4.2 ADMISSIONS PROCESS & REQUIREMENTS

4.2.1 OVERVIEW OF THE ADMISSIONS PROCESS

All accepted applicant to the PA Program must have all entrance requirements fulfilled at the time of matriculation. Successful applicants to the PA Program must meet both general admission criteria for the University of Saint Francis and program-specific requirements. The PA program makes student admission decisions in accordance with clearly defined and published practices of the institution and program. These are outlined below and available to prospective students on the program's public facing website (https://www.sf.edu/programs/physician-assistant-studies-ms/) (A3.14).

4.2.2 ADMISSIONS TIMELINE

Admission to the PA Program is granted through a competitive selection process. All candidates file using the Centralized Application Service for the PA (CASPA) between the dates of May 1 and December 1 for the class beginning the following August.

An overview of the admissions timeline is as follows:
- Application Submission: Applications may be submitted from May 1 through December 1. Priority review will be given to applications submitted by October 1. Applications submitted after October 1 may not be reviewed.
- Application Review: Review of applications will begin immediately. All applications received between May 1 and October 1 will be reviewed prior to the dissemination of interview invitations. The program will not communicate the results of the review process during this time.
- Interview Invitations: Interview invitations will be extended via email in October to the most competitive applicants. On-campus interviews will occur between October-January. No virtual interviews will be offered.
- Conditional Offers of Acceptance: The program will extend conditional acceptance offers via email to the 25 most competitive applicants by January. Waitlisted candidates will also be notified during this time.
- Remittance of a Non-Refundable Deposit: All candidates who receive a conditional offer of acceptance will be required to remit a $1,000 non-refundable deposit within 2 weeks of receipt of the formal acceptance letter.
- Secondary Applicant Review: Applications received between October 2 and December 1 may be reviewed beginning in January if a secondary round of the admissions process is necessary. Review of applications submitted between October 2 and December 1 is not guaranteed.

4.2.3 APPLICATION REVIEW & MINIMUM ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Review of applications begins immediately following verification by CASPA. Each application is preliminary screened by the Office of Admissions for completion of the minimum admission requirements. All applications received between May 1 and October 1 that meet minimum admission requirements will be forwarded on to the PA Program for deeper review. Applications that do not meet minimum admission requirements will not be reviewed by the PA Program.

Minimum admission requirements for the USF PA program include (A3.13b, d):
- The possession of a baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution in the United States of America prior to matriculation.
- A cumulative overall total GPA and overall science GPA of 3.0/4.0 as calculated by CASPA.
- Completion of the following prerequisite courses with a grade of "C" or better. Grades of "C-" or "pass/fail" will not be accepted. Each course must have a minimum of 3 total credit hours and be above the 100 level:
    – Human anatomy with lab
    – Human physiology with lab
    – Microbiology with lab
    – Organic chemistry with lab OR Biochemistry with or without lab
- Completion of two courses (minimum of 6 total credit hours) within the behavioral sciences discipline with a grade of "C" or better. Grades of "C-" or "pass/fail" grades will not be accepted. Accepted courses include those in the disciplines of psychology, sociology, and anthropology.

- Three letters of recommendation. One recommendation <u>must</u> be from a clinician (i.e., MD, DO, PA, or NP) who has worked alongside the candidate in a clinical setting through observation, shadowing, or prior/current work experience. Letters of recommendation from relatives or family friends are not accepted.
- Direct patient care experience. There is no minimum hour requirement.
- Shadowing experiences, volunteer experiences, and extracurricular experiences are not required but are encouraged.

Candidates are also encouraged to review the following clarifying notes regarding the program's minimum admission requirements:
- The courses and credit hours listed as prerequisites to enrollment <u>do not substitute</u> for more advanced applied content within the professional component of the curriculum (B2.01).
- Prerequisite courses may be completed at any traditional institution (e.g., regionally accredited college or university, four-year institution, community college, or two-year institution). Online or hybrid courses (including labs) are accepted.
- Candidates may have <u>no more than 2 outstanding prerequisite courses</u> (6 credit hours) remaining at the time of submission. All prerequisite courses must be completed <u>no later than three months prior to matriculation</u> with final transcripts sent to the Office of Admissions.
- Two courses of combined human anatomy and physiology with labs (minimum total of 6 credit hours) may be used to satisfy the individual human anatomy and physiology requirements. Comparative anatomy and/or physiology courses are <u>not</u> considered acceptable substitutions for human anatomy or human physiology. Mammalian anatomy and vertebrate anatomy <u>are</u> considered acceptable substitutions for human anatomy.
- Direct patient care experience is defined as hands-on experience with patients in an approved <u>paid</u> clinical position. Though volunteer experience is encouraged, volunteer experiences cannot be used to satisfy the requirement for direct patient care experience.
  - Positions that <u>qualify</u> for direct patient care experience include: medical assistant; patient care technician; surgical technician or technologist; first assistant; scribe; certified nursing assistant or student nursing assistant; occupational therapist or occupational therapy assistant/tech/aide; physical therapist or physical therapy assistant/tech/aide; certified athletic trainer; phlebotomist; respiratory therapist; emergency room technician; lab technician (if phlebotomy and/or direct patient care is the majority of the job description); pharmacist; certified pharmacy technician with hands-on patient care; dietician; emergency medical technician; paramedic; registered nurse or nursing assistant/aide; radiologic technician or technologist; ultrasound technician or technologist; EKG/EEG technician; chiropractor or chiropractor assistant; dental hygienist; military medic or corpsman; ophthalmic or optometric assistant; rehabilitation technician; or social worker (with a clinical focus).
  - Positions that <u>do not qualify</u> for direct patient care experience include: personal care assistant; clerical pharmacy technician; unit clerk; patient transporter; lifeguard; camp counselor; counselor; front office staff or clerical administrator; drug and/or equipment sales representative; or medical researcher.

Applications received by October 1 that meet the minimum admission requirements are sent from the Office of Admissions to the PA Program for deeper review. The PA Program scores each application it receives using a <u>point based CASPA Application Scoring Rubric</u> (see below). Preference points are awarded to candidates who:
- Possess an overall total GPA ≥ 3.60.
- Possess an overall science total GPA ≥ 3.45.
- Have completed (or are in the process of completing) an undergraduate or graduate level medical terminology course with a grade of "C" or better.
- Have completed (or are in the process of completing) an undergraduate or graduate level pathophysiology course with a grade of "C" or better.
- Have completed at least 3 of the 4 science prerequisite courses (i.e., anatomy, physiology, microbiology, organic chemistry/biochemistry) within the last 5 years.
- Submit letters of recommendation that have ≥ 7 ratings of "Excellent" each <u>and</u> indicate that the candidate is "highly recommended" by the letter writer.
- Possess ≥ 1000 hours of direct patient care experience.
- Possess ≥ 200 hours of volunteer service/community enrichment activities.
- Possess ≥ 50 hours of shadowing experience.
- Possess ≥ 1000 hours of extracurricular activities.

A maximum of 31 points may be earned, including preference points. Preferences represent components of the application that are considered highly desirable by the PA Program (A3.13a). Preferences are <u>not required</u> for admission, but they are associated with a

higher point value and therefore increase a candidate's competitiveness. However, there is no minimum threshold value required for an interview invitation. Rather, the most competitive candidates (i.e., those with the highest scores on the point-based scoring rubric) will be invited to interview. Meeting the minimum admission criteria does not automatically result in an interview invitation.

University of Saint Francis | Physician Assistant Studies Program
CASPA Application Scoring Rubric

Degree

Item	In Process	Completed
Bachelor's Degree	0.5 points	1 point

GPA

Item	0.5 points each	1 point each	3 points each	5 points each (preference)
Overall total GPA	3.00 – 3.20	3.21-3.39	3.40 – 3.59	≥ 3.60
Overall science total GPA	3.00 – 3.20	3.21-3.29	3.30 – 3.44	≥ 3.45

Coursework (must all be completed with grade of "C" or higher; grades of "pass/fail" not accepted).

Item	Not Completed	In Process^	Completed
Human anatomy with lab*	0 points	0.5 points	1 point
Human physiology with lab*	0 points	0.5 points	1 point
Two courses of combined human anatomy and physiology with labs (minimum total of 6 credit hours) may be used to satisfy the individual human anatomy and physiology requirements. Comparative anatomy and/or physiology courses are not considered acceptable substitutions for human anatomy or human physiology. Mammalian anatomy and vertebrate anatomy are considered acceptable substitutions for human anatomy.			
Microbiology with lab*	0 points	0.5 points	1 point
Organic chemistry with lab* OR Biochemistry with or without lab*	0 points	0.5 points	1 point
6 credits of behavioral science coursework	0 points	0.5 points	1 point
Medical terminology	0 points	0.5 points (preference)	1 point (preference)
Pathophysiology	0 points	0.5 points (preference)	1 point (preference)

*Must have a minimum of 3 total credit hours and be above the 100 level. ^In process courses refer to courses listed on the CASPA application that do not have a verified grade at the time of submission.

Recency of Coursework [not required]

Item	0 points	2 points (preference)
Amount of time that has passed since the four science prerequisite courses (i.e., anatomy, physiology, microbiology, organic chemistry / biochemistry) were successfully completed with a grade of "C" or better.	< 3 of 4 completed within the last 5 years.	≥ 3 of 4 completed within the last 5 years.

Letters of Recommendation

Item	0.5 points each	1 point each	2 points each (preference)
Letter from a clinician (i.e., MD, DO, PA, or NP)	≥ 7 ratings on individual reference are "Average," "Below Average," or "Poor" and/or recommendation says "Recommend only"	≥ 7 ratings are "Good" and recommendation says "Highly Recommend"	≥ 7 ratings are "Excellent" and recommendation says "Highly Recommend"
2nd Letter			
3rd Letter			

Letters from relatives or family friends are not accepted.

Direct Patient Care Experience

Item	0.5 points	1 point	2 points (preference)
Hours of Direct Patient Care Experience	1-499 hours	500-999 hours	≥ 1000 hours

Volunteer Service/ Community Enrichment Experience [not required]

Item	0 points	1 point (preference)
Hours of Volunteer Experience	< 200 hours	≥ 200 hours

Shadowing Experience [not required]

Item	0 points	1 point (preference)
Hours of Shadowing Experience	< 50 hours	≥ 50 hours

Extracurricular Activities [not required]

Item	0 points	1 point (preference)
Hours of Extracurricular Activities	< 1000 hours	≥ 1000 hours

4.2.4 INTERVIEW INVITATIONS & THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

Candidates with the highest scores on the point-based scoring rubric will be notified via email in October of an invitation to attend an on-ground interview with the PA Program in Fort Wayne, IN. Interviews will be scheduled between October-January in accordance with the program's schedule.

The half-day interview experience begins with a simple check-in process that requires candidates to provide a professional, passport sized headshot and complete the Health Requirements and Technical Standards Disclosure Form required by the College of Health Sciences for enrollment (A3.13e). Next, candidates will receive a formal welcome by program faculty and attend a brief presentation to learn more about the PA Program and the University of Saint Francis. After a short break, candidates will be divided into two groups. One group will participate in a panel interview (two interviewers, one candidate) and complete a critical thinking assessment. The other will receive a student-led campus tour and engage in a Q&A session with current PA students. Following another short break, the groups will rotate, allowing each candidate to complete each activity. The penultimate task requires candidates to complete a brief non-academic assessment before attending a final Q&A session with programmatic faculty and the program director. The wrap-up experience will include an opportunity to ask the program director any remaining questions and afford candidates time to complete an anonymous survey on their interview experience.

Time	Activity	
25 minutes	Check-In	
45 minutes	Welcome and Program Overview	
15 minutes	Break	
	Panel Interview & Critical Thinking Assessment	Student-Led Campus Tour & Q/A
60 minutes	Group 1	Group 2
15 minutes	Break	
60 minutes	Group 2	Group 1
15 minutes	Non-Academic Assessment	
30 minutes	Q/A with Faculty & Wrap-Up	

4.2.5 CANDIDATE SCORING & CONDITIONAL OFFERS OF ACCEPTANCE

Candidates are awarded a cumulative score upon completion of the interview experience. Scorable activities include the candidate's overall total and overall science total GPAs (15% each); scores on the critical thinking assessment and non-academic assessment (5% each); observed professionalism (10%); and impressions from the panel interview (50%). Each scorable activity is logged in an Excel spreadsheet along with keyword comments.

At the completion of all scheduled interview days, candidates are placed in rank order using their cumulative score. The highest scoring 25 applicants will be offered conditional acceptance, with notification occurring via the email address or phone number provided on the CASPA application. A minimum of 50 candidates with the next highest scores will be placed on the PA Program's waitlist and will be notified of their status via the email address or phone number included on the CASPA application. Candidates who are placed on the waitlist are offered conditional acceptance into the program based on availability and may be contacted at any time prior to the start of classes in August. Candidates not offered conditional acceptance nor placed on the waitlist will be notified of their status via the email address provided on the CASPA application.

A secondary round of the admissions process may begin in January if necessary. The review would include a duplication of the process described above for applications received between October 2 and December 1. Review of applications submitted between October 2 and December 1 is not guaranteed.

All candidates offered conditional acceptance are required to remit a non-refundable $1,000.00 deposit to secure their seat in the program within two weeks of receipt of their formal acceptance letter. Following matriculation, the deposit is applied to the student's tuition. Candidates who choose not to pay the deposit within the two-week period and/or do not communicate with the PA Program during this time are considered to have declined the offer of acceptance.

4.2.6 ARTICULATION AGREEMENTS

The USF PA Program currently maintains articulation agreements with six institutions:

- Goshen College
- Huntington University
- Indiana Tech
- Indiana Wesleyan University
- Manchester University
- Ohio Northern University

Under the terms of each agreement, two seats are reserved for students from each institution per admission cycle. All applicants admitted under articulation agreements are required to meet the course and credit hour program prerequisites.

The most recent copy of each agreement is shown on the program's public facing website (https://www.sf.edu/programs/physician-assistant-studies-ms/). New agreements may be established at the discretion of the PA Program in consultation with the Dean of the College of Health Sciences and the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

4.2.7 STATEMENT OF NON-DISCRIMINATION

In its employment practices, selection of students, and administration of all programs, the University of Saint Francis maintains a policy of non-discrimination regarding age, race, national origin, religion, sex, disability, genetics, and veteran status.

4.2.8 NON-ACADEMIC EXCLUSION

Any individual may be denied admission to the USF PA Program and any student may be dismissed or excluded from the program if it is determined by the responsible administrator that the individual or student does not possess the likely capabilities required of a practicing healthcare professional or practitioner in the field of that student's training. This may be based upon the individual's knowledge, conduct, character, or mental or physical fitness.

4.3 COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES PROGRAMS TECHNICAL STANDARDS (COHS POLICY 5.0)

The University of Saint Francis has identified technical standards that must be met by students to successfully progress in and graduate from its health science programs. These standards establish performance standards that will enable students to become competent practitioners who are able to provide safe care for their patients (persons, families and/or communities) with critical judgment, broadly based knowledge, and well-honed technical skills (A3.13e).

Technical standards (see below) outline skills, abilities and behavioral characteristics required to successfully complete health science programs at the university. Key areas include having abilities and skills in the areas of: (1) acquiring fundamental knowledge; (2) developing communication skills; (3) interpreting data; (4) integrating knowledge to establish clinical judgment; and, (5) incorporating professional attitudes and behaviors into practice.

The university provides reasonable accommodations to all students on a nondiscriminatory basis and consistent with legal requirements as outlined in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008. A reasonable accommodation is a modification or adjustment to an instructional activity, equipment, facility, program or service that enables a qualified student with a disability to have an equal opportunity to fulfill the requirements necessary for graduation from the program. To be eligible for accommodations, a student must have a documented disability of (a) a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual; (b) a record of such impairment; or, (c) be regarded as having such a condition.

- **Acquiring Fundamental Knowledge:** Students must be able to learn in classroom and other educational settings via lectures, demonstrations, review of research and patient care situations. Students must have the ability to find sources of knowledge, acquire the knowledge, be a life-long learner and demonstrate adaptive thinking.
- **Developing Communication Skills:** Students must have the ability to effectively communicate verbally, nonverbally, in writing, with groups and using information technology. Students must be able to interact appropriately with patients (persons, families and/or communities), peers, and with all members of the health care team. Students must be able to interpret and convey information gathered from communications. They must be able to speak, read and write in English.
- **Interpreting Data:** Students must have the ability to measure, calculate, reason, analyze and synthesize data in a timely manner. They must successfully fulfill examination requirements of the program, including written and practical

examinations. Students must have the ability to (1) observe patient conditions and responses to health and illness, (2) assess and monitor health needs, (3) translate data into abstract concepts, and (4) understand evidence-based reasoning.

- **Integrating Knowledge to Establish Clinical Judgment:** Students must demonstrate critical thinking, problem-solving and decision making ability needed to care for individuals, families and/or communities across the health continuum. They must demonstrate clinical competency and the ability to participate in clinical experiences. Students must possess sensory capacity and motor function to gather patient data, perform patient assessment and implement therapeutic interventions.
- **Incorporating Professional Attitudes and Behaviors into Practice:** Students must demonstrate cross cultural competency, integrity, moral reasoning, ethical behaviors and concern for others. They must have the ability to acquire interpersonal skills for professional interactions with diverse individuals, families and/or communities. They must be able to work cooperatively with intra and inter professional teams, adapt to changing environments inherent in clinical practice, and function effectively under stress.

The University of Saint Francis is committed to providing equal access to all students, including those students with disabilities. Once students are admitted to a health sciences program, they should contact Academic and Career Development Center at (260) 399-7700 x6075 if they believe that they may require reasonable accommodation to fulfill the Health Science Technical Standards. A copy of this form in its entirety is readily accessible on the College of Health Sciences SharePoint site and will additionally be made available upon request to the director of didactic education.

4.4 ENROLLMENT

To be qualified for enrollment in the USF PA Program, candidates must be able to meet the COHS Technical Standards (A3.13e), with or without reasonable accommodations.

4.4.1 ENROLLMENT PROCESS

Students admitted to the USF PA Program are responsible for following appropriate enrollment procedures and deadlines. The program's administrative assistant and director of didactic education handle student registration and provide oversight for the enrollment process, ensuring compliance with requirements and maintenance of accurate and complete student records and files.

4.4.2 ENROLLMENT REQUIREMENTS

All students admitted to the USF PA Program must complete a series of steps to finish the enrollment process. These steps are detailed on the Enrollment Packet Checklist and Programmatic Expectations document that is emailed to all admitted students in the semester preceding matriculation. As stated on the checklist, students are required to complete the following:

1. Read the *PA Student Handbook* in its entirety and return the Acknowledgement of the PA Student Handbook Form (see section 9.0).
2. Order and submit a background check.
   - The USF PA Program requires individuals who have been accepted to the program to complete a background check prior to programmatic enrollment to meet requirements of clinical training affiliates. Evidence of positive drug screens; DUIs or driving violations/penalties; crimes including battery, assault, theft, or embezzlement; and drug or other substance abuse related crimes may make students ineligible to participate in clinical experiences. The background check includes a required driving history check.
   - All students who have held a driver's license must include their driver's license information in the online background check application. Generally minor traffic violations will not typically prevent clinical participation. However, individuals who have been convicted of misdemeanors within the past 3-5 years and/or felony convictions within 7-10 years are typically excluded from clinical participation and cannot be admitted until the specified time has passed and the individual has been reviewed and approved for clinical participation by university clinical affiliates.
   - Individuals who have been convicted of crimes of abuse, sexual assault, dishonesty (any theft), crimes against a person (e.g., assault, battery, kidnapping, manslaughter, murder), or are a registered sex-offender will <u>never</u> be eligible for clinical participation and will not be admitted to the USF PA Program.
   - If infringements exclude an individual from clinical experiences, the student may not enroll in or continue with the USF PA Program. If infringements are revealed by the background check and were not listed on the COHS Clinical, Field, and Internship Requirements and Technical Standards Disclosure Form, this lack of disclosure may be considered a breach of academic honesty and professionalism and may exclude a student from enrollment.
3. Complete the signed health form required by the COHS and return it in a sealed, separate envelope.
4. Sign and return the Clinical, Field, and Internship Requirements and Technical Standards Disclosure Form.

5. Sign and return the Consent to Release Information Form.
6. Sign and return the Verification of Health Insurance Form.
7. Sign and return the Honor Code statement.
8. Sign and return the Technology Honor Code statement.
9. Sign and return the Informed Consent Form.
10. Sign and return the Confidentiality and Informed Consent for Participation in Educational Activities Form.
11. Sign and return the COHS Student Confidentiality Form.
12. Sign and return the HIPAA Regulations Summary for PA Students document.
13. Review the Financial Aid Information for PA Students document.
14. Review and share the Family and Friends Letter with loved ones.
15. Review the Textbooks and Materials List.
16. Provide a professional photo/headshot.
17. Provide official transcripts from all institutions attended.

4.4.3 ENROLLMENT FEES

Upon acceptance to the USF PA Program, each successful candidate is required to remit a $1,000.00 deposit to secure their place in the incoming class. This fee is non-refundable. However, the fee is applied to the student's tuition and is not in addition to the tuition due.

All expenses incurred as part of the enrollment process are the responsibility of the student. These include but are not limited to:

- Obtaining a physical exam
- Necessary laboratory tests and / or immunizations
- Other health requirements
- Background check