

2021-2022

**Physician Assistant Program Clinical Student
Handbook**



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH CAROLINA

School of Medicine

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Section 1: General Information

Welcome

Congratulations on completing the didactic portion of your physician assistant training and moving forward to the clinical phase of your education. You will train with preceptors at a variety of clinical sites to become competent clinicians capable of providing comprehensive care to patients from diverse populations and all walks of life.

Please take a moment to consider how very privileged you are as a PA student to enter the practices of your preceptors and the lives of their patients. Your preceptors and patients are counting on you and expect that you will provide excellent care in a professional and compassionate manner.

Supervised Clinical Practical Experiences (SCPEs) are your “real world” chance to practice what you have learned. Hard work, motivation, commitment, and enthusiasm will be rewarded with newfound knowledge and skills. You will gain personal satisfaction and self-confidence in knowing that you are improving the health outcomes and quality of life for these patients.

Be punctual, work hard, ask questions, and always maintain a positive attitude. Show genuine interest and read every day about the cases you see. Take responsibility for your learning. If you ask for help, you will get it. Remember that our faculty is here for you even while you are away from campus.

This handbook has information you will need for a smooth transition into the clinical year. It is intended to supplement other student material that we have provided for you. Should you have any questions about material covered in this publication, please contact the Director of Clinical Education or your faculty advisor.

Best wishes for a very productive year of patient care and learning!

Introduction

While all students who are enrolled at UofSC are covered by the policies and procedures as dictated by the institution, students of the Physician Assistant Program face unique situations that may or may not be addressed in the general student handbook. Therefore, this handbook is provided as a resource for the PA student in the clinical year. Although every attempt has been made to make this handbook comprehensive, it cannot possibly address every potential situation. Should you encounter a situation not covered in the handbooks provided for you and are uncertain of how best to proceed, contact the PA Program office for assistance. We trust that you will exercise good judgment and discretion in addressing the issue until the PA Program office can be contacted. UofSC ensures that all policies and procedures contained within this handbook have been reviewed by institutional administrators and the university legal counsel to assure that contents are consistent with federal and state statutes, rules and regulations prior to publication. This handbook is reviewed annually for its relevancy and application as part of the self-study process.

Mission Statement

The UofSC School of Medicine-Columbia Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies Program strives to produce highly competent, compassionate physician assistants who are committed to lifelong learning and advancing the PA profession. The PA Program is dedicated to producing physician assistants who deliver high-quality, patient-centered care, excel as members of an interprofessional health care team, while making significant contributions to the health care needs of South Carolina and the nation.

Accreditation Status

The Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant, Inc. (ARC-PA) granted Accreditation-Continued status to the University of South Carolina School of Medicine-Columbia Physician Assistant Program sponsored by University of South Carolina School of Medicine- Columbia in June 2021. Accreditation-Continued is an accreditation status granted when a currently accredited program is in compliance with the ARC-PA Standards.

Accreditation remains in effect until the program closes or withdraws from the accreditation process or until accreditation is withdrawn for failure to comply with the Standards. The approximate date for the next validation review of the program by the ARC-PA will be June 2031. The review date is contingent upon compliance with the Accreditation Standards and ARC-PA policy.

The program's accreditation history can be viewed on the ARC-PA website at <https://www.arc-pa.org/accreditation-history-university-of-south-carolina/>.

Accreditation standards are available at:

[5th Edition of the ARC-PA Standards](#)

12000 Findley Road, Suite 150, Johns Creek, GA 30097, (770) 476-1224

Faculty and Staff Contact Information

Interim Program Director

Rita M. Dixon, MPAS, PA-C
Telephone: (803) 216-3959
Email: rita.dixon@uscmed.sc.edu

Medical Director

James Stallworth, MD
Telephone: (803) 434-7020
Email: james.stallworth@prismahealth.org

Director of Didactic Education

Pamela S. Wilson, MPAS, PA-C
Telephone: (803) 216-3961
Email: pamela.wilson@uscmed.sc.edu

Director of Clinical Education

Laura Ernst, MPAS, PA-C, AT
Telephone (office): (803) 216-3955
Telephone (cell): (803) 960-2373
Email: laura.ernst@uscmed.sc.edu

Clinical Coordinator

Tracey Goldson
Telephone: (803) 216-3963
Email: tracey.goldson@uscmed.sc.edu

Mailing Address

University of South Carolina
Physician Assistant Program
6311 Garners Ferry Rd
Columbia, SC 29209
Telephone: (803) 216-3950
Fax: (803) 216-3958
Email: PAProgram@uscmed.sc.edu

Goals of the Clinical Year

- The clinical year takes students from a passive to an active role in patient care to prepare them for the assumption of their professional role as physician assistants. To this end, the overall goals of the clinical year include:
- Demonstrating a sound understanding of the biomedical and clinical sciences covered during the didactic year and to be able to effectively apply that knowledge to the treatment of patients.
- Further developing medical knowledge by participating directly in the care of patients under the tutelage of a qualified preceptor.
- Demonstrating interpersonal and communication skills that result in effective information exchange with patients, their families, physicians and other healthcare professionals.
- Developing and refining a systematic approach to both the complete and problem focused history and physical exam
- Learning an approach to the evaluation and management of acute and chronic illnesses and conducting wellness visits for patients of any age or gender.
- Demonstrating care that is effective, patient-centered, timely, efficient, and equitable for the treatment of health problems and the promotion of wellness.
- Exhibiting a high degree of responsibility, ethical practice, sensitivity to a diverse patient population and adherence to legal and regulatory requirements.
- Engaging in critical analysis of their own practice experience, medical literature, and other information resources for the purpose of self-improvement.
- Demonstrating an awareness of and responsiveness to the larger system of health care to provide patient care that is of optimal value.
- Preparing for the Physician Assistant National Certifying Exam (PANCE) and future employment.

The Program's Responsibility¹

- Provide the preceptor and student with the SCPE's educational objectives.
- Assume responsibility for selection and assignment of students to the individual preceptor. Students are not required to provide or solicit clinical sites or preceptors.
- Coordinate the educational and clinical activities involving the preceptor, clinical facility, student, and PA Program faculty.
- Make training guides, evaluation measures, and other materials available to the preceptor.
- Provide information at appropriate intervals to the student and preceptor regarding evaluation outcomes.

- Inform students on SCPEs they are subject to the policies, protocols, rules, and regulations of the preceptor and clinical facility.
- Inform students that they are responsible for their own meals, lodging, transportation, uniforms, laundry, and health during their clinical SCPEs.
- UofSC requires that each PA student carries professional liability coverage, is up to date on all PA Program required immunizations, has completed a criminal background check, has undergone a physical exam, has passed a drug screen, has completed HIPAA training, and is currently certified in BLS and ACLS.
- Provide students training sessions regarding infection control, use of universal precautions, TB, and blood borne pathogens.

The Student's Responsibility

- Act as an ambassador for the UofSC PA Program and conduct yourself in a professional, respectful manner.
- Report patient data fully and promptly to the preceptor.
- Proceed with management of the patient only after consulting with the preceptor.
- Act as a responsible health care provider by behaving professionally, legally, and ethically.
- Arrange the schedule in advance and promptly notify the preceptor and the PA Program office of any schedule changes.
- Must wear an identification badge that identifies them as a UofSC PA student while at a clinical site.
- Prepare yourself for the SCPE and the subsequent end of rotation exams.
- Meet, to the best of your ability, the learning outcomes of each SCPE.

The Preceptor's Responsibility

- Provide adequate clinical space for the student to care for patients.
- Ensure that students are not used as a substitute for clinical or administrative staff.
- Review and sign all the student's patient records.
- Familiarize each student with the protocols, rules, and regulations of the facility.
- Maintain administrative and professional supervision of the student while on duty.
- Provide direct supervision by qualified staff while the student is performing procedures.
- Provide students with dressing and eating facilities similar to those of employees.
- Allow students to participate in and attend education offerings by and at the facility.
- Notify the Director of Clinical Education in a timely manner of any unsatisfactory student conduct or performance.

- Provide evaluations for each student on PA Program forms. Allow and provide students with opportunities to meet objectives.
- Provide PA Program faculty access to the student, preceptor, and facility.
- In the event of an accident or illness, the student will be allowed to seek medical attention at the facility or an emergency room where the provider on duty will determine the course of treatment. Cost of the injury or illness is the sole responsibility of the student.
- Maintain full responsibility for the patient's medical care and treatment.
- Orient student to the safety and security measures of the clinical site.

Program Defined Professional Behaviors

- Demonstrate respectful, mature, and empathetic behavior with faculty, staff, and student colleagues.
- Demonstrate tolerance for uncertainty and ability to give and receive constructive feedback from faculty, staff, and student colleagues.
- Exhibit honesty and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code of the University of South Carolina as well as the Carolinian Creed, in all exams, quizzes, and graded assignments.
- Perform responsibly and with accountability by arriving promptly to classes and working effectively as a team member when assigned.

Student Contact Information

The PA Program must be able to reach you at all times. Please report any changes to your name, address, telephone number and/or emergency contact numbers to the PA Program. You may update your contact information with the PA Program office. Email is the preferred method of communication with students on SCPEs. You are required to check and respond to emails daily. Be certain your preceptor knows how to reach you in case of an emergency.

Social Media Policy

Social media guidelines are stated below:

1. Social networking is a great way to meet new people, stay in touch with old friends and connect with the University of South Carolina. Visit the university's [social media directory](#) to keep up with the latest news on programs and events and to share your thoughts with the Carolina community.
2. Remember that [university policies](#) including the [student code of conduct](#), as well as state and federal laws, apply online. You are responsible for what you say and do through social media just as you are in any other circumstances.
3. Uphold the [Carolinian Creed](#). Respect others and their opinions and engage in civil discourse and discourage any behavior that threatens personal freedom or dignity.

4. Remember that regardless of your privacy settings, information you share online can become public. Avoid sharing your address, full birthdate, telephone number, class schedule and passwords. Don't post obscene or tasteless material; it could come back to haunt you.
5. Think about your future. An increasing number of admissions officials and employers consider candidates' social media activities in making their selections. Online behavior has been used to terminate employees and submitted into evidence in legal cases. Be responsible and be careful.
6. If you are the victim of harassing or bullying online activities, contact the [Student Conduct and Academic Integrity](#) at 803-777-4333.
7. No student shall be "friends" with a faculty and/or staff member on a social media site while enrolled in the PA Program.

Clinic Environment

- IM, texting, email, etc., may only be conducted when away from the patient care environment and when not engaged with your preceptor or staff.
- Nonacademic internet usage is not appropriate in the clinic or hospital settings.
- Headsets and earbuds are never to be worn in the clinical setting.
- **Any posting on a social media site that discusses patient conditions or shows pictures of patients is a HIPAA violation and will result in immediate dismissal from the PA Program.**
- Students are forbidden from "friending" a faculty/staff member on social media while enrolled in the PA Program.
- Violations of the policy will result in disciplinary action.

Dress Code

Lab Coat/Name Tag:

While at clinical sites, you must wear a short white lab coat with the UofSC School of patch on the pocket and a nametag attached at pocket or lapel level identifying you as a physician assistant student from the UofSC PA Program. ID card must always be worn above the waist. If the nametag breaks or is lost, please call the PA Program office to order a new one. There is a cost for replacement nametags. Your white coat is always to be clean and free from stains. If there is a spill/stain you should wash your white coat that night, so it is clean the next day.

Attire/Uniform/Scrubs:

Always dress in a professional manner. While on SCPEs you represent the UofSC PA Program and the PA profession. Your attire and behavior will convey the

image of physician assistants to others. Your dress code will be the same as initiated in the didactic year (refer to didactic student handbook for details). You may see others wearing “less than professional” attire, however, that doesn’t justify you doing the same. Dresses and skirts are not to be worn during clinical rotations. Jeans are not appropriate attire. Be mindful of blouse necklines, as you will be bending and crouching. Ties may be appropriate in some situations, refer to your preceptor. Scrubs may be worn when your preceptor’s wear them: i.e. in the OR or ER.

Shoes:

Please use good judgment in the type of shoes you wear. Comfort is important, however, sneakers should be reserved for the OR or emergency department. Sandals, heels and open-toed shoes are prohibited. No part of the foot, including the heel or arch should be exposed.

Hair/Jewelry/Fingernails:

Long hair and bangs that touch the eye will be restrained. Haircuts should be tidy and appropriate. Facial hair is to be kept neat and trimmed. Perfumes or colognes are prohibited, as they may cause undesired reactions in your patients. Jewelry should be kept to a minimum. Earrings allowed: studs that are no larger in diameter than a pencil eraser. Drop, dangle or hoop earrings are not allowed. Body piercings should be conservative and not distract from professional appearance. Artificial/Acrylic nails are not permitted in medical institutions. Nails should be trimmed to within ¼” of tip of finger. Nail polish is not permitted at clinical sites.

Work Policy²

Students enrolled in the clinical phase of the PA Program are strongly discouraged from maintaining employment due to the intense and rigorous nature of the program. Students are not required to work for the PA Program. Students are not to receive or accept compensation for any work performed within the preceptors' clinical site or practice. Students must not substitute for clinical or administrative staff at a clinical training site.

Course Registration

The Director of Clinical Education will provide course information to you for your use for registration during each semester of the clinical year. The Registrar will be notified of any changes to your SCPE schedule. It is the student’s responsibility to register for classes by the Registrar’s deadline.

Housing/Travel/Meals

UofSC is not required to provide housing for students during SCPEs. SCPEs are conducted at sites throughout the state. The ultimate responsibility of travel to and from the SCPE site, meals and/or housing is that of the student. Efforts will be made by the PA Program for housing for rotations out of the area. This housing may be co-ed and may be up to an hour driving distance from the rotation site. The student is under no obligation to use this housing and may endeavor to find their own housing for that rotation. If the student declines the housing found and there is a cancellation fee incurred, they are responsible for that fee. Housing for out of state rotations are entirely the responsibility of the student.

Health and Malpractice Insurance

All students enrolled in the Physician Assistant Program are required to have health insurance. You will be enrolled in and charged for the campus student health plan automatically unless you are able to document that you have alternative coverage through your parents, spouse, or individual plan. If you have alternative coverage and wish to waive the campus health care plan, you must present a copy of your health insurance card in person during your orientation. You must maintain your health insurance throughout the clinical year. You are not an employee of UofSC and as such you are not entitled to worker's compensation coverage. Injuries and accidents may occur during the course of your clinical training. If medical attention is required at any point during the clinical year, costs incurred are your responsibility, and not that of the PA Program or the University.

UofSC provides student malpractice insurance with \$300,000/\$600,000 coverage for the academic and clinical year. Each clinical site is offered a copy of the policy as evidence of the student's coverage.

All students are required to be in compliance with UofSC's immunization policy.

Medical Care Available at UofSC

IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY CALL 911

Students that require after-hours health care may be seen at any local urgent care clinic or hospital emergency room.

Three area hospitals are located within a three-mile radius of the Dorn VA School of Medicine campus:

Emergency Rooms:

Prisma Health Baptist Hospital

1301 Taylor St.
803-296-5010

Providence Hospital

2435 Forest Dr.
803-256-5300

Prisma Health Richland Hospital

3301 Harden St.
803-434-7000

*The student health fee does not cover services received at any outside facility.

Multiple services are offered through the UofSC Student Health Center, a complete listing is available at their website.

[Student Health Services](#)

803-777-3175

UofSC SOM Employee/Student

Health Building 3 Room 309

Jennifer Evans

jennifer.evans@uscmed.sc.edu

Office: (803) 216-3374

Cell: (618) 559-0419

Fax: (803) 216-3381

On-Campus Urgent Medical Calls

Call 911

24/7 Sexual Assault/Violence

If you experience a sexual assault or violent situation and need the assistance of a Student Health Services sexual assault advocate after hours, call the UofSC Police Department at 803-777-4215, and they will contact the advocate. If it is an emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room.

Psychological Counseling

Counseling & Psychiatry Services

Thomson Building, Second - Fourth floors

1401 Devine St. Columbia, SC 29208

Appointments: 803-777-5223

Routine care and other services

Routine medical appointments are to be taken care of on your own time. You will not be given excused time off for routine medical appointments. [Student Health Services](#) will provide students with hours and locations for the Thomson Student Health Center, counseling services, psychiatric services, campus wellness, sexual assault and violence intervention & prevention, and student health care services department locations.

You were required to complete a health assessment, background check, drug screen, and TB skin test (PPD test) prior to beginning the PA Program. This information must be included with the material sent to every clinical site and preceptor. The TB skin test, background check and drug screen must be repeated, at the students' expense, and results submitted to the clinical office prior to starting clinical SCPEs.

Body Fluid/Needle Stick Exposure and Accident Policy

Procedures for student exposures occurring in facilities within 50 miles of Columbia, SC:

- Should you sustain a needle stick or exposure to a potentially infectious and/or hazardous substance during your SCPE or suffer any other injury during normal working hours Monday-Friday, 8:00 am – 4:00 pm (excluding holidays):
- Immediately report the incident to the appropriate person at your SCPE site. They will follow the policies in effect at their site to provide proper immediate care and necessary follow-up care. **Contact the School of Medicine Employee Health Nurse by phone at (803) 216-3374 or cell (618) 559-0419.** If you are unable to reach the employee health nurse by phone within 10 minutes, you must page Dr. Olabisi Badmus at (803) 352-0576. These health care providers are affiliated with the UofSC Family Medicine Center. You may be required to report to the UofSC Family Medicine Center's Employee Health Office for further evaluation. The Family Medicine Center is located on the first floor at 3209 Colonial Drive, Columbia, SC 29203. The Employee Health Office team will determine the appropriate clinical protocols to follow based on the circumstances of the reported incident.
- Incidents occurring outside normal working hours and on weekends or holidays should be reported to the Emergency Department at Prisma Health Richland Hospital. Send an incident report to the UofSC Family Medicine Center's Employment Health Office at employeehealth.uscmed.sc.edu during the normal work week. This report must include the date of the incident, person involved and their supervisor, nature and consequences of the incident, root cause, and a description of the material/hazard involved.
- Incident is to be reported to the Director of Clinical Education after it has been reported to the School of Medicine Employee Health Office.

Procedures for student exposures occurring in facilities outside Columbia, SC:

- (Note: This guidance applies to students participating in academic training at an area hospital/facility).
- All health care facilities are required to have institutional procedures for post-exposure evaluation and follow-up. Any UofSC faculty, staff or student that has an exposure to a potentially infectious material as a result of performing their employment or academic duties should follow the procedures established by the local institution. In the event that a UofSC faculty, staff or student has an exposure in a facility that does not have a documented protocol, the individual should report to the local Emergency Room. Personnel working outside the Columbia area must be familiar with the local facility exposure protocol.
- You should also notify the PA Program of the incident and if you need any additional assistance in securing appropriate medical treatment.

Harassment Policies and Procedures

Medical offices, operating rooms, emergency rooms and hospitals are all institutions where the serious business of taking care of patients occur. Employees often use humor as a means of stress relief; however, their humor should never make another person feel as though they have been harassed or create a hostile work environment. If an incident occurs where you feel in imminent danger, clearly communicate your distress by any means possible, remove yourself from the situation, and call 911. If you feel that an incident has occurred that is not one of imminent danger, you should report the incident to the Director of Clinical Education and the UofSC Office of Equal Opportunity Programs (EOP).

Sexual Harassment

The University of South Carolina recognizes that harassment on the basis of sex is a violation of the law. UofSC is committed to an environment free from explicit and/or implicit coercive sexual behavior used to affect the well-being of members of this academic community. Sexual harassment is unacceptable and grounds for disciplinary action. Students who wish to file a complaint alleging sexual harassment should do so by contacting the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs. Persons observing sexual harassment should report the matter to the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs. Further details regarding sexual harassment and how reports are initiated may be found at:

[Equal Opportunity Programs](#)

[Student Health Services - Interpersonal Violence Support](#)

Student Mistreatment Policy³

The UofSC PA Program strives to maintain a professional learning environment. However, there are instances when a student may feel as though they have been mistreated and these should be investigated per the procedure in this policy.

Examples of mistreatment include: 1) instructional faculty/preceptor speaks insultingly or unjustifiably harshly, 2) belittles or humiliates, 3) threatens physical harm, 4) physically assaults (hits, slaps, kicks), 5) demands personal services, threatens to lower a student's grade for reasons other than course/clinical or professional performance.

The PA Program is dually housed in the School of Medicine and The Graduate School. The educational program has been developed to support and encourage the collegiality and professionalism essential to an effective learning environment. Students who believe that they have been punitively assessed or mistreated because of religion, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age or other factors have access to the Graduate School ombuds, currently Dale Moore.

[Graduate School Ombuds](#)

His contact information is e-mail: dm@mailbox.sc.edu
Phone: (803) 777-4243

The ombudspersons are empowered to receive and investigate reports of mistreatment in a completely confidential manner, to mediate between the parties involved, and, in the event mediation is not successful, to make recommendations directly to the Senior Associate Dean of the Graduate School regarding appropriate resolution of any complaints.

The use of the ombudspersons' services to resolve a complaint represents a form of alternate dispute resolution. For this reason, the services of the ombudspersons will no longer be available to a student once that student engages an attorney to initiate legal action against the School of Medicine, the University of South Carolina, or the employees of those institutions.

Conflict Resolution

Policy and Procedure:

- As professionals, PA students are expected to be able to handle conflict with other professionals in an appropriate manner. Therefore, conflicts between students or between the student and faculty should be discussed between the individuals involved.
- If the conflict cannot be resolved between the parties involved, or if the conflict is of a nature that the student feels uncomfortable confronting the involved individual, then the student should report to their faculty mentor (if the faculty mentor is the involved individual, then the student should report to the Program Director).
- The mentor/Program Director will take the complaint to the appropriate committee for resolution.

If the student is not satisfied with the resolution, then they should appeal to the Graduate School ombuds.

Other resources:

Academic grievances: [Academic Grievance Policy](#)

Non-Academic grievances: [Non-academic Student Grievance Policy](#)

Graduate School Grievances, Appeals and Petitions Form: [Graduate - Grievances, Appeals, and Petitions Form](#)

Sexual Harassment: [Sexual Harassment Policy](#)

Bias or hate incident: [Report an Incident](#)

Policies related to student relationship violence, stalking, and harassment are available online: [Relationship Violence, Stalking, and Harassment Policy](#)

Student Security

Security while on SCPEs is paramount to the PA Program and is the responsibility of the participating facility. The preceptor should orient the student

to safety and security measures specific to the clinical site. The student is to exercise good judgment while on SCPEs in terms of his or her own personal security. Most institutions have security personnel available to walk the student to their car after hours. If a security incident occurs while on SCPE, the student should immediately contact the institutions security personnel or local authorities. The Director of Clinical Education should be made aware of any incidents where a student's security has been compromised.

Faculty Mentor

All students were assigned a faculty mentor during the academic year. This same faculty member will continue to be your mentor during the clinical year. You are required to meet with your mentor at least once per semester during the clinical year.

This individual is committed to seeing you succeed in the PA Program and as a future provider. You may address any personal concerns about your clinical education experience – i.e. personality issues, concerns about not meeting learning objectives, etc. with either them or the Director of Clinical Education. There will likely be communication between faculty members regarding these issues. Specific questions regarding SCPE assignments and placement are to be addressed with the Director of Clinical Education.

Section 2: SCPEs

Required SCPEs

Family Medicine

Urgent Care/Primary Care 2

Behavioral Medicine

Internal Medicine

Orthopedics

Surgery

Women's Health

Pediatrics

Emergency Medicine

Elective x 2

SCPE Syllabi

Each SCPE has a separate syllabus written to address the specific topics and objectives that are to be introduced and/or mastered during the clinical experience. Students will have access to the syllabus prior to the start of the SCPE.

Medical Literature

Students may utilize the UofSC Library website to access a wealth of online resources: [UofSC School of Medicine Library](#)

Students have access to a large collection of online medical texts and journals, ClinicalKey, PubMed and MD Consult. Should you have any questions about available resources or need assistance researching a topic, contact the medical librarian.

SCPE Placement Policy

PA students are not required to provide or solicit clinical sites for preceptors. SCPE assignments are entirely the domain of the Director of Clinical Education with assistance of the Clinical Coordinator. Students will have an opportunity to submit requests for specific clinical sites and electives during the last semester of their didactic education. While attempts will be made to honor reasonable requests; the educational needs of the student and availability of preceptors will guide the ultimate assignments. As UofSC does not pay preceptors or sites, if there is a "student fee" associated with a rotation site, students would be responsible for it.

Every student is provided the SCPE information and preceptor contact information well in advance of each individual SCPE. It is imperative that the student contact the site at least one week prior to the start of a SCPE to confirm the schedule. Preceptors appreciate this and it gives them a chance to let you know where and at what time you should report on your first day.

Understand that the SCPE schedule may have to change for a multitude of reasons. You will be informed promptly if this is necessary.

Removal from SCPE

Any student who has willfully, accidentally, or unwittingly endangered the life of a patient, staff, peer, or him/herself during a SCPE will be removed from the SCPE immediately. The student may also be removed from the site per preceptor request. The incident will be reported to the Director of Clinical Education and/or the Program Director for appropriate action.

Attendance/Holidays/Pregnancy

Duration of the SCPEs will be outlined in the syllabus. They are normally 4 weeks, but this can vary depending availability and unpredictable external events. Students are expected to be present for all scheduled shifts. **Students are expected to work the clinical hours set by the preceptor.** Preceptors determine when and where students work, when the workday begins and ends, and if students take call. **This includes nights, weekends and holidays.** In the event of religious holidays, the student must first seek approval from the Director of Clinical Education before making any arrangements with the clinical facility. Students will be required to make up clinical hours lost due to religious holidays.

Excused Absences: Include the following: death/bereavement, personal illness, significant injury that required a doctor's visit, vehicular accident, family emergency of immediate family member, military obligations, or PA Program requests (i.e. interview days). Should this need arise, you must notify both the preceptor by phone and the Director of Clinical Education by email. **Absences due to illness of three or more consecutive days require medical clearance.** Medical clearance must be completed by a licensed physician, physician assistant, or nurse practitioner and submitted to the Director of Clinical Education in the form of a formal note or memo. Students will not be allowed to return to their SCPE sites without this clearance. Time lost must be made up with the exception of death/bereavement.

Unexcused Absences: Leaving a shift early, routine medical/dental, other business appointments, vacations, weddings, other personal events, and travel to or from these events are not acceptable absences from SCPEs. You are required to make up the time missed and any consequences of this, including losing points from the EOR activity grade is at the discretion of the Director of Clinical Education.

Leave of Absence: Prolonged absences may require a leave of absence from the clinical education experience. In the event of a leave of absence request, the student will meet with the Student Progress and Promotions Committee to specify the terms and conditions of the leave, as well as conditions under which the student

may resume their clinical education experience.

Tardiness: Tardiness is an issue of professionalism. Tardiness is defined as coming to work 1-60 minutes after the beginning of the shift. Anything over 60 minutes, without a viable excuse will be considered an unexcused absence, and consequences are at the discretion of the preceptor and/or Director of Clinical Education. Habitual tardiness will be brought before the Student Progress and Promotions Committee.

Pregnancy

There are areas of clinical medicine and clinical practice that present hazards or potential danger to an expectant mother and/or unborn child. A student who is pregnant at the time of matriculation, or becomes pregnant at any time before graduation, is required to inform the Director of Clinical Education and their faculty advisor. SCPEs will be adjusted as much as possible to minimize stress on the mother and baby. The preceptors and sites may have their own guidelines/policies regarding pregnant students and the PA Program has no authority over a clinical site's policies. If an issue arises, the PA Program will review each instance on a case-by-case basis. Missed time on SCPEs, return to campus conferences, lectures, or other PA Program requirements due to pregnancy will be treated as any other absence. Additionally, the leave of absence policy applies to those pregnant students who wish to delay their rotations.

Clinical Year Assignments

The clinical year assignments are structured to allow the student to continue to prepare for the PANCE exam, sharpen and refine critical analysis skills, and to demonstrate the professional ability to submit documentation on a deadline.

Each 4-week SCPE may require the following:

1. EXXAT Data Submission
 - Patient/procedure logs
 - SOAP note on Sentinel Patients
2. Behavioral health paper – refer to SCPE-specific syllabi for requirements.
3. Student Evaluation of Site & Preceptor
4. Preceptor Evaluation of Student
5. PAEA End of Rotation Exam or case presentation of elective rotation
6. EOR activities as assigned, including, but not limited to:
 - Guest speakers
 - OSCE
 - Skills checks
 - Quizzes

Return to Campus for End of Rotation (EOR)

ALL EOR DATES ARE MANDATORY. Adjustments to the EOR schedule will not be made for any reason, to include travel. All students are **required** to return to campus at the end of each SCPE for exams, clinical skill testing and/or other activities as planned.

Preceptor Evaluations

The preceptor will complete an end of SCPE evaluation. It will be completed by the preceptor and returned to the PA Program by the EOR date. It is the student's responsibility to see that the evaluations are completed.

Exxat Data Submission

Students will be provided an introduction and opportunity to become proficient at using Exxat during the clinical year orientation program. Data submission includes required patients logs, optional procedure logs, student's evaluation of site/preceptor and written assignments. **Exxat data submission must be completed by 5:00 pm on the EOR date.**

Written Assignments

The Behavioral Health rotation where the student will complete a 2000 word paper. See SCPE syllabi for details.

Students are also required to complete SOAP notes on the sentinel patients assigned over the course of the clinical year. These can be completed during any SCPE in any specialty. For example, if a student evaluated a women's health complaint in the Emergency Department, they could complete that SOAP note at that time; they do not have to wait for the women's health rotation. These SOAP notes are to be fully completed no later than the last day of the last SCPE.

Rotation Assignments

Each core rotation will have specific assignments associated with it. These may include completion of Aquifer Cases, online modules from scholarly or specialty websites, or any other assignments. These will be completed by the EOR and transcripts uploaded into Exxat under the appropriate SCPE. Assignments completed and uploaded prior to that specific EOR will not be considered for grading. Any assignments given by the preceptor are in addition to the school assignments.

Student Evaluation of Site

This evaluation is to be completed for every preceptor/site at the end of each SCPE. It is located under the survey section of the EXXAT program. We value your opinion of preceptors and sites and use this evaluation in determining the future use of preceptors and clinical sites.

Rosh Question Completion

Each student will be required to complete a minimum of 150 Rosh Questions per rotation (including the electives). The transcript or screenshot of the completed questions are to be uploaded into EXXAT as proof of completion since many students erase their cache or buy the extra boost exams.

Elective Case Presentations

In lieu of an EOR exam for an elective SCPE, each student is required to do a case study presentation on a case they found particularly interesting. The entire case presentation should take about 5-10 minutes. Questions from classmates and the faculty grader will be answered after case presentation. The presentation will be graded by the faculty utilizing the Case Study Presentation Rubric (found in Elective SCPE syllabus). See the Elective SCPE syllabus for more details.

Site Visit for the Student

A PA faculty member may visit students during SCPEs. Site visits may be announced or unannounced and may be at the request of the preceptor.

Section 3: Grading Policy

Clinical Year Grading Policy

Each SCPE will be graded in the following manner:

End of SCPE Preceptor Evaluation of student:	45%
EOR Exam or Case Presentation:	45%
Documentation/completion of Rosh Questions, Patient and Procedure logs, and student Evaluation of Site/Preceptor	Required
OSCE/Skills checks/Quizzes	10%
Total	100%

Although the Rosh questions and Exxat assignments are not graded, per Se, you will lose points from the General EOR (10%) portion of your graded if they are not completed.

Requirements for Successful Completion of the SCPE

An overall score of 70% is required to pass the SCPE.

Failure of a SCPE may occur if:

- b. If the student is removed from the clinical site by a faculty member or preceptor request due to academic, clinical, or professionalism reasons.
- c. Any student who has willfully, accidentally, or unwittingly endangered the life of a patient, staff, peer, or him/herself during a SCPE will be removed from the SCPE immediately. The incident will be reported to the Director of Clinical Education and/or the Program Director for appropriate action.
- d. Failing to demonstrate professionalism on the SCPE, including absenteeism and tardiness.
- e. This includes any remarks made by the preceptor either via verbal or written communication that would indicate deficits in knowledge or skills or lapses in professionalism.
- f. Failing to participate in required EOR day – **EVERY EOR DAY IS REQUIRED**
- g. Failing the Preceptor Evaluation – below 70%
- h. Failing the EOR Exam – below 70%
- i. Overall score for the SCPE is below 70%

Regardless of the student's calculated grade for a particular SCPE, if the preceptor or faculty has identified deficits or concerns in any area of the student's performance, including professionalism, the student will be referred to the Student Progress and Promotions Committee, who may recommend actions ranging from remediation to dismissal from the PA Program.

A failing grade will result in the student being referred to the Student Progress and Promotion Committee (SPPC). The SPPC may make recommendations from remediation to dismissal from the PA Program. Anyone earning a failing grade must meet with their advisor as soon as possible.

A student may also be referred to the SPPC if they have not demonstrated progression to or performing up to expected standards. This includes, but is not limited to, repeated “below-average” ratings, or repeatedly reported areas of weakness.

Supplemental Preparation

Studies have shown that EOR Exam scores directly correlate to PANCE performance. Therefore, if you score below the national average that could lead to poor PANCE performance. Therefore, it is now a PA Program requirement that students obtain a scale score of 400 or better on core EOR Exams. This is separate from your graded score: it is still possible to pass your exam with a 70 or better if your raw score is below 400. The PA Program has taken steps to mitigate possible poor PANCE performance through Supplemental Preparation. For each exam scored below a raw score of 400:

- The student will have one week to do 100 Rosh questions in that core with a passing score of 85% or better.
- Repeat that exam during an elective EOR (not graded).
 - If there are multiple exams below 400, you will repeat the lowest scored.
- *Optional, yet strongly encouraged:* use your EOR grade report to outline/review the areas you missed.

Remediation

At the discretion of the Student Progress and Promotion Committee, the student may be afforded remediation of the failed SCPE. In addition to repeating the SCPE at a clinical site and time selected by the faculty, the Committee may also recommend additional assignments, counseling, or any other suggestions as they see fit. These recommendations are made to the Program Director in the form of a written document. The Program Director may choose to accept or augment these recommendations and will present the findings to the student.

If a SCPE is allowed to be repeated, the repeated SCPE will automatically take the place of one of the electives if electives remain and there is site availability. However, if these two conditions are not met, the repeated SCPE may be added at the end of the clinical year, which may result in a delay in graduation and possibly additional tuition. The expected matriculation for the program is 27 months. However, students may be afforded an extra four months, equal to one semester, or 31 months to complete the program in certain instances recommended by the SPPC and approved by the program director. Any absences longer than four months will require an approved leave of absence no greater than one year and deceleration to the following cohort.

Academic Probation

All students in the UofSC PA Program are required to achieve a 70% or better average in each of their SCPEs and an overall GPA of 3.0 or higher to progress and graduate from the UofSC PA Program. Students who fail a SCPE will be placed on Academic Probation for the remainder of the clinical year due to the expected graduation date within a year of the start of the clinical year.

Special Circumstances

Any student who is unable to complete a SCPE due to *extenuating circumstances*, such as major illness or injury, will be required to complete the entire SCPE at the end of the scheduled clinical year or in place of their elective. The student should note that any delay in graduation will result in additional tuition charges. A grade of incomplete will be recorded until the SCPE is repeated.

Deceleration Policy and Procedures

Deceleration of a student is defined as a student leaving their current cohort to join a cohort following behind with the goal to satisfactorily completing the PA Program with the new cohort. Deceleration can be recommended by the SPPC if a student requires a leave of absence that the student cannot make up within one semester and would not allow the student to complete the program in 31 months.

Students may request to be decelerated if an extenuating circumstance occurs requiring a leave of absence that may include a prolonged illness, pregnancy, injury, or mental health issue. Deceleration will only be offered in rare instances. In most cases, deceleration will not be offered to students who are not meeting academic standards.

Procedures for deceleration are as follows:

1. Deceleration has been recommended for the student by the SPPC in writing and supported and signed by the Program Director.
2. The Program Director will convey recommendations and expectations to the student in writing. The student must sign the proposed plan.
3. The deceleration plan will then be forwarded to the Associate Dean of Research and Graduate Studies and subsequently the Senior Associate Dean of the Graduate School for validation. Any changes will be conveyed to the student through the Program Director.
4. The student then enrolls and becomes a member of the following cohort at the appropriate time.

Withdrawal Policy and Procedures

The Graduate School policy regarding withdrawal can be found at: [Withdrawal from All Courses](#)

The PA Program procedure for withdrawal are as follows:

1. Student first needs to notify the Program Director of desire to withdraw by way of a scheduled appointment.
2. Program Director signs a form acknowledging the student's desire to withdraw from the UofSC PA Program.
3. Student takes the signed form to the Registrar for processing.
4. A student will not automatically be withdrawn from the PA Program if he/she stops attending class. It is the student's responsibility to follow the appropriate procedures to withdraw from the PA Program.

Dismissal Policy and Procedures

Recommendation for dismissal may result from any of the following:

- Any student earning a failing grade in any course or SCPE.
- Any student earning two grades of C or C+ in a single semester.
- Any student earning a total of three grades of C or C+ throughout the entire PA Program.
- Obtaining a cumulative GPA of <3.0 for more than a single semester.
- Any student failing to meet the requirements of a course as stipulated in the syllabus.
- Failure to comply with professional behavioral standards as deemed appropriate by the faculty of the PA Program including the Medical Director with guidance from the AAPA Guidelines for Ethical Conduct.

Dismissal procedures:

- The student meets the SPPC and dismissal is recommended.
- The student meets with the Program Director and decision to dismiss is upheld. A letter of dismissal is signed by both the student and Program Director. Options for appeal are discussed including Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies, Senior Associate Dean of the Graduate School, and Provost. Consultation with the Graduate School Ombuds is also offered.
- The student is then dismissed from the PA Program and no longer able to register or attend further coursework even if an appeal is initiated. The PA Program notifies the Registrar and the Bursar's Office that the student is no longer part of the PA Program.

Grievances³

See:

For academic grievances:

<http://www.sc.edu/policies/ppm/staf630.pdf>

For non-academic grievances:

<http://www.sc.edu/policies/ppm/staf627.pdf>

Graduate School Grievances, Appeals and Petitions

Form: _

https://www.sc.edu/study/colleges_schools/graduate_school/documents/g-gap.pdf

Grade Notification Policy

The Director of Clinical Education, with the assistance of the Clinical Coordinator, maintains grade records. Grades will be posted to Self Service Carolina once SCPE have been tabulated.

Academic Integrity

The university expects all students to adhere to the academic honesty policy located in the student handbook. The principle of the honor code assumes that no student will cheat, nor tolerate cheating by classmates. This means that in addition to the most obvious forms of cheating, such as copying someone else's answers, you may not share any of the information that was on a test with a classmate.

Unlike the first year of the PA Program when the entire class took tests at the same time, clinical exams are taken in the order of your individual SCPEs and all of the exams are administered at the end of a SCPE. All students are obligated, therefore, not to discuss any aspect of the exam they have taken with another student.

In addition, the honor code requires that you bring to the attention of the faculty any incidents of cheating. To have knowledge of academic dishonesty without reporting it is considered the same as actively cheating. The Physician Assistant Program administration does not tolerate any form of cheating and may dismiss any student found guilty of the charge of academic dishonesty.

The integrity policy applies to the attendance policy during SCPE's as well – you are expected to complete approximately 160 hours of Supervised Clinical Practical Experience under a licensed provider.

Professionalism and Ethical Conduct

As members of the health care community, PA students are expected to behave in a manner consistent with the principles and obligations inherent in professional practice. Professional maturity, integrity, and competence are expected of students in every aspect of the clinical setting with preceptors, coworkers, and patients. Students are obliged to practice diligence, loyalty, and discretion in the patient-provider relationship.

The UofSC PA Program subscribes to the AAPA Guidelines for Ethical Conduct for the PA Profession. The basic guidelines of the policy are listed below.

- Physician assistants hold as their primary responsibility the health, safety, welfare, and dignity of all human beings.
- Physician assistants uphold the tenets of patient autonomy, beneficence,

nonmaleficence and justice.

- Physician assistants recognize and promote the value of diversity.
- Physician assistants treat equally all persons who seek their care.
- Physician assistants hold in confidence the information shared in the course of practicing medicine.
- Physician assistants assess their personal capabilities and limitations, striving always to improve their medical practice.
- Physician assistants actively seek to expand their knowledge and skills, keeping abreast of advances in medicine.
- Physician assistants work with other members of the health care team to provide compassionate and effective care of patients.
- Physician assistants use their knowledge and experience to contribute to an improved community.
- Physician assistants respect their professional relationship with physicians.
- Physician assistants share and expand knowledge within the profession.

Students are required to read the complete document on the AAPA website at:

[AAPA Guidelines for Ethical Conduct for the PA Profession](#)

After you have reviewed these guidelines please sign the signature page, located in the back of the handbook. This document should be submitted to the UofSC PA Program office.

Some behaviors or patterns may raise concerns as to the student's suitability to continue in this program of study. Inappropriate behaviors for a health profession student may include, but are not limited to, breaching patient confidentiality, using illegal or synthetic drugs or abusing controlled substances, "dating" or becoming sexually involved with a patient, preceptor or staff member, undertaking a procedure or scope of practice beyond that of a student, disobeying or showing disrespect for preceptors or faculty, showing a judgmental attitude toward patients, or revealing a lack of concern or compassion in practice. All cases involving alleged misconduct by PA students will be considered by the Student Progress and Promotions Committee. The committee may recommend possible disciplinary action that may range from individual counseling to dismissal from the UofSC PA Program.

Section 4: Signature Pages

Clinical Year Student Handbook Receipt

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Clinical Year Student Handbook for the Physician Assistant Program at UofSC School of Medicine. I understand that I am responsible for the information contained in this handbook and am expected to abide by the policies and procedures as stated in this handbook. I also understand that, at any time, the UofSC School of Medicine Physician Assistant Program may change a policy or procedure, and that I will be notified in writing and asked to replace the current policy or procedure contained in this handbook with a new or revised policy/procedure.

I also acknowledge that the Clinical Year Student Handbook not only contains information that is helpful to me as a clinical year student in the UofSC School of Medicine Physician Assistant Program, but also contains information about graduation, licensure, and certification. Therefore, since this handbook may be the only source of such information, and will be referred to by the faculty of the UofSC School of Medicine Physician Assistant Program, I will keep this handbook available for use throughout my clinical education in the PA Program.

Student Name: _____
(Print)

Student Signature

Date

Consent for Release of Student Information Form

NCCPA Personal Information Release

I authorize the UofSC School of Medicine PA Program to release to The National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA) my name, social security number, date of birth, gender, address, email address, graduation date and any other information that they may require to ensure my eligibility to take the PANCE.

Initials _____

Criminal Background Checks and Drug Screening

Certain federal, state and local regulations now require students to provide criminal background checks and, in some cases, drug screen results to prospective clinical sites. I authorize the UofSC School of Medicine PA Program to release the results of my background check and/or drug screen to clinical sites and/or preceptors as needed to facilitate scheduling of SCPEs.

Initials _____

Release of Immunization Information and TB Test Results

I authorize the UofSC School of Medicine Physician Assistant Program to release my personal information regarding immunization status and TB test results to preceptors, hospitals, or other institutions that require that information to allow me to function in the role of a PA student in their areas of authority.

Initials _____

I authorize the UofSC Physician Assistant Program to release my information as outlined in the above paragraphs.

Student Name: _____
(Print)

Student Signature

Date

Guidelines for Ethical Conduct for the PA Profession

I understand and acknowledge that professionalism is an important factor in the PA profession and agree to abide by the following guidelines as set forth by the American Academy of Physician Assistants.

- Physician assistants hold as their primary responsibility the health, safety, welfare, and dignity of all human beings.
- Physician assistants uphold the tenets of patient autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence and justice.
- Physician assistants recognize and promote the value of diversity.
- Physician assistants treat equally all persons who seek their care.
- Physician assistants hold in confidence the information shared in the course of practicing medicine.
- Physician assistants assess their personal capabilities and limitations, striving always to improve their medical practice.
- Physician assistants actively seek to expand their knowledge and skills, keeping abreast of advances in medicine.
- Physician assistants work with other members of the health care team to provide compassionate and effective care of patients.
- Physician assistants use their knowledge and experience to contribute to an improved community.
- Physician assistants respect their professional relationship with physicians.
- Physician assistants share and expand knowledge within the profession.

I have reviewed the preceding guidelines along with the full list of detailed guidelines from the AAPA website at: [AAPA Guidelines for Ethical Conduct for the PA Profession](#). I fully understand and agree to abide by these guidelines in their entirety.

Student Name: _____
(Print)

Student Signature

Date

The contents of this clinical handbook are subject to change in ways that will improve accuracies of the Program's accreditation status, reflect changes in clinical year requirements, and update UofSC SOM and PA Program policies. Any changes will be announced as soon as possible after they are made.

Revised August 2021

References

1. ARC-PA Standard 3.03
2. ARC-PA Standard 3.05
and 3.15e
3. ARC-PA Standard
3.15g