

5.1 PROGRAM CURRICULUM

The USF PA Program requires the successful completion of a 98-credit hour curriculum (A3.12e). The curriculum is consistent with the mission, goals, and competencies of the program; includes core knowledge about established and evolving biomedical and clinical sciences and the application of this knowledge to patient care; and is of sufficient breadth and depth to prepare the student for the clinical practice of medicine (B1.01a-d). The curriculum design also reflects content and course sequencing that builds upon previously achieved student learning (B1.02). Students in each cohort are expected to enroll full-time, take courses in the same order, and graduate at the same time.

5.1.1 DIDACTIC PHASE OVERVIEW & COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

The didactic phase of the curriculum consists of the first four semesters of enrollment. Classes, labs, and most other program sanctioned activities occur on campus, though a few class-related activities, including interprofessional educational experiences, occur in the greater Fort Wayne area. During the didactic phase, students develop a foundational knowledge of anatomy, physiology, pathophysiology, pharmacology and pharmacotherapeutics, and the genetic and molecular mechanisms of health and disease that permits application in clinical practice (B2.02a-e). Course descriptions are available on course syllabi and are published in the USF Graduate Catalog (<https://catalog.sf.edu/content.php?catoid=4&navoid=92>), as well as repeated here:

- **PAC 512 Human Structure and Function (including PAC 512L):** This course provides a clinically-oriented investigation of the structure and function of the human body via anatomy and physiology lectures, team-based interactive learning sessions, small group cadaveric dissection and peer instruction, and self-directed learning. Students examine the anatomical organization of the human body and explore the basic physiological mechanisms of control in regards to neural, muscle, cardiovascular, gastrointestinal, respiratory, renal, endocrine, and reproductive physiology.
- **PAC 520 Foundations of PA Studies:** The course provides instruction in the systemic evaluation of patient problems through comprehensive history taking and physical examinations. Emphasis is placed upon techniques of interviewing and physical examination that ensure the acquisition of an accurate database that is essential for diagnosis and the preparation of a treatment plan. Students are introduced to the general principles of research design and implementation. Reliability and validity of published studies is considered. Students learn to collect and critique medical journal articles, conduct literature searches, and produce referenced papers. Medical laboratory and diagnostic procedures such as ECG, CBC, CHEM 7, radiographs, CT, MRI are reviewed. Basic ECG patterns are mastered.
- **PAC 530 Pharmacology for PA's:** Students are introduced to the concepts of pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics. Emphasis is given to the classes of commonly used drugs, general principles of clinical use, drug pathways, effects and side effects of drugs, and the mechanism of action in the body.
- **PAC 540 Pharmacology II:** This course deals with the practical aspects of pharmacology as they relate to the primary care Physician Assistant. Representative generic and brand name drugs will be discussed as well as their therapeutic indications. Information about prescription writing as well as indications and contraindications for various therapies will be outlined.
- **PAC 545 Clinical Medicine for PA's:** This course has two principle elements. The first is to introduce the student to the broad concepts of medical care emphasizing health promotion, disease prevention, nutrition, lifestyle, and the psychosocial aspects of disease. The second is to begin surveying the etiology, pathophysiology, diagnosis, and treatment of some common diseases and disorders found in each body system.
- **PAC 552 Mechanisms of Defense and Disease:** This course provides students with a thorough overview of the pathological basis of disease and the human host defense system. Topics include cellular pathogenesis, inflammation and repair, hematologic and immunopathology, infectivity, genetic abnormalities, and cancer.
- **PAC 555 Clinical Problem Solving (including PAC 555L):** This course introduces students to the methods of inductive reasoning used to solve medical problems. Students learn how to assimilate patient data and ask questions that generate additional significant data. Using the skills of patient history taking and physical examination, differential diagnoses are derived and a medical diagnosis is determined. Treatment and follow up plans are established based on the diagnosis.
- **PAC 572 Evidence Based Research:** The focus of this course is to introduce students to the defining principles and models of evidence based practice and to decipher the statistical analyses commonly employed in scholarly works. Emphasis is placed on navigating and assessing scholarly literature with the goal of illuminating the best practices for clinical practice.
- **PAC 560 Medical Diagnostics I (including PAC 560L):** This course addresses the clinical problems encountered by the physician assistant and the professional role of the PA in primary care, as well as surgical and specialty care of adults, children, and geriatric populations. The learning method is a problem-oriented approach, which merges critical thinking with

clinical skills to arrive at a differential diagnosis. Students consider both acute and chronic cases as well as the prevention of disease through detection, education, and preventive treatment. Community and public health concepts include a model of public health care delivery and payment systems, epidemiology, infectious disease control, community health assessment, and community health services.

- **PAC 565 Medical Therapeutics I (including PAC 565L):** This course addresses the clinical problems encountered by the physician assistant and the professional role of the PA in primary care, as well as surgical and specialty care of adults, children, and geriatric populations. The learning method is a problem-oriented approach, which challenges students to seek diverse treatment options for a particular disorder, understand the consequences of each option, and develop an optimal treatment plan. The course allows for extensive study of certain drug therapies as well as physical therapies, psychological therapies, nutritional therapies, and various methods of alternative medicine.
- **PAC 605 Master's Project Research and Design I:** This course will expand on the principles of evidence based medicine introduced in PAC 572 Evidence Based Research. A mixture of lectures and self-directed learning activities will be utilized to help students develop a literature review of a relevant medical topic and begin to design a poster to showcase their work.
- **PAC 580 Medical Diagnostics II (including PAC 580L):** Using a problem-oriented approach this course is a continuation of PAC 560.
- **PAC 585 Medical Therapeutics II (including PAC 585L):** Using a problem-oriented approach this course is a continuation of PAC 565.
- **PAC 590 Medical Ethics:** This course provides a study of medical issues in relationship to various cultures and belief systems. Discussion involves contemporary medical dilemmas, historical perspective, and societal demands placed upon the health care system.
- **PAC 606 Master's Project Research and Design II:** This course serves as the culmination of the Master's Project course progression sequence. Students will finalize their scholarly works and poster presentations and will showcase their projects during a local and/or community symposium.

5.1.2 CLINICAL PHASE OVERVIEW & COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

The clinical phase of the curriculum consists of the final three semesters of enrollment. Each student is required to complete nine clinical courses. These courses include supervised clinical practice experiences (SCPEs) with preceptors who enable students to meet program defined learning outcomes for family medicine, emergency medicine, internal medicine, surgery, pediatrics, behavioral and mental health care, and women's health (including prenatal and gynecologic care) (A3.12d; B3.07a-g). Students will also complete three elective clinical rotations within trauma/surgery, family practice, hospital inpatient care, and internal medicine. Students also complete several didactic courses during the clinical phase. Course descriptions are available on course syllabi and are published in the USF Graduate Catalog (<https://catalog.sf.edu/content.php?catoid=4&navoid=92>), as well as repeated here:

- **PAC 608 Clinical Year Seminar Project:** This course is designed to continue to enhance problem-solving skills through participation, analysis and professional presentation on a problem-oriented patient case. The student will also use clinical reasoning to formulate a diagnosis and develop a treatment plan consistent with current standard of care. This course runs concurrently with the Clinical Experience courses.
- **PAC 609 Clinical Year Seminar I:** This course is designed to continue to enhance problem-solving skills in a clinical setting through viewing and discussing problem-oriented case presentations. It also transitions the PA student into clinical practice with readings and discussions on health policy and professional issues. This course runs concurrently with the Clinical Experience courses.
- **PAC 618 Clinical Year Seminar II:** This course is designed to continue to enhance problem-solving skills in a clinical setting through viewing and discussing problem-oriented case presentations. It also transitions the PA student into clinical practice with readings and discussions on health policy and professional issues. This course runs concurrently with the Clinical Experience courses.
- **PAC 619 Clinical Year Seminar III:** This course is designed to continue to enhance problem-solving skills in a clinical setting through viewing and discussing problem-oriented case presentations. It also transitions the PA student into clinical practice with readings and discussions on health policy and professional issues. This course runs concurrently with the Clinical Experience courses.
- **PAC 621-PAC 629 Clinical Experience I – Clinical Experience IX:** These clinical experiences are medical rotations in which students are assigned to a preceptor who supervises the clinical experience. Students work with the preceptor and primarily engage in direct patient care. All students must complete a core of clinical experiences which includes SCPEs in **family medicine, internal medicine, emergency medicine, surgery, pediatrics, women's health (including prenatal and gynecologic care), and behavioral and mental health care.** Beyond the required core, students complete three elective rotations in the

areas of trauma/ surgery subspecialty, internal medicine, family practice, or hospital care. The equivalence of at least one rotation during the clinical year will be with an underserved population.

5.1.3 PROGRAM ACADEMIC PLAN

All required curricular components are shown in the table. Each student is required to complete supervised clinical practice experiences (SCPEs) with preceptors who enable students to meet program defined learning outcomes for family medicine, emergency medicine, internal medicine, surgery, pediatrics, behavioral and mental health care, and women’s health (including prenatal and gynecologic care) (A3.12d; B3.07a-g). These courses, as well as several electives, are completed in PAC 621 Clinical Experience I – PAC 629 Clinical Experience IX.

**PAC 608 Clinical Year Seminar Project (0.5 cr.) is offered each semester for Fall II, Spring II, and Summer III. However, students only enroll in this course once in the program.*

Summer I	Fall I	Spring I
PAC 512 Human Structure and Function (6 cr.)	PAC 540 Pharmacology II (2 cr.)	PAC 560 Medical Diagnostics (6 cr.)
PAC 512L Human Structure and Function Lab (0 cr.)	PAC 545 Clinical Medicine for PAs (2 cr.)	PAC 560L Medical Diagnostics Lab (0 cr.)
PAC 520 Foundations of PA Studies (5 cr.)	PAC 552 Mechanisms of Defense and Disease (2 cr.)	PAC 565 Medical Therapeutics (6 cr.)
PAC 530 Pharmacology for PAs (2 cr.)	PAC 555 Clinical Problem Solving (6 cr.)	PAC 565L Medical Therapeutics Lab (0 cr.)
	PAC 555L Clinical Problem Solving Lab (0 cr.)	PAC 605 Master’s Project Research and Design I (1 cr.)
	PAC 572 Evidence Based Research (1 cr.)	
13 credit hours (13 credit hours total)	13 credit hours (26 credit hours total)	13 semester credit hours (39 credit hours total)
Summer II	Fall II	Spring II
PAC 580 Medical Diagnostics II (5 cr.)	PAC 608 Clinical Year Seminar Project (0.5 cr.)*	PAC 618 Clinical Year Seminar II (0.5 cr.)
PAC 580L Medical Diagnostics II Lab (0 cr.)	PAC 609 Clinical Year Seminar I (0.5 cr.)	PAC 624 Clinical Experience IV (5 cr.)
PAC 585 Medical Therapeutics II (5 cr.)	PAC 621 Clinical Experience I (5 cr.)	PAC 625 Clinical Experience V (5 cr.)
PAC 585L Medical Therapeutics II (0 cr.)	PAC 622 Clinical Experience II (5 cr.)	PAC 626 Clinical Experience VI (5 cr.)
PAC 590 Medical Ethics (1 cr.)	PAC 623 Clinical Experience III (5 cr.)	
PAC 606 Master’s Project Research and Design II (1 cr.)		
12 credit hours (51 credit hours total)	16 credit hours (67 credit hours total)	15.5 credit hours (82.5 credit hours total)
Summer III		
PAC 619 Clinical Year Seminar III (0.5 cr.)		
PAC 627 Clinical Experience VII (5 cr.)		
PAC 628 Clinical Experience VIII (5 cr.)		
PAC 629 Clinical Experience IX (5 cr.)		
15.5 credit hours (98 credit hours total)		

5.1.4 ACADEMIC CREDIT OFFERED BY THE PROGRAM

The USF PA Program requires the successful completion of a 98-credit hour curriculum (A3.12e). This includes:

- 51 credit hours in the didactic year
 - 13 credits during the first semester
 - 13 credits during the second semester
 - 13 credits during the third semester
 - 12 credits during the fourth semester

- 47 credits hours in the clinical year (semesters five through seven)
 - The number of credit hours per semester in the clinical year depends on when students register for PAC 608, which is offered once each semester but taken only once by each student.