

# **Physician Assistant Program Handbook**

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## Welcome

UNMC Physician Assistant Students:

We are pleased to welcome you to the Division of Physician Assistant Education and congratulate you on being selected from a competitive pool of applicants to be enrolled in our PA studies.

You join a growing legacy spanning over four decades of PA education. The UNMC PA Program was first established in 1971 as a mandate from the Nebraska State Legislature to provide primary health care to rural and underserved areas of Nebraska.

While this still remains our priority, the scope of our outreach has significantly grown. You are among an exceptional group of 58 new students for our premier curriculum leading to the Master of Physician Assistant Studies degree. All of you will experience our newly developed technologies in simulation and media capture instruction, including eight students at our new distant campus site at UNMC-Kearney. In addition, we host over 120 students who are clinically practicing PAs from across the country and world taking courses through our Degree Advancement Option (DAO) Programs. Through a collaborative relationship with the Interservice PA Program we also grant diplomas to PA graduates at Fort Sam Houston in Texas where they educate 210 students each year for service as PAs in the US military. Another 24 graduates from the Canadian Forces PA Program receive UNMC diplomas each year by a similar collaboration.

With these opportunities to extend our educational services more widely, our first priority remains developing PAs who will safely provide the highest quality, evidence-based, health care to those they serve. The policies and standards established in this Handbook help assure that this goal is reached. Please review this material so you are informed of the expectations you may hold of what our Program provides for you, and what this program expects of you.

We have no doubt your commitment to your PA studies is high. The journey ahead will be challenging and dynamic, unlike anything else you've ever accomplished. We look forward to guiding you on the path to becoming the best PA you can possibly be.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Huckabee, MPAS, PhD, PA-C  
Professor and Director  
Division of Physician Assistant Education

## I. Mission and Goals of the UNMC PA Program

### A. Mission

The mission of the Physician Assistant Program at the University of Nebraska Medical Center is to educate a diverse student population as entry-level practitioners of primary care medicine, working with physician supervision, in order to provide the citizens of Nebraska, particularly those in rural and underserved areas, with quality medical care.

### B. Goals

- To provide a comprehensive and relevant medical educational experience for students.
- To provide the means and support for every entering student to graduate.
- To prepare students to provide the highest quality, evidence-based and safe care for all patients.
- To prepare exceptional, clinically competent graduates.
- To prepare graduates with exceptional professionalism.
- To prepare graduates to achieve 100% first-time pass rate on the PANCE.
- To prepare graduates to meet primary care workforce needs.
- To prepare graduates to improve access to medical care in Nebraska, especially its underserved populations.

## II. The Physician Assistant Profession

### A. Definition of a PA

Physician Assistants (PAs) are healthcare providers who are nationally certified and state licensed to practice medicine and prescribe medication in every medical and surgical specialty and setting. PAs practice and prescribe in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and all U.S. territories with the exception of Puerto Rico. PAs are educated at the graduate level, with most PAs receiving a Master's degree or higher. In order to maintain national certification, PAs are required to recertify as medical generalists every 10 years and complete 100 hours of continuing medical education every two years.

### B. Description of the PA Profession

Physician assistants are academically and clinically prepared to practice medicine with the supervision of a doctor of medicine or osteopathy. The physician-PA team relationship is fundamental to the PA profession and enhances the delivery of high quality health care. Within the physician-PA relationship, PAs make clinical decisions and provide a broad range of diagnostic, therapeutic, preventive and health maintenance services. The clinical role of PAs includes primary and specialty care in medical and surgical practice settings. PA practice is focused on patient care and may include educational, research and administrative activities.

The role of the PA demands intelligence, sound judgment, intellectual honesty, appropriate interpersonal skills and the capacity to respond to emergencies in a calm and reasoned manner. Essential attributes of the graduate PA include an attitude of respect for self and others,

adherence to the concepts of privilege and confidentiality in communicating with patients and a commitment to the patient's welfare.

PAs are employed in virtually all types of health care settings -- hospitals, clinics, private physician offices, schools, and other health care facilities. PAs can be found in communities of all sizes and in virtually every medical and surgical specialty. Although the majority of PAs work in primary care medicine -- family medicine, internal medicine, pediatrics -- many work in specialties such as cardiothoracic surgery and orthopedics. PAs may also work in the areas of medical education, health administration and research.

\*Portions of the above text are taken from Accreditation Standards for Physician Assistant Education, Fourth Edition, ARC-PA, page 1, 2012.

### **C. UNMC Program Accreditation**

Programs that educate PAs are accredited by the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant, Inc. (ARC-PA), which serves as the only accrediting body for PA programs in the country. Seven national medical organizations cooperate with the ARC-PA to establish, maintain and promote appropriate standards of quality for entry level education of PAs.

A PA graduate is not eligible to take the national certifying exam unless the PA graduated from a program that is accredited by the ARC-PA. A PA graduate must pass the national certifying exam in order to practice in all states, the District of Columbia and all American territories.

In 1972, the University of Nebraska Medical Center PA Program received provisional accreditation as a new program.

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

Accreditation remains in effect until the Program closes or withdraws from the accreditation process or until accreditation is withdrawn for failure to comply with the Standards. The approximate date for the next validation review of the Program by the ARC-PA will be 2016. The review date is contingent upon continued compliance with the Accreditation Standards and ARC-PA policy.

## **III. Academic Policies**

### **A. Overall Evaluation of Student Performance**

The faculty of the University of Nebraska Medical Center Physician Assistant Program are charged with the responsibility to determine the clinical and professional capacity of every student. Throughout the Program, formative and summative evaluations are performed to

measure the student's competence, identify areas of weakness and recommend whether or not the student should continue in the Program.

The faculty, as represented by the Progress and Promotion Committee, are required to identify any student's failure to comply with published Program policies and requirements deemed necessary for professional competency, and to make recommendations to the Program Director, as outlined in Section III.B below.

## **B. Progress and Promotion Committee**

### **1. Role of the Committee**

The Progress and Promotion Committee is a standing committee of the Physician Assistant Program. It has responsibility for the evaluation of student academic and professional progress and to make recommendations for action to the Program Director.

The Committee may recommend to the Program Director a formal acknowledgement of a student's success and any of the following actions (Appendix 6):

- a. Recommendations for academic progress
- b. Academic Warning
- c. Academic Probation
- d. Academic Dismissal
- e. Disciplinary Probation
- f. Disciplinary Dismissal
- g. Voluntary Withdrawal
- h. Leave of Absence
- i. Remediation Plans

### **2. Composition of the Committee**

The Progress and Promotion Committee is comprised of the core faculty members within the Division of Physician Assistant Education. The chair of the Committee is selected annually. Subcommittees will be appointed by the chair to adjudicate student issues brought to the committee as outlined in the Progress and Promotion Committee policy manual.

### **3. Appearance before the Committee**

Students in the PA Program are expected to make satisfactory academic and professional progress toward completion of the degree requirements. Failure to comply with the Program's standards will result in action by the Progress and Promotion Committee. All student appearances before the Committee will be arranged by the chair and, when possible, confirmed in writing prior to the meeting. Procedures for the hearing process are outlined in the Progress and Promotion Committee policy manual (available upon request).

## C. Evaluation of Student Academic Work

### 1. Letter Graded Evaluation

All courses and clerkships taken by students will be evaluated by letter grade according to the approved standard University grading scale as follows:

Grade	Quality Points	Grade	Quality Points
A+	4.00	C+	2.33
A	4.00	C	2.00
A-	3.67	C-	1.67
B+	3.33	D+	1.33
B	3.00	D	1.00
B-	2.67	D-	0.67
		F	0.00

Definition of		
A+, A, A-	=	Excellent performance
B+, B, B-	=	Very good performance
C+, C	=	Satisfactory performance
C-, D+, D, D-, F	=	Unsatisfactory performance
I	=	Incomplete
NR	=	No report
WX	=	Administrative withdrawal
W	=	Withdrawal

PLEASE NOTE: Receiving a grade of a C+ or lower in one or more courses may result in a cumulative GPA that does not meet Standard I for academic progress (i.e., a GPA below 2.50).

### 2. Non-letter Graded Evaluation

Professionalism Evaluations each semester and additional assignments in selected courses and clerkships are evaluated by a non-letter grade. For the Professionalism Evaluation, evaluation designations include “Satisfactory”, “Skill Demonstrated”, “Skill Developing” or “Unsatisfactory.” In other assignments, students are given either a “Pass/Fail” evaluation or a “Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory” evaluation. Professionalism Evaluations are further described in Section F.3 of this handbook. Selected assignments are required and are described with the method of evaluation in the syllabus of each course or clerkship utilizing these non-letter graded evaluations.

### 3. Clinical Clerkship Evaluation

During the clinical phase of the Program students are evaluated using a number of instruments to assess knowledge, clinical skill development, professionalism, and overall competency to practice as a physician assistant. These include, but are not limited to, preceptor evaluations, clerkship patient logs, written assignments, end-of-clerkship examinations, practice examinations, paper OSCEs, professionalism evaluations, clinical skills testing, comprehensive (summative) examination and a summative OSCE. Detailed information regarding assessment and evaluation during the clinical year is outlined in the Clinical Year Handbook.

## D. Standards of Academic Progress

Every student must meet the following standards of academic progress in each semester and/or enrollment period in order to be designated as making satisfactory academic progress in the Program and to be considered “in good standing” in the Program. Failure to meet all four standards in any semester will result in consequences as outlined in Section III.E.

### Standard I

Every student must maintain a minimum UNMC PA Program curriculum cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2.50 (on a 4.00 scale) for all courses and clerkships while enrolled in the Program.

NOTE: During the didactic phase of the program, cumulative GPA will be calculated at the conclusion of the Fall and Spring semesters. Grades from the Summer and Fall 2 semesters will be combined as a single semester GPA and cumulative GPA will be calculated at the completion of the Fall 2 (F2) semester. During the clinical phase of the program, cumulative GPA will be calculated at the conclusion of each standard semester (Fall, Spring and Summer).

### Standard II

Every student must attain a letter grade of C or higher in each course or clerkship. Any grade below C (i.e., C-, D+, D, D- and F) will be considered unsatisfactory and thus designated as a failure of that course or clerkship.

### Standard III

Every student must maintain a “Satisfactory” rating in all categories of the Professionalism Evaluation on a continuing basis throughout the student’s enrollment in the Program (Section III.F.3).

### Standard IV

Every student must achieve a “Pass” or “Satisfactory” evaluation on all non-letter graded assignments and projects designated as “required.”

## E. Academic and Disciplinary Probation

If a student fails to meet the relevant Standards of Academic Progress outlined in Section III.D at the completion of every semester, the student will be referred to the Progress and Promotion Committee, and at a minimum, be placed on Academic or Disciplinary Probation (Appendix 6).

A student will be allowed only one period of Academic or Disciplinary Probation throughout his or her entire enrollment in the Program. Once a student is placed on probation and successfully completes all of the requirements for the probationary period, the student will be returned to “good standing” status in the Program. Any occasion for a second probation (Academic Probation or Disciplinary Probation) will result in termination of enrollment.

If any of the following occur at any point during the course of study, the student will be immediately dismissed from the Program:

- Failure to pass two or more courses and/or clerkships with a grade of C or higher.



- Failure to pass a single course or clerkship with a grade of C or higher on the second attempt.
- Any cause for a second probationary semester.

## F. Consequences of Substandard Performance

### 1. Substandard Performance on Standard I

Every student must maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2.50 (on a 4.00 scale) in the UNMC PA Program curriculum. Failure to maintain a minimum UNMC PA Program curriculum cumulative GPA of 2.50 will result in Academic Probation and referral to the Progress and Promotion Committee for potential further action. The period of Academic Probation will be one semester and will be effective during the next semester in which the student is enrolled. Failure to meet all of the following requirements of Academic Probation for Standard I by the end of the probationary semester will result in dismissal from the Program:

- a. Complete all of the required academic coursework as sequenced in the PA Program curriculum.
- b. Maintain a minimum UNMC PA Program curriculum cumulative GPA of 2.50.
- c. Achieve a grade of C or higher in all courses and clerkships.
- d. Obtain “satisfactory” ratings in all categories of the Professionalism Evaluation.
- e. Seek and participate in academic counseling from the UNMC Counseling and Development Center.
- f. Satisfactorily complete all non-graded requirements of the Program.
- g. Complete all remediation activities required by the Program Director on recommendation by the Progress and Promotion Committee.

### 2. Substandard Performance on Standard II

#### *Phase I Consequences*

Every student must achieve a letter grade of C or higher in each course while enrolled in the PA Program. Any grade below C (i.e., C-, D+, D, D-, and F) is considered unsatisfactory and does not meet the Standards of Academic Progress. Any student who receives one grade below C for any program course will be placed on a required academic leave of absence until the next semester in which that course is offered in the PA curriculum. Upon returning to the Program, the student will be on Academic Probation for that semester and will be required to repeat the failed course and achieve a grade of C or higher. No more than one year may lapse before returning from a required academic leave of absence.

Failure to meet all of the following requirements of Academic Probation for Standard II by the end of the probationary semester will result in dismissal from the Program:

- a. Repeat and successfully pass the course at its next offering with a grade of C or higher.  
NOTE: Failure to pass the course a second time with a minimum grade of C will result in academic dismissal.
- b. Complete the required academic coursework as sequenced in the PA Program curriculum.

- c. Maintain a minimum UNMC PA Program curriculum cumulative GPA of 2.50.
- d. Achieve a grade of C or higher in all courses.
- e. Obtain “satisfactory” ratings in all categories of the Professionalism Evaluation.
- f. Satisfactorily complete all non-graded requirements of the Program.
- g. Seek and participate in academic counseling from the UNMC Counseling and Student Development Center.
- h. Complete all remediation activities required by the Program Director on recommendation by the Progress and Promotion Committee.

### **Phase II Consequences**

Every student must achieve a letter grade of C or higher in each clerkship, required or elective. Any clerkship grade below C (i.e., C-, D+, D, D-, and F) is considered unsatisfactory and does not meet the Standards of Academic Progress. Any student who receives a grade below C for any clerkship will be placed on Academic Probation for a minimum of one semester. Upon receiving a clerkship grade below C, the probationary period will be for one semester and will become effective during the next semester in which the student is enrolled.

Failure to meet all of the following requirements of Academic Probation for Standard II by the end of the probationary semester will result in dismissal from the Program:

- a. Repeat the clerkship at a time designated by the Clinical Coordinators of the Program with a grade of C or higher. NOTE: Upon completing the repeated clerkship, the student must take and pass the end-of-clerkship examination in a single attempt with a grade of C or higher. Failure to obtain a minimum grade of C for the repeated clerkship will result in academic dismissal.
- b. Complete the required academic coursework and clerkships as sequenced in the PA Program curriculum.
- c. Maintain a minimum UNMC PA Program curriculum cumulative GPA of 2.50.
- d. Achieve a grade of C or higher in all courses and clerkships.
- e. Obtain “satisfactory” ratings in all categories of the Professionalism Evaluation.
- f. Satisfactorily complete all non-graded requirements of the Program.
- g. Seek and participate in academic counseling from the UNMC Counseling and Student Development Center.
- h. Complete all remediation activities required by the Program Director on recommendation by the Progress and Promotion Committee.

### **3. Standard III**

Students must maintain a “Satisfactory” rating (“Skill Demonstrated” or “Skill Developing”) in all categories of the Professionalism Evaluation each semester. Each student will be monitored by the faculty on a continuing basis throughout his or her enrollment in the Program, and a written evaluation will be completed at the end of each semester and at other times when deemed necessary.

If a student receives a rating of “Skill Developing” in any category, a meeting is required with the student’s advisor to discuss the rating and to receive guidance. The student will be re-evaluated on all parameters each semester. A rating of “Skill Demonstrated” for each

parameter must be obtained by the end of the next to last semester of study and must be maintained for each parameter through the final semester of study. Students who do not achieve a rating of “Skill Demonstrated” by the next to last semester in all parameters will be assigned an “Unsatisfactory” rating for that parameter.

If, on any occasion, a student is given a “Skill Underdeveloped” rating, the student will be given 30 days in which to make necessary corrections. After 30 days the student will be re-evaluated and at that time must have improved to the point of receiving a “Skill Demonstrated” or “Skill Developing” rating as determined by the Program Director and faculty. If the student fails to achieve a “Skill Demonstrated” or “Skill Developing” rating after 30 days, an “Unsatisfactory” rating will be assigned.

Any action, behavior, or incident at any time during a student’s enrollment that results in a student receiving a rating of “Unsatisfactory” in one or more categories of the Professionalism Evaluation will require the student to meet with the Progress and Promotion Committee to determine remediation requirements. A recommendation of Academic Probation, Disciplinary Probation or immediate disciplinary dismissal from the Program is indicated. During a probationary period, the student will be expected to remediate and improve the unsatisfactory area of professionalism as recommended by the Progress and Promotion Committee. If the student is unable to meet all of the following requirements of Academic or Disciplinary Probation for Standard III by the end of the probationary semester, the student will be dismissed from the Program:

- a. Earn ratings of either “Skill Demonstrated” or “Skill Developing” in all categories in which ratings of “Unsatisfactory” were received in the previous semester.
- b. Complete the required academic coursework and clerkships as sequenced in the PA Program curriculum.
- c. Maintain a minimum UNMC PA Program curriculum cumulative GPA of 2.50.
- d. Achieve a grade of C or higher in all courses and clerkships.
- e. Obtain “Satisfactory” ratings in all categories of the Professionalism Evaluation.
- f. Satisfactorily complete all non-graded requirements of the Program.
- g. Complete all remediation activities required by the Program Director on recommendation by the Progress and Promotion Committee.

Serious breaches of professionalism by a student (i.e., causing harm to others, academic dishonesty, committing a felony) will result in a recommendation by the Progress and Promotion Committee for immediate termination of enrollment.

#### 4. Standard IV

Every student must achieve a “Pass” or “Satisfactory” evaluation on all non-letter graded assignments and projects designated as “required.” Any student who does not pass or satisfactorily complete a non-letter graded assignment will be placed on Academic Probation for a minimum of one semester. The probationary period will become effective immediately and will remain in effect through the semester immediately following the incomplete assignment which resulted in probation. If the student is unable to meet all of the following requirements of

Academic Probation for Standard IV at any time during the probationary period, the student will be dismissed from the Program:

- a. Initiate a meeting with the faculty member to arrange the successful completion of the assignment.
- b. Pass or satisfactorily complete the previously incomplete assignment.
- c. Complete the required academic coursework and clerkships as sequenced in the PA Program curriculum.
- d. Maintain a minimum UNMC PA Program curriculum cumulative GPA of 2.50.
- e. Achieve a grade of C or higher in all courses and clerkships.
- f. Obtain “satisfactory” ratings in all categories of the Professionalism Evaluation.
- g. Satisfactorily complete all non-graded requirements of the Program.
- h. Complete all remediation activities required by the Program Director on recommendation by the Progress and Promotion Committee.

## G. Academic Dismissal

Academic dismissal requires the immediate removal of the student from enrollment in the PA Program.

## IV. Program Policies

### A. General Policies

#### 1. Personal Conduct and Professionalism

The concept of professional identity implies knowledge of professional conduct, professional attitudes and professional growth collectively known as professionalism. Every student in the PA Program is expected to move intellectually and attitudinally toward developing a greater sense of professionalism in order to realize his/her greatest contribution in the promotion of health and alleviation of suffering.

In particular, the attributes of excellence, humanism, accountability and altruism together with a sense of dedication to service and ethical principles must be developed if a student is to grow toward a sense of professional competence, professional identity and the shared values which function to reinforce greater service to humanity within the PA profession.

The PA Program is part of an educational institution in which there is an atmosphere of learning, as well as a sense of community. The Program regards as basic to professional development the principles of academic integrity, self-respect, respect for others and individual responsibility, all aspects of professionalism. Students enrolled in the PA Program assume an obligation to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with these principles. Should a student’s personal conduct adversely affect other persons, the Program, the University, or under certain conditions, the student himself or herself, the Progress and Promotion Committee will investigate determine appropriate actions as necessary. Examples of conduct for which students are subject to disciplinary action include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a. Dishonesty in any form, such as cheating, academic misconduct, fabrication, plagiarism, misuse of identification card, and furnishing false information to the academic institution or clinical rotation sites.
- b. Obstruction or disruption of any academic, social or administrative activity.
- c. Threats, physical harm or verbal abuse of any person on institutional property or at institutional-sponsored activities.
- d. Theft of or damage to property of the institution.
- e. Unauthorized entry into UNMC facilities
- f. Violation of UNMC computer and internet use policies.
- g. Violation of rules governing institution facilities.
- h. Use, possession, sale or distribution of narcotics or abuse of drugs or stimulants.
- i. Drunkenness, or use, possession, sale or distribution of alcoholic beverages on institution property.
- j. Gambling on institution property.
- k. Unauthorized possession or use on campus of explosives or firearms.
- l. Failure to comply with the directions of institution officials acting in the performance of their duties.

In addition to the above, all Physician Assistant students will be subject to the rules and regulations for students matriculating at the University of Nebraska Medical Center as described in the University of Nebraska Medical Center Student Handbook, including the University of Nebraska Medical Center Code of Conduct.

Professional behavior is expected in the classroom and clinical settings at all times. Behavior in the classroom should promote comfort and enjoyment for everyone. Respect is to be shown for fellow students and instructors in all interactions.

It is reasonable that occasional use of a cellular phone or other electronic devices by students may be necessary. However, this can become a significant distraction if the student engages in excessive use. In the classroom, all electronic devices should be turned off unless their use is directly related to the topic of instruction and the activity is not distracting to other students and faculty.

If emergency phone calls are anticipated, the student should notify the instructor prior to the class period and every effort should be made to limit the disruption of the class.

In clinical settings, cell phones/pagers should be turned off during all health care delivery activities and professional meetings, unless the student has been specifically instructed to be available "on-call" by the clinical preceptor.

The instruction of certain examination and procedural skills requires live models. Whenever possible, fellow students are asked to equally share the responsibility of serving as models, which gives the students helpful instruction from both the clinician's and the patient's perspectives. In situations involving sensitive exams, appropriate staff supervision is provided to assure that modesty and respect is maintained while facilitating the instruction. In selected exams, such as male and female GU exams, trained live models are provided. The student should keep in mind at all times that he/she represents UNMC, the PA Program and

the PA profession. Due courtesy and respect should be shown at all times to patients, faculty, instructors, medical staff and preceptors.

## **2. Attire**

University-wide standards of dress and behavior should be observed both on campus and in the classroom. Neatness and modesty are valued and expected. Appropriate dress, grooming and personal hygiene are expected for students in all phases of the Program. Students in the didactic phase of the program are allowed less formal dress code when not engaged in formal clinical activities. Specific dress requirements for didactic and clinical phases of the Program are outlined in Sections IV.B.2 and IV.C.3 respectively.

For all classes involving lab or clinical performance and while on clinical rotations, students are required to wear attire consistent with OSHA standards if there is any risk of exposure to blood, bodily fluids, chemicals or potentially harmful agents. Legs must be covered and footwear must cover the majority of the foot (such as athletic shoes). Open-toed shoes may not be worn.

The program provides a photo ID badge identifying the student as a Physician Assistant student from UNMC and issues an insignia of the Program which is to be worn in all clinical settings on a white jacket of uniform style. The student is responsible for the purchase and upkeep of the jacket.

## **3. Leave of Absence**

Under exceptional circumstances, a leave of absence may be granted or required for a period of time no longer than one academic year under one of the following types: Academic, Medical, Military or Personal. A leave of absence constitutes formal permission to delay progression through the PA Program, but does not excuse the student from any course requirements.

A leave of absence that extends the student's academic program beyond the usual 28 consecutive months will require the assignment of a new program completion date, new graduation date, and may require assignment to a new class. The new graduation date assigned will depend on the length of the leave and the official University graduation dates. In addition, a new completion date will delay eligibility for taking the NCCPA PANCE examination and will delay the temporary and/or permanent licensing process in various states including Nebraska.

### **a. Academic Leave of Absence**

A student in the Program may be required by the Program Director to take an academic leave of absence based on the recommendation of the Progress and Promotion Committee. For example, students who do not meet Standard II of the Standards of Academic Progress (section III.D) will be placed on an academic leave of absence as outlined in Section III.F.2.

### **b. Medical Leave of Absence**

A student in the PA Program may be granted a medical leave of absence should a health issue interfere with the student's ability to progress through the Program. Any request for a medical leave of absence must be accompanied with a recommendation by the student's health care provider, and will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis by the Progress and

Promotion Committee. The final decision to grant or deny a leave of absence will be made by the Program Director based upon the recommendations of the Progress and Promotion Committee.

### ***c. Military Leave of Absence***

A student will not be excused from classes to attend short sessions (2 to 31 days) of active duty associated with National Guard or reserve training commitments. Because of the critical nature of the educational material being presented at any given time, absence from scheduled classes or clerkships could seriously interrupt the academic progress of students. In the event an entire unit is called to active duty because of a local or national emergency, the UNMC Policy #7013 will apply, resulting in a military leave of absence.

### ***d. Personal Leave of Absence***

Other exceptional circumstances may lead a student to request a personal leave of absence, which shall be evaluated on a case-by-case basis by the Progress and Promotion Committee. Any student who is experiencing academic failure, or who is not in good academic standing, or any student who is the subject of an involuntary dismissal from the Program for any reason is not eligible to utilize a personal leave of absence for the purpose of avoiding or delaying academic or disciplinary consequences. The final decision to grant or deny a leave of absence will be made by the Program Director based upon the recommendations of the Progress and Promotion Committee.

For all leaves of absence, the following will apply:

- The student is responsible for the financial consequences of taking a leave of absence. Students must review financial arrangements with the Business Office and the Office of Financial Aid prior to finalizing the leave of absence.
- When a leave of absence is granted, the Program may require that the student meet additional academic requirements for effective and safe reintegration into the classroom or clinic (e.g., remedial course work, ACLS/PALS course work, physical exam proficiency, etc.) and/or submit specific documentation (e.g., a medical release to return to classes).
- For medical, personal and military leave of absences, the student request must be made in writing and addressed to the Program Director. The reason for the request should be stated clearly in the letter. The student should continue to attend classes, take examinations and fulfill any other class assignments until leave has been formally granted.
- When a leave of absence is granted, students must notify the course coordinators of all classes in which they are enrolled of their withdrawal from course work, or the clinical preceptors of any clerkships in which they are enrolled of their withdrawal from clerkships.
- A student who has been granted a leave of absence is responsible for notifying the Program Director in writing of his/her intention to return to classes on the appointed date no later than two months before the start of classes. Without this notification, the

student's place in the class will be forfeited. Re-entry into the Program will then require re-application through the usual admissions process of the Program.

- Upon re-enrollment following a leave of absence, the student will be subject to all rules and regulations which pertain to the new class.

#### **4. Absences for Professional Organization Sponsored Activities**

Students who cannot be present for required and/or assigned academic work because of attendance or involvement in professional organization sponsored activities specifically approved by the Program will have the obligation to make up any missed assignments, quizzes, examinations, clinical clerkship days or other academic work as determined by the Program faculty and the ability of the faculty to provide such activities or comparable substitutes upon the return of the student from the approved activity. Such activities include, but are not limited to, membership and leadership activities related to PA professional organizations at the local, state or national level. This policy applies only to Division of Physician Assistant Education course work and clerkships. Students enrolled in course work in other academic departments must consult with the course directors for department policies regarding absences.

#### **5. Appeals**

The Division of Physician Assistant Education policy on appeals for academic and disciplinary actions conforms to the policies and procedures designated by the College of Medicine and the School of Allied Health Professions. These policies and procedures are described in The University of Nebraska Medical Center Student Handbook and in Policies for Students in the School of Allied Health Professions. Students are referred to these publications for detailed information.

#### **6. Social Media**

Personal use of social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter have rapidly increased over the last several years. While this technology allows instant widespread sharing of information, basic privacy and information security requirements applicable to the UNMC confidential information apply. Sharing confidential UNMC information, including protected health information on personal social networking websites is strictly prohibited. Examples of prohibited disclosure include:

Any references to a patient or patient care events, even if the patient's name is not included. Under HIPAA, such information is still considered protected health information.

Photographs of patients at UNMC, The Nebraska Medical Center, UNMC Physicians, or any clinical site attended while enrolled as a student at UNMC, even if the patient or his/her legal guardian gives a copy of the picture to a staff member. Patient photographs are also protected health information under HIPAA, and signed written HIPAA authorization is required before disclosing them.

Sharing any confidential UNMC business with others who do not have a need to know to perform their assigned duties on behalf of UNMC.



Under HIPAA, UNMC students can be found civilly or criminally liable for privacy and information security violations. Any student violating confidentiality will be subject to corrective action up to and including academic dismissal as determined by the Progress and Promotion Committee.

## 7. Background Checks

Prior to the beginning of class instruction, each PA student is required to have a background check for a review of criminal or other illegal behavior as recorded by state or national agencies. The cost of the initial required background check is borne by the PA Program. Results of the background check are required by many clinical rotation sites. If criminal or illegal behaviors are discovered that were not previously disclosed, UNMC will consider possible disciplinary actions as described under 'Personal Conduct and Professionalism' (Section IV.A.1). Subsequent background checks may be required and the cost will be borne by the student. Disciplinary action due to undisclosed or serious offenses on the background check may include dismissal from the PA Program.

## 8. Drug Screening

The UNMC PA Program abides by the drug and alcohol policies set forth in the UNMC Policy and Procedure Manual on Student Substance Use Disorders.

Any drug screening required by clinical clerkship sites is the personal and financial responsibility of the student. If results show evidence of illegal drug use, UNMC will consider possible disciplinary actions as described under the 'Personal Conduct and Professionalism' (Section IV.A.1).

## 9. Policy on Student Work

In order to avoid practices that might conflict with the professional and educational objectives of the UNMC Physician Assistant Program during Phase I and Phase II, and to avoid practices in which students are substituted for regular staff, the following policy shall be in effect with regard to service work.

- a. Students may not be hired as employees for any private or public practice, clinic or institution to perform any medical services during any time they are part of the Physician Assistant Program including during the time the student is under the sponsorship of a specific practice, clinic or institution during a clerkship.
- b. Students may not take the responsibility or place of qualified staff in any medical setting.
- c. Students may not be given any payments, stipends or other remuneration for medical services performed as part of the Physician Assistant Program.
- d. Students may volunteer their medical services to charitable, humanitarian or community service organizations when such services are assigned or approved within the Physician Assistant Program.

## B. Phase I Policies

### 1. Attendance

Because of the concentrated curriculum in the PA Program, all courses, labs and clinical experiences require mandatory attendance. Attendance at all classes is considered an aspect of professionalism and individual responsibility. The student's presence in class is essential to understanding the content, structure and testing rationale of PA Program coursework. Attendance is, therefore, considered critical for the successful completion of all courses.

Regular checks of attendance are not possible for each class period, therefore, unannounced random checks of attendance may be performed. Processes for emergent and planned absences are as follows:

#### *a. Process for Emergent Absence*

An excused absence will be granted for severe illness of the student, severe illness of a student's immediate family member or a death in the student's immediate family. In these instances, the student must follow the process outlined below. Failure to meet these criteria will result in an unexcused absence.

- Student must notify the PA office as soon as it becomes evident that s/he will be unable to attend class.
- Student must notify the course coordinator(s) for all classes to be missed.
- Notifications must occur prior to the scheduled class periods, unless extenuating circumstances exist which prevent the student from making such notifications.
- An Emergent Absence Form must be completed by the student and submitted to the PA Office within one week of the student's return to classes.

#### *b. Process for Requested Absence*

In certain circumstances, excused absences will be considered for reasons other than the emergent situations noted above, including any necessary legal appearances. Requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

The student must follow the procedures outlined below in order to obtain an excused absence. Failure to follow these procedures will result in an unexcused absence.

- Student must complete and submit an Absence Request Form to the PA office at least two weeks prior to the requested absence date.
- Requests will be reviewed and either approved or denied by the Program Director and faculty.
- If the request is approved and the course coordinator is not a member of the PA Program faculty, the student must also seek approval for absence from the course coordinator.
- Once the faculty and course coordinator have approved the absence and the form returned to the PA office, this will be deemed an excused absence.
- If the request is denied, the student is expected to attend all classes, clinical experiences and program activities as scheduled.

- If the request is denied and the student chooses to be absent despite the decision, this will be counted as an unexcused absence.

### ***c. Consequences for Excessive Absences***

Individual course coordinators are given the discretion to determine penalties for absences, which will be documented in the course syllabus. These may include, but are not limited to, reduction of final course grade or failure of the course.

Excessive absences, whether excused or unexcused, will require a meeting with the Progress and Promotion Committee (PPC) and Program Director. Excessive absence is sufficient reason for considering a student as academically deficient. Determination of the number of absences that may be interpreted as excessive rests with the Progress and Promotion Committee. If the Program Director and PPC determine that a student's cumulative absences have substantially interfered with the student's education, s/he may be required to take a leave of absence from the Program, be recommended for academic dismissal, or subject to other corrective action.

## **2. Professional Appearance**

Personal appearance must be neat. No ragged, torn or unkempt clothing is acceptable. Appearance may be casual but not slovenly. Appropriate dress and shoes required in all labs as designated by instructors. Personal grooming and hygiene are a priority. No hats are allowed in the classroom for men or women, except as a customary part of a student's cultural or religious wardrobe. Clothing may not display images or language considered to be lewd or obscene.

## **3. Academic Advisors**

All students will be assigned academic advisors and are expected to consult with their advisors at least two times per semester during Phase I. The main responsibilities of the faculty advisor are:

- To be an advocate for the student throughout the student's enrollment.
- To oversee and monitor the student's progress through the Program and assist the student to maintain satisfactory progress through the Program whenever necessary.
- To be available for academic advising and consultation throughout the student's enrollment in the Program.
- To advise the student about the UNMC campus resources and assistance for non-academic problems or concerns.
- To consult with the student about any Program requirements, policies, expectations or concerns that may impact the professional development or academic progress of the student.

During the first few weeks of the first semester the student is enrolled in the Program, the student is expected to make an appointment with his/her advisor for an introductory session. At that time advisors will let students know about office hours, schedules and the preferred ways to contact them throughout the year. Advisors will also inform the student about the Program's expectations concerning academic progress and professional behavior and development throughout the student's enrollment.

Academic advisors may be consulted by the student for any reason. Faculty advisors are considered advocates for their assigned students and have their student's best interests and welfare as their first responsibility. Students are encouraged to get to know their academic advisor well in order to establish a positive rapport for effective collaboration.

There are two areas of particular importance regarding academic advising that are emphasized by the Program: academic progress and professionalism. With regard to academic progress, students are expected to consult with their advisors at the first indication of any academic difficulty or problem such as a low or failing grade, difficulty mastering class material, or concerns with a class or course. Emotional, social, circumstantial or other personal problems may also be impediments to academic progress and can be addressed by academic advisors or any member of the faculty with whom the student feels comfortable. Students should know that academic advisors are obligated to contact students for consultation in any circumstance where satisfactory academic progress may be in question. All academic advisors want to ensure that their advisees maintain good academic standing throughout the entire enrollment in the Program.

Regarding the second area, professionalism, students will be evaluated by the faculty at the end of every semester on their professional behaviors by means of the Professionalism Evaluation form. Advisors will consult with the student about the evaluation in order to promote and foster the student's professional development. Should there occur an event necessitating a "Skill Underdeveloped" or an "Unsatisfactory" rating on the Professionalism Evaluation form at any point in the student's enrollment, the student will be contacted by his/her advisor for consultation and remedial action as outlined in Section III.F.3.

## C. Phase II Policies

### 1. Progression from Phase I to Phase II

Students must successfully complete and pass all Phase I course work and all Phase I requirements (graded and non-letter graded) to be promoted to Phase II, as determined by the Progress and Promotion Committee. Any exception to this requirement must be approved in writing by the Program Director.

### 2. Attendance

During the clinical portion of the PA Program, students must attend all scheduled courses, exams, and rotation activities. If a rotation requires that a student participate in supervised call time, the student is expected to do so. The PA Program generally does not permit absences for any reason other than personal illness, a family emergency, or legal appearance. Students are not permitted time off to study for exams or to seek employment, except as noted later in this section.

#### a. Process for Emergent Absence

An excused absence will be granted for severe illness of the student, severe illness of a student's immediate family member or a death in the student's immediate family. In these instances, the student must follow the process outlined below. Failure to meet these criteria will result in an unexcused absence.

- Student must notify the PA office and the rotation site before 9:00 a.m. or prior to the start of planned clinical activities for the day, whichever is earlier.
- Notifications must occur prior to the scheduled clinic, unless extenuating circumstances exist which prevent the student from making such notifications.
- An Emergent Absence Form, signed by the Preceptor, must be completed by the student and submitted to the Clinical Coordinator within one week of the student's return to classes.

The Clinical Coordinator will work with the Preceptor to determine how the missed time will be made up. Final approval for the make-up of missed time will be at the discretion of the Clinical Coordinator. Extended absence, even if excused, may require a Leave of Absence (LOA) from the Program, which will alter the student's anticipated date of graduation. For additional information, please refer to the UNMC Student Handbook.

### ***b. Process for Requested Absence***

In certain circumstances, excused absences will be considered for reasons other than the emergent situations noted above, including any necessary legal appearances. The student should not, under any circumstances, directly ask a Preceptor for permission for an absence for any reason, unless prior approval is given by the PA Program faculty. Requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis. The student may not plan any absence unless the following processes are complete. The student must follow the procedures outlined below in order to obtain an excused absence. Failure to follow these procedures will result in an unexcused absence.

- Student must complete and submit an Absence Request Form to the Clinical Coordinator as soon as s/he is aware of a possible absence. At a minimum, the request must be submitted at least two weeks prior to the requested absence date.

Requests will be reviewed and either approved or denied by the Clinical Coordinator and Program Director.

- If the request is approved, the student must also seek approval for absence from the Preceptor.
- Once the faculty and Preceptor have approved the absence and the form is returned to the Clinical Coordinator, the absence will be deemed an excused absence.
- If the request is denied, the student is expected to attend all clinical activities and program activities as scheduled by the Preceptor and PA Program.
- If the request is denied and the student chooses to be absent despite the decision, this will be counted as an unexcused absence.

### ***c. Travel Days***

Students assigned to a distant rotation will be allowed travel time one day prior to the scheduled End-of-Clerkship (EOC) dates. If the rotation site is more than five hours from Omaha a full day will be allowed and a half day will be allowed if the location is less than five hours away.

#### **d. Job Interviews**

Each student will be allowed up to three days for job interviews. Approval must be obtained from the Clinical Coordinator at least five working days in advance of the interview. No more than two consecutive days will be allowed for distant travel. The same procedure for obtaining an Absence Request form as noted above should be followed. No more than two days will be allowed for job interviews during any single rotation month.

#### **e. Consequences for Excessive Absence or Habitual Tardiness**

An unexcused absence is grounds for failure of a rotation or clinical phase course. Any unexcused absence will be reviewed by the Clinical Coordinator and the matter may be referred to the Progress and Promotion Committee for further action. Habitual tardiness is also considered disruptive and unprofessional and may result in disciplinary action by the Clinical Coordinator. Habitual tardiness is also considered disruptive and unprofessional and may result in disciplinary action by the Clinical Coordinator.

### **3. Professional Appearance**

Students in Phase II are expected to dress in professional attire at all times in the clinical setting. Students will observe the following dress code when working in any clinical situation. This means that a professional appearance is mandatory for all students unless otherwise specified by the clinical preceptor. Appropriate dress to reflect a "professional" or "business" appearance (i.e. no blue jeans, shorts, tennis shoes, etc.) is required in all clinical settings. Personal grooming and hygiene must be a priority. Tattoos should be covered and piercings should be removed from the face area with the exception of earrings. For men a shirt and tie with appropriate dress pants are required. For women a skirt and blouse, dress, or dress slacks are required. Shoes must be closed-toed and heels may be flat to low height. Clothing should allow for adequate movement during patient care and should not be tight, short, or low cut. Women are not to wear short skirts or revealing tops. Scrub attire is appropriate only for a surgical/ER or procedural settings and should not be worn in the clinic.

The Program provides a photo ID badge identifying the student as a Physician Assistant student from UNMC and issues an insignia of the Program which is to be worn in all clinical settings on a white jacket of uniform style. White coats must be worn at all times when seeing patients.

In certain clerkships, the requirement for the white coat may be waived by the preceptor; however, you **MUST** always be identified by your UNMC Identification badge (Appendix 5). The student is responsible for the purchase and upkeep of the jacket.

### **4. General Phase II Policies**

All students will be governed by the requirements for clerkships and other educational activities and assignments during Phase II as outlined in the Phase II Handbook on Blackboard.

### **5. Policy on Assignment of Clerkships during Phase II**

Phase II of the UNMC PA Program is the Clinical Education phase of the Program. During Phase II, students develop their clinical competence at clinical sites that have been established by the Program. These sites, known collectively as the Nebraska Clinical Network, have been

established over many years with Nebraska physicians, hospitals, clinics and other institutions

together with selected sites outside of the state of Nebraska. Because of the PA Program's educational focus on primary care practice and the Program's professional commitment to the entire state of Nebraska, most clinical clerkship sites are located away from Omaha and the Nebraska Medical Center. The majority of these sites are spread throughout the state of Nebraska with many of them being located in the small towns and rural areas of the state. Because of the Program's goal to educate students broadly in medicine as well as provide optimal clinical experiences for its students, the following requirements will guide the Program's policy for the assignment of all students to clerkships during Phase II of the Program.

- a. Every student will be required to spend three consecutive months in a Family Practice Clerkship located in a small town or rural area of Nebraska.
- b. Every student will be required to perform all required clerkships within the Nebraska Clinical Network.
- c. Every student will be expected to perform all elective clerkships within the Nebraska Clinical Network.
- d. Elective clerkships established outside of the Nebraska Clinical Network must be approved and arranged by the PA Program. Requests by students for clerkships outside the Nebraska Clinical Network will be subject to University and Program policy, logistical, legal and monitoring considerations, and clerkship site circumstances.
- e. Students must agree to pay their own transportation costs to all clerkship sites.
- f. Students must agree to pay for costs of room and board if these are not furnished by the clerkship site.
- g. Required testing and educational sessions are held at the Medical Center Campus up to eight times during Phase II of the Program. Students are responsible for all costs incurred to attend these sessions including travel to and from clerkship sites and the Medical Center.
- h. All international clerkships must be set up through and approved by UNMC's International Student and Programs Division. No outside agencies are accepted. Students are responsible for all costs associated with international travel.
- i. All clerkship assignments and schedules must have the approval of the Clinical Coordinator, and the final authority for the assignment of all clerkships and schedules rests with the Clinical Coordinator.

All students must complete the clerkships designated as "required" by the Program. Reasonable effort will be made to accommodate student preference on clerkship scheduling and sites. However, in all cases the final determination for all clerkship dates, sites and activities will be at the discretion of the Clinical Coordinator.

Grades will be assigned on the basis of performance and end of clerkship examinations as defined in the Phase II Handbook on Blackboard.

## V. Graduation Requirements

### A. Academic Requirements for Graduation

In order to graduate from the UNMC PA Program, each student must satisfactorily complete all of the following:

1. All letter-grade and non-letter grade course work,
2. All clerkships (required and elective),
3. Achieve a “Skill Demonstrated” rating in all categories of the Professionalism Evaluation,
4. All assignments designated by the program as ‘required,’
5. A summative evaluation of all clinical knowledge and skills, consisting of both objective examinations and skill performance evaluations.

“Satisfactory completion” means completing all courses, clerkships and the summative evaluation with a letter grade of C or higher; maintaining a cumulative GPA of 2.50; receiving a “pass” or “satisfactory” evaluation on non-letter graded assignments; and achieving a “Skill Demonstrated” rating in all categories of the Professionalism Evaluation.

Standards for completion of any course are determined by the instructor or course coordinator of the course. The instructor or course coordinator determines the criteria for earning each letter grade. Course objectives outline these evaluation methods and the required performance scale and have meet the approval of the Program Director. Standards for completion of any clerkship are based on the preceptor evaluation and examination performance as interpreted by the PA program clinical coordinators and approved by the Program Director. Standards for completion of the summative evaluation are determined by the PA program faculty and approved by the Program Director. Students are notified in advance of all performance criteria.

All students who have successfully completed the PA Program graduation requirements are recommended for graduation by the Program Director to the Senior Associate Dean of the School of Allied Health Professions.

### B. Credentials Awarded

Since the class starting in 1994, UNMC PA Program graduates are awarded the Master of Physician Assistant Studies (MPAS) degree. Program graduates are qualified to sit for the Physician Assistant National Certifying Examination administered by the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants.

### C. Awarding Degrees with Honors

Awarding of degrees with honors will be based on grade point average. The grades from the first six semesters of the Program will be used in the computation of the GPA for degrees with honors for all students. The last or seventh semester grades of the Program will not be used in the computation for degrees with Honors. In conformity with the School of Allied Health Professions (SAHP) policy on degrees and honors the following additional stipulations will apply to each PA graduating class: No more than 20 percent of each graduating class will be eligible for graduation with honors. Within this 20 percent, the following percentages of



students may receive the indicated designations for honors, 2 percent Highest Distinction, 8 percent High Distinction, 10 percent Distinction.

## Appendix 1: Technical Standards

The UNMC Physician Assistant Program is dedicated to the education of students who strive to become competent and caring providers of primary health care services. The student must be able to achieve certain technical standards of knowledge and skill in order to successfully complete the Program. The technical standards stated in this document apply to satisfactory performance in all academic and clinical course work, as well as fulfillment of "non-academic" essential functions of the curriculum involving physical, cognitive, and behavior factors that are essential to a professional clinical practitioner.

UNMC shall provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities otherwise qualified to complete the essential functions of the curriculum and the profession. The safety and welfare of a patient shall never be put in jeopardy as a result of an effort to reasonably accommodate a disability.

A student in the Physician Assistant Program must have adequate abilities and skills in the following five areas:

**Observation** The student must be able to observe demonstrations and conduct experiments in the basic sciences, including but not limited to chemical, biological, anatomic and physiologic sciences, microbiologic cultures, and microscopic studies of microorganisms. A student must be able to observe a patient accurately at a distance and close at hand. Observation necessitates the functional use of the sense of vision and other sensory modalities. A student must be able to integrate all information visually and through the other senses.

**Communication** A student must be able to communicate effectively, sensitively, and rapidly in English with patients and members of the health care team. A student must be able to elicit information from patients, perceive nonverbal communications, and describe changes in mood, activity and posture. Communication includes not only speech, but writing, reading, interpreting tables, figures, graphs and computer literacy.

**Sensory and Motor Function** The student must have sufficient sensory and motor function to elicit information from patients by palpation, auscultation, percussion, and other diagnostic maneuvers. The student will be required to coordinate both gross and fine muscular movements, equilibrium, and functional use of the senses of hearing, touch and vision.

More specifically, the student must be able to exercise such fine motor skills as to adequately perform laboratory tests, including but not limited to, wet mount, urinalysis and gram stain. The student must exercise such level of dexterity, sensation and visual acuity as to accurately complete such processes as administering intravenous medication, making fine measurements of angles and size, measuring blood pressure, respiration and pulse, performing physical examinations, and performing therapeutic procedures such as suturing and casting. The student must be able to hear sufficiently to accurately differentiate percussive notes and auscultatory findings, including but not limited to, heart, lung, and abdominal sounds, as well as discern normal and abnormal findings using instruments such as tuning forks, stethoscopes, sphygmomanometers, and Doppler devices.

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

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

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

**Behavioral and Social Attributes** A student must possess the emotional health required for full use of his or her intellectual abilities, the exercise of good judgment and the prompt completion of all responsibilities attendant to the diagnosis and care of patients. The development of mature, sensitive effective and professional relationships with patients and members of the health care team is essential. Students must be able to tolerate physically taxing workloads and to function effectively under stress. They must be able to adapt to changing environments, to display flexibility and learn to function in the face of uncertainties inherent in the clinical problems of many patients. Compassion, integrity, interpersonal skills, interest and motivation are all personal qualities that are desired in a health professional and assessed during the admissions and education processes.

**NOTE:** Requests for accommodation due to any type of disability must be made to the Program Director in writing either 1) Upon matriculation into the Program or 2) Immediately upon determination that such disability exists. Retroactive academic considerations will NOT be made for students with a known disability which could affect their academic performance if the disability was not made known to the Program Director.

## Appendix 2: Graduate Competencies

Graduates of the UNMC PA Program are expected to demonstrate proficiency in the following competency areas, which are based upon the ‘Competencies for the Physician Assistant Profession,’ developed and maintained by the four main PA professional organizations: NCCPA, AAPA, ARC-PA and PAEA.

### Medical Knowledge

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

### Interpersonal & Communication Skills

Interpersonal and communication skills encompass the verbal, nonverbal, written, and electronic exchange of information. Physician assistants must demonstrate interpersonal and communication skills that result in effective information exchange with patients, patients’ families, physicians, professional associates, and other individuals within the health care system.

### Patient Care

Patient care includes patient- and setting-specific assessment, evaluation, and management. Physician assistants must demonstrate care that is effective, safe, high quality, and equitable.

### Professionalism

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

### Practice-Based Learning & Improvement

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

### Systems-Based Practice

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

## Appendix 3: Curriculum Overview

University of Nebraska College of Medicine  
 Division of Physician Assistant Education

### CURRICULUM 2015 – 2016

<u>Course No.</u>		<u>Semester Hours</u>
<b>PHASE I</b>		
FALL SEMESTER		
GCBA 571	Structures of the Human Body .....	9
CIP 606	Physiology .....	6
PHAS 620	Physician Assistant Professional Issues .....	1
PAMM 690	Biology of Disease .....	5
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>21</b>
SPRING SEMESTER		
CLS 500	Application and Interpretation of Clinical Laboratory Data .....	2
PHAR 507	Pharmacology .....	5
CLS 511	Medical Microbiology .....	2
PHAS 630	Clinical Skills I .....	2
PHAS 632	Communication in Medicine I .....	2
PHAS 650	Adult and Pediatric Medicine I .....	8
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>21</b>
SUMMER SEMESTER		
PHAS 635	Clinical Skills II .....	3
PHAS 637	Communication in Medicine II .....	1
PHAS 645	Behavioral Medicine .....	3
PHAS 655	Adult and Pediatric Medicine II .....	11
PHAS 660	Medical Ethics .....	1
PHAS 665	Systems in Health Care and Management .....	1
PHAS 670	Research Applications in Medicine .....	1
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>PHASE II</b>		
FALL SEMESTER		
PHAS 700	Clinical Education/Clerkships (by arrangement) .....	12
SPRING SEMESTER		
PHAS 700	Clinical Education/Clerkships (by arrangement) .....	16
SUMMER SEMESTER		
PHAS 700	Clinical Education/Clerkships (by arrangement) .....	16
FALL SEMESTER		
PHAS 700	Clinical Education/Clerkships (by arrangement) .....	16

## PHASE II

Phase II, The clinical education phase, consists of 10 months of *Required* clerkships and 5 months of *Elective* clerkships. The required clerkships are in specific areas of clinical medicine, designed to provide a broad foundation for primary care clinical practice. Elective clerkships will be selected from specialty and primary care areas.

### Required Clerkships

PHAS 702	Psychiatry Clerkship .....	4
PHAS 703	Internal Medicine Clerkship .....	4
PHAS 704	Pediatrics Clerkship .....	4
PHAS 705	Obstetrics/Gynecology Clerkship .....	4
PHAS 706	Surgery Clerkship .....	4
PHAS 707	Family Medicine Clerkship .....	12
PHAS 708	Emergency Medicine Clerkship .....	4
PHAS 709	Geriatric Clerkship .....	4

### Elective Clerkships

PHAS 721	Cardiology Elective .....	4
PHAS 722	Endocrinology Elective .....	4
PHAS 724	Infectious Disease Elective .....	4
PHAS 726	Oncology/Hematology Elective .....	4
PHAS 727	Pulmonary Medicine Elective .....	4
PHAS 729	Cardiovascular Surgery Elective .....	4
PHAS 731	Neurosurgery Elective .....	4
PHAS 732	Orthopedic Surgery Elective .....	4
PHAS 736	Plastic Surgery Elective .....	4
PHAS 737	Urology Elective .....	4
PHAS 742	Dermatology Elective .....	4
PHAS 744	International Elective .....	4
PHAS 749	Otolaryngology Elective .....	4

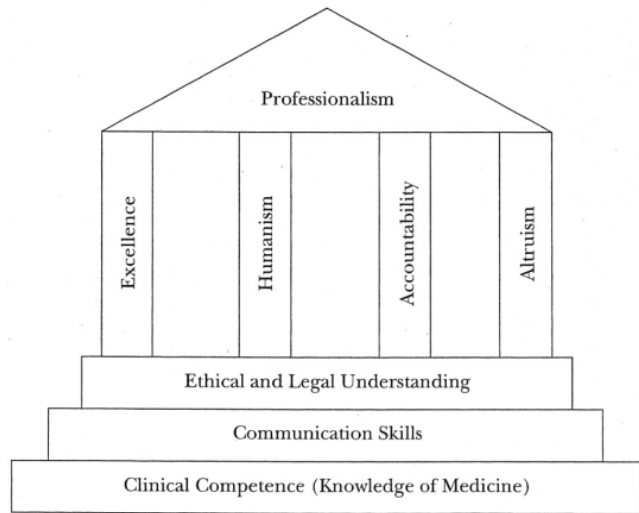
**(This is not an inclusive list. Clerkships in other specialties are available to meet student needs.)**

## Appendix 4: UNMC PA Program Model of Professionalism

Throughout the UNMC PA Program Student Policy Handbook, professionalism is emphasized as a primary value for the PA Program. Here is presented an abbreviated model of professionalism that has been adopted by the PA Program for its students and faculty and serves as the basis for the student Professionalism Evaluation.

### A Definition Guiding the Assessment of Professionalism

Professionalism is demonstrated through a foundation of clinical competence, communication skills, and ethical and legal understanding, upon which is built the aspiration to and wise application of the principles of professionalism: excellence, humanism, accountability, and altruism.



### Definitions for the Four Principles of Professionalism

**Excellence** begins with a commitment to competence in medical knowledge and skills, ethical and legal understanding and communication skills. It includes a continual effort to exceed ordinary expectations in these areas through professional commitment, self-assessment and lifelong learning. It focuses on dedication to the continuous improvement of the quality of care and the promotion of scientific knowledge and technology in the service of patients.

**Humanism** denotes a sincere concern for and interest in humanity rooted in the interaction between people in need of assistance and those offering it. Humanism includes respect, compassion, empathy, honor and integrity in relationships with patients, colleagues, and other health professionals. These qualities also apply to a variety of activities including patient care, academic assignments, scholarly work and research.

**Accountability** refers to the procedures and processes by which one justifies and takes responsibility for his or her activities. Responsibility involves the free acceptance of duty to serve one's patients and the public, to advocate for individual patients so they may receive the best possible care and to use systematic approaches to promoting, maintaining and improving the health of individuals and populations. It also includes responsibility for professional competence and legal and ethical conduct.

**Altruism** is behavior designed to benefit another person. The essence of altruism involves actions aimed at increasing the welfare of others, particularly those in need. It is grounded in compassion with a deep sense of connection to others. It involves helping others out of a sense of regard and commitment. It demands that patient's best interests rather than the interests of the practitioner guide behavior.

Source: Stern, D.T. (Ed). Measuring Medical Professionalism. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.

## Appendix 5: Professional White Coat

All students are required to follow these instructions concerning the proper appearance of the white coat which is to be worn by students in all clinical settings. Students should know that there is a requirement by the Program's accrediting agency (The Accreditation Review Committee on Education for the Physician Assistant) stipulating that students be clearly identified specifically as physician assistant students in all clinical settings to distinguish them from other healthcare professionals. Accordingly, the Nebraska Program has established requirements to ensure that all students are clearly and uniformly identifiable by patients and health professionals in clinical settings, and that they present a professional appearance at all times. The identifying items required by the Program for all students include 1) a standard white clinic coat, 2) an identification badge, 3) a patch displaying the identifier for the Nebraska Physician Assistant Program, 4) a University of Nebraska Medical Center patch, and 5) an identification card issued by UNMC to all students. This memo should provide guidance and clarification about the proper appearance of the coat and the proper display of identification items on the coat. Please take the time and make the effort to be sure that your coat and overall appearance conform exactly to the specifications detailed below.

**WHITE COAT** The standard white student coat is short, buttons in front and has one left breast pocket, and two waist pockets. The length of the coat should approximate that of a man's or woman's suit coat. Sleeve length should be exact to avoid having to roll up the sleeves. Smocks, belted coats, long coats (i.e., extending to the knees or below) and colors other than white are not acceptable. The coat should be absolutely clean at all times, free of soil and stains, and neatly ironed or pressed for a crisp, neat look. It is suggested that students have two (2) coats to insure that one is ready to wear at all times (additional coats may be purchased at the bookstore).

**PA PATCH** The PA patch must be permanently affixed and centered on the left breast pocket on the coat. The patch must not be worn on the sleeve, lapel, or any other location on the coat. The patch is required to be on the coat, and is not an optional item.

**IDENTIFICATION BADGE** The ID badge must be placed on the white coat. The ID badge must be centered on the upper part of the left breast pocket. The ID badge is required to be on the coat and is not an optional item.

**UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA MEDICAL CENTER PATCH** This patch is usually supplied with the coat when the coat is purchased at the UNMC bookstore. It must be sewn or permanently affixed just above the left breast pocket of the coat

**UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA MEDICAL CENTER IDENTIFICATION CARD** The UNMC ID card must be worn at all times by PA students in order to identify themselves as currently enrolled students. The ID should be visibly worn on the person, such as around the neck on a chain or cord.



## Appendix 6: Definition of Terms

**Academic Dismissal** The student has not met the minimum academic standards of the Program and will not be allowed to continue in the Program.

**Academic Probation** The student has not met the minimum academic or professional standards of the Program and will be required to meet certain standards established by the Program for a defined period of time. Academic Probation for one semester is automatic if a student does not meet the standards of academic progress in Section D of this document. During the period of academic probation the student must earn a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2.50 or better, must earn grades of C or better in each course or clerkship, must receive “Satisfactory” rating (“Skill Demonstrated” or “Skill Developing”) ratings on all sections of the Professionalism Evaluation, and receive “Pass” or “Satisfactory” in all non-graded assignments and projects. Failure to achieve these standards during the probationary period and thereafter will result in termination of enrollment via voluntary withdrawal or academic dismissal. Only one semester of Academic Probation will be allowed during a student’s course of study. Any occasion necessitating a second period of Academic Probation will result in termination of enrollment via voluntary withdrawal or academic dismissal.

**Academic Warning** A cautionary notice from the Program Director, on recommendation by the Progress and Promotion Committee, that the student is not meeting minimum academic standards of the Program in a course or clerkship in progress. If improvements are not made, further academic consequences may result.

**Clerkship** A supervised clinical learning experience in a defined area of medicine characterized by utilizing clinical knowledge and skills in working with patients, occurring in Phase II (Clinical Phase) of the PA Program.

**Course** A unit of instruction which may involve lectures, observation, performance, assignments and evaluation which usually takes place in the classroom or laboratory occurring primarily in Phase I, the Academic (Didactic) Phase, of the PA Program.

**Disciplinary Dismissal** The student has failed to comply with Program requirements or policy related to conduct or professional behavior and will result in termination of enrollment.

**Disciplinary Probation** The student has failed to comply with Program requirements or policy related to conduct or professional behavior, and will be required to meet certain standards established by the Program for a defined period of time. Failure to meet the established standards will result in termination of enrollment via voluntary withdrawal or disciplinary dismissal.

**Good Standing** The student is currently meeting all requirements for satisfactory academic progress and all other requirements of the Program.

**Leave of Absence** A student is granted formal permission or required to delay progression through the PA Program due to exceptional circumstances. The length of the leave of absence will not exceed one year from the time the leave is approved. Refer to section IVA3a-d for further clarification.

**Voluntary Withdrawal** The student has not met the minimum academic standards or other requirements of the Program and agrees to withdraw from the Program, or simply wishes to withdraw for personal reasons.

## Appendix 7: Compact

### THE COMPACT WITH THE PA PROGRAM

Each student accepted into the UNMC PA Program will be expected to enter into a compact with the Program. A compact is defined here as a non-legal agreement between two parties. The compact states that as a condition of acceptance into, and continuation in the Program, the student freely and sincerely agrees to abide by the UNMC Physician Assistant Program Student Handbook, a collective name for the policies, requirements, guidelines and expectations of the Program. In return, the Program agrees to provide instruction, experiences and guidance to enable the student to become a competent practitioner. The compact is intended to emphasize the commitment to professional excellence on the part of both the student and the Program.

The student is asked to sign the following Compact Declaration:

*I hereby affirm and declare that I, (\_\_\_\_\_), wish to enroll in, and complete the Physician Assistant Program at UNMC. As a condition for enrollment and continued progress in the Program, I freely and with full understanding and sincerity of purpose, agree to enter in to a compact with UNMC PA Program and abide by the policies, requirements, guidelines and expectations of the Program collectively known as the UNMC PA Program Student Handbook. In return, I understand that the UNMC PA Program agrees to provide me with the curriculum, instruction and guidance to enable me to become a competent, and compassionate professional PA practitioner. I also understand and agree that if, in the judgment of the Program Director and/or the faculty of the Program, I fail to meet the obligations, responsibilities or requirements as stated in the Handbook I have agreed to, my enrollment will be terminated via voluntary withdrawal, or academic dismissal. Finally, I understand the intent and meaning of the Handbook contained herein, and agree that the Handbook will be used to evaluate my academic progress and professional conduct for as long as I am enrolled in the UNMC Physician Assistant Program.*

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

The Handbook is presented to each student accepted into the UNMC Physician Assistant Program for his/her thorough review and understanding. It contains essential information the policies, requirements, guidelines, and expectations which govern academic performance and student conduct applicable to all students who are enrolled in any phase of the twenty-eight months of the Program. This Handbook is unique to the Program and is designed to promote standards for academic progress, professional development and personal responsibility. It presents, in concise form, the parameters of achievement and professional behavior the Program faculty expects of its students.

Each student enrolled in the Program is expected to read and understand this Handbook, and keep them in a handy place for ready reference. Additionally, each student is encouraged to obtain clarification from the Program Director about any sections not understood.

The information contained herein replaces previous policies and requirements and will be effective for all students in the Fall Semester of the 2015-2016 academic year and thereafter. Consequently, any student appeals that attempt to invoke, utilize or assume as precedent any past policies, requirements or practices will not be considered valid or legitimate.