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Effective: November 9, 2022

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Related ARC-PA Standards:
A2.05b | A3.13a | A3.13b | A3.13c | A3.13d | A3.14 | A3.16a | A3.16b | A3.16c | B2.01 | D1.02a | D1.02b | D1.02c

UC San Diego

School of Medicine

Atkinson Physician Assistant Education Program

Admissions Statement & Process

Admissions Statement

The University of California San Diego School of Medicine Atkinson Physician Assistant Education Program is committed to building and sustaining a diverse academic community of faculty, staff, and learners. We aim to attract and admit culturally and cognitively diverse learners with the potential for clinical excellence, whose interests align with the mission, vision, and core values of the program. The program is dedicated to a holistic admissions process that considers the lived experiences, attributes, and academic achievements of each applicant, recognizing their unique potential to serve as future clinicians.

In accordance with applicable federal and state law and university policy, the University of California San Diego does not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity, pregnancy,[1] physical or mental disability, medical condition (cancer related or genetic characteristics), ancestry, marital status, age, sexual orientation, citizenship, or service in the uniformed services.[2,3] This nondiscrimination policy covers admission, access, and treatment in university programs and activities. The University of California San Diego recognizes its obligation to provide program accessibility (as described in Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990) for persons with disabilities.

[1] Pregnancy includes pregnancy, childbirth, and medical conditions related to pregnancy or childbirth.
[2] Service in the uniformed services includes membership, application for membership, performance of service, application for service, or obligation for service in the uniformed services.
[3] State and federal funding programs may require the program to recruit individuals who are economically and/or educationally disadvantaged, underrepresented populations, military veterans, and those from rural backgrounds.

Admissions Process

Applicants must satisfy both the minimum and prerequisite coursework requirements by the stated application deadlines. Admission is highly competitive. Meeting some or all these requirements does not guarantee admission.
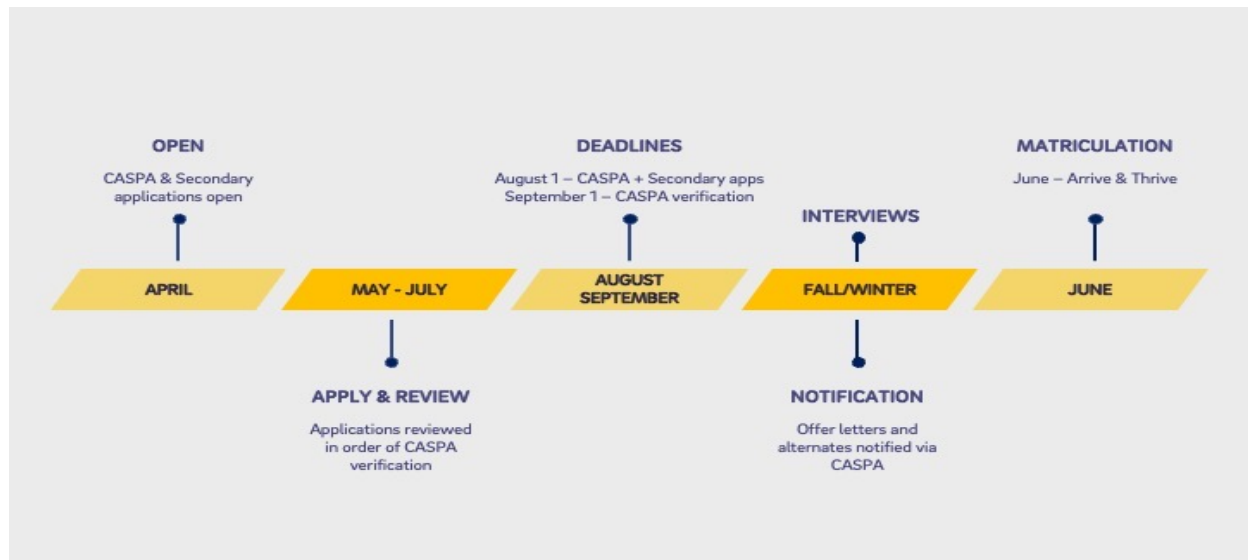
Transfer Credit or Advanced Placement

Learners granted admission must fulfill all program requirements. No substitutions for program of study coursework will be accepted, including but not limited to the following:

- Advanced Placement (AP)
- International Baccalaureate (IB) courses
- CLEP (College-Level Examination Program) examination
- Credit for experiential learning and continuing education
- Courses completed as part of a professional degree
- Medical school course completion (domestic or foreign)

Transfer of credit toward the MAS-PAS degree from other PA programs will only be granted to ARC-PA approved transfers via the "Expansion of Class Size" process. The program reserves the right to refuse transfer credit in part or in whole or to allow credit provisionally. The program may request additional information, materials, or passage of competency assessments when considering a request for transfer of credit. Transfer credit outside of the "Expansion of Class Size" process will not be considered.

Admissions Timeline

April

- CASPA application portal opens for applicants.
- Data begins to be sent electronically to programs for the current cycle.
- Applicants are encouraged to apply early.

May – August

- The admissions team will review applications to ensure admissions and prerequisite requirements have been met. **Invitations for interview are sent throughout this time period.**

August – September

- Applicants must complete and submit an online application through CASPA on or before August 1st 11:59 pm EST.
- Applicants must complete and submit an online supplemental application through UC San Diego on or before August 1st 11:59 pm EST.
- Applicants must have a verified CASPA application and submit the supplemental application fee, letters of recommendation, and transcript(s) with final prerequisite grades by September 1st at 11:59 pm EST.

Note: The transcript verification process can take CASPA up to 30 days to complete. Applicants should submit their application and supporting documents to CASPA with this timeframe in mind. Check the CASPA application often to ensure no problems exist with processing. Extensions will not be granted for any reason.

Fall/Winter

- Applicant personal interviews are conducted.
- After the conclusion of personal interviews, the Admissions Committee selects candidates for admission.
- Applicants will be notified by email of their admission status.

June

- Matriculate into program

ARC-PA Standards: A3.13b | A3.13c | A3.13d | A3.14 | B2.01

Minimum Requirements

Applicants to the Atkinson Physician Assistant Education Program must complete an online application using the Centralized Application Service for Physician Assistants (CASPA), and a Secondary Program application. Applicants must satisfy both the minimum and prerequisite coursework requirements by the application deadlines. Admission is highly competitive. Meeting some or all these requirements does not guarantee admission.

- CASPA application with official transcripts submitted by August 1; verified by September 1
- Secondary application submitted by August 1
- Evidence of U.S. citizenship, permanent U.S. residence, or current DACA recipient
- Bachelor's degree (or higher) from regionally accredited U.S. institution or equivalent prior to matriculation*
- Completed prerequisite coursework
- Minimum overall undergraduate GPA of ≥ 3.0 or overall graduate GPA of ≥ 3.0 (4.0 scale)
- Minimum undergraduate sciences GPA of ≥ 3.0 or graduate sciences GPA of ≥ 3.0 (4.0 scale)
- Minimum of 500 hours of healthcare experience (volunteer or paid)
- Three letters of recommendation

  * https://grad.ucsd.edu/admissions/requirements/international-students/english-proficiency.html

Entrance Exams

Entrance exams are not required, e.g. GRE, PA-CAT, MCAT, etc. If entrance exam scores are reported in the CASPA application, scores are not considered during the application review process

Useful Links	Address
CASPA Application	https://caspa.liaisoncas.com/applicant-ux/#/login
Secondary Application	https://bit.ly/ucsdpae_secondary
CASPA Fees & Fee Waiver	https://bit.ly/caspafeesandwaivers
UC San Diego PA Education E-mail	paeducation@health.ucsd.edu
UC San Diego PA Education Website	https://medschool.ucsd.edu/education/pa-education
Office for Students with Disabilities	https://osd.ucsd.edu

Prerequisite Coursework

Guidelines

- Completed at a regionally accredited U.S. institution. International prerequisite courses not accepted.
- Completed with a grade by the August 1 deadline and verified by CASPA before September 1
- Letter or numerical grade on transcripts is required.
- Grades of Pass (P) for 2020-2021 coursework will be accepted.
- AP/CLEP and concurrent enrollment coursework documented on the official transcript is accepted.
- Community college and online/distance courses from regionally accredited institutions are accepted.
- Prerequisite coursework does not expire/time-out.

Required Prerequisite Coursework

Biological Sciences	- 12 quarter credit hours/8 semester credit hours - In addition to the Anatomy, Physiology, and Microbiology requirements below.
Human Anatomy with Lab*	- 4 quarter credit hours/3 semester credit hours
Human Physiology with Lab*	- 4 quarter credit hours/3 semester credit hours
Microbiology with Lab	- 4 quarter credit hours/3 semester credit hours
Chemistry	- 4 quarter credit hours/3 semester credit hours
Organic Chemistry or Biochemistry	- 4 quarter credit hours/3 semester credit hours
Statistics	- 3 quarter credit hours/2 semester credit hours

* 8 quarter credits/6 semester credits combination human anatomy/physiology with labs also accepted.

Recommended Coursework

Genetics	General Psychology/Abnormal Psychology
Nutrition/Dietetics	Medical Terminology
Advanced/Upper-Level Biological Sciences	Medical Spanish/Spanish for Healthcare Professionals

Non-Academic Prerequisites

Healthcare Experience

A minimum of 500 hours of healthcare experience must be accrued at the time of application and recorded as part of the official CASPA application. Healthcare experience is required and is an indication to the admissions committee of an applicant's awareness of and commitment to a career in healthcare. Either paid or un-paid experience is accepted. Experiences in positions requiring autonomous, high-level, medical decision-making are scored highest. Hours obtained observing, volunteering, shadowing, or as part of an educational program will be counted towards the 500 hours as limited-level (Level 1) experiences. Applicants should seek experiences that expose them to the patient-provider relationship. Healthcare hours/experiences are subject to verification.

Applicants will be scored on quantity and level of experience. A maximum of 5000 hours will be scored.

Community Service

Evidence of community service/volunteerism with local programs or outreach initiatives in collaboration with community organizations is desirable but not required.

When applicable, applicants will be scored on quantity of service. A maximum of 1000 community service experience hours will be scored.

Shadowing

The program values and encourages but does not require PA shadowing experience. Shadowing hours with PA, MD/DO, and NP providers will count toward the 500 healthcare experience hours as Level 1 up to a maximum of 5000 hours. Shadowing other types of healthcare providers will not count toward the healthcare experience requirement.

Special Populations

Applicants from the following affinity groups will receive additional consideration:

- Grant-funded scholarship and pipeline programs
- Articulation agreement partnerships
- Veterans
- Federally-defined, self-reported disadvantaged backgrounds (educational and socioeconomic)

Levels of Healthcare Experience

Level 1

- Phlebotomist
- PT/OT Aide
- Volunteer
- Shadow
- Research Assistant
- Medical Interpreters
- Pharmacy Tech
- EKG Tech
- Psych Tech
- Laboratory Tech

Level 2

- CNA or CMA
- Dental hygienist
- LCSW
- Speech Path
- EMT
- LPN/LVN
- Medical Scribe
- Radiology/US Tech
- Med Tech
- ED Tech

Level 3

- RN/CRNA
- Resp Therapist
- Paramedic
- International Medical Graduate
- PT/OT
- Athletic Trainer
- Medic/Corpsman
- Pharmacist
- Dietitian
- Perfusionist
- Midwife

Scoring Healthcare Experience

Level 1 = limited-level experience
Level 2 = intermediate-level experience
Level 3 = advanced-level experience

CASPA Supporting Documentation

Letters of Recommendation

A minimum of 3 letters of recommendation are required. Letters must be submitted through the CASPA portal and should come from professional and reputable sources. Careful consideration should be given to clear conflicts-of-interest; i.e., personal, familial/kin, and marital relationships. Letters submitted to the program by email or postal mail will not be accepted. Applicants should consider garnering references from healthcare providers, professors, academic advisors, and employers/supervisors.

Applicants will be scored on tabular/numerical reference entries. If an applicant has submitted more than three letters, a mean score of all letters submitted will be calculated. Narrative entries will be judged subjectively by trained personnel and included in the admissions decision.

Personal Statement

Applicant personal statements must be submitted via the CASPA portal. Narrative entries should be clear, concise, well-written, and free of grammatical and spelling errors. Statements are reviewed and scored by trained personnel utilizing a predefined rubric.

Secondary Application – Custom Narratives

Custom narratives are designed to collect information such as an applicant's career aspirations, academic successes and challenges, and commitment to the program's mission. Question prompts may be labeled either required or optional. Required custom narratives must be submitted through the Secondary Application. Applicants are encouraged to submit narrative responses to optional prompts when applicable. Narrative entries should be clear, concise, well-written, and free of grammatical and spelling errors. Custom narrative entries are reviewed and scored by trained personnel utilizing a predefined rubric.

Criminal Background Checks

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 UC San Diego Atkinson 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.

Residency Requirements

California Residence

All learners, regardless of in-state or out-of-state residence, will be subject to the same cost of attendance.

International Applicants

The Program will consider applications from U.S. citizens, permanent residents of the U.S., and DACA recipients. Applicants that do not satisfy one of these three eligibility requirements will not be considered.

International Degrees

Applicants with international degrees equivalent to a U.S. Bachelor's degree or higher may apply to the program provided all minimum and prerequisite coursework requirements are met. International degree transcripts must be translated and transcribed for U.S. equivalency and submitted to CASPA for verification. English-language proficiency may be required for international degree-holding applicants. Applicants should seek more information from the Division of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs.

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)

DACA recipients are eligible to apply for and obtain a license to practice as a physician assistant in California. Prospective applicants should consult the requirements of the licensing authority in any state in which they consider practicing to determine qualifications for licensure. Information concerning physician assistant licensure in California is available from the Physician Assistant Board.

UC San Diego Undocumented Student Services
https://uss.ucsd.edu/graduate-students/index.html

Higher Ed Immigration Portal
https://www.higheredimmigrationportal.org
https://www.higheredimmigrationportal.org/state/california/

California Physician Assistant Board
https://www.pab.ca.gov

Holistic Admissions Procedure (6-Steps)

Holistic Review

The Atkinson Physician Assistant Education program is dedicated to a holistic admissions process that considers the lived experiences, attributes, and academic achievements of each applicant, recognizing their unique potential to serve as future clinicians.

1. Application Submission
2. Application Screening and Review
3. Interviews
4. Applicant Review
5. Notifications
6. Admission

Application Submission

Applicants must submit a formal application and all supporting documents to the Central Application Service for the Physician Assistant. In addition, a Secondary Application is required. Both applications open in April annually and must be submitted on or before August 1st 11:59 pm EST. CASPA Applications must be fully verified by September 1st at 11:59 pm EST.

Application screening and review - a six-level process - will begin after CASPA notifies the program that an application is verified, and the Secondary Application and related fees are received prior to deadlines.

Level 1, 2, 3 – Initial Review

All applications undergo a three-level initial review. During Level 1 review, admissions staff confirm receipt of both applications and all supporting documents. During Level 2 review, admissions staff verify that minimum requirements, prerequisite coursework, and all non-academic requirements have been met. During Level 3 review, the application is holistically scored and ranked using a predefined screening rubric. The Director of Admissions & Recruitment (DAR) will determine a Level 3 cut score to advance application files to Level 4 review. Depending on Initial Review scores, applicants will advance to Level 4 review or be placed in a hold status pending any further adjustments to the cut score.

Level 4 – Qualitative Review

Trained personnel will review all narrative sections of the application and score them using a predefined rubric. The qualitative reviewer score will be combined with the Level 3 score and used advance application files to Level 5 review.

Level 5 – Faculty Review

Competitive applications are reviewed by program faculty. Faculty will make recommendations for interview invitation. The DAR will compile a ranked list of interview invitations, "Second Look," and denials. "Second Look" files will advance to Level 6 review.

Level 6 – Second Look

Applications receiving a "second look" Level 5 status will be reviewed by a second faculty member who will make recommendations for interview invitation. The DAR will compile a ranked list of interview invitations and denials.

Application Screening and Review

Holistic Admissions Procedure (6-Steps)

The physician assistant program regards the interview as an important component of our holistic admission process. Invited candidates will be required to meet with Admissions Committee personnel. The committee looks for such personal attributes as emotional and academic maturity, empathy and compassion, motivation, ability to communicate, cultural sensitivity and humility, critical thinking skills, knowledge of the PA role in healthcare, understanding of the program's mission and goals and the potential to achieve career fulfillment within the PA role. Interviews will be conducted virtually with Zoom technology during the months of September and October. A virtual multiple mini-interview (vMMI) format will be utilized. Interview days will include a virtual program/campus tour, a review of the program's curriculum, technical standards, and any timely updates. Applicants will have opportunities to meet with program faculty, staff, and students throughout the day. It is anticipated that 90-120 applicants will be invited to interview.

What is the vMMI?

The vMMI consists of a series of short, carefully timed interview scenarios organized into stations. Each station aims to draw multiple samples of applicants' ability to think on their feet, to critically appraise information, to communicate their ideas, and to explore their reasoning with the station facilitator.

Applicants will complete a circuit of timed mini-interview stations, rotating from station to station. At each station, candidates will have two minutes to read a 'scenario' or question prompt. Candidates then have eight minutes to either interact with a rater who may ask questions or be observed by the rater while interacting with an actor or another applicant. One station will be devoted to a more personalized, 15-minute one-on-one interview with program faculty.

Interviews

Advantages of the vMMI

- More reliable
- More chances to perform well
- More equitable opportunity for those of diverse backgrounds to demonstrate quality
- Less biased way to evaluate applicants
- Test characteristics such as cultural sensitivity, maturity, teamwork, empathy, reliability, and communication skills
- Fast-Paced

The MMI has been evaluated by many Canadian and U.S. medical schools and PA programs. The MMI has been shown to be more reliable and valid than the traditional one-on-one interview process. In addition, both MMI raters and applicants alike report positive feedback regarding the MMI. Education theory portends the performance of an individual is highly variable across situations; therefore, evaluation using multiple scenarios is a sounder psychometric approach. Literature also has shown that the MMI allows individuals with diverse backgrounds to have a more equitable opportunity to demonstrate the quality of their educational and personal backgrounds.

Scoring the vMMI

Each vMMI station will be scored individually by trained personnel using a predefined rubric. The scores from all stations will be averaged as a single, final score for each applicant.

Holistic Admissions Procedure (6-Steps)

The Admissions Committeee is chaired by the Director of Admissions & Recruitment (DAR). Admissions process recommendations and decisions are made collectively by the Admissions Committee using a majority vote format. The Associate Dean/Program Director has final approval of all recommended candidates and any admissions process changes.

After each interview day, the DAR will convene the Admissions Committee to review the candidates' application and interview scores in summation with their respective comments and recommendations. The committee will rank applicants in order by classification in these categories:

- Admit
- Second Look
- Do Not Admit

Admits

The Admissions Committee will select and offer admission to 30 applicants from the pool of ranked candidates classified as Admit.

Second Look and Alternates

Some applicants who interview will be placed in a hold status pending a Second Look. Following the completion of all interviews (all days), the Admissions Committee will convene to review Second Look applicants. A ranked order list of Second Look applicants will then be considered by the Admissions Committee to determine the final status of the applicant. A ranked order alternate list will be created from the pool of applications receiving Admit (not already offered admission) and Second Look classifications, respectively.

Applicant Selection

Applicants will be notified of their status throughout the admissions process. All applicants will receive email notifications via CASPA at the following milestones:

- Level 1 review
- Level 5 review and invitation for interview
- Admit offer or alternate list with rank
- Denial of admission
- Forfeiture of admission offer
- Individual program requests; i.e., clarifications, additional documentation, etc.

Candidates will be notified by email via CASPA of their final status in late October – early November. Declined offers of admission will be filled from the Alternate List in ranked order in November – January up until the week of matriculation.

Notification

The Admissions Committee will utilize a quasi-rolling admissions process. The committee may begin contacting the most competitive candidates with offers soon after the interview day(s). Candidates offered admission must complete the Offer Acceptance Form which includes the Technical Standards within seven (7) days of offer notification. Failure to respond will result in forfeiture of the admissions offer. A seat deposit is not required. Deferrals of admission will not be granted for any reason. Candidates who receive an offer and decline due to deferral are subject to reapply in future cycles without priority consideration.

Admission

Accreditation Status

Accreditation Statement

The ARC-PA has granted **Accreditation-Provisional** status to the **University of California San Diego Atkinson Physician Assistant Education Program** sponsored by the **University of California San Diego**.

Accreditation-Provisional is an accreditation status granted when the plans and resource allocation, if fully implemented as planned, of a proposed program that has not yet enrolled students appear to demonstrate the program's ability to meet the ARC-PA *Standards* or when a program holding Accreditation-Provisional status appears to demonstrate continued progress in complying with the *Standards* as it prepares for the graduation of the first class (cohort) of students.

Accreditation-Provisional does not ensure any subsequent accreditation status. It is limited to no more than five years from matriculation of the first class.

The program's accreditation history can be viewed on the ARC-PA website at https://www.arc-pa.org/accreditation-history-university-of-california-san-diego/.

MAS-PAS Degree Approval

The University of California San Diego School of Medicine Atkinson Physician Assistant Education Program has submitted the Master of Advanced Study in Physician Assistant Studies (MAS-PAS) degree plan of study was approved by the Academic Senate at UC San Diego on October 10, 2023. It is pending approval by the UC system. Final approval is anticipated prior to the planned June 2024 launch. If the MAS-PAS degree is not approved in time for a June 2024 launch, the program will not matriculate its first class in June 2024 as planned. The University will not be responsible for refunding application fees or expenses incurred by applicants during the application and/or interview process (e.g., CASPA fees, supplemental application fees, travel to/from campus, etc.).

Useful Links	Address
ARC-PA	https://www.arc-pa.org
Atkinson UC San Diego PA Education E-mail	paeducation@health.ucsd.edu
Atkinson UC San Diego PA Education Website	https://medschool.ucsd.edu/education/pa-education