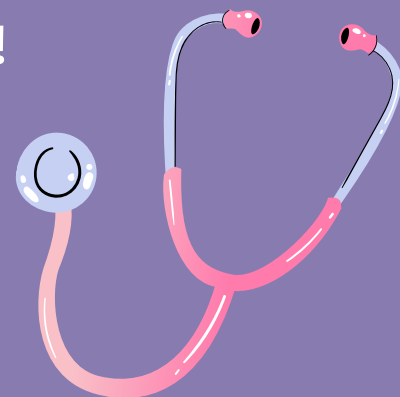




This guide will focus on Canadian applicants. Stay tuned for our guide on becoming a Canadian PA for US Applicants!



STEP 1: IS THE PA PROFESSION FOR YOU?

Take time to truly explore if the PA profession aligns with your passion—it's a fast-paced, hands-on role with lifelong learning!

Role:

- PAs are **advanced practice providers** that can diagnose, treatment, prescribe, and more.
- PAs work in a **team-based environment**, under the supervision of a physician.
- **Patient-centered care** is central to PAs, who prioritize patient values across diverse populations.



In Canada:

- **New profession:** PAs are a growing career in Canada, with ~1000 nationwide and ~60 in Alberta.
- **Advocacy:** PAs often advocate to raise awareness and highlight their training and value.



PAs are NOT:

- **MDs:** PAs are medically trained but don't work independently like MDs.
- **Future MDs:** PA is a lifelong career, not a stepping stone.
- **MOAs:** PAs don't do admin or receptionist tasks.
- **NPs:** PAs follow the medical model; NPs follow the nursing model and may work independently in some provinces.



STEP 2: PICK YOUR PROGRAM!

University of Calgary

Location: Calgary, Alberta

Class Size: 20

Features: Program follows spiral curriculum and utilizes case-based learning in small-groups. Promotes self-directed learning. Students engage in QI initiatives.

University of Manitoba

Location: Winnipeg, Manitoba

Class Size: 30

Features: Program follows a horizontally-integrated spiral curriculum. Students complete a research capstone project.

Dalhousie University

Location: Halifax, Nova Scotia

Class Size: 24

Features: Priority is given to Nova Scotia residents. Maritime applicants are considered for remaining seats. Teaching is patient-centered and uses case-based learning in small group settings

University of Saskatchewan

Location: Saskatoon Saskatchewan

Class Size: 20

Features: In second year, $\frac{1}{3}$ of clinical rotations will take place outside of major urban centres. A research capstone project will be completed.

McMaster University

Location: Hamilton Ontario

Class Size: 40

Features: Taught through small group, problem-based learning with placements in Hamilton, satellite campuses, and across Ontario.

University of Toronto

Location: Toronto, Ontario

Class Size: 60

Features: Online/in-person hybrid didactic year offers a curriculum that supports rural training and improve accessibility.

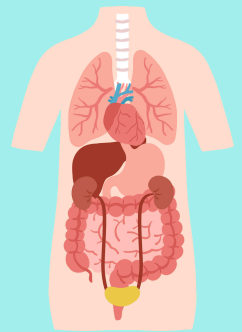
FYI: U.S.-trained PAs can work in Canada, but Canadian PAs can't practice in the U.S. (yet!)

STEP 3: MEET THE REQUIREMENTS



Required Courses:

- Human Anatomy
 - Human Physiology
 - Indigenous Education
 - Biochemistry
- May require 3 or 6 university credits
 - Minimum GPA may be required



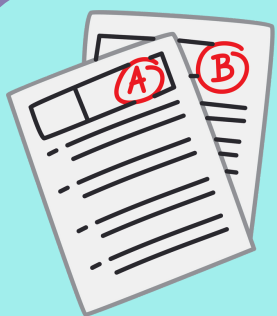
Minimum Education:

- **Minimum 2 years undergrad:** McMaster and Toronto
- **Undergraduate Degree:** Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Calgary and Dalhousie
 - Some schools allow applying in 4th year; others require a completed degree first



Healthcare Experience:

- Required by some schools; strongly recommended by others
 - May need to meet minimum hours
- Includes paid work, volunteer, practicum, etc.
- Schools will not pre-approve your HCE



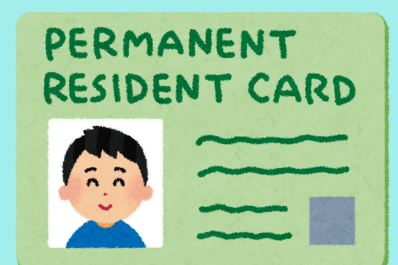
Minimum GPA:

- Varies by school, typically 3.0–3.2 (4.0 scale)
- Competitive GPAs are usually higher (3.5+)
- May be cumulative or based on last 60 credits



Residency:

- All universities require applicants to have Canadian Citizenship or Permanent Resident Status.
- U of C also accepts applicants with Refugee Status.



Requirements vary by school and may/may not include the listed items. Last slide provides links to application requirements for each university.

STEP 4: SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION!

1 CV/Resume

Includes healthcare experience, work experience, education, volunteering, etc.

2 Letter of Intent/Personal Essay

Explain why you want to be a PA, and highlights skills/qualities that you bring to succeed in the program.



3 Transcripts

Universities may require official or unofficial transcripts. May also require proof of degree completion.

4 References

Amount of referees required varies from 2-3. Referees may have to write a letter of recommendation, or fill out a provided form.

5 English Language Proficiency

You may have to provide scores from TOEFL, IELTS, Pearson Test of English, etc.



6 CASPer

An online, scenario-based assessment that evaluates non-academic traits like communication, empathy, and ethics.



7 Supplementary Application

May include additional information, such as: work experience, volunteer, written/video answers to prompts, etc. May be by invitation, or upon submission of initial application.

Alternative Pathways:

- Calgary has an Equity Admissions and an Indigenous Admissions pathway.
- Dalhousie has an Indigenous Admissions and a Black Learners Admissions pathway.
- McMaster has an Facilitated Indigenous Application Process for Indigenous Applicants.
- Other universities are committed considering rural ties, Indigenous identity, and diverse experiences, in their application reviewing process.

Note: Applications differ by school and may not include everything listed. See the end of the slide deck for school-specific details.

STEP 5: YOU GOT AN INTERVIEW!

All Canadian programs have an interview component in their admissions process. Here's what you need to know

McMaster

- Virtual MMI interview through Kira Talent platform
- Written and video responses
- Invites sent out mid-April. Interviews held early May
- Previously, 120-140 applicants were invited for interview. **This number may have changed**



COLLABORATION



COMMUNICATION

University of Toronto

- Virtual MMI interview
- Interviews held late April. Invites sent out 2 weeks prior
- Approximately 150 applicants are invited for interview

University of Calgary

- Virtual MMI interview
- Invites sent out early April. Interviews held early May



EMPATHY

Dalhousie University

- Virtual interview
- Invites sent out early March. Interviews held early April



CRITICAL THINKING

University of Saskatchewan

- MMI interview
- Invites sent out in February. Interviews held February-March



CULTURAL AWARENESS

University of Manitoba

- MMI and panel interview with written and verbal components. **Previously in-person**
- Invites sent out in mid-March Interviews held mid-April

MMI: Series of timed stations assessing key skills with different interviewers.
Panel: A single interview with multiple interviewers asking questions and evaluating responses together.

STEP 6: CONGRATS, YOU'RE IN!

Here's what to expect in PA school

YEAR 1 - DIDACTIC LEARNING

Learners develop clinical skills such as patient interviewing, physical examination, and medical procedures, alongside foundational medical knowledge and professional competencies relevant to the PA profession.

UNIQUE FEATURES

McMaster

- Problem-based learning
- Anatomy simulations
- Large group workshops

University of Calgary

- Large group lectures
- Small group case-based learning

Dalhousie University

- Case-based Learning

University of Manitoba and Dalhousie University

- Dedicated courses in foundational sciences ex. pharmacology, physiology, pathology, anatomy, biochemistry, and microbiology.

University of Toronto

- Synchronous and asynchronous online learning

YEAR 2 - CLERKSHIP

Learners will transfer what they learned in first year to clinical practice through clinical placements. Most programs offer 48 weeks of clinical learning. The University of Toronto which provides 44 weeks.

CORE ROTATIONS

Family Medicine, Emergency Medicine, General Surgery, Internal Medicine, Pediatrics, Psychiatry

UNIQUE FEATURES

Geriatrics

- McMaster and Dalhousie University

Rural Placements

- University of Calgary, University of Toronto and University of Saskatchewan

Obstetrics and Gynaecology

- University of Calgary and Dalhousie University

Mental Health and Substance Use

- University of Saskatchewan

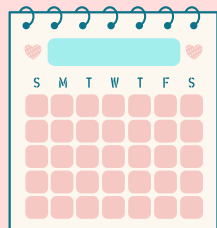
Community Health

- University of Manitoba

STEP 7: CERTIFICATION EXAM



To become a certified Physician Assistant in Canada, you must pass the Canadian Physician Assistant Entry to Practice Exam. This exam assesses the knowledge, skills, and competencies required to provide safe, high-quality patient care.



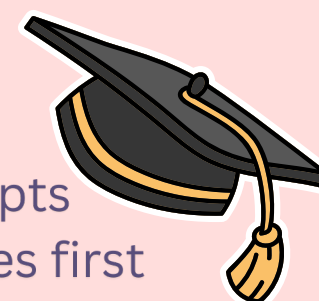
Exam date: October 15, 2025

Registration: Opens June 30, 2025 | Closes September 3, 2025

ELIGIBILITY

Graduate from a Canadian PA program:

- Must attempt the exam within 3 years of graduation
- Eligible to take the exam within 5 years, up to 4 total attempts
- Eligibility ends after 5 years or 4 attempts, whichever comes first



OR

Graduate from an accredited U.S. PA program and certified by the National Commission of Certification for Physician Assistant (NCCPA)

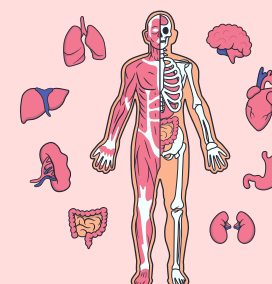
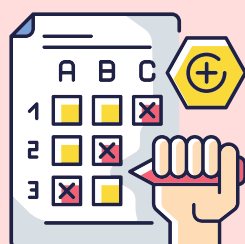
FORMAT

4-hour MCQ exam with up to 4 answer options

250 questions split into two 2-hour sections (125 questions each)

Section 1 is locked after submission

Normal lab values are provided during the exam



CONTENT

The PA Certification Exam tests candidates on all major systems of the human body as well as the Entrustable Professional Activities (EPAs) for physician Assistants.

For a full breakdown of the exam content, please visit the CAPA link at the end of this slide deck

STEP 8: GET HIRED!

The first step to securing your dream Physician Assistant (PA) role is having an up-to-date, well-crafted CV and tailored cover letter. These documents should highlight your clinical strengths, areas of interest (specific specialties or patient populations), and be customized to the specific role and setting.

Ensure both documents are professionally formatted and free of errors. Consider seeking feedback from mentors, peers, and career counsellors to strengthen your application.

1

CAPA Resources

- Job board for CAPA Members
- Network at the CAPA annual conference



Canadian
Association
of Physician
Assistants

Association
canadienne
des adjoints
au médecin

2

Job Hunting Sites

- LinkedIn
- Indeed
- Job Bank Canada
- Hospital and clinic job boards



indeed



Government
of Canada



3

As a Student

- Stay connected with program directors, administrators, and instructors.
- Strategically choose clerkship electives to build professional relationships within your specialty of interest.

4

Networking Opportunities

- Join PA-related social media groups
- Attend community health conferences and programming



Once you have obtained a PA position, don't forget to maintain your PA Certification with Continuing Professional Development (CPD) hours. The Physician Assistant Certification Council of Canada (PACCC) website has more details on maintaining your certification.

RESOURCES

Step 1:

- Canadian Association of Physician Assistants. (2025, May). Information brief: Physician assistants [PDF]. https://capa-acam.ca/_uploads/67db2b0f04379.pdf
- Canadian PA. (n.d.). What is a physician assistant? <https://canadianpa.ca/whatisapa2#whatisapa>

Step 2, 3, 5, and 6:

- Dalhousie University. (n.d.). Department of Physician Assistant Studies. Retrieved June 7, 2025, from <https://medicine.dal.ca/departments/PASudies.html>
- McMaster University. (n.d.). Physician Assistant Education Program. Retrieved June 7, 2025, from <https://physicianassistant.mcmaster.ca/>
- University of Calgary. (n.d.). Physician Assistant Program. Retrieved June 7, 2025, from <https://cumming.ucalgary.ca/physician-assistant/program>
- University of Manitoba. (n.d.). Master of Physician Assistant Studies (M.P.A.S.). Retrieved June 7, 2025, from <https://umanitoba.ca/explore/programs-of-study/master-physician-assistant-studies-mpas>
- University of Saskatchewan. (n.d.). Physician Assistant Studies (M.P.A.S.). Retrieved June 7, 2025, from <https://grad.usask.ca/programs/physician-assistant-studies.php>
- University of Toronto, PA Consortium. (n.d.). Home. Retrieved June 7, 2025, from <https://paconsortium.ca/>

Step 5:

- Canadian PA. (n.d.). Guide to Canadian PA program Admission Requirements. <https://canadianpa.ca/blog/admissions>
- Canadian PA. (n.d.). Manitoba PA Program Overview. <https://canadianpa.ca/blog/manitobampas>
- Canadian PA. (n.d.). Canadian PA Programs. <https://canadianpa.ca/paprograms>

Step 6:

- MPAS Program Requirements and Sample Schedule. (n.d.). Program Schedule. <https://cdn.dal.ca/content/dam/dalhousie/pdf/faculty/medicine/departments/core-units/MasterPhysicianAssistantStudies/Program%20Requirements%20and%20Sample%20Schedules%20Aug%2010.pdf>

Step 7:

- Canadian Association of Physician Assistants. (2022). PACCC PA Cert Exam Blueprint. <https://capa-acam.ca/paccc/pa-cert-exam/blueprint>
- Canadian Association of Physician Assistants. (n.d.). Physician assistant entry to practice certification examination (PA Cert Exam). <https://capa-acam.ca/paccc/pa-cert-exam/eligibility-criteria>
- Canadian PA. (n.d.). Study Tips and Schedule for the Canadian PA Certification Exam. <https://canadianpa.ca/blog/pacertexam/studytips>

Step 8:

- Canadian PA. (n.d.). Where to find PA Jobs in Canada. <https://canadianpa.ca/blog/pajobs>