- The learner is responsible for any fees associated with the initial background check at matriculation.
- All learners are required to repeat the background check process before starting clinical rotations. The program will be responsible for any fees associated with the second background check.
- Refusing to undergo either background check is grounds for dismissal from the program or the rescinding of admission to the program.
- Learners are required to disclose and explain any felony, misdemeanor, or conviction that occurs while enrolled in the program of study. Disclosures will be reviewed by the Associate Dean/Program Director. Failure to disclose such information as soon as reasonably possible will result in a meeting with the Learner Progress Committee for next steps and recommendations to the Associate Dean/Program Director.
- Conviction of a felony while enrolled in the program of study will result in a meeting with the Learner Progress Committee for next steps and recommendation of dismissal from the program to the Associate Dean/Program Director.

State Laws on PA Licensing and Practice

Although the Program curriculum offers education on this topic, learners are responsible for their own awareness of California PA practice and licensing laws as they related to criminal history as it pertains to their own personal situation. If a learner plans to apply for licensure and practice in another state or U.S. Territory, they should be aware of those laws as well.

California PA Board

<https://www.pab.ca.gov>

Laws & Regulations Relating to the Practice of Physician Assistants

https://www.pab.ca.gov/lawsregs/pab_laws_reqs_booklet.pdf

Drug Screening & Substance Abuse Policy

Effective: January 15, 2023

Revised: February 12, 2026

Related ARC-PA Standards:

None

UC San Diego

School of Medicine

Atkinson Physician Assistant Education Program

Drug Testing

Disclaimer

By declining drug testing, a learner's clinical placement may be limited due to the requirements for drug testing by affiliated clinical partners. The Atkinson Physician Assistant Education Program cannot guarantee the learner's placement at a clinical site and may limit the learner's ability to successfully complete and graduate from the program. Completion of all clinical rotations is required to earn the MAS-PAS degree.

Re-Entry

Learners who take leaves of absence of any duration and for any reason may be required to update the following to return to the program:

- Immunization status
- Tuberculosis screening
- Influenza vaccination
- COVID-19 vaccinations
- Drug screening/testing
- Criminal background check

ARC-PA Standards:

None

Pre-Matriculation

The Program does not require drug testing prior to matriculating into the program. However, applicants should review and take note of the following:

- Supervised clinical practice experiences (SCPE) are a critical part of the Program's requirements for graduation. Many affiliated clinical rotation facilities will not place a learner on a clinical rotation unless they have successfully passed drug testing. Drug testing results that limit the program's ability to secure SCPEs may prevent a student from progressing or graduating from the program.
- As a part of the licensing and credentialing process, many state boards, healthcare systems, and third-party payers require that graduates undergo a comprehensive drug testing.

To satisfy the requirements of affiliated clinical partners both internal and external to the university, learners in the program may be subjected to programmed drug testing throughout the clinical curriculum at the program's expense.

Post-Matriculation

In addition to the general policy statement below, learners should refer to the Drug Screen Policy and Substance Abuse Policy for further details.

- Random drug screening may be performed at any point during the program, especially if there is reasonable suspicion of illicit drug use or alcohol abuse. ***The cost of this type of request is incurred by the learner.***
- Although recreational marijuana is legal in California, marijuana is still federally illegal. Healthcare systems receive federal funding as well as participate in Medicare/Medicaid programs and are therefore held to the federal standards regarding marijuana use. Learners who test positive for marijuana will be unable to participate in clinical rotations and will not be permitted to progress in the program until they have met with the Learner Progress Committee. Affected learners may be asked to seek counseling.
- Refusing to undergo required drug screening, failure to provide a specimen, or evidence of tampering with the specimen will deem the learner ineligible to progress in the program and may lead to dismissal from the program pending investigation and recommendation by responsible parties.

Drug Screening Policy

Requirements

While currently, it is not the policy of the program to drug test all learners at matriculation; drug testing will be implemented during the clinical phase of the program when indicated or requested by an affiliated institution as part of the onboarding and credentialing process for clinical rotations. Clinical rotations at affiliated institutions are required components of training, and it is important that UC San Diego comply with these requests. UC San Diego is responsible for all such testing of physician assistant learners and for notification of responsible parties.

Urine drug screening (UDS) applies to all UC San Diego PA learners upon request of an affiliated institution **or** upon request of an institutional official. Urine drug screening must be done via Certiphi thirty (30) days prior to the planned clinical rotation, **or immediately** upon the request of an institutional official. If the learner is unable to provide a urine specimen for drug testing because of anuria due to a documented medical condition, arrangements must be made with the COEM Clinical Supervisor or designee for the collection of a blood sample for drug testing. *The program will incur the cost of initial drug testing/screening when necessary for credentialing and meeting clinical site requirements. The learner will incur the expense of drug testing/screening when requested by institutional officials for suspicion of substance use/abuse.*

Requests for urine drug screening examinations are initiated by the responsible party at the affiliated institution **or** when indicated by an institutional official. The Director of Professional Services, UCSD Medical Center, the Associate Dean for Physician Assistant Education, and the Director of Clinical Education will provide program oversight for the drug testing program.

Procedures and Responsibilities

A. Urine Drug Testing

1. 60-90 days prior to rotating at an affiliated institution, the Director of Clinical Education will ensure that each learner is advised of urine drug screening requirements, which will also be documented in each learner's EXXAT profile.
2. Urine drug screen results must be completed prior to the assigned rotation. This process must be initiated thirty (30) days prior to rotation, and results must be available for transmission to the responsible party at the affiliated institution fifteen (15) days prior to rotation's start date. The learner must consult with the Director of Clinical Education if unable to complete drug screening within this 15-30 day time period.
3. The learner contacts Certiphi for an appointment. The learner must bring a photo ID to the urine drug screening appointment. A urine sample will be obtained for drug screening (UDS). Consent and Authorization for Release of Information Regarding Drug Testing will be obtained. UDS must be obtained within 30 days prior to the rotation date.

If the learner does not comply with urine drug screening requirements, they will not be allowed to complete the scheduled rotation. This is considered a violation of the program's policies on professionalism. This may also delay the completion of the program's curriculum.

B. Urine Drug Screen Findings

Urine drug screens are sent to an independent laboratory for processing. This laboratory performs the drug screen, often within 24 hours, and will notify the Program of the results. In the event of a positive screen, the laboratory will plan for confirmatory testing and follow standard laboratory procedures.

Certiphi will notify the Director of Clinical Education of the learner's drug screen status. Status will either be "meets requirements", "delay in clearance", or "does not meet requirements." A learner may request retesting of the learner's original sample within five days of being notified of a positive result. *The learner is responsible for the cost of retesting.*

Substance Abuse Policy

The Atkinson Physician Assistant Education program aims to assist learners before they develop academic or legal problems related to alcohol and drugs. Learners who seek assistance before such problems occur may do so with confidence that participation in rehabilitation will have no effect on their standing in the School of Medicine. When a learner is self-referred for treatment or counseling, no official report is made unless specific permission is granted by the learner. Confidentiality is carefully guarded. Learners who wish to receive assistance will be referred to the UC San Diego [Counseling and Psychological Services](#) by the Associate Dean/Program Director or the Director of Learner Success & Wellness.

However, additional steps must be taken if a learner is impaired. In any situation where learner responsibility for patients is required, or may be required, the learner may never risk patient welfare by acting under the influence of drugs, including alcohol. Of particular concern is the unauthorized use of drugs to which the learner may have privileged access. Such drug misuse is a violation of societal trust and is viewed by the profession as an especially grave offense. Learners who endanger patients or others through the use of alcohol or drugs, or who violate the trust of the special position granted to them, are subject to disciplinary action through the program and the School of Medicine, independent of any action(s) which may be taken by other authorities. Learners who use drugs that produce physical dependence or learners who excessively use alcohol may have associated, serious psychological problems requiring additional consultation.

Drug Policy Action Guidelines

1. If a learner is accused of a violation of policy concerning illegal drug possession or use, the matter is to be referred to the Associate Dean/Program Director or the Director of Learner Success & Wellness.
2. The Associate Dean/Program Director may elect to obtain a psychiatric evaluation of the learner in terms of the significance and prognostic implications of the violation. The learner's compliance with this procedure is required.
3. While awaiting definition of the facts of an alleged or established violation and of its significance, the Associate Dean/Program Director must promptly notify the learner of the charges in writing. In any case which is not immediately and obviously resolvable, the Associate Dean/Program Director is obliged to notify the learner's academic advisor and any appropriate supervising faculty. These communications must have as their objective the protection of the learner, patients, and others, and must be made without prejudice to the learner or the eventual disposition of the case.
4. If in the judgment of the Associate Dean/Program Director, the learner represents a clear and present danger to self or to others, the Associate Dean/Program Director may take immediate steps to suspend the learner until further notice. The Associate Dean/Program Director may also take additional steps that, in the Associate Dean's judgment, may be necessary to minimize hazards to the learner or to others, including securing emergency professional assistance. The Associate Dean/Program Director decision is non-negotiable and cannot be appealed while the investigation is ongoing.
5. The resolution of matters concerning substance abuse and dependence fall within the purview of the Associate Dean/Program Director. If substance abuse or dependence has affected a learner's academic performance, the matter will also be brought before the Learner Progress Committee for recommendations made to the Associate Dean/Program Director.
6. A decision to dismiss a learner from the program based on facts and evidence of the case, professional conduct, and compliance will be processed and carried out using the program's dismissal policy.
7. Regardless of the outcome, learners should understand that substance abuse must be reported to all state licensing boards and credentialing facilities/institutions upon completion and graduation from UC San Diego.

Degree Completion Timeline

PURPOSE

The Atkinson Physician Assistant Education Program is committed to exemplary academic standards in medical knowledge, clinical skills, attitudes, and professional behavior. It is the Program's responsibility to determine criteria for the progression of learners throughout the continuum of the MAS-PAS program of study and assess/evaluate their knowledge, skills, and abilities along the way to graduation.

The purpose of this policy is to provide clear expectations on requirements and principles governing academic performance and progression and to outline disciplinary actions that may be taken when learners are unable to meet program-defined academic standards. Additionally, this policy outlines expectations on requirements and procedures related to deficiencies, remediation, and reassessment of unsatisfactory performance, and is intended to ensure that learners receive due process and consideration in academic matters.

Excerpted from:
Learner Progression Policy

Normative Time to Complete the MAS-PAS Degree

The normative time from matriculation to degree completion for the MAS-PAS program of study is 29 months. This includes 15 months of didactic instruction followed by 14 months of clinical instruction. The program of study is designed as a lock-step model. The program will conduct frequent, objective, and documented evaluations of student performance to monitor learner progress in meeting the program's learning outcomes and graduate competencies.

Exceptions to Normative Timeline

The Program's Learner Progress Committee has established policies regarding remediation, reassessment, and deceleration to ensure learners complete the program of study within the prescribed timeline. If a learner decelerates, the maximum time from matriculation to the granting of the degree is 44 months. Approved leaves of absence recommended by the Learner Progress Committee (LPC) and approved by the Associate Dean/Program Director may extend the 44-month maximum time to completion. These decisions will be determined on an individual basis and will not set precedent. Learners placed on a decelerated path to completion must pay full tuition and fees for all additional quarters.

Part-Time Enrollment

The Program does not offer a part-time program of study. Except in cases where deceleration dictates the need for part-time enrollment, all learners must be enrolled full-time every quarter. Special Topics guided independent study courses will be utilized to ensure no decelerated learners are enrolled part-time.

Learners required to repeat SCPEs to graduate during the summer quarter may be enrolled part-time and the tuition may be prorated. Part-time enrollment may challenge learners seeking financial aid to pay tuition and fees. Special Topics guided independent study courses may be utilized to enroll a learner full-time. If enrolled full-time, tuition and fees for additional quarters will not be prorated.

Requests to Progress Online

Requests to progress in the program of study exclusively online will not be approved. The Program does not offer a hybrid model or a fully online curriculum. Temporary exceptions to this policy may be accommodated for reasons of documented disability or illness. Temporary accommodations cannot be made permanent as the change would result in the learner's inability to meet all program learning outcomes and graduate competencies. The learner may also need to reaffirm the Program's Technical Standards Policy. A permanent accommodation to progress exclusively online is considered a fundamental alteration in the program of study and would therefore be unreasonable to accommodate.

Academic Standards

MAS-PAS Program of Study Policies

All Learners **MUST**:

- meet all requirements outlined in the Technical Standards Policy.
- attend and fully participate in all program instructional activities in accordance with the Program's Attendance & Participation Policy.
- fulfill all requirements for each didactic, clinical, and capstone course as established in individual course syllabi.
- achieve minimum academic performance standards on all assessments and examinations.
- successfully remediate any academic deficiencies and demonstrate acceptable levels of maturity, integrity, and other attitudes and behaviors in compliance with program-defined standards for professionalism and ethical conduct in accordance with the Code of Conduct Policy, Professionalism Policy, and Academic Integrity Policy.
- complete two Physician Assistant Clinical Knowledge Rating and Assessment Tests (PACKRAT).
- complete a master's capstone project.
- pass a summative written examination and practical assessment 2 months prior to graduation.

Course Policies

- All PAE course final grades are calculated using a weighted grading scale.
- Written examinations for all MAS-PAS courses will be graded using a percentage scale.
- OSCEs, Clinical, and Technical Skills Assessments for all MAS-PAS courses will be graded using the standards-based grading scale.
- Rounding up is not applied to final course grades < 70% nor can rounding up be applied to any final course grade when rounding up has already been applied to individual course content scoring; e.g., quizzes, assignments, graded formative assessments, etc.
- Bonus credit is not available for any course in the program of study.

Minimum Academic Performance Standards

All Learners **MUST**:

- earn a minimum final course grade of at least 70% for all didactic, clinical, and capstone courses.

Didactic Phase

Didactic Course Written Examinations:

A score of $\geq 70\%$ is considered passing on any individual didactic course examination.

End-of-Didactic Phase GPA (EOD GPA):

A cumulative GPA of ≥ 3.0 at the conclusion of the didactic phase of the MAS-PAS program of study is required to progress to the clinical phase.

End-of-Didactic Summative Practical Assessment (EOD SP-OSCE) :

This practical assessment is administered as a simulated-patient OSCE. A score of ≥ 3 on all components of the assessment is required to pass the assessment.

Clinical Phase

Preceptor Evaluation of the Student:

A score of ≥ 3 on at least 70% (aggregate mean) of the course learning outcomes measured by the Preceptor Evaluation of the Learner is considered passing.

Master's Capstone Project:

A score of ≥ 3 on all components of the Capstone Project Rubric is required to pass this assessment.

End of Rotation™ (EOR) Examinations:

EOR examinations are administered for core SCPEs only. Passing scores on EOR examinations are based on the national mean. A minimum score of 1.5 standard deviations below the national mean is required to pass the examination.

End-of-Curriculum Summative Practical Assessment (EOC SP-OSCE) :

This practical assessment is administered as a simulated-patient OSCE. A score of ≥ 3 on all components of the assessment is required to pass the assessment.

End-of-Curriculum™ (EOC) Summative Written Assessment:

The passing score on the EOC written examination is based on the national mean. A minimum score of 1.5 standard deviations below the national mean is required to pass this examination.

End-of-Curriculum Objective Structured Assessment of Technical Skills (OSATS):

This assessment is administered in the last four months of the program of study with a minimum standards-based grading scale performance score of 3 or greater.

End-of-Curriculum GPA (EOC GPA):

A cumulative GPA of ≥ 3.0 at the conclusion of the MAS-PAS program of study is required to meet the criteria for graduation.

An ACADEMIC DEFICIENCY is defined as failure to meet any of the above performance standards.

Grades & Grading Models

Grades

It is the prerogative of the Instructor-of-Record (IOR) to determine the grading components and weights for the course. The IOR will determine the type of assessment instrument(s) to be used in the classroom. Course syllabi provide course content and course expectations. It is the learner's responsibility to become familiar with this information.

Grades given in the MAS-PAS program of study are "A", "B", "C", "D", and "F" on a 100-point scale as defined by individual course syllabi. A learner must complete all the required courses and clinical rotations of the program with a passing grade to be eligible for graduation. A "C" is the minimum passing grade for all courses with a "PAE" prefix. The "D" grade is not considered passing for any course with a "PAE" prefix. While a "C" is the minimum passing grade, a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 must be maintained or the learner will be placed on **Academic Probation**. Learners allowed to repeat didactic courses or assigned deceleration by the LPC must do so the following year the course is offered.

Weighted Grading Scale

The weighted grading scale provides the learners with a holistic view of their performance through a single letter or numerical grade. All examination/assessment scores that have been graded and recorded are averaged and converted using a percentage system. Overall grades are often determined by combining academic and non-academic components, such as classwork, participation, attendance, homework, quizzes, and exams. Each component has a weight assigned to influence the final grade accordingly.

Standards-Based Grading Scale

The standards-based grading scale is a set of teaching and reporting practices that communicate how a learner is performing against a predetermined set of expectations. It relies on the mastery of learning targets and performance standards rather than performance on single assignments and course components grading on a scale. The Program uses several versions of this type of scale; e.g., Professionalism & Participation Rubric, EOR™ Examination Standards-Based Grading Scale.

Weighted Grading Scale			Standards-Based Grading Scale			
A	90 - 100 %	Excellent	4	Advanced	TBD	At this level of training, the learner proficient and far exceeds expectations.
B	80 - <90 %	Good	3	Proficient	TBD	At this level of training, the learner is proficient and meets expectations.
C	70 - <80 %	Satisfactory	2	Developing	TBD	At this level of training, the learner needs additional education and experience to meet expectations and proficiency.
D	60 - <70%	Poor	1	Needs Improvement	TBD	At this level of training, the learner clearly lacks proficiency* and does not meet expectations.
F	< 60 %					

*Proficiency is defined as the ability to do all things consistently, adapting to contextual and situational needs.

Grades & Grading Models

End-of-Rotation™ Examination (EOR) Standards-Based Grading Scale				
4	Advanced	100 %	$\geq +0.5$	The learner's fund of knowledge is proficient and exceeds expectations. ≥ +0.5 standard deviations above the mean
3	Proficient	85 %	-1.5 to +0.49	The learner's fund of knowledge is proficient and meets expectations. -1.5 standard deviations below the mean to +0.49 standard deviations above the mean
2	Developing	70 %	-1.51 to -2.0	The learner's fund of knowledge needs additional education and experience to become proficient. -1.51 to -2.0 standard deviations below the mean
1	Needs Improvement	0 %	≤ -2.1	The learner's fund of knowledge lacks proficiency* and does not meet expectations. ≤ -2.1 standard deviations below the mean

*Proficiency is defined as mastery of prerequisite knowledge and skills that are fundamental for proficient practice in the subject area.

Progression to the Clinical Phase

PURPOSE

Several indicators of performance are used to determine a learner's readiness to move forward from the didactic to the clinical phase of the curriculum. These indicators include prerequisite courses completed, grade point average achieved, skills proficiencies attained, results of knowledge and skills testing, and completion of all requirements of the didactic curriculum.

The purpose of this policy is to define, publish, and make readily available requirements for progression from the Didactic to the Clinical Phase of the MAS-PAS program of study.

Timeline Note

All Program policies will be strictly followed including timelines. This may affect a learner's ability to progress further in the program of study while processing is being completed. If a grievance, grade, and/or dismissal appeal is submitted near the end of the didactic year, the Program will not allow progression to the Clinical Phase until all grievances, grade, and/or dismissal appeals have been processed completely and decisions rendered and published. If a grievance, grade, and/or dismissal appeal is submitted near the end of the Clinical Phase, the program will not allow completion of the program of study until all appeals and grievances have been resolved and a decision has been rendered and published.

ARC-PA Standards:

A2.05f | A3.15a-d | A3.15g | A3.17d-f
B4.01b | B4.03a-e

Learners who have been recommended to the Learner Progress Committee for progression to the Clinical Phase by the principal faculty of the Program may do so provided they meet all the following conditions.

1. Satisfactory completion of all didactic and capstone courses during the didactic phase of the curriculum earning 88 quarter credits and achieving an overall cumulative ≥ 3.0 grade point average.
2. Satisfactory completion of the End-of-Didactic Summative Practical Assessment (EOC SP-OSCE) at the end of the didactic phase of the curriculum with a minimum standards-based grading scale performance score of 3 or greater.
3. Satisfactory demonstration of the ethical, professional, behavioral, and personal characteristics requisite to the professional identity development of a learner in good standing.
4. Satisfactory demonstration of program learning outcomes and graduate competencies pertinent to the Didactic Phase as evidenced by all the above-met requirements.

Challenges to Progression

Learners unable to fulfill these requirements by the completion of the Didactic Capstone will not be allowed to progress to the Clinical Phase of the program of study without the written approval of the Associate Dean/Program Director. Learners pending remediation and reassessment requirements subsequent to Didactic Capstone performance will be placed on temporary progression hold until they have satisfactorily completed the above requirements. Learners may need to forego the scheduled break immediately after the Didactic Capstone to work on remediating and reassessment any deficiencies identified during the capstone.

Although not anticipated, learners with significant academic deficiencies may be more intensively remediated or decelerated, potentially resulting in a departure from the normative time to completion of the MAS-PAS program of study; i.e., delayed graduation. Learners on Academic Probation cannot progress to the Clinical Phase of the curriculum until the Academic Probation is rehabilitated. Although rehabilitation of Academic Probation should occur as soon as possible, it must be rehabilitated no later than 15 months after the notification of action. The process and timeline for rehabilitation must follow the GEPA and Academic Senate petition process.

Didactic Capstone

The Program's curriculum includes PAE 290 – Didactic Capstone which occurs at the end of the Didactic Phase of instruction. This seminar-based course is designed to evaluate the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors acquired by learners during the didactic phase of training. The Physician Assistant Clinical Knowledge Rating Assessment Tool is administered for learners to self-assess the depth and breadth of medical knowledge. Learners will also participate in an Objective Structured Clinical Examination to gauge the acquisition of program competencies in all seven domains. Informative sessions on topics that prepare learners for the clinical phase of training are also provided.

Graduation Requirements

PURPOSE

Several indicators of performance are used to determine a learner's readiness to move forward from the didactic to the clinical phase of the curriculum and to graduate from the Program. These indicators include prerequisite courses completed, grade point average achieved, skills proficiencies attained, results of comprehensive knowledge and skills testing, and completion of all requirements for the Master's Capstone Project.

The purpose of this policy is to define, publish, and make readily available graduation requirements for the MAS-PAS program of study.

ARC-PA Standards:

A2.05f | A3.15a-d | A3.15g | A3.17d-f
B4.01b | B4.03a-e

Learners who have been recommended for graduation to the Learner Progress Committee by the principal faculty of the Program may be awarded the Master of Advanced Study in Physician Assistant Studies (MAS-PAS) degree provided they meet all the following conditions.

1. Satisfactory completion of all didactic and capstone courses during the didactic phase of the curriculum earning 88 quarter credits and achieving an overall cumulative ≥ 3.0 grade point average.
2. Satisfactory completion of the End-of-Didactic Summative Practical Assessment (EOC SP-OSCE) at the end of the didactic phase of the curriculum with a minimum standards-based grading scale performance score of 3 or greater.
3. Satisfactory completion of all clinical and capstone courses during the clinical phase of the curriculum, earning 48 quarter credits and achieving an overall ≥ 3.0 cumulative grade point average.
4. Satisfactory completion of the End-of-Curriculum™ (EOR) Examination administered in the last four months of the program of study with a minimum score of 1.5 standard deviations below the national mean.
5. Satisfactory completion of the End-of-Curriculum Summative Practical Assessment (EOC SP-OSCE) administered in the last four months of the program of study with a minimum standards-based grading scale performance score of 3 or greater.
6. Satisfactory completion of the End-of-Curriculum Objective Structured Assessment of Technical Skills (OSATS) assessment administered in the last four months of the program of study with a minimum standards-based grading scale performance score of 3 or greater.
7. Satisfactory completion of the Master's Capstone Project evidenced by signatures of the learner's faculty advisor/capstone mentor, Associate Dean/Program Director, and the Dean of the School of Medicine.
8. Satisfactory demonstration of the ethical, professional, behavioral, and personal characteristics requisite to practicing as a Physician Assistant.
9. Satisfactory completion of all didactic, clinical, and capstone courses earning 136 quarter credits and achieving an overall ≥ 3.0 cumulative grade point average.
10. Satisfactory demonstration of all program learning outcomes and graduate competencies as evidenced by all the above-met requirements.

Learners unable to fulfill these requirements by the day of graduation will not be allowed to participate in the commencement ceremony without the approval of the Associate Dean/Program Director. Learners will not be considered graduates in any capacity until they have successfully completed all the above requirements.

Graduation Ceremony

The Program's curriculum ends when all didactic and clinical coursework is satisfactorily completed. Learners can participate in formal commencement exercises in late May or early June on the UC San Diego School of Medicine campus. The ceremony celebrates the Atkinson Physician Assistant Education Program. The ceremony is not planned as an interdisciplinary event.

Reexamination and Addressing Learning Gap (RLG)

The success of every learner is our highest priority. The program recognizes that learning gaps emerge from complex and interconnected circumstances. Learners navigating particularly rigorous academic coursework may find themselves struggling to keep pace, while others face challenges stemming from mental health conditions that affect their ability to focus and engage with their studies. Understanding these diverse challenges, this policy outlines a comprehensive approach to identifying and addressing learning gaps through early intervention, targeted support, and continuous assessment.

Purpose

This policy outlines a structured process for the early identification of learners facing academic difficulties and the timely implementation of targeted interventions. The approach includes access to supplemental learning resources, consistent progress monitoring, and ongoing assessment, with flexibility to adjust support strategies based on individual learner needs and responsiveness.

The program is committed to fostering an inclusive educational environment that promotes both academic achievement and learner wellbeing. Recognizing that each learner's path to success is unique, this policy affirms the provision of individualized support to ensure all learners are equipped to progress and thrive.

Reexamination

Students must achieve a minimum score of 70% on each examination to successfully pass and progress in this course. If a student scores below this threshold, they will complete a reexamination process. The student will meet with the Instructor of Record (IOR) to identify knowledge gaps and develop a personalized plan to address their learning gaps. Once this has been completed, the Instructor of Record will schedule a reexamination at their discretion within 7-14 days following the original exam.

Students must achieve a minimum score of 70% on the reexamination to pass and progress in the course. The maximum score assigned for a reexamination will be 70%. If a student does not pass the reexamination, the student will be assigned a final grade of F in the course regardless of previous scores resulting in course failure. The student will be referred to the Learner Progress Committee for further action. Refer to the Learner Progression Policy in the Learner Handbook for policies regarding Academic Probation and Academic Deceleration.

Deceleration Policy

Purpose & Background

The MAS-PAS program of study is designed to be delivered and completed on a full-time basis over a 29-month time period. Deceleration is a mechanism for allowing learners an opportunity to complete the curriculum through the required repetition of some or all parts of the didactic phase of the program of study. Deceleration is considered when a recommendation is made by the Learner Progress Committee (LPC) to decelerate a learner. Learners may not request a deceleration. There are two types of deceleration: 1) deceleration with a leave of absence and 2) deceleration without a leave of absence. This policy applies to either type of deceleration.

Policy

Deceleration is an alternative distribution of didactic courses that allow learners to complete the program of study in forty-four (44) months. Deceleration may allow learners to decompress their curriculum or repeat a course or courses in which they have deficiencies or failing grades. Deceleration may be required for learners having significant academic difficulty. The Associate Dean/Program Program director determines the final decision for any recommendation from the LPC to decelerate a learner, which may be contingent upon ARC-PA approval of a class size increase. Learners will not be decelerated without ARC-PA approval and, when approved, are allowed only one opportunity to decelerate.

The Learner Progress Committee (LPC) may recommend deceleration to remediate deficiencies and as a preventative measure to avoid further academic difficulty. The LPC may specify the plan for deceleration and the schedule of courses that the learner is to take or defer to the judgment of the Associate Dean/Program Director. Learners in the decelerated curriculum must successfully complete all required courses of the didactic phase prior to progressing into the clinical phase of the program of study. Upon decelerating, learners delay their graduation by a minimum of fifteen (15) months and are subject to revisions in curriculum requirements and changes in tuition and fees of their new graduating class.

Upon deceleration, learners must comply with any revisions in curriculum requirements and policies of their new graduating cohort. Upon deceleration, the learner will be placed on Academic Alert status permanently, without the opportunity to be removed from this status, for the remainder of their program of study. The process and timeline for deceleration must follow the GEPA and Academic Senate petition process.

Decelerated learners who fail a course, fail to maintain academic progression, and/or fail to meet all technical standards will be notified of dismissal from the program. Decelerated students who fail a course will not be offered course remediation. Dismissal under these circumstances is not subject to appeal.

Special Topics Courses

Special Topics courses with variable course credits (1-6) have been created to support one-to-one remediation with principal faculty/academic advisors and to support added credits needed for financial aid purposes.

Withdrawal, Reinstatement, and Readmission

Withdrawal

Learners who must interrupt their progress through the MAS-PAS program of study for reasons of prolonged illness or compelling personal reasons must withdraw from the Program. A voluntary withdrawal from the Program is a permanent decision and cannot be rescinded once processed and enacted. Requests for voluntary withdrawal must be submitted in writing to their faculty advisor, Learner Progress Committee, and the Associate Dean/Program Director. Learners should discuss this process with their faculty advisor prior to this action. Learners may choose to request a Leave of Absence for as long as a year rather than withdraw permanently.

The following policies apply to voluntary withdrawals:

1. Learners who withdraw from the Program will receive a "W" in all uncompleted courses and will appear on the learner's transcript.
2. Learners who do not officially withdraw will be considered enrolled in courses until an appropriate academic participation verification point. If it is determined a learner is no longer academically participating at the regular checkpoints, the learner will be officially withdrawn from the program and receive "F" grades for all enrolled courses.
3. A voluntary withdrawal is official when a learner notifies the parties listed above and the withdrawal is submitted to the School of Medicine Registrar by the Associate Dean/Program Director.
4. Tuition and fee refunds when withdrawing will be applied proportionally due to the unique nature of the program's academic calendar. The Registrar of the SOM will be responsible for applying the schedule of refunds correctly and for submitting any withdrawal request with the appropriate date from the main campus schedule of refunds.

W grades will be assigned if a student withdraws after 40% of the instruction for a term has passed. The SOM Registrar will manage when determining main campus effective dates on any withdrawal request. The transcript will reflect withdrawal (W) when students withdraw from a course after the course has initially convened. To withdraw from a course, learners must meet with the Director of Learner Success & Wellness (DLWS) and submit a signed Didactic Phase Schedule Change Form to the Associate Dean/Program Director. Upon approval, the DLSW will notify the Course Director(s), School of Medicine Registrar, the LPC, and the Office for Students with Disabilities if applicable.

Reinstatement

A voluntary withdrawal from the Program is a permanent decision and cannot be rescinded once processed and enacted. Reinstatement after withdrawal and reentry into the Program is not allowed.

Readmission

Any learner who voluntarily withdraws or is dismissed from the Atkinson Physician Assistant Education Program will not be granted readmission.

Leave of Absence

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to define, publish, and make readily available the Program's policy regarding learners who take a leave of absence from the MAS-PAS program of study.

Decisions regarding an LOA are made on a case-by-case basis and there is no guaranteed approval will be granted. The LPC and Associate Dean/Program Director will consider the learners:

- academic standing
- attendance
- professionalism
- timing within the curriculum

Leaves of absence of less than 2 weeks duration will be managed by core faculty, the LPC, and the Associate Dean/Program Director. Some leaves may be accommodated longer than 2 weeks may be accommodated by the Program with approval and will be decided on case-by-case basis. Formal decelerations may not be requested by any learner for any reason. As part of its continuous monitoring of learner progress, the LPC will recommend deceleration necessitating leave of absence as needed.

Excerpted from:
Learner Progression Policy

Learners may request a **Leave of Absence (LOA)** from the Program when extenuating personal circumstances (non-academic) arise that have the potential to jeopardize the successful completion of the program. Learners requesting a leave of absence must complete and submit a Leave of Absence Form to the Learner Progress Committee (LPC). The LPC will investigate the request to determine its viability. The LPC will either deny the request or recommend the approval to the Associate Dean/Program Director. If the LP denies the request, the learner may appeal to the Associate Dean/Program Director. The decision of the Associate Dean/Program Director is final and cannot be appealed further.

This policy indicates that the approval of an LOA during the Didactic Phase requires a Deceleration w/Leave of Absence as mentioned elsewhere in this policy. However, since this LOA request is not related to academic performance and deficiency, it does not require remediation and reassessment nor do policies related to Academic Alert, Probation, and Dismissal apply.

Leave of Absence approvals counts toward attrition data toward the Program's accreditation regardless of the circumstances. The Associate Dean/Program Director will approve only the most extenuating of circumstances. Learners should be aware of the extensive resources needed to attend PA school prior to accepting a seat in the cohort; e.g., finances, transportation, parking, room and board, health care costs, childcare, utilities, mortgages, car payments, credit card debt, etc. None of these types of hardships are likely to be approved with an LOA request.

Guidelines for granting a leave of absence are as follows:

1. Requests for LOA during the Didactic Phase are reviewed by the LPC and decisions are made on a case-by-case basis. The LPC will also determine a plan for the learner to continue the program which may include Deceleration w/Leave of Absence or Deceleration w/o Leave of Absence depending on the situation.
2. Requests for LOA during the Clinical Phase are reviewed by the LPC and decisions are made on a case-by-case basis. The LPC will also determine a plan for the learner to continue the program which will include rescheduling planned SCPEs. The learner must acknowledge that previously available SCPE sites/preceptors will likely be unavailable.
3. Only learners in **Good Academic Standing** will be considered for a Leave of Absence.
4. Leave may not be longer than the start of the next didactic cycle.

Reentry

If a learner is approved for a deceleration with a leave of absence, they will be assigned a learner-specific and individualized alternative distribution of courses designed to include previously taken courses with passing grades. The learner will reenter with the next incoming cohort at the beginning of the next didactic phase and will be subject to the renewal of all matriculation requirements. The learner may be subject to renewal of matriculation requirements and assessments of knowledge, skills, and abilities. Failure to satisfactorily meet reentry requirements may require repetition of certain courses, all courses, or may lead to dismissal.

Refer to the deceleration types section of this policy for information about failure to reenter on time. The process and timeline for deceleration must follow the GEPA and Academic Senate petition process.

Academic Dismissal

Critically Deficient

Academic Dismissal is a formal action of involuntary removal of a learner from the Atkinson Physician Assistant Education Program for failing to meet required academic performance standards. Depending on the nature of the *critical deficiency*, an Academic Alert or Academic Probation may not precede Academic Dismissal. Once dismissed, learners cannot be readmitted, nor will they be considered for readmission through the admissions process. Decisions regarding Academic Dismissal are made by the LPC after the action has been investigated and vetted ensuring that due process has been afforded to the learner. A decision to dismiss can be appealed to the Associate Dean/Program Director within ten calendar days of the receipt of the notice of Academic Dismissal from the LPC. The terms of the Academic Dismissal will be documented in the learner's educational record. Learners may appeal the decision to dismiss by the Associate Dean/Program Director to the Dean of the School of Medicine within 10 calendar days of the receipt of the notice of the action. The Dean will investigate the case presented by the Associate Dean/Program Director and may meet with the learner to discuss details of the case within 10 calendar days of receipt of the appeal. The Dean's determination of the appeal is final and cannot be appealed further. Learners who are dismissed will not receive a refund of tuition and fees for the quarter when the action occurred and must be paid in full if not already paid.

Summary of Criteria for Academic Dismissal

The learner may be dismissed if any (but not limited to) of the following occur:

- Failure of two or more courses, either didactic or clinical
- Failure to rehabilitate Academic Probation in a timely manner as specified elsewhere in this policy
- Failure of a repeated or remediated course
- Failure to comply with or complete an Academic Success Plan within the defined time frame; includes decelerations
- Failure of reassessment under a remediation or Academic Success Plan
- Two or more occurrences of professional misconduct, behavior, and/or attitude inconsistent with the PA profession with subsequent LPC full investigations and recommendations
- While on Academic Probation, receipt of verbal or written reports from academic faculty, clinical preceptors, or designees indicating that they are not adhering to site regulations, site schedule, ethical standards of conduct, limitations of learner role
- Failure to progress academically or demonstrating a lack of proficiency has the potential to jeopardize patient safety
- Two or more occurrences of failure to follow program policies and procedures as defined in The Learner Handbook and School of Medicine, UC San Diego, and UC San Diego Health policies and procedures.

Readmission

Any learner who voluntarily withdraws or is dismissed from the Atkinson Physician Assistant Education Program will not be granted readmission.

The Atkinson Physician Assistant Education Program, after due consideration and process, reserves the right to require the dismissal of any learner at any time before graduation if circumstances of a legal, moral, behavioral, ethical, and/or academic nature justify such an action.

Grievances and Appeals

Learners who feel they have grounds for an appeal, or a grievance related to policies and procedures of the Program other than a grade appeal must first utilize the following steps:

1. The learner who has a specific problem or grievance should first discuss the problem or grievance with the faculty or Instructor of Record (IOR) involved.
2. The grievance/appeal must be initiated through the formal process within the academic quarter when the concern was raised.
3. Once the learner has identified the issue(s) giving rise to the grievance/appeal, new issues may not be introduced at a later stage unless the learner can demonstrate that:
 - a. the learner could not reasonably have known about these issues;
 - b. the new issues have a direct and pertinent bearing on the grievance/appeal,
 - c. highlighting aspects that would otherwise be unclear.
4. The faculty member or IOR named in the grievance must be prepared to defend the decision or action based on Program policy, professional standards, or sound professional judgment.
5. If a satisfactory resolution with the faculty member or IOR is not achieved, the learner may appeal to the Associate Dean/Program Director, who will attempt to reconcile the differences between the learner and the faculty member or IOR within ten calendar days of the notice to the Associate Dean/Program Director.
6. The Associate Dean/Program Director will notify (in writing) the learner and the faculty member or IOR named in the grievance documenting that the meeting occurred and confirming the decision that was made.
7. If the learner believes that the issue was not resolved at that level, the learner may appeal to the Learner Progress Committee (LPC) via the Chair of the committee.
8. If the grievance is with the Associate Dean/Program Director, the learner may bypass the initial grievance process and appeal directly for a hearing by the LPC. Depending on the grievance, the LPC may forward the appeal to the Dean of the School of Medicine for a decision.

If the above steps do not lead to a resolution, then the following steps must be followed:

1. The written request from the learner must detail:
 - a. Identification of the issue involved with supporting documentation;
 - b. A description of the appeal or grievance; and
 - c. A description of the action(s) taken by the learner, faculty member or IOR, and the Associate Dean/Program Director.
2. The faculty member or IOR named in the grievance and the LPC will be provided a copy of the learner's written request and the faculty member or IOR named in the grievance will have the opportunity to provide the LPC and the learner with a written response to the learner's complaint.
3. The LPC will review the documentation provided by the learner and the faculty member or IOR and if the committee members need additional information, they will request either an interview with the involved parties or supplemental written documentation.
4. The LPC will render a decision in writing no later than 30 days after receiving the additional required information. This decision will include a justification for the decision. Copies of the written decision will be provided to the learner and others who have been involved in the appeal process and will be placed in the learner's file as a part of the permanent record.
5. If the decision rendered by the LPC does not resolve the complaint, the learner may appeal to the Dean of the School of Medicine.

Grade Appeals

Once grades have been submitted by the Instructor of Record (IOR) to the School of Medicine Registrar at the end of each quarter, they may not be changed without following the University policy regarding grade appeals. The exception would be if there has been an error by the instructor in the grading of an assignment or determination of the final grade.

Learners in the Atkinson Physician Assistant Education Program may appeal a course grade if the grade was assigned based on non-academic or academic criteria. The non-academic criteria include discrimination on political grounds, or based on a protected trait, including but not limited to a student's gender, race, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, or disability. Academic criteria include objective and subjective grading of learner performance on exams, homework, and assignments, participation in discussions, attendance, oral presentations, and other areas identified in the course syllabus.

Time Limits for Appeals

Grade appeals, for both didactic and clinical phase courses, must be made within thirty calendar days after the grade has been assigned and recorded by the School of Medicine Registrar.

First Step: Appeal to the Instructor of Record (IOR)

Learners must appeal in writing to the IOR within thirty calendar days after the grade has been assigned and recorded by the School of Medicine Registrar. In the written appeal, the learner should specify the grounds for the appeal. The IOR should respond in writing to the learner within ten calendar days of receiving the learner's written appeal.

Possible responses from the IOR may include:

- denial of the appeal, or
- granting of the appeal, or
- granting of the appeal with contingency, as deemed appropriate, or
- acknowledging receipt of the appeal, with a stated plan for investigation is to be concluded no later than thirty calendar days after receipt of the appeal.

Final Step: Appeal to the Learner Progress Committee (LPC)

The learner's written appeal along with the IOR's response will first be submitted by the learner to the LPC Chair. The Associate Dean/Program Director will provide fact-finding support and serves as an ex officio member of the LPC.

1. At its first scheduled meeting following receipt of the appeal, the LPC will review:
 - a. The written appeal from the learner, and
 - b. The written response from the IOR
2. Written notification of the decision of the LPC will be transmitted to the learner and IOR within ten calendar days following the meeting where the appeal was discussed. This will constitute the final decision.

All Program policies will be strictly followed including timelines. This may affect a learner's ability to progress further in the program of study while processing is being completed. If a grievance, grade, and/or dismissal appeal is submitted near the end of the didactic year, the Program will not allow progression to the Clinical Phase until all grievances, grade, and/or dismissal appeals have been processed completely and decisions rendered and published. If a grievance, grade, and/or dismissal appeal is submitted near the end of the Clinical Phase, the program will not allow completion of the program of study until all appeals and grievances have been resolved and a decision has been rendered and published.

Learner Work & Work Hours

Effective: March 2, 2023

Revised: February 12, 2026

Related ARC-PA Standards:

A3.02 | A3.03 | A3.14i | B2.20c

UC San Diego

School of Medicine

Atkinson Physician Assistant Education Program

Learner Work & Work Hours

PURPOSE

The Atkinson Physician Assistant Education Program expects its learners to focus all of their working hour's attention to the program of study while being mindful of the need for rest and relaxation while studying.

The purpose of this policy is to define, publish, and make readily available policies regarding learner on duty work hours, part-time work, work study and working for the Program, all of which can contribute to burnout while enrolled.

On Duty Work Hours

To address the effects of fatigue and sleep deprivation on learning and patient care, the Program has developed the following policy on learner work hours. The spirit and intent of the policy is to guide learners in their professional development by providing a structure for serving patients' needs while also respecting one's own health and fatigue to help prevent burnout. The physician assistant trainee must learn how to weigh factors (such as patient continuity of care, appropriateness for sign-out to on-call, and self-awareness of fatigue) for decision-making in the best interest of the patient.

- Learners must not work beyond 60 hours per calendar (7-day) week.
- Continuous on-site duty, including in-house call, should not exceed 24 consecutive hours. Learners may remain on duty for up to 6 additional hours to participate in didactic activities, transfer care of patients, conduct outpatient clinics, and maintain continuity of medical and surgical care.
- Learners must be provided with 1 day (out of a 7-day week) free from all educational and clinical responsibilities.
- Adequate time for rest and personal activities should be provided. Optimally, this should be a 10-hour time period between shifts.

Part-Time Work

The Program strongly discourages part-time employment of any kind while enrolled in the MAS-PAS program of study. Learners may opt to work full-time or part-time during scheduled/official time off from coursework. Learners will be asked to terminate all full-time/part-time work obligations should they lead performance and participation issues while enrolled in coursework.

Work Study and Program Work

The Program does not employ its own learners under any circumstance. This includes financial aid work study programs which the Program does not support as a means of financing education.

Learners cannot work as administrative staff, clinical, or instructional faculty for the Program or any other UC San Diego Departments or Divisions.

Burnout

The Program recognizes the cognitive load, academic rigor, and long hours required to train in both the Didactic and Clinical phases of the program of study can tax mental health and well-being. For this reason, learners should consult with their faculty advisors as frequently as needed to seek prevention of burnout and exhaustion resources while enrolled at UC San Diego. The program also acknowledges that economic hardships and finances while enrolled in PA training can impact mental health and well-being. Since the Program discourages working to earn while studying, learners should consult with faculty advisors and financial aid counselors to address shortages in funds necessary to continually enroll in the program of study.