

MSPAS Core Competencies and Technical Standards

Read on for information about the core competencies that students acquire in this program, as well as technical standards that all students must meet.

Core Competencies

Medical Knowledge

1. Demonstrate knowledge of the basic medical sciences.
2. Apply knowledge of human development, anatomy and physiology, and pathophysiology to distinguish normal variations from disease.
3. Critically evaluate and incorporate evidence-based medicine to make practice-based improvements.
4. Integrate a multi-faceted, holistic approach to the lifelong pursuit of knowledge.

Interpersonal and Communication Skills

1. Demonstrate effective verbal, non-verbal and written communication that results in the exchange of information and collaboration with patients, families, caregivers and members of the healthcare team.
2. Incorporate elements of shared decision-making into communication with patients, families and caregivers to facilitate active participation in their care.
3. Demonstrate sensitivity, honesty and compassion in difficult conversations, including those about disclosure of errors, prognosis and end of life.
4. Communicate effectively with and demonstrate cultural competency for a diverse patient population, including but not limited to diversity in gender, gender identity, age, culture, race, religion, disabilities, socioeconomic status, body habitus and sexual orientation.

Clinical and Technical Skills

1. Perform and document a comprehensive, full, and focused history and physical exam across all age groups.
2. Perform diagnostic and therapeutic procedures.
3. Interpret diagnostic laboratory and radiographic tests.
4. Provide patient education, counseling, resources and referrals.

Professional Behaviors

1. Demonstrate integrity, honesty, compassion, respect and empathy with all individuals.
2. Adhere to all ethical and legal principles governing medical practice.
3. Respect each patient's privacy and autonomy.
4. Perform continuous self-assessment for clinical proficiency, the prevention of medical errors and risk management.
5. Demonstrate community engagement and service.

Clinical Reasoning and Problem-Solving

1. Develop comprehensive differential diagnosis and problem lists.
2. Develop appropriate treatment plans that include pharmacologic and non-pharmacologic therapies.
3. Provide appropriate medical care in preventive, emergent, acute, chronic, rehabilitative, palliative and end-of-life settings.
4. Assess patient outcomes for accuracy of diagnosis, effectiveness of interventions, patient adherence and other factors that can impact patient care.

Interprofessional Collaboration (IPEC Core Competencies)

1. Work with other health professionals to establish and maintain a climate of mutual respect, dignity, diversity and inclusion, ethical integrity and trust to provide patient and population-centered care that is safe, efficient, effective and equitable. (Teams and Teamwork and Values/Ethics for Interprofessional Practice)
2. Use the knowledge of one's own role and the roles of other health professions to appropriately assess and address the healthcare needs of the patients and populations served. (Roles and Responsibilities)
3. Communicate with other health professionals in a responsive and responsible manner that supports the maintenance of health and the treatment of disease in individual patients and populations. (Interprofessional Communication)

Technical Standards

USAHS maintains a strong institutional commitment to providing equal educational opportunities for qualified students with disabilities who apply for admission to the MSPAS program or who are already enrolled. These technical standards are not intended to deter any candidate for whom reasonable accommodation will allow the fulfillment of the complete curriculum. Admitted candidates with disabilities are confidentially reviewed by the Office of Student Welfare and Accessibility upon receipt of the Reasonable Accommodation Request Form found within the MyUSA portal. The Office of Student Welfare and Accessibility office will determine whether there are any reasonable accommodations or alternative mechanisms that would permit the candidate to satisfy the standards. This process is informed by the knowledge that students with varied types of disabilities can become successful health professionals. If you are an applicant with a disability who may require accommodations in our program, contact the Office of Student Welfare and Accessibility at accommodations@usa.edu.

Functional Technical Standards

Acquiring Medical Knowledge. Candidates/students must be able to learn through a variety of modalities, including but not limited to lecture and laboratory instruction; physical demonstrations, small group, team and collaborative activities; individual study; preparation and presentation of reports; and the use of computer technology.

Performing Clinical and Technical Skills. Candidates/students must conduct routine physical examinations and diagnostic maneuvers to form an accurate and comprehensive assessment of relevant patient health, behavioral and medical information. Candidates must be able to provide or direct general patient care and emergency treatment for patients and respond to emergencies in a timely

manner. Candidates must meet applicable safety standards for the environment and follow universal precaution procedures.

Interpersonal Skills. Candidates/students should be able to communicate with patients to elicit information, detect changes in mood and activity, and establish a therapeutic relationship. Students should be able to communicate effectively and sensitively with patients and all members of the healthcare team in person, virtually and in writing.

Clinical Reasoning and Problem-Solving. Candidates/students must be able to measure, calculate, organize, retrieve, sequence, reason, analyze and synthesize. Students must have the ability to synthesize data obtained in a clinical setting, perform clinical reasoning, and solve problems efficiently and effectively. They must be able to demonstrate mastery of these skills and the capacity to use them together in a timely fashion in medical problem-solving and patient care.

Professionalism. Candidates/students must possess the emotional health required to exercise good judgment, complete their responsibilities promptly, and develop mature, sensitive, and effective relationships with patients and their family members, staff, and colleagues. Students must be able to function effectively under stress, adapt to changing environments, display flexibility, and adjust to the uncertainties inherent in patient care. All students must be able to work effectively as a member of a healthcare team. Additional attributes required for medical practitioners include compassion, integrity, effective interpersonal skills and motivation.

I. Observation

Candidates should be able to observe demonstrations and experiments in the basic sciences, including (but not limited to) physiologic and pharmacologic demonstrations in animals, microbiologic organisms, and tissues in normal and pathologic states. Candidates should be able to observe a patient accurately at a distance and close at hand. Observation necessitates the functional use of the sense of vision and somatic sensation. It is enhanced by the functional use of the sense of smell.

II. Communication

Candidates should be able to speak, to hear, and to observe patients to elicit information; describe changes in mood, activity, and posture; and perceive nonverbal communications. Candidates should be able to communicate effectively and sensitively with patients. Communication includes not only speech but also reading and writing. Candidates should be able to communicate effectively and efficiently in oral and written form with all members of the healthcare team.

III. Motor

Candidates should have sufficient motor function to elicit information from patients by palpation, auscultation, percussion and other diagnostic maneuvers. Candidates should be able to retrieve basic laboratory tests from electronic databases, carry out diagnostic procedures (lumbar puncture, paracentesis, etc.) and read ECGs and X-rays. Candidates should be able to execute motor movements

reasonably required to provide general care and emergency treatment to patients. Examples of emergency treatment reasonably required of physician assistants are cardiopulmonary resuscitation, the administration of intravenous medication, the application of pressure to stop bleeding, the opening of obstructed airways, the suturing of simple wounds and the performance of simple obstetrical maneuvers. Such actions require coordination of gross and fine muscular movements, equilibrium, and functional use of the senses of touch and vision.

IV. Intellectual/Conceptual, Integrative and Quantitative Abilities

These abilities include measurement, calculation, reasoning, analysis and synthesis. Problem solving, the critical skill demanded of physician assistants, requires all these intellectual abilities. In addition, the candidate should be able to comprehend three-dimensional relationships and understand the spatial relationships of structures.

V. Behavioral and Social Attributes

Candidates should possess the emotional health required for full utilization of their intellectual abilities, the exercise of good judgment, the prompt completion of all responsibilities attendant to the diagnosis and care of patients, and the development of mature, sensitive and effective relationships with patients. Candidates should be able to tolerate physically taxing workloads and to function effectively under stress. They should be able to adapt to changing environments, display flexibility, and learn to function in the face of uncertainties that are inherent in the clinical problems of many patients. Compassion, integrity, concern for others, interpersonal skills, interest and motivation are all personal qualities that are assessed during the admissions and education processes.