Physician Assistant Studies Hybrid Program Policy and Procedure Manual

University of Pittsburgh | School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences

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Introduction

The following is the Policy and Procedure Manual for the University of Pittsburgh Physician Assistant (PA) Studies Hybrid Program. This manual is to be the primary reference document regarding Program specific policies and procedures for the PA Studies Hybrid Program. These policies and procedures will remain in effect for the duration of your time as a student in this Program. As a member of the University of Pittsburgh Community, you are responsible for all University, SHRS, and PA Studies Hybrid Program policies and procedures. This manual will be reviewed at least annually. Program policies and procedures may be modified or implemented at any time, with advance notice given. These policies apply to all courses offered by the PA Studies Hybrid Program and will not necessarily be restated in each individual class syllabus. You are responsible for reading and understanding the content within this manual and signing an acknowledgement and signature form. If you have any questions or concerns about the content, you are welcome to discuss the matter with the Program Director.

This manual supplements the current University of Pittsburgh PA Studies Hybrid Program Student Handbook, as well as the current School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences (SHRS) Graduate Student Handbook (https://www.shrs.pitt.edu/current-students/student- handbooks) and the University of Pittsburgh Graduate and Professional Studies Catalog for the Pittsburgh Campus (https://catalog.upp.pitt.edu/index.php).

This policy manual is intended to be compliant with the 5th edition of the ARC-PA *Accreditation Standards for Physician Assistant Education*.

1.0   Program Policies (A3.01)

University of Pittsburgh PA Studies Hybrid Program policies must apply to all students, staff, principal faculty, instructional faculty, Medical Director, and the Program Director regardless of location. Program policies and practices must be consistently applied to all student, staff, and faculty groups as stated in each policy and practice. Program policies are uniform throughout the Program regardless of geographic location; however, a signed clinical affiliation agreement or memorandum of understanding may specify that certain Program policies will be superseded by those at the clinical site. If this is the case, all students, staff, and faculty subject to clinical site policies will be informed of this.

Any such conflict will have been reviewed by the University of Pittsburgh Office of University Counsel before the agreement was signed to be sure the policy does not conflict with the University of Pittsburgh's policies or federal/state/municipal law to the point that an affiliation with the institution is not possible. Program policies are consistent with University-wide policies, especially regarding fairness and respect for the rights and responsibilities of students, staff, faculty, and Program leadership. Program policies have been reviewed by the School of Health and Rehabilitation Associate Dean for Graduate Studies to ensure consistency with federal, state, and local statutes, rules, and regulations.

2.0   SCPE Affiliation Agreements (A3.03)

Clinical site affiliations are established by the signing of an approved affiliation agreement between the University of Pittsburgh and the responsible party at the clinical affiliation site. In addition to the signing of the affiliation agreement, the proposed clinical site is vetted by the Director of Clinical Education and clinical year faculty of the University of Pittsburgh PA Studies Hybrid Program. An affiliation agreement must be executed with the proposed affiliate and the required verification of the proposed clinical preceptors and other associated medical provider credentials must be completed prior to utilization of the site for a Supervised Clinical Practice Experience (SCPE), either required or elective.

Prospective and enrolled students must not be required to provide or solicit clinical sites or preceptors. It is the sole responsibility of the Program faculty to evaluate, approve, review, and coordinate all clinical placements, including the associated sites and the instructional faculty assigned to be clinical preceptors.

3.0 Student Employment (A3.04, A3.05, A3.15e)

Acceptance into the University of Pittsburgh PA Studies Hybrid Program requires a full-time commitment. It is an intense and rigorous Program that can be demanding. The Program prohibits students from engaging in any outside employment during specific hours and circumstances, to ensure that academic and clinical training commitments are prioritized. This policy aims to support students' focus and success in completing program requirements by preventing external work obligations from interfering with educational responsibilities. Additionally, this policy applies to immersion experiences and required programmatic events.

Didactic Year Employment Restriction:

  - During the didactic phase of the Program, students are prohibited from working an outside job between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday.

  - This restriction aligns with the Program's scheduled instructional hours, ensuring that students can fully participate in lectures, labs, and other required academic activities without external work conflicts.

Clinical Year Employment Restriction:

  - Throughout the clinical phase, students are prohibited from engaging in outside employment during any time in which they are scheduled to complete Supervised Clinical Practice Experiences (SCPE).

  - The clinical phase requires full immersion in hands-on patient care and professional practice, and students must be able to meet all SCPE requirements without compromise or distraction due to outside employment.

Students found to be in violation of this employment policy may be subject to disciplinary actions, including warnings or, in cases of repeated non-compliance, potential dismissal from the Program. This policy will be communicated to students during program orientation, and all students will sign a Policy & Procedure Manual attestation to confirm their acknowledgement and understanding of this and all program policies and procedures.

Students are not required to work for the Program or permitted to serve as the primary instructor for any component of the curriculum. Students must not substitute for or function as instructional faculty, clinical or administrative staff.

Students are not permitted to substitute as clinical or administrative staff during the supervised clinical practice experiences.

Employment is not an acceptable excuse for class absence, missed or late assignments, or poor performance which could result in a failing grade and/or loss of professionalism points, at the discretion of the course director.

4.0   Student Identification in Clinical Settings (A3.06)

Students at the University of Pittsburgh PA Studies Hybrid Program must be clearly identified in the clinical setting to distinguish them from other health profession students and practitioners. More information can be found here: 15.0 Dress (A3.06)

5.0   Immunization, Health Screening, and Travel Health (A3.07)

PA Studies Hybrid Student Health Appraisal Form is provided to students at the University of Pittsburgh PA Studies Hybrid Program prior to matriculation and must be completed and uploaded into the designated health and immunization record management system of the verification service through the online portal. Student compliance with the Program's immunization policy (see below) will be reported to the Program by the designated health and immunization record management verification. Students will be expected to update their immunization record and demonstrate compliance as required during their tenure in the Program. Students who do not have an approved immunization record on file with the designated health and immunization record management system of the verification service will not be permitted to participate in coursework. Student compliance with the Program's immunization policy will be documented by the Program and becomes a part of the student's permanent record.

In addition to immunization clearance, all students are required to have the PA Studies Hybrid Student Health Appraisal Form completed and signed by a physician or other licensed healthcare provider. The form will also be uploaded into the designated health and immunization record management system of the verification service and compliance with this requirement will be reported to the Program and documented in their permanent record. Further, students are required to maintain copies of their health history form and immunizations as the student may be required to produce these records by request of their assigned clinical placement.

Students must complete the Mandatory Immunization Form and submit to the verification service's designated health and immunization record management system upon matriculation, in addition to the above procedures.

These requirements are also reviewed (and updated, if applicable) annually for consistency with current scientific and clinical recommendations from federal (e.g., ACIP) and local health

authorities as well as recommendations from a leading association of college health experts (e.g., AHCA).

Students must meet additional requirements to support their health and safety as well as comply with clearance requirements set forth by affiliated training sites (e.g., clinics, hospitals, rehabilitation centers, clinical research facilities, etc.) or students will not be permitted to participate in or complete coursework.

The student is responsible for all costs related to immunizations, physical examination, drug screens, and criminal background checks.

The following Immunizations or positive titers are required for all PA students as recommended by the CDC's guideline for [health care professionals](). All students, regardless of age, are required to submit documentation showing:

- **Diphtheria/Tetanus and Pertussis**: Documentation of one dose of diphtheria/tetanus and pertussis within the last ten years.
- **Rubella**: Vaccination with the live rubella virus or a positive rubella antibody titer (copy of laboratory report).
- **Rubeola (Measles)**: Vaccination with live attenuated rubeola or a positive rubeola antibody. NOTE: All students born after December 31, 1956, must show proof of either two doses of vaccine administered on or after their first birthday (at least 30 days apart), or serologic proof of immunity (a copy of the laboratory report), or laboratory confirmation of disease and/or evidence of immunity.
- **Mumps**: Vaccination with live attenuated mumps, only available after 1967, or laboratory confirmation of disease and/or evidence of immunity.
- **Hepatitis B**: All PA students must show documentation of a complete series of three Hepatitis B vaccinations or show serologic proof of immunity to Hepatitis B.
- **Varicella (Chicken Pox)**: Proof of varicella vaccination, a positive titer confirming immunity or evidence of prior infection, or validated history of disease.
- **Tuberculin Skin Test (PPD)**: A student must provide documentation that they have not been exposed to tuberculosis (by purified protein derivative skin test or QuantiFERON blood test). If positive, the student must provide documentation of a chest x-ray.
- **Meningococcal** vaccine(s)
- Yearly **Influenza** vaccination (required on a yearly basis)
  - Exemptions:
    A student may be granted exemptions from immunization for the following reasons:
    - **Medical**
      A medical exemption from immunization is granted based on a written statement from a physician, or his designee, that the immunization may be detrimental to the health of the student.

- **Religion**

    A religious exemption from immunization may be granted based on a student's written objection to the immunization on religious grounds or on the basis of a strong moral or ethical conviction similar to a religious belief.

    However, if an outbreak of Measles, Mumps, Rubella, Chicken Pox, Meningitis or COVID-19 occurs, the State Health Department, Program, and/or SCPE may exclude students from classes/SCPE who do not provide proof of immunity to these diseases.

    CLICK HERE to fill out the Immunization Exemption form. Please note these are the only vaccination exemptions you may file. You may not add additional vaccinations to this form for vaccine exemption approval from the University.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

Exemptions accepted by the University related to vaccination requirements do not transfer or otherwise apply to clinical placements. Each student must also comply with the vaccination requirements for all clinical sites to which such student is assigned, and students are hereby advised that many clinical sites will not accept or approve exemptions to their vaccination requirements for students. Questions about vaccination requirements for clinical placement sites should be directed to the Director of Clinical Education. Students not complying with clinical rotation site requirements regarding vaccinations for health care workers may have their graduations delayed and/or may not be able to complete the program. In addition to delays in graduation, students may face a professionalism review. Student participation in Supervised Clinical Practice Experience (SPCE) is required to complete the Program and the University must satisfy certain requirements imposed by training sites as a condition of student participation. Additionally, prior to being permitted to begin or continue rotations at off-campus training sites, students may be required to:

- Provide a medical history including immunity to infectious diseases by documented history of infectious diseases (e.g., Measles, Mumps, Rubella, Varicella, Influenza, COVID-19, Hepatitis B) or vaccination including titers for certain agents
- Have a negative two-step PPD, or QuantiFERON gold, and/or chest x-ray (if indicated)
- Complete a physical examination
- Complete all required immunizations/vaccinations or positive titers (see below for a complete list)
- Obtain and pass a N95 fit test
- Submit to criminal background checks with disclosure to site of any convictions consistent with their criteria

- Submit to drug screens with disclosure to site of any positive findings for drugs that are taken without medical supervision
- Provide evidence of and always maintain personal medical insurance coverage while at off-campus training sites
- Provide BLS, ACLS, and any other clinical training certifications as required by site
- Be responsible for transportation to SCPEs
- Provide or create an NPI number

Depending on the requirements of the affiliation agreement between the SCPE site and the University, the documentation requested may be coordinated by or at the training site or facilitated by the University using campus-based programs or by an external agency. In all cases, the student is responsible for ensuring the requirements have been satisfied. Students without completed Health Appraisal forms and all other requirements will not be permitted to participate in courses, assignments, or clinical rotations. This delay may disrupt the student's curriculum timeline and force them to sit out of the program's didactic curriculum until the following year or delay the completion of their clinical rotations. Students not complying with clinical rotation vaccination policies may have their graduation delayed and, in some cases, may not be able to complete the curriculum. In addition to delays in graduation, students may face a professionalism review. University approved vaccination exemptions may not be accepted at clinical sites, each clinical site determines their exemptions independently and the process is outside the control of the Program.

Though the Program does not currently offer any elective international curricular components, this policy is established in anticipation of student requests and potential change to this practice. Should this change occur, students who rotate at international clinical sites will need to follow the current CDC requirements for the country where they plan to travel. Students need to either consult the University of Pittsburgh, University Center for International Studies, Global Experiences Office, or a personal provider for evaluation and provide documentation of compliance with CDC recommendations for international travel.

Successfully complete and submit the following requirements by or before their due dates listed on EXXAT. Upon receipt of the student's deposit, specific instructions regarding completion of the student's initial health appraisal form, background checks, clearances, drug screening and additional credentialing requirements will be sent to the student via email from EXXAT (EXXAT is a third-party secure website that manages your documentation and clinical site placements). Please note that some of these requirements are completed annually, so the student should keep this in mind when scheduling the above items. The student should receive an EXXAT email invitation after their deposit has been processed and they will need to pay an activation fee and set up an account. Please remember it may take at least 4-6 weeks to complete these requirements. If the requirements are not completed by the deadlines listed on EXXAT, the student will forfeit their seat.

6.0 Exposure to Infectious and Environmental Hazards (A3.08)

Prevention:

The University of Pittsburgh PA Studies Hybrid Program is committed to providing a safe environment for learning and working. Safety and high-quality work are a shared responsibility among students, staff, and faculty.

- Staff and faculty, including Supervised Clinical Practice Experience preceptors, are responsible to understand the hazards, ensure hazards are mitigated, make sure that graduate students are qualified, competent, and properly trained, and make sure that the students perform work safely and with high quality.
- Students are responsible for following the Program's procedures and trainings put in place to ensure a safe work environment and to communicate expeditiously with the staff or faculty about safety issues and questions.
- All Program personnel must work closely with the University of Pittsburgh Environmental Health and Safety to ensure that activities are pursued in a safe manner, this includes:
  - o Prior to didactic instruction occurring on campus in the Anatomy Lab or Clinical Skills Lab spaces, PA students and faculty undergo training on:
    - Bloodborne pathogens and chemical hygiene/formaldehyde awareness provided by the University of Pittsburgh Department of Environmental Health and Safety
    - Proper lab etiquette, dress, and safe performance of procedures (to include, but not limited to, injections, suturing, and scalpel use) provided by the faculty who teach the courses that use this space.
    - If the above requirements are not completed, students cannot attend/participate in lab spaces or classroom space until satisfactory completion
  - o For all locations where Supervised Clinical Practice Experience (SCPE) instruction occurs, the University has established the following security and personal safety measures for PA students and faculty:
    - Affiliation agreements with placement sites, signed by representatives of the University, specify that the placement site is responsible for documenting and notifying University of appropriate security and personal safety measures for University students and faculty in all locations where instruction occurs, including but not limited to, instruction on occupational health and safety, harassment prevention, conflict resolution, and other Program policies and manuals.
  - o Prior to SCPE instruction at any clinical site, PA students and faculty undergo training specific to the site.
  - o All PA staff and faculty are also provided orientation to campus services and resources, including those related to security and personal safety as well as access to the associated website from the Office of Human Resources.
  - o All PA students, staff, and faculty are to stay updated on environmental health

and safety policies, trainings, reporting mechanisms, and procedures in case of concerns for security and personal safety via the website of the Department of Environmental Health & Safety (Home | Environmental Health and Safety | University of Pittsburgh).

- Further safety training may be required for work at certain SCPE sites or campus learning spaces. The student and the faculty member responsible for this instruction will discuss the necessary training requirements and instructions prior to the commencement of the work by the student.
- If the above requirements are not complete, students cannot attend SCPEs. Failure to do so may result in delayed start to rotation or delayed graduation.

Procedures for Care and Treatment after Exposure:
- If a student sustains an injury or exposure, the student must:
  - Be responsible for initiating care and recommended follow up after injury or exposure to possible infectious pathogens.
  - Report the incident immediately to the instructor/preceptor.
  - Personally complete and submit to the Program Director the University of Pittsburgh Department of Environmental Health and Safety Accident/Incident Report Form (found at this link: https://www.ehs.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/docs/Report-IncidentForm.pdf).
  - Personally complete any required clinical site form, if applicable.
  - If non-emergency medical attention is needed and the student is close to the University's Pittsburgh Campus, the student may utilize the Student Health Services office for the evaluation.
    > Student Health Services Nordenberg Hall-Wellness Center
    > 119 University Place
    > Pittsburgh, PA 15213
    > Phone: 412-383-1800
    > Hours of Operation:
    >> Monday, Wednesday 8:30a - 9:00p EST
    >> Tuesday, Thursday & Friday 8:30a-5:00p EST
  - If emergency medical attention is needed or if the Student Health Services Center is closed, the student should seek emergency care at the nearest emergency department or contact emergency medical services that support their location (e.g., call 911).
  - If the student is at a distant site for didactic or SCPE instruction:
    - If non-emergency care is needed, the student should contact Student Health Services.
    - If emergency medical attention is needed or if the Student Health Services Center is closed, the student should seek emergency care at the nearest emergency department or contact emergency medical services that support their location (e.g., call 911).
  - If the injury or exposure occurs during clinical rotations, the student must also

notify the Physician Assistant Studies Hybrid Program's Director of Clinical Education via Pitt email (as soon as soon as the above steps are completed). The Clinical Coordinator will then report the incident to the Program Director. Per University policy, the incident must be reported to the Program Director by the next business day, if possible.

Financial Responsibility:

- Any expenses occurring from any injury or exposure during any educational activity will be the financial responsibility of the student, to be paid directly by the student or any applicable insurance policy that the student owns, according to plan coverage.
- Students are required to carry personal health insurance.

7.0 Policy on Security and Personal Safety Measures for PA Students and Faculty in all Locations Where Instruction Occur (A1.02g)

- In remote/virtual instructional settings, as outlined in Program Policy and Procedure 6.0 Exposure to Infectious and Environmental Hazards and course syllabi, PA students and faculty encountering security and personal safety concerns are directed to seek emergency care or contact local authorities.
- For on-campus or off-campus instructional settings, PA students and faculty are briefed on safety and emergency exit procedures. Proper signage is in place to guide individuals in the event of security or personal safety threats. Oversight for safety measures in University-owned, leased, and managed spaces is managed by the Office of Facilities Management.
- Before didactic instruction in campus Anatomy Lab or Clinical Skills Lab spaces, PA students and faculty undergo training on bloodborne pathogens and chemical hygiene/formaldehyde awareness provided by the University of Pittsburgh Department of Environmental Health and Safety.
- Faculty teaching courses that require the use of lab spaces will cover proper lab etiquette, dress, and safe procedures, including injections, suturing, and scalpel use. Supervised Clinical Practice Experience (SCPE) locations adhere to security and personal safety measures outlined in affiliation agreements. The University assesses safety through initial and ongoing evaluations, student surveys, and encourages reporting of safety concerns.
- PA faculty receive orientation on campus services, including security and safety resources. All PA students and faculty are advised to stay updated on environmental health and safety policies through the Department of Environmental Health & Safety's website (https://www.ehs.pitt.edu/).
- The University of Pittsburgh Police Department (https://www.police.pitt.edu/) provides 24-hour protection and works collaboratively with other law enforcement agencies. Their jurisdiction covers university-owned lands and buildings. Safety measures are

provided for on-campus didactic instruction and SCPE within their jurisdiction. PA students and faculty are oriented to the Police Department and proper security procedures before entering their jurisdiction.

8.0   Policy on Faculty as Health Care Providers (A3.09)

The University of Pittsburgh PA Studies Hybrid Program faculty, Program Director, and Medical Director must not participate as healthcare providers for students in the Program, except in an emergency.

For any non-emergency care or the answer to personal health questions:
- Schedule an appointment with the University Student Health Service (SHS) at 412- 383-1800
  - Telemedicine services are also available from SHS:
    - https://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/shs/telemedicine-services-offered/
  - ONLINE PORTAL SERVICES, Student Affairs (pitt.edu)
- If more immediate care is required, the SHS offers walk-in hours Monday – Friday from 1 – 3 pm EST
- Nurse Triage is also available for minor illnesses, every Monday – Friday, 9:00am – 12:00noon EST and 1:00pm – 4:00pm EST
- For more information visit https://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/shs/
- Contact your primary care provider
- Seek care at an urgent care center or emergency department

9.0   Student Referrals (A3.10)

Staff and faculty will provide timely access and/or referral of students to services addressing personal issues which may impact their progress in the University of Pittsburgh PA Studies Hybrid Program.

All Program Staff, Instructional Faculty, Principal Faculty, the Medical Director, and the Program Director will receive orientation and regular updates on the proper practices for such referrals, including but not limited to medical and mental health issues, financial aid, disability resources and services, and career development.

10.0 Graduation Requirements

Graduation Requirements for a Graduate degree from SHRS are as follows:
- Student must be considered an "active student" at time of graduation; they must have been registered for at least one credit at the University of Pittsburgh within the last three terms or sessions.

- o If the graduating student is funded under a GSA/GSR/TA/TF – Fall and/or Spring appointment, the student must continue to be enrolled either as full time (9 credits) or FTDI, even if they are graduating.
- Students may not enroll in courses outside the University of Pittsburgh in the semester they are graduating.
- Satisfactory completion of required credits.
- Minimum cumulative GPA 3.000.
- The GPA will be calculated as a composite of all courses taken at the University of Pittsburgh and counting toward completion of the degree.
- Completion of all requirements for the Program in which student has enrolled.
- No outstanding D, F, G or I grade in a required course.
- Updated and approved Plan of Study on file in Student Services, 4050 Forbes Tower.

An application for graduation must be filed in the SHRS Office of Student Services, based on the deadlines determined for that term. Email notification of these deadlines will be sent to students in the prior term and will be posted on https://www.shrs.pitt.edu/student-life/applying-graduate.

A student with outstanding financial obligations to the University is not eligible to receive the diploma, official academic transcripts, or any certification of completion of the academic program.

Each student must complete the program within five calendar years of their first day of class in their first term.

11.0 Academic Remediation and Deceleration (A3.15c)

Didactic Year:
Advancement through the University of Pittsburgh PA Studies Hybrid Program is based on the student's ability to demonstrate proficiency in content, skills, and professional behaviors consistent with achievement of the Program competencies/overall learning outcomes and the learning outcomes and instructional objectives of each course in the Program curriculum. It is the responsibility of the Program faculty to assure the student's competency of the content within each course, and to facilitate student progress through the curriculum. Remediation is a process by which students review areas of weakness as identified through student assessment. The goal of the remediation process is to assist the student in assessing their approach, understanding, knowledge and application on an assignment, exam, course, or procedure. If completed satisfactorily and demonstrates competence, the student may continue in the Program. If the student does not complete the required remediations by the end of the course the student may receive an "I" grade. Additionally, if the academic improvement plan is not completed by the assigned due date in the middle of a semester,

then the program reserves the right to temporarily restrict the student's attendance to regular classes or assessments until the assignment is complete. The student will be subject to individual class loss of participation/professionalism points for missing class. Any absence from an assessment may result in a "0" at the course instructors' discretion.

Successful completion of the remediation assignment will not result in a change of the original grade received for the assessment and any decision to change a course grade is at the discretion of the course instructor.

In addition to the specific course instructor's recognition, each student is also accountable for recognizing when they are not grasping the material. Once the concern by the student or instructor has been identified, a meeting with the lead instructor of the course (or a meeting with their advisor if concern exists in multiple courses) should be requested by the student. At this meeting, strategies will be developed that will enable the student to successfully grasp and retain the content, as well as to assist students in studying effectively. Each remediation plan will consist of an assessment of student learning needs and determining why they feel they are not grasping the material. In addition, if indicated, a student may meet with a counselor to determine if test anxiety or other stressors are interfering with their performance.

The student and faculty will collaboratively develop a remediation plan for implementation. This plan serves to enable the student to focus on their individual learning styles, develop strategies to improve critical thinking, clinical application of course content, and improve test taking skills when indicated.

There are five different levels of academic remediation:
- Low Pass
- Remediation
- Student Success Pathway
- Academic Probation
- Deceleration

Low Pass

An important part of being a PA and a PA student is the constant process and learning and growing. In this manner, even if some students exhibit competence on an assessment, there may still be room for growth and improvement.

A "Low Pass" is a score of 70%-79.9% on a major assessment. A final score in this range means that the student will be **required** to attend an exam review session that will be held outside of normal class hours. This time can include course office hours or another designated programmatic reserved time.

To promote this continued learning, expectations for attendance will be consistent with live synchronous session attendance (see 15.0 Attendance). This includes, but is not limited to, being present with their camera on, in an appropriate learning environment, and interacting with the material being presented by the professor. Failure to attend a required exam review session will be counted as an unexcused absence and may also require the completion of a homework assignment as determined by the course instructor. Students should not expect to use synchronous class time to review a previous exam.

Since the exam reviews are an opportunity to continue to learn, anyone who scores an 80% or above on the assessment is welcome to join, but not required, and participate in the discussion. In addition to students who score in the "Low Pass" range, students who required remediation (scoring below 70%) will also be required to attend the exam review (see Remediation policy below).

Failure to attend the required exam review session and failure to complete the required assigned homework may prevent successful completion of the course.

Remediation

As part of the Program's commitment to the remediation process the following objectives, *as indicated by individual needs*, will be met:

- Establishment of clearly specified goals and objectives for the remediation process.
- Provision of a high degree of structure.
- Use of a variety of approaches and methods in remedial instruction.
- Application of sound cognitive theory in the design and delivery of remediation.
- Provision of a highly coordinated remediation program.
- Use of formative evaluation to guide remediation development and improvement.
- Provision of a counseling component integrated into the structure of remediation
- Provision of tutoring performed by well-trained tutors.
- Assurance of consistency between exit standards for remediation.
- Use of learning communities in remediation.
- Use of supplemental instruction (clinical scenarios, videos, etc.) to support the remediation process.
- Integration of critical thinking into the remediation process.

Assessments that may require remediation will fall under two categories – major assessments and supporting assessments as described by the course instructor. Any assessment worth less than 10 points will not require remediation and does not fall into either category.

Grades on **supporting assessments** of less than 70% **may be recommended** for remediation as determined by the course instructor. The course instructor will contact students either via

a Canvas announcement or via email to instruct students on the next most appropriate step. If a remediation meeting occurs the student will complete and submit any pre-remediation documentation that is required 24 hours prior to the scheduled meeting.

Students who receive a score of 70%-79.9% on a **major assessment** will be required to attend an exam review session that will be scheduled by the instructor (See "Low Pass" above).

A student who receives less than 70% on a **major assessment**, as determined by the course instructor, will be required to have a remediation meeting and also required to attend the exam review session. The course instructor will contact the student and inform the student of the indication and need for remediation. This email communication should take place within 24 hours from when the course instructor has completed grading the assessment and final grades have been posted to Canvas. The student is required to respond to this email communication within 48 hours to schedule a meeting time for the remediation meeting. The student must complete and submit any pre-remediation documentation that is required 24 hours prior to the scheduled meeting.

During the remediation meeting:
- The student and instructor will assess time management, study skills, individual strengths and weaknesses and circumstances that may be interfering with the student's performance.
- The student and instructor will collaboratively develop a plan of remediation that may include but is not limited to:
  ο Repeating the assignment or a similar one developed by the instructor.
  ο Researching and documenting from an approved resource the correct answers to missed exam questions.
  ο Extra reading or writing assignments.
  ο Developing new time management or study skills to be employed.
  ο Another process agreed upon by the student and instructor.
  ο Referral to University, private academic, or professional resources, as necessary.
  ο A signed agreement between faculty and student on the remediation plan and follow up.

Student progress will be monitored with sufficient frequency to ensure that deficiencies in students' knowledge, skills, and professionalism are identified in a timely fashion. Once identified, students with deficiencies will be required to enter the Program's remediation process. Students will meet with course directors and/or the remediation team to identify the nature and underlying causes of the problems. Opportunities for remediation will be identified and the Program will work with students to the student's fullest ability. Remedial actions may include but not be limited to referral for tutoring, time management, study skills enhancement, test taking strategies, and/or personal counseling.

The successful completion of remediation will be determined by the primary instructor with consultation with the remediation team and faculty advisors as indicated according to the specific content assessed. If remediation is successfully completed then no further remediation meetings will be required, but continued support from the instructor or advisor may be continued on a case-by-case basis.

Student Success Pathway

The Student Success Pathway will be required for any student with a course grade in any course <80% at weeks 5 and 9 of the semester. Student grades will be monitored, and students will be contacted by their advisor if this occurs. The student is required to schedule an initial meeting to occur within 1 week of being contacted by their advisor. The meeting will include the student, the advisor, and the student success coach.

Student Success Pathway meetings will consist of the following:
- Review of any previous remediation meetings, interventions, their effectiveness, etc.
- Develop student success strategy with objectively defined goals
- Schedule regular standing meetings to assess progress
- Consider referrals as indicated

The student and their advisor will meet regularly throughout the didactic and clinical years to assess progress and determine if further interventions are required. Regular assessment of goals and their successful completion will be compelted at each meeting. Students may progress out of the Student Success Pathway if all course grades are above 80%, they have met all previously determined goals, and the student and advisor agree that the student may progress out of this pathway.

Academic Probation

Graduate students of the University of Pittsburgh School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences (SHRS) must have a 3.000 cumulative GPA to be eligible to graduate. Graduate students who have completed at least 9 credits and whose cumulative GPA falls below a 3.000 will be placed on academic probation and will receive written notification of this status. At this point it is the student's responsibility to meet with their advisor.

To be removed from academic probation, the student will need to achieve a cumulative GPA of 3.000 within their next two terms of study. Failure to do so may subject the student to recommendation for immediate dismissal from the Program by the Department Chair, in collaboration with the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies.

Students must have a cumulative GPA of 3.000 to progress from the didactic coursework to the clinical education of the Supervised Clinical Practice Experience courses. Students who fail to demonstrate progress toward meeting graduation requirements in a timely manner may be placed on academic probation or recommended for dismissal from the Program by the Department Chair, in collaboration with the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies. SHRS reserves the right to terminate a student at any time for academic or other reasons.

Dismissal from the University of Pittsburgh PA Hybrid Studies Program is at the discretion of the SHRS Dean. Notwithstanding the foregoing, in the event it is not mathematically possible for a student to remediate their cumulative Program GPA within their next two terms of study the student may be immediately dismissed.

A student may appeal their dismissal with the University of Pittsburgh Provost office.

Only course work completed within the PA Studies Hybrid Program curriculum will be calculated in the cumulative GPA.

Deceleration
Students must receive a grade of "C" or better in all courses required by the Program curriculum. Students who receive a grade below a "C" in a required course must repeat that course and attain a grade of "C" or better to graduate. (Note: University regulations state that a student may repeat any course in which a grade of "B-" or lower is received if an authorization to repeat the course is given by the student's advisor/faculty.)

Each course in the Program is offered only once during the academic year. Achieving a grade less than a "C" will require that the student remediate their knowledge in the course material to a level of competence to be determined by the course instructor. The student should be aware that remediation will require deceleration. Deceleration is the process where a student remains matriculated but joins an upcoming cohort when the course is offered again to exhibit competence in the material.

Students will not be permitted to register for a course until they attain a "C" or better in its prerequisites.

Failure to receive an acceptable grade after the second opportunity to complete a required course may result in the student being dismissed from the Program and SHRS.

Each student is allowed one deceleration during their academic journey in the Program. Any extra need for deceleration beyond the permitted instance will result in the student being recommended for dismissal from the Program and SHRS.

12.0 Monitored Withdrawal and Tuition Refunds (A1.02k, A3.15d)

After the add/drop period has ended, students may withdraw from a course that they no longer wish to attend by completing a Monitored Withdrawal Request form in the office of the school offering the course. Students must process the Monitored Withdrawal Request form within the first nine weeks of the term in the fall and spring. Because summer sessions vary in length, students should check the University's Academic Calendar for those deadlines.

Students should check with the school offering the course for the last day to submit a Monitored Withdrawal Request form. The grade W will appear on the student's grade report and transcript. There is no financial adjustment to student's tuition or fee obligations involved in withdrawing from courses, but withdrawing may jeopardize satisfactory academic progress, financial aid, and assistantships or fellowships.

The form must be signed by the instructor of the course and be returned to the Director of Student Services, Registrar, 4054 Forbes Tower within the first nine weeks of the term in the fall and spring. Monitored Withdrawal forms can be found on the SHRS Website at https://www.shrs.pitt.edu/student-life/forms or email the Program Administrator, Debby Farkas farkasdr@pitt.edu for the form.

Resigning from the University for a Specific Term

If students decide to drop all of their courses after the add/drop period has ended and before 60 percent of the term or session has been completed, they must resign from the University for that term. Official resignation from the University requires students to contact the Student Appeals Office. Students have several options. They may resign in person, by mail, or by calling 412-624-7585, where students may leave a message 24 hours a day, including weekends and holidays. An R grade will appear on the student's academic transcript. Tuition is prorated from the date of the student's notification to the Student Appeals Office of the student's desire to resign, unless 60 percent of the term has been completed, in which case there is no refund.

After the 60 percent point of the term or session has passed, students who wish to terminate their registration may process a withdrawal from all classes only with the permission of their academic Dean. If the reason for withdrawal is medical or psychological in nature, the academic Dean may consult with the Director of the Student Health Service prior to making a determination. There is no financial adjustment associated with this procedure, which results in the assignment of W grades for the courses.

Please visit the Student Payment center resignation page on the University of Pittsburgh website for more information.

Leave of Absence

Under special conditions, graduate students may be granted one leave of absence. **A maximum leave of two years may be granted to doctoral students or one year to master's students.** All requests for a Leave of Absence need to be submitted using page 2 of the form course. The length and rationale for the leave of absence must be approved by the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies. If approved, the time of the leave shall not count against the total time allowed for the degree (statute of Limitations) being sought by the student.

Leave of Absence forms can be found on the SHRS Website at https://www.shrs.pitt.edu/student-life/forms or email the Program Administrator, Debby Farkas farkasdr@pitt.edu for the form.

Email your completed form to: SHRS Registrar, Kellie Beach (Kbeach@pitt.edu). She will then seek approval from the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies.

Note: If you are an International Student, you must inform OIS of your request to take a LOA.

Note: If the reason for your leave is medical in nature, a formal note from a doctor must be included with this form.

Upon approval:
- Student Services will email a copy of the approved form to the student and their advisor.
- A hold will be placed on the student's PeopleSoft account to block enrollment until the SHRS Registrar is notified of the student's return.
- If the student is enrolled in the term that the leave of absence is to begin, it is the responsibility of the student and their advisor to notify all instructors of the leave of absence, so that they can assign the proper grade of a "G" for the course(s). A student may also resign from the term by going through the resignation office at Pitt. More information can be found here: http:// payments.pitt.edu/ tuition-adjustments/
- Instructors who will be issuing a "G" grade will need to submit to the SHRS Registrar a Completion Agreement of a "G" Grade Form for each course. This can be found on the SHRS Website under Current Students/Forms.
- Students have one year to complete the work for the "G" grade(s). At the time of completion, the instructor will submit a change of grade in PeopleSoft.

Upon Return:
- A student on leave must contact the SHRS Registrar upon their return so that the hold

can be lifted from their PeopleSoft account.

- If the leave was for medical reasons, the student must provide a doctor's note clearing them for return.
- If you are an International student you need to follow up with OIS regarding your return.

Academic Probation and Dismissal Policy

Graduate students who have completed at least 9 credits and whose cumulative GPA falls below a 3.000 will be placed on academic probation and/or suspension and will receive written notification of this status. At this point it is the student's responsibility to meet with their advisor.

To be removed from academic probation, the student will need to achieve a cumulative GPA of 3.000 within their next two terms of study. Failure to do so may subject the student to recommendation for immediate dismissal from the Program by the Program Director, in collaboration with the Department Chair and Associate Dean of Graduate Studies.

Students who fail to demonstrate progress toward meeting graduation requirements in a timely manner may be placed on academic probation or recommended for dismissal from the Program by the Department Chair, in collaboration with the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies. SHRS reserves the right to terminate a student at any time for academic or other reasons.

Dismissal from the Program is at the discretion of the SHRS Dean. Notwithstanding the foregoing, in the event it is not mathematically possible for a student to remediate their cumulative program GPA within their next two terms of study the student may be immediately dismissed.

A student may appeal their dismissal with the University of Pittsburgh Provost office.

Defer Admission:

Requests to defer admission must be submitted in writing (email) and the appropriate form signed by the program director. To obtain a copy of this form, please email the Program Administrator, Debby Farkas farkasdr@pitt.edu. Before a deferral is processed the student must accept the initial offer and pay the tuition deposit if one is required. Students will send completed forms to admissions@shrs.pitt.edu for processing. Students will receive a new letter of admission for the term they are deferring to with the enrollment deadline you indicate.

Additional Applicable Policies:

- University Policy and Procedure AC 67 on Termination of Registration

- o [AC 67 Termination of Registration Policy](#)
  - o [AC 67 Termination of Registration Procedure](#)
- Title IV Refund Policy
  - o [Title IV Refund Policy](#)

13.0 Mistreatment (A1.02i, A1.202j, A3.15f)

The University of Pittsburgh PA Studies Hybrid Program is confident that safe and effective care of patients is shaped by an environment where quality medical education is rooted in human dignity. We embrace our responsibility to create, support, and facilitate a learning environment for our students so that they witness and experience a culture of respect, collegiality, kindness, and cooperation within our school community. This same positive behavior is expected of all who impact the environment of patient care: health professionals, advanced learners, and staff.

Harassment or mistreatment of any kind is detrimental to such an environment and the Department of PA Studies will not tolerate any incidents of mistreatment or harassment of students by faculty, health professionals, staff, or other trainees. The Department of PA Studies encourages students to report any incidents of mistreatment or harassment, whether directed at themselves or others, using the process below. All concerns will be registered and investigated without fear of retaliation.

Mistreatment and harassment will not be tolerated. Department of PA Studies takes allegations of such behavior seriously and will investigate and respond to reports of mistreatment or harassment. Examples of such behaviors include but are not limited to being:

- Humiliated publicly
- Threatened with harm
- Physically harmed
- Subjected to psychological cruelty
- Required to perform personal services
- Subjected to unwanted sexual advances
- Asked to exchange sexual favors for grades or other rewards
- Sexual harassment
- Denied opportunities based on gender identity/race/ethnicity/sexual
- orientation/age/etc.
- Subjected to offensive comments
- Receiving lower evaluations or grades because of factors other than performance

No person shall be subject to retaliation for participating in the good-faith reporting or investigation of mistreatment.

If a student feels they have experienced mistreatment, they are hereby directed to the following policies and procedures:

- University Policy and Procedure CS 07 on Nondiscrimination, Equal Opportunity, and Affirmative Action
  - CS 07 Nondiscrimination, Equal Opportunity, and Affirmative Action Policy
  - CS 07 Nondiscrimination, Equal Opportunity, and Affirmative Action Procedure

- University Policy and Procedure CS 20 on Sexual Misconduct
  - CS 20 Sexual Misconduct Policy
  - CS 20 Sexual Misconduct Procedure

If support from a member of the Program staff or faculty is needed by the individual who feels they have experienced mistreatment, they should contact a member of the staff or faculty they feel comfortable engaging for support and to navigate the above policies and procedures or additional mechanisms to ensure their safety and security.

If mistreatment occurs during a clinical experience, the student is to contact a member of the Program staff or faculty, especially the Director of Clinical Education or the Program Director, depending on whom they feel comfortable reaching out to for support.

If a faculty member feels they have experienced mistreatment, they are hereby directed to the following policies and procedures:

- University Policy and Procedure AC 22 on Faculty Grievances
  - AC 22 Faculty Grievance Policy
  - AC 22 Faculty Grievance Procedure
- University Policy and Procedure AC 23 on Faculty Grievances (an Alternative Policy for Expedited Procedures)
  - AC 23 Faculty Grievance/Alternative Policy
  - AC 23 Faculty Grievance/Alternative Procedure
- University Policy and Procedure AC 28 on Faculty Reviews and Appeals
  - AC 28 Faculty Reviews and Appeals Policy
  - AC 28 Faculty Reviews and Appeals Procedure
- University Policy and Procedure CS 07 on Nondiscrimination, Equal Opportunity, and Affirmative Action
  - CS 07 Nondiscrimination, Equal Opportunity, and Affirmative Action Policy
  - CS 07 Nondiscrimination, Equal Opportunity, and Affirmative Action Procedure
- University Policy and Procedure CS 20 on Sexual Misconduct
  - CS 20 Sexual Misconduct Policy
  - CS 20 Sexual Misconduct Procedure

14.0 Grievances and Appeals (A3.15g)

Grievances and Complaints regarding Faculty Obligations and Student Rights

The Department of Physician Assistant Studies adheres to the University and SHRS policies and procedures regarding grievances and complaints. Visit https://www.facultyhandbook.pitt.edu/faculty-grievances and https://www.provost.pitt.edu/academic-integrity-guidelines guidelines for the University's Guidelines on Academic Integrity, and Student and Faculty Obligations and Hearing Procedures.

Grievances and Complaints Regarding the Physician Assistant Studies Hybrid Program

The Department of (PA) Studies strives to maintain good working relationships and a supportive learning environment and encourages open and honest dialogue about concerns. Depending on the nature of the concern, students may discuss the matter with their faculty advising team or another appropriate faculty member. The faculty advising team and/or another faculty member's responsibility is to meet in a timely and professional manner with the student to discuss the concern and consider reasonable solutions that would remedy the situation in a manner consistent with Department, School, and University policies. Students who feel they are not able to direct their particular concern to their faculty advising team or to a faculty member may discuss the matter with the Program Director and/or the Department Chair. If such discussion does not prevent or solve a problem, additional actions may be taken, and the concern can be expressed in writing to the SHRS Associate Dean for Graduate Studies or the SHRS Dean.

Students who wish to bring a complaint regarding the Physician Assistant Studies Hybrid Program's compliance with the ARC-PA *Standards* should submit a complaint in writing to the Department Chair. The written complaint must be signed by the student(s). The Department Chair will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 3 business days and will meet with the student or respond to the complaint in writing within 3 weeks of receipt of the complaint. The student will be informed of the Chair's response to the complaint, the steps being taken to address the complaint, or the steps being taken to investigate it. Any investigation will be time limited.

If the student is dissatisfied with the response to the complaint, a written appeal may be made to the SHRS Associate Dean for Graduate Studies or the SHRS Dean; the appeal must be made within 3 weeks of the Chair's response. The Associate Dean's/Dean's response to the complaint will be communicated to the student within 3 weeks of the appeal. The Associate Dean's/Dean's decision is final.

The Chair/Dean will maintain a written record of a complaint, including the nature of the complaint, the steps taken to resolve the complaint, the final decision, and any external actions initiated by the student. This record will be confidential and will be held for 8 years.

For the complete University of Pittsburgh Academic Integrity Policy, visit
http://www.provost.pitt.edu/faculty-resources/academic-integrity-freedom/academic-integrity-guidelines. Visit http://www.shrs.pitt.edu/current-students/student-handbooks for the SHRS
Graduate Student Handbook, and http://www.shrs.pitt.edu/academic-integrity for the SHRS
Guidelines on Academic Integrity.

SHRS Ombudsperson

The Ombudsperson is a person who handles complaints, serves as a mediator, and a
spokesperson for the rights of a particular individual or group. The Ombudsperson in the
School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences (SHRS) will be a neutral contact person (Non-
faculty) for students with whom they can engage in informal discussions to express concerns
about conflicts and other issues that may arise during the course of their education that they
believe are difficult to address with their academic department.

**The Ombudsperson for SHRS is Jessica Maguire, Executive Director of Student Affairs and
Ombudsperson.** To find out more information on her role for SHRS, click on this link for SHRS
Ombudsperson or, if you would like to meet with her, please email her at maguire@pitt.edu
to make an appointment.

University Policies

The University of Pittsburgh has several policies and procedures in place to protect students,
faculty, and staff. These policies include:
- CS 20 Sexual Misconduct (https://www.policy.pitt.edu/cs-20-sexual-misconduct-formerly-06-05-01)
- Nondiscrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy (https://www.diversity.pitt.edu/notice-nondiscrimination-and-anti-harassment-policy-statement#:~:text=The%20University%20of%20Pittsburgh%2C%20as,identity%20and%20expression%20in%20its)
- CS 07 Nondiscrimination, Equal Opportunity, and Affirmative Action Policy (https://www.policy.pitt.edu/cs-07-nondiscrimination-equal-opportunity-and-affirmative- action-formerly-07-01-03)
- CS 02 Consensual Relationships (https://www.policy.pitt.edu/cs-02-consensual-relationships-formerly-07-14-01)
- Notice of Nondiscrimination (https://www.facultyhandbook.pitt.edu/notice-nondiscrimination)

If you believe you have experienced or witnessed a violation of these policies, please contact
the Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

15.0 Attendance

The PA Studies Hybrid Program is committed to fostering a rigorous and professional learning environment, where attendance is a vital component of academic and clinical success. Attendance in all synchronous sessions, whether virtual or in-person, is mandatory and an essential part of each student's responsibility in meeting the Program's academic and clinical standards.

Students are required to attend all scheduled synchronous sessions held typically between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday. Students must be prepared, punctual, and fully engaged for each session, as attendance reflects commitment, professionalism, and readiness to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills. For all virtual sessions, students are required to have their cameras on to promote active engagement and contribute to peer and faculty interactions. This engagement includes listening actively, offering commentary, and maintaining a professional and distraction-free environment conducive to learning. Students may attend classes from locations suited for learning, but actively participating in class while driving or in other unsafe or distraction filled environments is strictly prohibited. Students found driving during a session may be asked to leave or removed from the session. Students removed from class for any reason, including driving during class, will be counted as an unexcused absence.

Failure to meet attendance, punctuality, or engagement standards will result in a deduction of participation or professionalism points from the course grade, and repeated infractions may result in further remediation actions focused on professionalism. All required materials, including lab instruments, texts, and attire, must be brought to each session as designated. Students who are unprepared may be excluded from participation, and make-up opportunities for missed competencies due to unpreparedness are not guaranteed.

Students must submit the Absence Request Form (ARF) per the Excused Absence policy outlined below to the course instructor(s) of the courses in which an excused absence will take place per the given timeline for the absence to be considered excused. Note that advanced notice does not ensure the ability to make up participation points, which remains at the discretion of the primary course instructor. In the case of any absence (excused or unexcused), students must obtain class notes from a peer and use faculty office hours to address specific questions. Instructors will not offer individual sessions to cover missed material, and assignments or activities graded during missed sessions may not be made up.

Excused Absences:

Acceptable reasons for excused absences and the timeline to submit the Absence Request Form are in the table below:

Reason for Absence	Absence Request Form (ARF) Timeline
Urgent or Emergent medical visit for student or for individual for whom the student is the responsible party (Please note that every effort should be made to schedule medical visits outside of previously scheduled programmatic requirements)	Communicate with course coordinator as soon as possible prior to the start of class. ARF to be submitted within 48 hours. Immediate communication will facilitate the arrangement of appropriate academic support.
Catastrophic event or natural disaster	
Bereavement due to death of family member or close friend	
Religious Observances	ARF to be submitted in the first week of the semester.
Participation in non-programmatic educational activities/conference	ARF to be submitted in the first week of the semester or as soon as the student is aware of the event.

Employment is not considered a valid excuse for absences, tardiness, missed assignments, or poor performance. Students are responsible for managing their external commitments to align with the Program's academic and clinical requirements.

Recording sessions or classes is strictly prohibited unless explicitly permitted by faculty. Course recordings may be provided only for specific sessions, such as syllabus reviews or Human Anatomy classes during the spring semester, accessible via the Canvas platform for educational purposes only.

The program defines an absence as any of the following: logging on to class more than five (5) minutes after the class period is scheduled to start, missing an entire class session, missing an entire day of class sessions, or failure to attend any required programmatic activity. Consistent adherence to attendance policies is mandatory, and non-compliance may lead to loss of professionalism points. Additional consequences for absences are as follows: three (3) unexcused absences in one academic term will trigger formal professionalism remediation with the student's advisor; five (5) unexcused absences in one academic term may lead to dismissal from the Program.

Additionally, three (3) excused absences in one academic term will trigger the student entering the Student Success Pathway to ensure each student receives the programmatic

support they require. Students are responsible for contacting instructors regarding any course work impacted by tardiness or absence.

16.0 Dress (A3.06)

The PA Studies Hybrid Program places a high value on maintaining a professional appearance that reflects general hygiene and a strong professional identity. Therefore, any time you are representing the department and/or university, you will be held to these standards. This policy was developed in careful consideration of the Program's professional mission, professional impression, cultural sensitivity, infection control, and safety. Professional appearance helps to build trust and confidence in both patients and fellow health care providers.

Students are expected to always present a positive image when present within or when representing the University of Pittsburgh's School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences. This includes synchronous sessions, immersion weeks, clinical experiences, and any other activities.

The dress code will be interpreted and enforced by the Program faculty. Any student in violation of the dress code may be excluded from the activity, may be subject to a reduction in the professionalism component of a course grade, and may be subject to further action if recurrent violations occur.

General Standards
- Personal hygiene, hair, facial hair, fingernails, and jewelry should be in line with patient safety and the ability to safely perform job duties
- Clothing should be clean, neat, and appropriately fitting
- Clothing should be avoided anything which provokes, alarms, offends, or disparages those whom students are serving or others with whom they interact

Standards of Professional Appearance

Synchronous Sessions
- Attire for synchronous sessions will require that you follow all 16.0 General Standards unless otherwise specified by your instructor. In general, casual clothing may be worn if it is appropriate for the learning environment.

Immersion Experiences
- Encompasses clothing that is comfortable at work, yet appropriate for a business environment. Acceptable attire includes hijabs, yarmulkes, sarees, skirts, dresses, capris, slacks, khakis, blouses, turtlenecks, sweaters, golf-shirts, shirts with a finished

collar or neckline, or any other business casual attire that is also consistent with an individual's cultural or religious beliefs. Individual labs/courses may have specific dress code requests based on activities. Please refer to individual syllabi for complete guidelines. Our Program's mission to promote an inclusive learning environment includes our recognition that the above list does not detail each possible type of business casual attire that is consistent with an individual's cultural or religious beliefs. If you have specific questions or requests, please discuss them with the faculty.

Lab Coats
- Unless instructed otherwise by preceptor or faculty, lab coats must be worn during:
  - Real or simulated patient encounters
  - Competency assessments/examinations
  - At other times if instructed by faculty
- Lab coats must be clean, ironed, and fit properly
- The sleeves of lab coats should not be rolled up
- Lab coats must be short jackets (long jackets are traditionally worn by attending physicians, resident physicians, certified physician assistants, and other certified advance practice providers)

Scrubs
- Unless instructed otherwise by faculty, scrubs must be worn during anatomy lab experiences
  - Both scrub tops and bottoms must be worn
  - Closed-toe shoes should also be worn

Identification

- All students must wear photo ID badges, identifying them as physician assistant students, and lab coats during real or simulated patient encounters. ID badges may also be required for some guest lecture sessions.
- All students must wear photo ID badges, identifying them as a physician assistant student, in all clinical settings.
- If an individual clinical site requires its own ID, the student must wear both.

Other Considerations

Each clinical site may have additional dress code guidelines.

If a student has a personal objection to this dress policy, they should present it to the Program Director for consideration. The Program recognizes clinical site dress codes may be less inclusive than Program guidelines and any issues should be discussed with the Director of Clinical Education.

17.0 Professional Behavior and Development

Students' professional behavior is continuously monitored throughout the Program. Professional Development includes adherence to this policy and all others.

PA students may not take the responsibility or the place of qualified staff or faculty. PA students must not have access to records or other confidential information of other PA students.

To respect the learning environment of classmates and faculty, use of electronic communication devices is limited to emergencies. Cellular phones must be turned to silent during synchronous sessions and immersion week activities. Use of personal devices for non-instructional reasons during synchronous sessions is inappropriate and should not occur.

Students enrolled in the Program must be committed to working collegially with other members of the class, faculty, staff, department, school, and university. Students must maintain respect for their fellow classmates, faculty, and staff. The physician assistant student must not participate in or conceal any activity that will bring discredit or dishonor to fellow classmates, faculty, staff, administration, or the University of Pittsburgh. They should report illegal or unethical conduct by a fellow classmate(s) to the appropriate University authorities. If a student is found to be responsible for such egregious acts, they may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including Program dismissal.

All Program related injuries, i.e., needle sticks, cuts, falls, etc. must be reported within 24 hours, in writing, on the incident report form provided by the Program. Please contact the Program Director and Program Administrator if this incident occurs during didactic year or during an immersion experience. Please contact the Director of Clinical Education if this incident occurs in the clinical year.

Professional Development in the PAS Hybrid Program occurs in several ways:

- Faculty are here to help students succeed. Personal feedback and support are key elements in helping students to recognize areas of strength and weaknesses. Technical skills must be integrated with interpersonal professional behavior for students to succeed as physician assistants.
- Students need to demonstrate competency in technical skills as observed and evaluated throughout the didactic year. These skills are evaluated by means of examinations and competencies. Students also need to demonstrate social and behavioral skills. Any concerns related to your professionalism will result in meeting with your advising team to discuss.
- Clinical year students will receive feedback via their Preceptor Evaluation of Student

forms which include professionalism assessments.

- If problem areas are identified and remain unresolved, the student must meet with the Program Director to discuss specific steps for improvement. Such steps may include referral to appropriate resources, developing a contract regarding behavioral modification, on-going advisory meetings, and other means of assisting the student to improve problem areas. Faculty advisors will meet one on one with student advisees to provide feedback.

18.0 Advising

Each student is assigned a faculty member as their academic advisor upon matriculation. Students are required to meet with their advisor during the first and last terms of the program. Additionally, students must respond to mandatory email check-ins from their advisor, which will occur each additional term throughout the program and may result in an additional meeting during terms if deemed necessary.

These advising sessions are designed to foster a productive advisor-advisee relationship, support the student's academic journey, and offer guidance on navigating the program, including time management and study strategies. Each meeting also provides an opportunity for students to share feedback on their experiences within the program.

Prior to each scheduled meeting, students are required to complete a self-assessment form. This form encourages personal quality improvement and serves as a basis for discussion, helping both the advisor and student to identify areas of focus and support.

Advisors may also initiate meetings with individuals or groups of advisees as needed. Faculty will communicate with each other regularly and during Student Advising and Assessment Committee meetings regarding student performance and progress. Students will receive regular feedback from these collaborative discussions through their academic advisor, if deemed necessary.

Students are encouraged to set up additional individual appointments with their advisor as needed, especially when they feel they are having academic or professional challenges. As noted in Section 11.0 "Academic Remediation and Deceleration" the student may be contacted by their advisor if they meet requirements for Student Check-in or the Student Success Pathway.

All program related questions/concerns should first be directed to their advisor or course instructor.

19.0 Assessments

General Procedures

- You must be fully clothed throughout your entire exam
- You cannot stand or move around for the duration of the testing unless previously discussed with the instructor
- No one can enter your testing environment
- You cannot leave your testing environment without permission from your course instructor
- All exams should be taken as an individual activity
- If an exam is to be taken in a communal space, prior discussion with the instructor regarding exam integrity must be communicated
- All textbooks, class notes, study guides, and any other reference material must be closed and out of view
- Beverages are allowed, but no food or smoking
- You cannot move your webcam once your testing session has started
- Mumbling or speaking aloud will lead to a warning and subsequent event may lead to exam dismissal
- Baseball caps, hats, or hoods of any type are not permitted to be worn during exams
- Cell phones, smart watches, and other electronic communication devices, except for a device for exam proctoring, must remain outside of the testing environment for the duration of the examination
- If a student has an extenuating circumstance that would necessitate access to their cell phone, they must notify the instructor prior to the beginning of the exam and arrangements will be made
- Use of phones, calculators, tape recorders, or other electronic devices other than the device being used for testing and for video are not permitted during exams unless otherwise indicated by the course instructor or proctor

Student questions during the exam must be limited to those of a technical nature regarding the examination itself, such as errors in spelling or numbering, missing pages, etc. Students are not permitted to ask questions regarding the meaning or intent of any questions on the examination.

The time limit for the exam will be announced prior to the beginning of the examination session. It is the responsibility of the student to keep track of the remaining time. Proctors will not update students on the time remaining.

All test answers must be legible and easily interpretable or will otherwise be marked incorrect. Points may be deducted for illegible writing and/or misspellings at the instructor's discretion.
Late arrivals

- Students must arrive at all virtual and in person examinations on time and prepared with the necessary materials/technology needed to complete the examination as designated by the instructor. Failure to do so may result in a percentage deduction or a zero (0%) on the examination at the course instructor's discretion.
- Make-up examinations/competencies due to lack of preparation may not be offered.
- Exams will begin promptly at the scheduled time. Students are expected to arrive earlier than when the examination is set to begin. A late arrival is defined as being one minute or more tardy from the beginning of an examination. An example of this is if an examination/competency is scheduled to begin at 10:00 ET and a student presents in person or virtually at 10:01 ET.
- Students arriving late for an exam will **not** be given additional time to complete the exam.
- Students who anticipate a late arrival for an exam must notify the course instructor as soon as possible.
- It is the course instructor's right to reschedule a student who is late to an examination, is absent from an examination, or if a student does not communicate with the instructor in a timely manner, regarding a late arrival, before the start of the examination.

Exam review and grade posting

- Completed exams may not be made widely available for student viewing.
- Students may individually discuss exam performance, by appointment, with the course instructor. This must be scheduled within two weeks of the exam.
- Students are not permitted to copy, photocopy, or duplicate exam questions or answers in any way. Grades may only be released by Program faculty.
- Grades will be posted by course instructors after analysis and review of class performance.
- Students are not to ask instructors about the release of grades or their individual grades. Instructors post grades as soon as possible after each assessment.

Missed exams

- Notification of absence for an exam must be given to the instructor 5 business days *before* the scheduled exam.
- If there is an emergency the day of the exam, the student must notify the instructor prior to the start of the exam
- Absence from an exam does not automatically grant the student the right to take it later.
- The make-up exam may be in a different format than the original exam at the discretion of the instructor.
- Students should contact the course instructor as soon as possible (within 24 hours) after their return to classes to schedule a make-up exam.

- Missed exams will be made up based on the availability of the course instructor and/or Program staff.

Physician Assistant Clinical Knowledge Rating and Assessment Tool (PACKRAT):

Students are required to take the PACKRAT during each phase of the curriculum. This test allows students to compare their medical knowledge to a national peer group. Students may also use the results of this examination to identify any deficiencies in task performance or system specialty.

20.0 Grading

The letter grade system for graduate courses in the Physician Assistant Studies Hybrid Program is as follows:

Grade	Percent	Quality Points	
A+	97 to 100	4.00	
A	94 to 96.9	4.00	Superior attainment
A-	90 to 93.9	3.75	
B+	87 to 89.9	3.25	
B	84 to 86.9	3.00	Adequate graduate-level attainment
B-	80 to 83.9	2.75	
C+	77 to 79.9	2.25	
C	74 to 76.9	2.00	Minimal graduate-level attainment
C-	70 to 73.9	1.75	
D+	67 to 69.9	1.25	
D	64 to 66.9	1.00	
D-	60 to 63.9	0.75	
F	Less than 60	0.00	

Grading for the Clinical Year is as follows:
- H: Honors (Pass)
- S: Satisfactory (Pass)
- U: Unsatisfactory (Non-pass)

Other Grades:

Upon completion of a course, one of the grades listed below may appear on the student's transcript. None of these carry quality points.

- **G Grade Policy**

- o Students assigned G grades due to unfinished course work because of extenuating personal circumstances are required to complete course requirements no later than one year after the term in which the course was taken. Once the deadline has passed, the G grade will be changed to a "NG" no-grade on the transcript and the student will be required to re-register for the course if it is needed to fulfill requirements for graduation. Students will not be permitted to register for courses in which a G grade was assigned to a prerequisite course unless prior approval has been obtained by the Department/Program Chair.
  - o If you still have outstanding course work, you will receive a G which will allow you up to one year to complete those outstanding materials. You may continue into summer and/or fall semester in didactic year with G grades. Please note that you must have a 3.0 cumulative GPA in all courses to proceed onto your first clinical rotation (course). Additionally, you cannot have any outstanding G grades or grades of a C- or lower in order to move onto clinical year instruction.
- **SHRS G Grade Policy**
  - o A SHRS Completion Agreement of G Grade Credits form must be completed by the student, instructor, and advisor and submitted to Student Services (form and instructions can be found on the SHRS website at https://www.shrs.pitt.edu/student-life/forms or email the Program Administrator, Debby Farkas farkasdr@pitt.edu for the form.
  - o When a G grade is assigned for a medical reason the form must be accompanied by a physician's note when it is turned into student services.
    - ▪ It is the responsibility of the instructor to clearly state the objectives for completion of course requirements as well as the expected due date to the student.
    - ▪ This agreement must be submitted before the next semester add/drop deadline.
    - ▪ Failure to submit this form before the next semester add/drop deadline will be at the discretion of the instructor to change the grade to a failing grade.
  - o Student Services will be following up on any G grades that are not changed within the expected timeframe at the end of every term.
  - o Note: G grades will be converted automatically to an NG Grade after the 1-year deadline.
  - o See: AC 32 - G Grade Deadline Policy.
- **I Grade Policy**
  - o The I grade indicates work in the course for which it is assigned has ***not been completed due to the nature of the course, clinical work, or incomplete research work in individual guidance courses or seminars.*** It is to be assigned only to students who have been doing the regular work of the course but who need more time than the term allows to complete the course work.

- If you still have outstanding course work, you will receive a I which will allow you up to one semester to complete those outstanding materials. You may continue into summer and/or fall semester in didactic year with I grades. Please note that you must have a 3.0 cumulative GPA in all courses to proceed onto your first clinical rotation (course). Additionally, you cannot have any outstanding I grades or grades of a C- or lower in order to move onto clinical year instruction.
- **SHRS (Incomplete) I Grade Policy**
  - All incomplete grades are expected to be completed by *no later than the <u>end of the next consecutive semester</u>.*
  - A SHRS Completion Agreement of Incomplete Credits form must be completed by the student, instructor, and advisor and submitted to Student Services (Forms can be found on the SHRS Website at https://www.shrs.pitt.edu/student-life/forms or email the Program Administrator, Debby Farkas farkasdr@pitt.edu for the form.
    - It is the responsibility of the instructor to clearly state the objectives for completion of course requirements as well as the expected due date to the student.
    - If the incomplete grade is assigned in the spring, it is expected that outstanding course requirements will be completed by the end of the summer term in August.
    - This agreement must be submitted before the next semester add/drop deadline.
    - Failure to submit this form before the next semester add/drop deadline will be at the discretion of the instructor to change the grade to a failing grade.
  - Student Services will be following up on any I grades that are not changed within the expected timeframe at the end of every term.
- **W grade:** Signifies that the student withdrew from the course
- **R grade:** Signifies that a student has resigned from the University

SHRS Grade Appeal Process

If a student feels a grade had been assigned incorrectly or improperly, the following appeal process should be followed:
- Every effort should be made first with the course instructor to come to a mutually agreed upon resolution.
- If the student and course instructor are unable to resolve the grade in question, the student should contact the director of their academic program. The program director may consult with the course instructor as well as their department chair or vice-chair, as appropriate, to arrive at a decision regarding the grade.
- If the program director and chair are unable to arrive at a resolution, the matter should then be referred to the applicable Associate Dean for Undergraduate or Graduate Studies. The Associate Dean will have the final say regarding the resolution of the grade disagreement.

- If the student continues to disagree with this resolution they may contact the SHRS Ombudsperson.

21.0 Academic Integrity

Students have the responsibility to be honest and to conduct themselves in an ethical manner while pursuing academic studies. Students have the right to be treated by faculty in a fair and conscientious manner in accordance with the ethical standards generally recognized within the academic community (as well as those recognized within the profession). Should a student be accused of a breach of academic integrity or have questions regarding faculty responsibilities, procedural safeguards including provisions of due process have been designed to protect student rights. These may be found in the [SHRS Guidelines on Academic Integrity: Student and Faculty Obligations and Hearing Procedures](#).

Student Obligations

Students have an obligation to exhibit honesty, and to respect the ethical standards of the profession in carrying out their academic assignments. Without limiting the application of this principle, a student may be found to have violated this obligation if they:
- Possesses materials or employs devices not authorized by the instructor during an academic evaluation.
- Provides assistance during an academic evaluation to another person in a manner not authorized by the instructor.
- Receives assistance during an academic evaluation from another person in a manner not authorized by the instructor.
- Possesses, buys, sells, obtains, or uses a copy of any materials intended to be used as an instrument of academic evaluation in advance of its administration.
- Acts as a substitute for another person in any academic evaluation process.
- Utilizes a substitute in any academic evaluation procedures.
- Practices any form of deceit in an academic evaluation proceeding.
- Attempts to override constraints imposed by examination software.
- Depends on the aid of others in a manner expressly prohibited by the instructor, in the research, preparation, creation, writing, performing, or publication of work to be submitted for academic credit or evaluation.
- Provides aid to another person, knowing such aid is expressly prohibited by the instructor, in the research, preparation, creation, writing, performing or publication of work to be submitted for academic credit or evaluation.
- Presents as one's own, for academic evaluation, the ideas, representations or words of another person or persons without customary and proper acknowledgment of sources.
- Submits the work of another person in a manner that represents the work to be one's own.

- Knowingly permits one's work to be submitted by another person without the instructor's authorization.
- Attempts to influence or change one's academic evaluation or record for reasons other than achievement or merit.
- Indulges, during a class or examination session, in conduct that is so disruptive as to infringe upon the rights of the instructor or fellow students.
- Fails to cooperate, if called upon, in the investigation or disposition of any allegation of dishonesty pertaining to a fellow student.
- Mutilates library materials or takes or sequesters library materials for their own benefit or to the detriment of others.
- Continues writing after the final warning indicator signaling the conclusion of an examination. Upon the issuance of the one-minute warning, a student shall make sure the front of the exam booklet is properly filled out. When the final announcement is given, students shall stop writing. The only time a student may make any further markings is with the express consent of the person supervising that examination.
- Falsifies or misrepresents academic records on an employment application made through the Department; or
- Falsifies or misrepresents information or participates in the falsification or misrepresentation of information in any admissions application form or other SHRS disclosure form prior to or following their matriculation.
- Whether prior to or following matriculation, fails to disclose information required by any admissions application form or other SHRS disclosure form, or fails to update or correct information contained in such forms, as and when required either by such forms or by other communications from the SHRS administration.
- Signs another student's name to an attendance sheet.
- Copying, reproducing, or distributing of any examination questions, assessment instructions or rubrics.

Definitions to note:

Academic Integrity
Academic Integrity means adhering to ethical standards when submitting assignments or taking quizzes and exams. Whether taking classes in person or remotely, it is very important submit only your own original work.

Plagiarism
In basic terms, plagiarism is taking the words or ideas of others and presenting them as your own. Sometimes this is done unintentionally by not citing information properly. In other instances, students will purposefully copy from others to complete an assignment quickly.

Paraphrasing

When you have to explain something that you just read, you need to paraphrase, or put the content in your own words.

SHRS Guidelines on Academic Integrity

This link contains additional information on SHRS guidelines on academic integrity including for student obligations and procedures for adjudication:
https://www.shrs.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/library/documents/students/2019/SHRS%20Guidelines%20on%20Academic%20Integrity_rev_2019.pdf

22.0 Documents and Deadlines (A3.07)

The Program uses EXXAT to monitor requirements. This must be purchased by the student prior to matriculation into the PA Studies Hybrid Program.

Renewals of all requirements must be completed on time to remain current with no lapse of coverage. Detailed guidelines for each requirement can be found on the EXXAT Required Document dashboard. The required documents are subject to change and based on the current Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations as well as input from our clinical partners. Students will be notified of any changes.

Students may also be required to provide site-specific documentation while in the clinical phase of the Program (e.g., confidentiality agreements, security forms, interviews, etc.)

It is the sole responsibility for each student to remain current with all requirements with no lapse of coverage (even one day) throughout the length of the Program. **Any lapse in coverage will result in the student no longer being permitted to participate in coursework until they are back in compliance.**

Requirements:

Pre-Matriculation
PAS Hybrid Health Appraisal Form
Required Vaccinations: • Hepatitis B • MMR • Varicella • Tdap • TB – 1 step • Flu Shot
FBI Fingerprinting Clearance

	Universal-Drug Screen
	Pennsylvania Child Protection Clearances
	Universal-Background Check

During Didactic Year – Prior to Start of Clinical Year	
	Clinical Year Orientation • HIPAA Training • Blood Borne Pathogen Training • Mandated Reporter Training • Crisis Training • *Sexual Misconduct and Title IX Training*
	American Heart Association CPR/BLS Certification
	*American Heart Association ACLS Certification
	FBI Fingerprinting Clearance
	Universal-Drug Screen
	Pennsylvania Child Protection Clearances
	Universal-Background Check
	Required Vaccinations: • Hepatitis B • MMR • Varicella • Tdap • 2 Step TB • Flu Shot*
Exemptions may be granted with student attestation	
Maintain Throughout Program	
	Health Insurance

*ACLS CERTIFICATION
  - Students must successfully complete Advanced Cardiac Life Support during the didactic year, regardless of current certification status prior to entering the clinical year and must maintain a valid ACLS provider card throughout the clinical phase. ACLS certification prerequisite of Health care provider BLS must be obtained through American Heart Association. If you already have a current ACLS certification, please discuss with the clinical year team to identify if this will satisfy the clinical year requirements prior to immersion experience #2.

23.0 Drug Screen Policy

This policy applies to all University of Pittsburgh Physician Assistant Studies Hybrid Program conditionally accepted applicants and enrolled PA students. A urine drug screen (UDS) is

required of each conditionally accepted applicant prior to full admission, and at least annually thereafter for every continuing student. Conditionally accepted applicants who have an adverse finding on a UDS report may be denied full admission/matriculation, and current students will be disciplined in accordance with established University/PA Program policy. As a prerequisite to participating in patient care, students may be required to undergo one or more random urine drug screens. Such randomized testing is necessary to adhere to our clinical affiliates' requirements. When required by clinical facilities, students must complete urine drug screening prior to the onset of the given clinical experience. Students are financially responsible for services related to urine drug screening. Depending on the specific clinical site requirements, this may need to be repeated annually or more frequently. Urine drug screening results that limit the Program's ability to secure clinical experiences may result in a student being unable to complete the program on time or be recommended for graduation. Acceptance into and successful completion of the University of Pittsburgh PA Studies Hybrid Program does not imply or guarantee that the student will be able to obtain state licensure upon graduation. The PA Program is committed to accepting and educating students who meet established standards for professionalism, are of high moral character, and are suitable candidates for professional certification or licensure.

URINE DRUG SCREEN (UDS)

Definitions:

Adverse Finding: A term describing a UDS report of anything other than "clear" or "no findings" or other similar language used by the approved vendor that issued the UDS report.

Conditional Acceptance: A term describing an applicant's status when basic review criteria have been met at the time an admission offer is extended but prior to full admission to an academic program.

Full Admission: A term indicating that a student has met all program admission requirements and has been cleared of any Adverse Findings that would prevent eligibility for enrollment.

Matriculated: A term describing students enrolled in a University program as degree candidates.

Positive Result: Under this policy, is any instance in which a drug screening report shows a positive test for one or more of the drugs listed under "Scope of the UDS."

Prospective Students: Will be notified through the admissions web page that if accepted, they will be required to complete a UDS, and authorize release of the results to appropriate academic and/or clinical personnel.

Conditionally Accepted Applicants:

The UDS is not to be used as a component of the application, interview, or decision-making process regarding conditional acceptance to a designated program. It is a mandatory component of the post-conditional acceptance matriculation process.

- Students accepted for admission will be notified that matriculation is contingent upon the evaluation and acceptable outcome of all required UDS.
- Any conditionally accepted applicant who fails to complete the above will not be allowed to begin classes and may jeopardize full admission status to the PA program.

Enrolled PA Students:

- Once admitted, students will be notified via e-mail of the deadline for completion.
- The PA program will provide students with instructions on obtaining an authorized drug screen.
- At a minimum, complete a UDS during the didactic phase, in preparation for entry into the clinical phase. (Or more frequently if required by clinical rotation sites or by the PA Program).
- Any student who fails to adhere to the UDS deadline will be suspended from all classes until the UDS is completed. All exams and assessments missed while on suspension will be recorded with a grade of "0" or "Fail" as this is not an excused absence from the program.
- Failure of the UDS may preclude participation in any further clinical rotations. As a result, the student may not be able to complete the education program's requirements, may not be eligible for federal, or state credentialing required for practice, and may be recommended dismissed from the Program. Decisions are subject to right of appeal.
- All information will be retained until an appeal, if any, has concluded and determination regarding continued participation has been made.
- Results of all drug screens shall be privileged and confidential, will be maintained in a secure place and shall not be released or otherwise disclosed to any person or agency, other than (1) individuals involved in PA program's admissions and student services; (2) persons who have a legitimate need to know, as determined by the Program director; (3) upon direction of a court order; (4) any affiliated entity providing clinical training; or, (5) with the written consent of the student.
- Should the vendor report a diluted screening specimen thereby precluding an accurate drug screen test, the enrolled student or conditionally accepted applicant will be required to complete and successfully pass a new drug screen test. The cost of the second test will be at the enrolled student's / conditionally accepted applicant's expense.

Costs:

- The costs associated with the UDS for conditionally accepted applicants, didactic, and clinical phase students are the applicant/student's responsibility.
- If an additional UDS is requested or required, the costs are the student's responsibility.

Period of Validity:
- The program will generally honor the Urine Drug Screen for one year, but a UDS may be necessary more frequently, depending on class or rotation site requirements. Any student with a break in enrollment may be required to complete a UDS before they can re-enroll in any courses.

Scope of the UDS:
The drug screen panel will consist of:

1. Marijuana (THC, Cannabinoids)
2. Cocaine
3. Amphetamines
4. Phencyclidine
5. Opiates
6. Benzodiazepines
7. Barbiturates
8. Propoxyphene
9. Methadone
10. Methaqualone

Initial Positive Results:
- Students with a positive drug screen will have an opportunity to consult with a Medical Review Officer (MRO) provided by the vendor, to verify whether there is a valid medical explanation for the screening results. If, after review by the vendor's MRO, there is a valid medical explanation for the screening results, the vendor will notify the University of a "clear" test. If, after review by the MRO, there is not a valid medical explanation for the positive screen then the test results will stand.
- Any appeal right of a positive UDS rests solely between the student/accepted applicant, the Medical Review Officer, and the vendor.

Procedure for Review of Positive UDS:
- A "positive result" under this policy is any instance in which a drug screening report shows a positive test for one or more of the drugs listed above under "Scope of the UDS."

Conditionally Accepted Applicants:

- The Director of Clinical Education will review all UDS reports and notify the Program Director of any positive results.
- Conditionally accepted applicants with a positive drug screen may have their conditional offer rescinded by the PA program Director and will not be allowed to matriculate. They may choose to reapply to the Program but must complete a new CASPA application during the next admission cycle.

Enrolled Students:
- Results of all student urine drug screens will be provided by the approved vendor to the Director of Clinical Education.
- In the event that a student fails a drug screen, the PA Program Director will be notified, and the student may be removed from the clinical rotation or classroom.
- A repeated UDS may be requested at the student's expense. Due to the mandate to comply with health system policies, and the serious implications of a "non-negative" test, disciplinary actions against students may be imposed without the customary mechanisms of warning and probation. Students may not continue coursework (clinical or non-clinical) immediately after a "nonnegative" UDS is received.
- The Director of Clinical Education and the Program Director will review each referred non-negative UDS to determine the potential impact that any adverse findings might have on the enrolled PA student's educational program of study and will determine the course of action regarding the student's continued participation in the program. If it is determined that the student may be unable to complete the educational requirements of the PA program, they will be recommended for dismissal from the program, pending the outcome of an appeal, should such right be invoked.
- Any student who fails the drug screen will be notified of their right to appeal to the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies at SHRS, within 7 days after "non-negative" UDS was received. All information will be retained until an appeal, if any, has concluded and determination regarding continued participation in the program has been made.
- The appeal must be made in writing and should include any supporting documentation the student wishes to submit. The Associate Dean for Graduate Studies will consider the request for an appeal and decide on it within seven days of receipt of it.
- Students claiming inaccuracies in their UDS will be referred to the vendor and/or authorized laboratory completing the screen.

Falsification of Information:
- Falsification of information submitted as part of the application process or on the UDS can result in a recommendation of immediate removal of the applicant from the conditionally accepted list or dismissal of an enrolled student from the MS degree program.

Confidentiality of Records:
- The University maintains UDS reports and all records pertaining to the results in confidence unless release is otherwise required by law.
- Information about the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is available at: FERPA
- Release of information reported on the UDS may be released to future employers, licensing boards and clinical sites with signed release from the student for employment credentialing, licensure, and site placement.

Record Keeping:
UDS reports and all records pertaining to the results will be maintained in the conditionally accepted applicant's file or enrolled student's academic file in the PA Program for the minimum timeframe listed below, unless otherwise required by law:
- Enrolled Students – Five (5) years after graduation.
- Conditionally Accepted Applicants – Two (2) years from date of application (provided no anticipated legal action)

24.0 Communication

Program Policy

The primary mechanisms of communication with students will be email and Canvas. Students are expected to check their "Pitt" email account and Canvas dashboard *every 24 business hours* to remain up to date on Program information.

You are required to use the University e-mail address for all communication and must only email Program faculty and staff via "Pitt" e-mail addresses that end in @pitt.edu. Program faculty and staff will not respond to e-mails from non-Pitt accounts.

Students are anticipated to keep their name, address, phone number, and emergency contact information up to date with the Program, PeopleSoft and within EXXAT. It is mandatory for students to promptly notify Program administration of any changes to their emergency contact information, particularly before participating in any immersion experience, and no later than 7 days after the modification occurs. Failure to update their address with the Program before essential supplies are dispatched will result in students being held accountable for covering extra shipping expenses, estimated at approximately $150 per box.

Students, faculty, and staff are encouraged to communicate within normal business hours. Faculty and staff will make every attempt to respond as soon as possible. If you do not receive a response after 2 business days, please contact the Program Administrator.

SHRS Policy

Communicate with SHRS Faculty and Staff – (Posted in Undergraduate & Graduate Handbooks)

Students should stay in regular communication with their academic advisor and faculty members. To facilitate this, students are strongly encouraged to:

- Check their Pitt email regularly.
- Inform their academic advisor, faculty, or department chair of difficulties that may impact their academic standing.
- Seek help as needed.
- Make and keep regular advising/registration appointments with their academic advisor.

Failure to communicate with faculty and staff, respond in a timely fashion to faculty and staff requests for communication, or attend required meetings can result in one of the actions stated below in the SHRS Policy on Failure to Communicate.

SHRS Policy on Failure to Communicate

Failure to Communicate definition - not responding to two (2) requests for communication with faculty or staff or failure to attend one (1) required meeting with faculty or staff.

If a student is enrolled in the term but fails to communicate or attend class, the student will be dismissed from the Program if the occurrence is before the term add/drop date. This is at the discretion of the Program Director.

If the student is enrolled in the term and fails to communicate, they will be assigned the grade earned in the course, which may be a failing grade. If the course is a required course for degree completion, the student will need to repeat the course. Student grades will be assigned based on performance in the course, including failing grades for any missed assignments, at the instructor's discretion.

If a student is NOT enrolled in the current term or drops all courses by the add/drop deadline and has not a) communicated with their advisor or department the reason for withdrawing, or b) has not requested a leave of absence by the add/drop deadline and fails to communicate, they will be subject to dismissal from the program.

Recognized Student Groups

Student groups that are officially recognized by the University and/or the Student Organization Resource Center (SORC) are permitted to distribute information via the Program listserv. However, all communications must first be vetted by the designated

faculty advisor. This vetting process ensures that the content is relevant, appropriate, and aligns with University, Department, Program, and student group standards and policies. Recognized student groups must submit their communication for vetting at least two weeks prior to the intended distribution date. This lead time accounts for any additional approvals that may be required from other departments or offices within SHRS or the University.

Unsponsored/Unofficially Registered Groups

Unsponsored or unofficially registered student groups with the University may also use the Program listserv for distributing information. Similar to recognized groups, these communications must be vetted by the Program Director. This step ensures consistency with the Program's objectives and University policies. These groups should also allow a minimum of two weeks for the vetting process, which may include further reviews from other departments or offices within SHRS or the University.

Individual Student Communications

Individual students are not permitted to use the Program listserv to send emails to other Programs and/or Departments without prior approval from their Program Director. This policy is in place to maintain a coherent and controlled communication flow within and between different parts of the Program/Department.

Policy Violations

Failure to adhere to this communication policy may result in disciplinary action. Depending on the severity and nature of the violation, consequences may range from a formal warning to dismissal from the Program. All disciplinary actions will be conducted in accordance with the University's established procedures and policies.

25.0 Social Media

Social media is rapidly expanding, and new outlets are created every day. Professional organizations and ethical codes are often outdated given the rapid expansion of social media. It is essential that students and faculty remain aware and vigilant regarding the social media ethical challenges facing health professionals, clients, patients, and students.

Students are responsible for maintaining a professional social media presence related to any SHRS education activities. Some students may find it helpful to create separate professional and personal social media accounts.
We recommend that students consider the following prior to posting or transmitting on social media:
- Consider the audience and potential impact of your post prior to transmission.

- Assume anything that you post or transmit on social media can be made or viewed by the public.
- An electronic post or transmission is often traceable, without an opportunity for removal.
- Employers often search social media to learn more about you prior to interviews or offered employment.
- Clients often search social media to learn more about you. Proximity based apps and social media post new challenges to maintaining professional boundaries between health professionals and clients or patients.

SHRS students must:
- Respect the ethical standards of the profession in carrying out their academic assignments.
- Comply with HIPAA's social media rules.
- Read, review, and follow the social media policy of your practicum or internship placement.
- Comply with School and University academic integrity guidelines.
- Do not post or transmit any information or reference about your work with clients/patients.
- Do not post clinical encounters, clinical experiences, or information that pertains to working with clients.

Please note that boundaries on social media are no longer as simple as not 'friending' a client, professor, or colleague on Facebook. For example, all contacts in your phone book can read your posts on Venmo without being friends on the app. It is difficult to predict the latest ethical problem or boundary that will arise with social media. Therefore, please remain aware and consult with faculty or supervisors on these important issues. Faculty may have to act upon any material that does not comply with current academic integrity guidelines, professional ethical standards, or HIPAA policies.

PA Studies Hybrid students must abide by HIPAA (patient confidentiality) and FERPA (student confidentiality) for all posts including use on any personal social media accounts.

Disciplinary action may include, but is not limited to, completion of remediation, delay of progression through the Program, negative impact on course grade(s), and/or dismissal from the Program.

No "friend" requests on non-professional social media (X, Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, TikTok, etc.) will be accepted by any faculty or staff in the PAS Hybrid Program while students are enrolled. LinkedIn requests are considered acceptable.

26.0 Department Space Usage

When required to be on campus for programmatic activities, Physician Assistant Studies Hybrid students are free to access the following spaces in the Murdoch Building:

- Main Classroom
- Skills Laboratory
- Student Kitchen
- Quiet Study lounge (this space is intended to be a quiet and focused learning environment for Department of PA studies students)
- Two dressing rooms near the classroom doors (when not otherwise in use)

When using the above spaces, students should always leave spaces as they were found, keeping in mind that Program staff and faculty are actively preparing these rooms for labs and instruction.

Students may not access, unless instructed:

- Patient exam rooms
- Department of Physician Assistant Studies office space
- Any other space other than those listed above

27.0 SHRS Impaired Student Policy

The School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences (SHRS) has the responsibility to educate students to be responsible professionals prepared to provide quality services. Whether in the classroom, the clinical setting, or a research setting, students are expected to demonstrate professional behaviors aligned with respective Scopes of Practice, Codes of Ethics, and Technical Standards.

Safety is a critical component in the classroom, the clinical setting, and the research setting. The utmost responsibility of the University, the School, and the faculty is the protection and well-being of individuals in the classroom, the clinical setting, and in research, all of which supersedes the educational needs of the student to participate in a degree program.

When a student's psychological and/or physical condition has impaired their ability to participate and perform in the classroom, clinical setting, and/or research, the student will be asked to leave the area. As discussed below, the student will be given the opportunity to hear the reasons for the removal, to discuss the incident with a representative from the school and participate in a treatment plan if appropriate. Any expenses incurred because of assessment, treatment, transportation, and monitoring are solely the responsibility of the student.

The existence of a health or personal problem for a student is NOT synonymous with impairment under this policy.

In addition to this policy, the University of Pittsburgh has developed resources to assist faculty and staff with distressed students. The Faculty and Staff Guide to Helping Distressed Students is available as well as this document from student affairs.

When a partner site has a policy regarding fitness for duty, that policy will be followed in addition to the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences policy.

Purpose:
This Policy is designed to:
- Identify and adequately address the needs of students with impairment
- Enhance awareness among faculty and students of the typical characteristics of an impaired student to identify students in need of help
- Protect patients from risks associated with care given by an impaired student
- Promote educational programs and other methods of primary prevention of impairment of all students
- Provide a mechanism for a fair, reasonable and confidential assessment of a student who is suspected of being impaired, including the development of a plan to address the student's academic progress
- Take administrative actions as necessary

Definitions:
For the purposes of this policy, impairment is defined as a physical or mental condition, substance abuse, chemical dependence or any other circumstances that interferes with the student's ability to engage safely in patient care or clinical practice.

Reporting Possible Impairment:
a. Self-reporting - Any student who is concerned that they might be impaired or likely to become impaired should contact their respective Program Director to formulate a plan of action to secure appropriate assistance and resources.
b. Report by others - Any person (e.g., student, faculty, staff, clinical partner, or administrator) who has reasonable cause to suspect that the ability of a student to safely perform their clinical duties may be impaired shall, in good faith, report the student to the respective Program Director.
c. If a report is determined to be made in bad faith or malicious, the reporting party will be identified to the Dean and may be subject to action under applicable institutional policies and/or laws and regulations.

Process:

a. When there is concern that a student is impaired, a faculty member may remove the student from the applicable area. The student shall be informed of temporary suspension from clinical practice. If warranted by the student's condition, the clinical instructor, campus security, or a representative from the school may accompany the student to the nearest healthcare facility for emergency treatment.

b. When there is concern that a student poses a risk of harm, an immediate referral will be made to an appropriate service provider. If the behavior has occurred in the classroom, clinic, or research setting, the student will be temporarily removed from that setting.

c. Faculty involved in the identification of a possible impaired student must initially meet with the student and/or person who is reporting the student.

d. A subsequent meeting(s) will occur between the student, faculty involved in the identification of the problem, and Program Director. The documented and observable evidence of impaired performance will be reviewed with the student, and the student will have an opportunity to provide an explanation.

e. One representative from the University community chosen by the student may accompany the student to any meeting but they may not stand in place of the student during the discussions. Such representative may not be legal counsel.

f. During the meeting(s) an individualized plan will be discussed and developed with the student that considers the impact of the student's behavior on the safety of the environment. During the meetings(s) the student may be asked to sign an Authorization for the Disclosure of Protected Health Information and may submit relevant medical records from their treating physician. If the student agrees with the recommended plan, the student will proceed with implementation.

g. If agreed to, the student must seek and select a treatment provider when recommended by the Program Director in a timely manner (not more than 2 weeks). Costs of treatment will be the student's responsibility.

h. If the student has been referred for treatment, the student will be permitted to return to practice only on the specific recommendation of an appropriate treatment provider that the student is capable of safe and skilled performance in accordance with School or Programs Scopes of Practice, Codes of Ethics, and Technical Standards.

i. The student has the right to refuse this assessment, treatment, and further monitoring. In which chase the student may file an appeal [see link below].

j. The school may not permit a student to return to practice without certification from a recognized healthcare provider that he/she has completed treatment, is undergoing treatment, or does not need treatment, and is fit for duty.

Monitoring:
a. The student successfully completing the treatment period will be monitored by the Program Director or faculty designee for progression in the degree program.

Leave of Absence and Re-entry:

    a. An impaired student will be allowed a leave-of-absence in accordance with the policy outlined in the SHRS Student Handbooks.

    b. If the student requests a medical leave-of-absence, procedures for the leave and re-entry will be followed as outlined in the SHRS Student Handbooks.

Unresponsiveness to Intervention:

    a. If the student does not responsibly cooperate or respond to the plan created by the Program Director or faculty designee, the student may be required to take a leave of absence, be suspended, or be dismissed. Students can appeal this decision using the [SHRS appeals process](#)

Confidentiality:

    a. Confidentiality for every student is to be maintained throughout the process consistent with the University's FERPA Policy and Procedure.

File:

    a. All files will be kept by the student's respective department/program after the student graduates in accordance with university policy.

28.0 Payments to Supervised Clinical Practice Experiences (SCPEs)

The Program prohibits students from making payments for supervised clinical practice experiences. Any form of monetary transaction or compensation, directly or indirectly, by a student to secure or participate in supervised clinical placements is strictly prohibited. Payments include, but are not limited to, monetary transactions, gifts, or other forms of remuneration.

Students found to have made payments without the explicit consent or knowledge of the Program regarding supervised clinical practice experiences may face disciplinary action, up to and including programmatic dismissal.

29.0 Required Academic Standards (A3.15a-b)

Credit Load & Program Sequencing:

The Program consists of 6 terms taken on a full-time basis. Due to the importance of building a solid framework of medical knowledge required to provide safe patient care, the didactic courses have been designed to occur in an intentional and progressive order. All courses must

be taken in sequence, and students must satisfactorily complete every course in the program of study, for 82 credits.

Typically, students complete the program of study in 24 months. If there is a break during study (i.e., such as with a Leave of Absence), students must complete all requirements for graduation within five years of first matriculating in the program. If a student fails to complete the Program within five years of first matriculation, they will be dismissed from the Program.

Students enrolled in this program are required to focus solely on its rigorous curriculum. Students may not be enrolled in any other academic program, certificate, course, or any form of structured study, whether part-time or full-time, while they are matriculated in this program. This ensures that students dedicate their full attention and effort to the curriculum's progressive and cumulative structure, as designed to develop a comprehensive foundation in medical knowledge and patient care skills.

Any concurrent enrollment in other educational endeavors is considered a violation of this policy and may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from the program.

Course Grades & GPA Requirements:

To successfully complete the program, a student must achieve a cumulative grade point average (cumulative GPA) of 3.0 (B) or higher at the time of graduation.

Summative Evaluation:
The Summative Evaluation is administered within the last four (4) months of the program during the course Transition to Professional Practice. It is used to assess the culmination of medical knowledge, clinical and technical skills, clinical reasoning and problem-solving abilities, interpersonal and communication skills, patient care, and professionalism which we require all students to have learned prior to program completion. Since the Summative Evaluation is how we verify each student is prepared to enter clinical practice, a student will be permitted to take the Summative Evaluation only after successful completion of all preceding courses in the didactic and clinical phases of the program. Students must also be in good academic standing to be eligible for the Summative Evaluation. Exceptions to these rules will be permitted only under extenuating circumstances, on a case-by-case basis, and at the sole discretion of the Program Director. Students must demonstrate satisfactory performance on the Summative Evaluation to successfully complete the program.

30.0 Remediation & Retesting in Clinical (SCPE) Courses

SCPE Course grades are determined by student performance across multiple components, including End of Rotation Examinations (EOREs), preceptor evaluations (PES), SOAP notes,

procedure checklists, patient logging, attendance, participation, professionalism, evaluations of the preceptor and clinical site, and other assignments as determined by the Course Director(s).

Student Success Pathway (SSP) and Remediation Policy

1. End of Rotation Examination (EORE) and Preceptor Evaluation of Student (PES):

- Failure of an EORE: If a student's EORE score falls below a Z-score of -1.50, they will enter the Student Success Pathway (SSP). This includes required attendance in program-provided tutoring sessions and structured support.
- Failure of a PES: If a student scores below 3.0 on the Preceptor Evaluation of Student (PES), they will also be placed on the SSP, with mandatory tutoring and additional support.

2. Retesting and Remediation Requirements:

- EORE Failure: Students who fail an EORE after two attempts are required to repeat the corresponding rotation and retake the EORE at the end of the repeated rotation.
- PES Failure: Students who score below 3.0 on the PES are required to repeat the corresponding rotation and retake the EORE at the end of the repeated rotation.
- Second Failure of PES or EORE: If a student fails either the PES or the EORE on the repeated SCPE, they will be dismissed from the Program.

3. Limitations on Remediated SCPE Grades:

   - Students who must remediate any part of their SCPE, including PES, EORE, assignments, or logging, will receive a maximum grade of "Satisfactory (S)" for that SCPE.

4. Remediation Process and Timeline:

Students requiring EORE remediation will be notified within three (3) days of grade release. Details about the remediation process and associated deadlines will be provided at that time. Students must complete remediation tasks, including at least 60 additional Smarty PANCE review questions related to missed content by faculty. Proof of completion must be submitted before the retake. Additional preparatory resources, such as the Osmosis playlist specific to the SCPE subject, are highly encouraged. All remediation tasks must be completed by 8:00 a.m. ET on the Sunday before the scheduled exam retake period.

5. EORE Retake Examination Window:

The EORE retake will occur during the 5th week of the subsequent SCPE rotation, between midnight (ET) on Monday and 11:59 p.m. on the following Sunday. Exams submitted after this

period will not be accepted and will be graded as a 0 (zero). A passing score on the retake requires a scaled score above a Z-score of -1.51.

6. Grounds for Dismissal:

  - Students failing the EORE three times total or failing the PES or EORE on a repeated SCPE will be dismissed from the Program.

Remediation & Retesting Summative Assessments

During the last four (4) months of the Program, students must pass three (4) summative assessments including a summative written exam (PAEA End of Curriculum exam), summative OSLER, and two (2) summative competency assessment tasks (CAT)s. Students unable to successfully pass one of the summative assessments may have the opportunity to complete remediation and retest with approval by the Program Director.

Only one (1) summative assessment may be retaken for a passing grade (a grade of at least a C). This may result in a delay of program completion/graduation. If students cannot successfully pass a summative assessment after remediation or fail a second summative assessment, they may be considered for dismissal from the program.

Remediation Records
A record of all student remediation exercises will be kept in the student's file.

Acknowledgement and Signature

University of Pittsburgh Physician Assistant Studies Hybrid Program Policy & Procedures Manual

The Policy & Procedure Manual is published by the University of Pittsburgh Physician Assistant Studies Hybrid program, which reserves the right to revise the contents at any time. Any changes apply to all current students. The program reserves the right to revise the manual at any time. You are responsible for reading and understanding the manual. If anything is unclear, please discuss the matter with the Program Director.

I _____ , have received and have read the School of Health & Rehabilitation Sciences Physician Assistant Studies Hybrid Program Policy and Procedure Manual and the Orientation Canvas. I agree to abide by all policies found therein. If I fail to uphold this agreement, I am aware that I may be disciplined in accordance with Program, School, and University policies and procedures.

_____   _____
Student Signature   Date