MASTER OF SCIENCE IN PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROGRAM STUDENT HANDBOOK

2026

SOUTH UNIVERSITY, RICHMOND

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I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

ACCREDITATION STATUS

The Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant, Inc. (ARC-PA) has granted Accreditation-Continued status to the South University Richmond PA Program sponsored by South University Richmond. 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remains in effect until the program closes or withdraws from the accreditation process or until accreditation is withdrawn for failure to comply with the Standards.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 2031 March. The review date is contingent upon continued 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/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Accreditation-History-South-Univ-Richmond-269.pdf

INTRODUCTION

This handbook has been prepared to orient you to current policies and procedures, guidelines, and resources relevant to your participation in the South University (the "University") Master of Science in Physician Assistant program. Please read this handbook carefully as the contents will govern your enrollment in the South University Physician Assistant program. Additionally, this handbook contains information about the physician assistant (PA) profession and its professional organizations. Periodically, additional policies and/or procedures may be established or changes made to the South University Physician Assistant program's policies and procedures. All changes or additions will be shared with you via e-mail as they become effective. We hope this handbook will be useful to you. Please feel free to contact the Program Director or your faculty advisor if you have any questions.

Other policies and procedures regarding enrollment in South University can be found in the South University Academic Catalog, and the South University Student Handbook.

GENERAL INFORMATION

The educational goal of the South University Physician Assistant program is to provide a primary care-oriented education that prepares graduates for a meaningful and impactful career as physician assistants. The program's objectives are grounded in the Accreditation Standards for Physician Assistant Education as established by the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for Physician Assistants, Inc. (ARC-PA).

Graduates are prepared to demonstrate the core competencies of practicing physician assistants, including medical knowledge, interpersonal skills, clinical and technical skills, professional behaviors, and strong clinical reasoning and problem-solving abilities.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the South University Master of Science in Physician Assistant (MSPA) program is to educate a diverse student population and prepare graduates to practice the art and science of medicine who provide high-quality, compassionate, patient-centered healthcare that is responsive to the needs of all individuals.

VISION STATEMENT

The South University Physician Assistant (MSPA) Program strives to provide an educational environment that empowers students to practice evidence-based, patient-centered medical care. With an emphasis on increasing access to care, addressing barriers to healthcare delivery, and engaging in community outreach, we aim to offer meaningful connection and experiences for students, faculty, and staff. As future clinical leaders, the program's focus is to graduate physician assistants who will champion compassionate care and patient advocacy.

TECHNICAL STANDARDS

To ensure that patients receive the best possible care, the faculty of the South University Physician Assistant (PA) program has identified essential skills and professional behaviors required for successful progression as a physician assistant.

Students with physical, mental, or emotional disabilities who can perform these skills and behaviors, either independently, with dependable use of assistive devices, or by employing other reasonable accommodations are eligible to apply for enrollment in the program. The program is committed to providing reasonable accommodation in accordance with applicable laws and professional standards while ensuring that all students are able to meet the required competencies for safe and effective patient care.

These technical standards require that each student possess the physical, mental, and emotional health necessary to fully engage in both the academic and clinical training environment. Minimum performance expectations include the ability to demonstrate accurate observation, effective communication, sufficient motor and physical function, intellectual and cognitive abilities, and appropriate behavioral and social attributes.

Students must meet the following technical standards:

1. Observation

- Accurately perceive information through vision, hearing, touch, and other somatic senses.
- Gather information from demonstrations, patient encounters, diagnostic tests, and clinical instruments.
- Detect nonverbal cues such as facial expressions, body language, and affect, both at a distance and close range.

2. Communication

- Communicate clearly and effectively in oral and written form with compassion and sensitivity.
- Engage in professional interactions with patients, families, faculty, peers, and healthcare teams.
- Document, interpret, and convey medical information accurately and efficiently.
- Recognize and appropriately respond to nonverbal communication and feedback.

3. Motor and Physical Function

- Perform physical examination techniques such as palpation, auscultation, percussion, and diagnostic maneuvers.
- Execute essential motor tasks required for medical practice, including performing physical examinations, assisting with patient positioning for procedures, carrying

out clinical and emergency interventions, and delivering routine patient care safely and effectively.
- Manipulate medical equipment, instruments, and technology with both fine and gross motor skills.
- Maintain physical stamina to meet the rigors of classroom, laboratory, and clinical settings (including long hours, varied shifts, and high patient care demands).

4. Intellectual and Cognitive Abilities
- Demonstrate skills in measurement, calculation, reasoning, analysis, and synthesis.
- Integrate and apply information from lectures, simulations, patient encounters, and medical literature.
- Problem-solve efficiently in complex and dynamic clinical situations.
- Comprehend spatial and three-dimensional relationships essential for anatomy, imaging, and procedures.

5. Behavioral and Social Attributes
- Possess the emotional health and stability required for sound judgment, safe clinical decision-making, and effective patient care.
- Demonstrate integrity, compassion, professionalism, and ethical conduct in all academic, clinical, and community settings.
- Develop professional, respectful, and collaborative relationships maintaining appropriate boundaries with all patients, families, faculty, staff, and colleagues.
- Meet all professional and academic responsibilities in a timely and reliable manner, including attendance, preparation, participation, and follow-through on assignments and clinical duties.
- Exercise good judgment and self-control in both routine and stressful situations, avoiding behaviors that are disruptive, unsafe, or unprofessional.
- Adapt to stressful, changing, or uncertain environments while maintaining appropriate coping skills and a professional demeanor.
- Accept, integrate, and act upon constructive feedback to promote ongoing personal and professional growth.

PROGRAM GOALS

The following are goals for the South University, Physician Assistant program:

1. The program will promote advocacy and leadership within the PA profession.

2. The program will prepare graduates to achieve a first-time pass on the Physician Assistant National Certification Examination (PANCE) that equals or exceeds the national average. *
3. The program will offer community service and outreach opportunities that promote a commitment to improving access to quality healthcare.

*Note: Requirements for NCCPA Certification are determined by the NCCPA and are subject to change without notification to South University. Graduation from the South University Physician Assistant Program does not guarantee certification or employment.

Graduates are required to sit for and pass the national certification exam and obtain a state license in order to work in the field. Please refer to the State Professional Licensure Determination and National Certification/Licensure section of the University catalog for program and state specific information. South University cannot guarantee each graduate will pass the required examinations. Outside agencies control the requirements for taking and passing certification/licensing exams and are subject to change without notice to South University. Students must pass the required licensure to work in their respective field.

PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT LEARNING OUTCOMES (Graduate Competencies)

Students of the South University Physician Assistant Program are expected to demonstrate the competencies essential for entry into clinical practice. Each student must achieve the program learning outcomes (graduate competencies), which serve as measures of both individual competency and program effectiveness. Course syllabi outline the assessment modalities used to evaluate student performance across the domains of medical knowledge, interpersonal skills, clinical skills, technical skills, professional behaviors, and clinical reasoning and problem-solving abilities.

At the completion of the program, student will meet the following competencies required for successful entry-level PA practice:

PLO 1. Demonstrate comprehensive **medical knowledge** to promote health, evaluate a broad range of patient presentations, and manage clinical conditions across the lifespan.

PLO 2. Demonstrate **interpersonal and communication skills** to exchange information clearly and provide counseling and education to improve patient outcomes.

PLO 3. Perform essential **clinical skills** in decisions related to patient care.

PLO 4. Perform essential procedures and **technical skills** common to clinical practice.

PLO 5. Apply **clinical reasoning and problem-solving** in formulating differential diagnoses and developing patient-centered management plans.
PLO 6. Model essential **professional behaviors** in all interactions.
PLO 7. Demonstrate appropriate use of **healthcare resources** in order to advocate for quality patient-centered care.

PROGRAM CURRICULUM

The South University Physician Assistant Program delivers the didactic curriculum as a full-time, primarily on-campus experience with some blended instruction that may include virtual, synchronous modalities. As a complement to the on-campus didactic curriculum, clinical subject matter experts are included to ensure students are provided with current standards of medical practice. The clinical curriculum and clinical rotations are primarily direct patient care experiences with blended telehealth/telemedicine opportunities.

Notice: South University and the Master of Science in Physician Assistant Program reserve the right to modify curriculum requirements as necessary to ensure the academic integrity of its program. Students will be notified of any changes in curriculum or program requirements prior to implementation in accordance with ARC-PA Standards.

DIDACTIC PHASE (5 QUARTERS/15 MONTHS)

Quarter 1	PAS5102 Medical Interviewing and Documentation	3 Credits
	PAS5100 Physical Diagnosis I	3 Credits
	PAS5200 Physical Diagnosis I Lab	1 Credit
	PAS5125 Medical Anatomy and Physiology I	4 Credits
	PAS5225 Medical Anatomy and Physiology I Lab	1 Credit
	PAS5135 Laboratory Diagnostics	3 Credits
	PAS5173 Professional Seminar I (pass/fail)	2 Credits
	Total:	17 Credits

Quarter 2	PAS5115 Physical Diagnosis II	3 Credits
	PAS5215 Physical Diagnosis Lab II	1 Credit
	PAS5126 Medical Anatomy and Physiology II	4 Credits
	PAS5226 Medical Anatomy and Physiology Lab II	1 Credit
	PAS5180 Clinical Medicine and Pharmacotherapeutics I	8 Credits

	PAS5480 Clinical Medicine and Pharmacotherapeutics I Lab	1 Credit
	PAS5370 Medical Ethics	2 Credits
	PAS5295 Applied Learning Experience I (pass/fail)	1 Credit
	Total:	21 Credits

Quarter 3	PAS5181 Clinical Medicine and Pharmacotherapeutics II	8 Credits
	PAS5481 Clinical Medicine and Pharmacotherapeutics II Lab	1 Credit
	PAS5130 Diagnostic Methods	4 Credits
	PAS5124 Essentials of Behavioral Medicine	3 Credits
	PAS5296 Applied Learning Experience II (pass/fail)	2 Credits
	Total:	18 Credits

Quarter 4	PAS5182 Clinical Medicine and Pharmacotherapeutics III	8 Credits
	PAS5482 Clinical Medicine and Pharmacotherapeutics III Lab	1 Credit
	PAS5365 Surgery and Procedures I	4 Credits
	PAS5160 Public Health and Evidence Based Medicine	4 Credits
	PAS5143 Special Populations in Primary Care I	3 Credits
	PAS5297 Applied Learning Experience III (pass/fail)	1 Credit
	Total:	21 Credits

Quarter 5	PAS5183 Clinical Medicine and Pharmacotherapeutics IV	8 Credits
	PAS5483 Clinical Medicine and Pharmacotherapeutics IV Lab	1 Credit
	PAS5366 Surgery and Procedures II	2 Credits
	PAS5190 Essentials of Emergency Medicine	4 Credits
	PAS5144 Special Populations in Primary Care II	4 Credits
	PAS5174 Professional Seminar II (pass/fail)	3 Credits
	PAS5298 Applied Learning Experience IV (pass/fail)	1 Credit
	Total:	23 Credits

TOTAL DIDACTIC PHASE CREDITS: 100 credits

CLINICAL PHASE (4 QUARTERS/12 MONTHS)

Quarter 6	PAS6200 Clinical Rotation I	8 Credits
	PAS6205 Clinical Rotation II	8 Credits
	PAS6320 Special Topics in Clinical Practice I (pass/fail)	2 Credits
	Total:	18 Credits

Quarter 7	PAS6210 Clinical Rotation III	8 Credits
	PAS6215 Clinical Rotation IV	8 Credits
	PAS6330 Special Topics in Clinical Practice II (pass/fail)	2 Credits
	Total:	18 Credits

Quarter 8	PAS6220 Clinical Rotation V	8 Credits
	PAS6225 Clinical Rotation VI	8 Credits
	PAS6340 Special Topics in Clinical Practice III (pass/fail)	2 Credits
	Total:	18 Credits

Quarter 9	PAS6230 Clinical Rotation VII	8 Credits
	PAS6235 Clinical Rotation VIII	8 Credits
	PAS6350 Physician Assistant Senior Seminar (pass/fail)	4 Credits
	Total:	20 Credits

TOTAL CLINICAL PHASE CREDITS: 74 credits

Rotations must be completed in the following disciplines:

- Family Medicine
- Internal Medicine
- Pediatrics
- Emergency Medicine
- Surgery
- Women's Health
- Behavioral Medicine
- Clinical Elective

The courses below are offered on an as needed basis for remediation purposes:

- PAS5499 Independent Study I 8 credits
- PAS5599 Independent Study II 8 credits

II. STUDENT RIGHTS, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND RESOURCES

STUDENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

South University is committed to the development of knowledge and ethics that are consistent with responsible professional and social behavior. During orientation to the program, each student receives a copy of the Physician Assistant Program Student Handbook (this document). Additionally, students are oriented to the South University Academic Catalog . These documents govern student activity while enrolled in the South University Physician Assistant program. Students are expected to meet academic requirements and demonstrate a sense of responsibility with an understanding of and respect for the rights of others. The atmosphere of the University reflects these goals; and, in turn, each student must be aware of their individual responsibility to act accordingly. By enrolling as a student at South University, a student agrees to abide by the rules and regulations of South University. The rules concerning student behavior are outlined in the Code of Conduct section of the South University Student Handbook. Specific conduct expectations of the South University Physician Assistant student can be found in section IV of this handbook (PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OF CONDUCT). Alleged violations of the program's Standards of Professional Behavior will be referred to the program's Student Progress and Promotions Committee (SPPC). Alleged violations of the University Student Code of Conduct may be referred to the University's Dean of Student Affairs.

STUDENT EMPLOYMENT

Employment during a student's course of training is strongly discouraged. Any student who seeks employment and is unable to maintain adequate academic standing as outlined in this document may be asked to terminate their employment.

At no time is a South University PA student allowed to or required to work for the program. Additionally, PA students will not substitute for or function as instructional faculty, clinical, or administrative staff.

DISABILITY SERVICES

Students who seek reasonable accommodations should notify the Dean of Student Affairs at the campus location. Please refer to: South University Academic Catalog: Disability Services for more information.

ACADEMIC REGULATIONS AND POLICIES

Academic regulations, including grievance procedures, are further outlined in the South University Academic Catalog and the South University Student Handbook. Students enrolled at South University are expected to uphold, at all times, standards of integrity and behavior that will reflect credit upon themselves and South University. Registration at South University implies the student's acceptance of the published academic regulations and all other rules found in any official publication or announcements. Conduct regulations, are described in the South University Academic Catalog and the South University Student Handbook.

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

Please refer to the South University Academic Catalog: Non-Discrimination Policy.

NO HARASSMENT POLICY

Please refer to the South University Academic Catalog: No Harassment Policy.

STUDENT GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

For concerns regarding mistreatment, discrimination, harassment (other than sexual harassment), unprofessional relationships, abuse of authority, and abusive and/or intimidating behavior, please refer to the South University Academic Catalog: Student Grievance Procedure for Internal Complaints of Discrimination and Harassment.

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT AND RELATIONSHIP VIOLENCE POLICY AND PROCEDURES

For concerns regarding Sexual Misconduct & Relationship Violence, please refer to the South University Academic Catalog: Sexual Misconduct & Relationship Violence Policy; Procedures for Handling Sexual Misconduct and Relationship Violence Complaints.

STUDENT GENERAL COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

For concerns regarding general complaints, please refer to the South University Academic Catalog: General Complaint Procedures.

In compliance with U.S. Department of Education and SACSCOC regulations, South University is committed to implementing a student concern/complaint process that is fair, timely, and effective. Students should follow the process outlined in the South University Student Concern Submission form including; discuss complaints with the appropriate individual(s) within the PA Department or College of Health Professions. Initial discussion should be with the person most knowledgeable of the issues involved or with immediate decision-making responsibility.

If you feel that the complaint has not been fully addressed, a written account can be sent using the Student Concern Submission form. Your concern will be submitted to the Dean of Student Affairs if related to non-academic issues or to the Campus Director & Dean of Academic Affairs and Operations for academic issues.

STUDENT AFFAIRS

The Dean of Student Affairs is responsible for all aspects of student life outside of the classroom. This includes but is not limited to: campus security, career services, counseling, disability services, graduation, financial aid information, fire evacuation, medical procedures, orientation, tutoring, parking, student activities and clubs, student lounge and other common areas, veterans' affairs, weather announcements, approval for advertisement and on-site fundraising activities, alcohol and drug information, and student discipline. Please see the South University Academic Catalog: Student Affairs Section for detailed information on each of the above topics.

COUNSELLING SERVICES AND REFERRALS

South University has partnered with ***UWill at South*** to provide ease of access to mental health and wellness support and resources. With ***UWill***, all students have access to:

- 24/7/365 mental health services line for in-the-moment support from counselors and regardless the time of day or your location. **Call 833-464-1526 to reach the 24/7 support line.**
- **Telehealth** counseling sessions. These are available to you regardless of your location.
- **The Wellness Hub**, which includes articles and videos on mental health and wellness topics, including mental and emotional health, fitness and nutrition, academic performance, stress management, healthy relationships and more. To access the Wellness Hub, go to app.uwill.com.

Students seek counseling and mental health services for a variety of reasons through their academic journey. *UWill at South* clinicians are here for you anytime, and are prepared to assist you by phone and live video conferencing.

In the event that a student may need additional counseling beyond services offered by the university and the Student Assistance Program, **the Dean of Student Affairs will help students with referrals to outside counseling services**. Program faculty may not participate in mental health counseling or treatment of students.

HEALTH SERVICES AND REFERRALS

All students enrolled in the South University Physician Assistant Program are required to maintain active health insurance coverage for the entire duration of their enrollment. Proof of coverage may be requested at any time by the program. Students who need assistance accessing health services, including locating providers or community resources, may contact the Dean of Student Affairs, who will provide information on local health resources and support services.

GUIDANCE

Each student is assigned a faculty advisor soon after matriculation. Students are required to meet with their faculty advisor for academic and professionalism advisement each quarter. Specific academic concerns should first be discussed with the individual instructor who is directly involved in the concern, then addressed with the course director if not resolved.

The Dean of Student Affairs (DOSA) is responsible for student well-being, including oversight of disability services, and will facilitate referrals for academic or personal

support as needed. Students are strongly encouraged to schedule an appointment with the DOSA if they are experiencing academic or personal concerns. Counseling resources are also available through South University's Student Assistance Program, as noted above.

Students are strongly encouraged to seek help early, as academic deficiencies, personal challenges, or other issues can significantly affect successful completion of the program. Within two business days, students identified as having personal issues that may impact their progress in the PA program are referred to the Office of Student Affairs. Faculty are encouraged to remind them of available resources such as the Student Assistance Program.

Career and job concerns are addressed to the Director of Career Services.

III. ACADEMIC POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

ACADEMIC ADVISING

Each student in the South University Physician Assistant program is assigned a faculty advisor who serves as a primary resource and advocate throughout their academic journey. Faculty advisors assist students in navigating available resources, interpreting program policies, and providing accountability for both academic achievement and professional development.

As adult learners, students are expected to take responsibility for their progress and to engage in professional, proactive communication with their advisor. Students must participate in mandatory advising meetings, which may be held in person or virtually each quarter. These meetings are designed to foster open dialogue, provide guidance, and monitor progression through the program. Students who are experiencing barriers to success in academic or professional domains may be required to meet with their advisor more frequently.

Advisors play a key role in ensuring that students are aware of program requirements, institutional resources, and professional expectations. They will provide timely feedback, help identify areas for growth, and guide students to appropriate support services when needed. While advisors are strong advocates for student success, ultimate responsibility for professional conduct, engagement, and academic performance resides with the student.

Student Responsibilities in Advising

To promote accountability and success, students are expected to:

- **Communicate professionally and proactively** with their advisor, including responding promptly to emails and meeting requests.
- **Attend all scheduled advising meetings** (in person or virtual) and arrive prepared with questions, updates, or materials as requested.
- **Demonstrate accountability** by following through on agreed-upon action plans, recommendations, or referrals provided by the advisor.
- **Engage in self-assessment and reflection** to identify strengths and areas for improvement in academic and professional development.

- **Seek guidance early** when encountering challenges, rather than waiting until difficulties escalate.
- **Remain informed of program policies and requirements** and use advising sessions to clarify expectations when needed.
- **Maintain professionalism** in all interactions with advisors, peers, faculty, and staff.

Advisor Responsibilities in Advising

To ensure students are supported and guided effectively, advisors are expected to:

- **Schedule and document advising meetings** at required intervals and as needed for student support.
- **Provide accurate information** regarding program policies, procedures, and expectations.
- **Monitor student progress** in both academic and professional domains, offering feedback and guidance to foster growth.
- **Refer students to appropriate resources** (academic support, counseling, disability services, career services, etc.) when barriers to success are identified.
- **Model professionalism and integrity** in all interactions with students.
- **Maintain confidentiality** consistent with institutional policy, while ensuring compliance with FERPA and other regulations.
- **Advocate for student success** while holding students accountable to program standards and professional expectations.

PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROGRAM POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

In addition to the general academic regulations and policies as stated in the South University Academic Catalog, the following policies and procedures pertain to all required courses taken by students enrolled in the South University Physician Assistant program. Program policies apply to all students, principal faculty and the Program Director regardless of location.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

South University maintains an institutional attendance policy to support the academic achievement of its students. Students are expected to attend all scheduled class, laboratory, and examination periods each week. Students, whether present or absent from

class, are responsible for knowing all that is announced, discussed, and/or lectured upon in class or laboratory, as well as for mastering all assigned reading. In addition, students are responsible for submitting all assignments and examinations on time, as required in the class.

Students are expected to attend all scheduled activities that are part of the class, including those activities scheduled during class time and those scheduled outside of class time. Please refer to the South University Academic Catalog: Attendance Policy for further details on the University's attendance policy.

ADDITIONAL SOUTH UNIVERSITY PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROGRAM POLICIES ON ATTENDANCE

Attendance policies for courses within the South University Physician Assistant Program are more stringent than the standard University Attendance Policy. All PA students are responsible for knowing and abiding by the program's attendance policy.

Due to the rigorous nature of the coursework and the accelerated pace of learning, attendance for classes and clinical experiences is mandatory for successful completion of the program. It is the expectation of the Student Progress and Promotions Committee that all students will attend all scheduled classes (in all modalities inclusive of synchronous, asynchronous, virtual, on-ground, etc.), conferences, seminars, laboratory experiences, and clinical practicums. Any student who is absent from a required scheduled course activity (didactic or clinical) must notify the Course Director, as well as the respective Director (Didactic or Clinical) of the absence as soon as possible. The student assumes full responsibility for obtaining all materials and making up all course work that is missed during an absence.

The course syllabus will further define how attendance is graded and/or monitored. All students are responsible for reviewing and abiding by the attendance policy for each course, which is located in the course-specific syllabus. Students who are absent due to a medical condition will be excused for as long as a healthcare provider states it is medically necessary for the student to be absent. The PA Program will not accept any healthcare provider documentation from the student that includes personal protected health information. This is done for the student's protection against any accusation of neglect or indifference, as well as to ensure that students have received appropriate medical attention.

Recurrent absences and tardiness will not be tolerated and may result in a disciplinary action to include a formal review by the Student Progress and Promotions Committee.

Tardiness: Students are expected to be in class/clinic and ready to participate on time. Students are recommended to arrive 10 minutes prior to course scheduled activities. Tardiness reflects unprofessional behavior and will not be tolerated in either the didactic or clinical phases of the program.

Each didactic class will be monitored by faculty to identify those students who arrive late. In the clinical phase of the program, preceptors are responsible for monitoring attendance and tardiness. The first offense will result in a verbal warning. Any subsequent offenses will require a meeting with the student's faculty advisor and may result in referral to the Student Progress and Promotions Committee. Further details on tardiness can be found in the course specific syllabi and the Clinical Policy Manual.

Reporting of Absences: Didactic students must report absences in advance via email whenever possible to the Course Director and Director of Didactic Education. If circumstances do not permit immediate access to email, the student must call the program, and ultimately submit an email notification. When absence due to illness extends beyond 48 hours, a signed healthcare provider's note will be required.

Clinical student absences must be reported to the Director of Clinical Education. Students unable to meet as scheduled with individual clinical preceptors will communicate with the preceptor as directed by the Clinical Education Team in the Clinical Policy Manual. When absence due to illness extends beyond 48 hours, a signed healthcare provider's note will be required. The PA Program will not accept any healthcare provider documentation from the student that includes personal protected health information. This is done primarily for the student's protection against any accusation of neglect or indifference, as well as to ensure that a proper health care provider has been sought by students in the case of illness.

Examinations: Attendance is mandatory for all examinations, both written and oral. Students are responsible for being present at the beginning of all examinations. Exams will begin ON TIME. Students who arrive after an examination has begun will be refused admission to the testing room.

Student are only allowed to take an examination outside of the regularly scheduled test administration if it is approved in advance by the Director of Didactic or Clinical Education. Students who are excused from the regularly scheduled administration of a test will be required to set up a time with the Course Director to make up the missed test as soon as possible.

For unexcused absences, it is at the discretion of the Directors of Didactic or Clinical Education if the student will be allowed to make up the examination for a maximum achievable grade of 70%. Additionally, any missed exam may be referred to the Student Progress and Progressions Committee for evaluation. If the student would like to appeal any decision related to exam administration and policy, the Program Director should be contacted within three business days.

Religious Observances: The PA program is committed to providing an academic environment that is respectful of the religious beliefs of all students. As part of this commitment, the PA program will make a good faith effort to avoid scheduling examinations during religious holidays and to provide reasonable accommodations to students who identify conflict with their academic requirements or schedule due to their religious beliefs and practices. Any student who is unable to participate in an examination or course requirement because of their religious observances will be given the opportunity to make up the missed examination(s) and/or course requirement(s).

If a student is unable to resolve a schedule conflict concerning religious holidays with the appropriate Director of Didactic or Clinical Education, the student may appeal. Appeals should be made in writing first to the Physician Assistant Program Director, followed by the PA Department Chair, and finally the Dean of the College of Health Professions if resolution is not achieved at the previous level. Student are afforded 3 business days to submit each level of appeal should there be a denial.

Students who anticipate conflicts with regularly scheduled classes, tests, examinations, and/or any clinical experiences have the opportunity to notify, in writing, the Directors of Didactic and Clinical Education during their PA program pre-matriculation orientation in January.

Students are generally scheduled to be off during University designated holidays during the didactic year. Please refer to the South University Academic Catalog for the official university calendar.

Due to the “non-scheduled” nature of clinical training, each student is expected to recognize their own personal responsibility for patient care and their own learning experience. Preparing students to assume the responsibility for patient care is the nature of clinical training and is critical to students’ professional training.

During the clinical phase, students are expected to be at the rotation site for any days including holidays when the rotation site is in operation. If the clinic/office is closed the day prior to or the day of the holiday and the preceptor will not be available, you may be given the day off as well.

EVALUATION OF STUDENTS

It is essential for professional development that students adopt and exhibit self-directed responsibility for their mastery of knowledge and skills. Students are required to pass all requisite didactic and clinical course work with a minimum grade of “C” for courses utilizing the letter grading system, or “Pass” for courses utilizing the Pass/Fail system. Students must complete class work in its entirety. No PA course credits from another institution may transfer into the didactic or clinical phases.

Students performing poorly in the didactic phase of the program should contact the Director of Didactic Education and the course instructor as soon as possible to solicit their help and recommendations to remediate deficiencies. Students performing poorly in the clinical phase of the program should contact the Director of Clinical Education and the clinical preceptor as soon as possible to solicit their help and recommendations to remediate deficiencies.

Faculty members are expected to provide reasonable assistance and direction to aid in this remediation process. The methods and extent to which faculty assist students with review and remediation of deficient material is at the discretion of the individual faculty member. Please refer to the “Students at Academic Risk and Remediation” section below.

GENERAL INFORMATION

To satisfactorily complete a course, the student must earn a grade of “C” or better in courses using the letter grading system or a “Pass” in courses utilizing the Pass/Fail system. Additionally, students must maintain an overall cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher throughout the duration of their enrollment in the PA program. Each course grade may be

based on multiple examinations, assignments, and a comprehensive final exam. Each exam may consist of multiple choice, matching, essay and clinical competency skills testing. Demonstration of clinical competency skills testing will be proctored by program faculty and/or their designee and must be completed as assigned by the course instructor or a designated faculty member. Material and assigned readings covered up to the lecture preceding the scheduled exam may be included on the exam. Any exceptions to examination content will be announced well in advance of the scheduled exam. Basic concepts covered earlier in the quarter may be asked on later exams. Medical knowledge is cumulative and material covered in prior quarters that is relevant to the coursework in subsequent quarters is considered testable.

DIDACTIC PHASE EVALUATION

The Student Progress and Promotions Committee is responsible for monitoring and coordinating the evaluation of the progress of each student during the didactic phase of the South University, Physician Assistant program.

Evaluation of student performance during the didactic phase is conducted through traditional methods such as:

- Written quizzes and examinations
- Practical examinations
- Problem-based instruction and evaluation during objective structured clinical exams (OSCEs)
- Oral presentations and projects/written submissions

Examinations are primarily objective multiple choice, laboratory practical, clinical skills practical, and objective structured clinical exams (OSCEs). However, other formats may be used at the discretion of an individual course instructor. Multiple methods of evaluation may be given in each course. A comprehensive final examination is administered at the end of most courses.

The course director will utilize statistical analysis to review the reliability of each multiple-choice exam/quiz.

CLINICAL PHASE EVALUATION

The Student Progress and Promotions Committee is responsible for monitoring and coordinating the evaluation of the progress of each student in the clinical phase of the South University Physician Assistant program. Students receive clinical experiences in both primary care and specialized (medical, behavioral, and surgical) rotations to better prepare them for the wide range of patient problems which they may encounter after graduation. Students in the clinical phase of the program are evaluated in a variety of ways by their clinical preceptors and program faculty during their clinical rotations. Feedback is provided to the students daily by the preceptors while students are actively participating in the care of patients. During the clinical phase, evaluation is intended to address achievement of competency in medical knowledge, interpersonal, clinical and technical skills, professional behaviors, and clinical reasoning and problem-solving abilities required for PA practice.

Clinical students must satisfactorily complete all clinical rotations as assigned. Grades in clinical course work reflect a student's cognitive, technical, attitudinal and behavioral performance and are based upon preparation, skill, attitude, and attendance, as well as patient management. Successful completion of a clinical rotation requires timely completion of credentialing documents and requirements, attainment of objectives and learning outcomes, compliance with rotation and program assignments within the rotation period, attendance at all scheduled activities of the clinical service, applicable key experience measures and competencies, and attainment of passing scores on preceptor evaluations, end-of-rotation examinations, and other faculty assessments which can include OSCEs (objective structured clinical examinations) and practical examinations.

The South University Physician Assistant Program's Director of Clinical Education will review the evaluations from the clinical preceptors/instructors and have final authority in assigning grades for all the clinical rotations and courses. Patient safety, proper professional conduct, and the progressive demonstration of achieving learning outcomes and independence of thought at all clinical sites is expected. The Director of Clinical Education in consultation with the Student Progress and Promotions Committee may recommend that a student either stay longer at a clinical site or repeat specific components of a clinical rotation and course as deemed necessary to ensure patient safety and the student's expected level of professional development and mastery of learning outcomes. This will be reviewed by the Student Progress and Promotions Committee and a recommendation will be made to the Program Director for intervention.

An overall minimum grade of "C" is required for satisfactory completion of each clinical rotation course. The grade for each of the eight clinical rotations will be based on multiple

components including the evaluation from the primary preceptor, faculty evaluations of the student, end-of-rotation exam, and additional assignments as further defined in the discipline-specific clinical rotation syllabus for each rotation.

If a student does not earn a course grade of at least a "C" on any clinical rotation, the student will be dismissed from the program for failure to meet the Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy outlined in the Academic Catalog.

Any other circumstance that causes a student not to successfully complete a rotation will require the student to meet with the Student Progress and Promotions Committee.

All evaluations not turned in and grades not calculated by the end of the rotation are reported as "I" (Incomplete) to the Registrar's office. Late grades will be turned in to the Registrar's office with a change of grade form once the necessary evaluation(s) have been received. All evaluations must be returned to the Education Clinical Coordinator prior to graduation.

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS

Completion of the didactic phase of the curriculum requires satisfactory completion of a formative evaluation administered at the end of the didactic training. The formative evaluation consists of a written examination, clinical skills performance evaluation, and a professionalism component. This evaluation is used to identify individual and collective weaknesses within the cohort that should be remediated and strengthened during the clinical phase of the program.

SUMMATIVE EVALUATION

Before graduation, students must successfully complete a comprehensive summative evaluation administered near the end of the clinical training period. This evaluation, conducted within four months of clinical phase completion, includes a written exam, an objective structured clinical examination (OSCE), and assessment of professionalism. It measures medical knowledge, clinical and technical skills, communication, professionalism, and clinical reasoning and problem-solving abilities, ensuring competency in the program's learning outcomes and confirming eligibility for graduation

The graduate candidate's summative evaluation consists of three distinct components, each of which must be successfully completed to earn a passing grade. Minimum passing standards are as follows:

- **Written Exam** – Score must be greater than or equal to 1.5 standard deviations below the national mean for the exam (medical knowledge)
- **OSCE** – Score of at least 70% in each area assessed on the clinical performance exam (medical knowledge, interpersonal and communication skills, clinical skills, technical skills, professionalism behaviors, clinical reasoning, and problem-solving abilities in patient care)
- **Final Professional Behavior Evaluation** – Student must be rated "Competent" in all domains of professional behavior on the program's final evaluation

Students who do not pass any component of the comprehensive summative evaluation will be referred to the Student Progress and Promotions Committee (SPPC). They will be required to remediate deficiencies and repeat the failed portion(s). In cases of significant deficiency, the student may be required to enroll in a self-directed independent learning seminar. The Program Director, with input from the SPPC, will establish a remediation plan.

Students are not eligible for program completion until all components of the summative evaluation are successfully passed. Failure of a component on the second attempt will result in further review by the SPPC. Any delay in graduation will result in additional tuition and fees for which the student is responsible. All program requirements, including successful completion of the summative evaluation, must occur within 45 months of matriculation.

GRADING SCALE

Grades will not be changed with the exception of mathematical errors.

A: 90 – 100
B: 80 – 89
C: 70 – 79
D: 60 – 69
F: 59 and below

Some courses are graded as Pass/Fail. In order to obtain a grade of "Pass," the student must achieve a numerical average of 70% or greater.

Please refer to the South University Academic Catalog: Grading Policies for additional information including final course grade challenges.

STUDENT PROGRESS AND PROMOTIONS COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

The committee is chaired by one of the program's directors. If the Program Director is not the chair, they serve as a non-voting member of the committee. A quorum (defined as a simple majority of the voting principal faculty committee members) must be present to commence the Student Progress and Promotions Committee meeting.

COMMITTEE PROCEDURE

The committee meets at least quarterly to review Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP), professionalism evaluations, and other relevant information available to aid in evaluation of each student. In addition to quarterly meetings, the Student Progress and Promotions Committee (SPPC) may be convened on an ad hoc basis to address specific student issues. For procedures on students not meeting SAP standards, see the Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy (SAP) detailed in the South University Academic Catalog. SAP is evaluated at the end of each quarter by the University Registrar and is not under the purview of the SPPC.

At the conclusion of each quarter, a student in the PA program who does not achieve the minimum standards for academic, clinical, and/or professional behavior performance for the PA program will be placed on PA program academic, clinical, and/or professional behavior performance warning for the duration of the following quarter. The SPPC, after applying programmatic policy and reviewing the violation of the standards for PA program academic, clinical, and/or professional behavior performance, will recommend the action to be taken by the Program Director.
Any one of the following may be applied based on student performance and their previous enrollment status (previous warning or probation):

- Advance in good standing
- Advance in good standing with a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP)

- Advance on academic, clinical, and/or professional behavior performance warning with a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP)
- Advance on academic, clinical, and/or professional behavior performance probation (following successful appeal of a PA program performance dismissal)
- Deceleration
- Dismissal

If a student is being considered by the SPPC for placement in a status other than advance in good standing, they will be afforded the opportunity to speak formally to the SPPC before a final decision is rendered. Any student not recommended to "advance in good standing" will be notified within 72 hours by the Program Director. The Program Director will notify the Department Chair, Assistant Dean and Dean of the College of Health Professions, and the Campus Director/Dean of Academic Affairs and Operations on any recommendations of the SPPC other than "advance in good standing."

Failure to meet the minimum academic standard may result in a loss of financial aid and dismissal from the university. Please refer to the Minimum Standards for Graduate Academic/Financial Aid Progress and Consequences for Failing to Meet Minimum Standards Policy in the South University Academic Catalog for further information regarding financial aid warning.

STUDENT PROGRESS

Students are required to follow the Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy and Master of Science in Physician Assistant Program Progression Policy that are found in the South University Academic Catalog.

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROGRAM PROGRESSION POLICY

Physician Assistant (PA) students are required to satisfactorily complete all didactic phase course and clinical education requirements in order to remain in good standing and to be eligible for graduation. Students, program faculty, and staff must comply with published programmatic policies, syllabi, course goals and objectives, as well as published University requirements to ensure satisfactory student progress through both the didactic and clinical phases.

The policies described below either clarify, operationalize, or augment the South University Satisfactory Academic Progress Policies.

Good Standing Status – Students must meet all the following criteria while enrolled in the PA program:

- Students must maintain a cumulative grade point average (CGPA) overall of 3.0 or higher. (Refer to the Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy in the Academic Catalog for further details.)
- An overall minimum grade of "C" in courses utilizing the letter grading system and a "Pass" in courses utilizing the Pass/Fail grading system is required for satisfactory completion of each course. (Refer to the Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy in the Academic Catalog for further details.)
- Students must consistently meet the technical standards.
- Students must demonstrate progression in program learning outcomes/competencies including successful completion of course required evaluations and program comprehensive evaluations:
    - **Didactic Progression to Clinical Phase:** Completion of a comprehensive formative written exam of medical knowledge and passing a summative Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) assessing progression in all program competencies
    - **Summative Graduation Requirement**: Successfully passing each component of the comprehensive summative evaluation).
- Satisfactory professional behavior in accordance with all South University Physician Assistant Program policies and procedures, the South University Physician Assistant Program Standards of Professional Behavior (as outlined in the PA Student Handbook), Master of Science in Physician Assistant Code of Conduct, South University Academic Integrity Policy, and the South University Honor Code.
- Performance assessment during clinical education is based on student achievement of program learning outcomes and competencies and is evaluated by instructional faculty. Assessment of students is based on the minimal levels of competency for each discipline-specific rotation. Any violation of these standards will result in referral of the student to the Student Progress and Promotions Committee (SPPC).

Any violation of these standards will result in referral of the student to the Student Progress and Promotions Committee.

STANDARDS OF CLINICAL PERFORMANCE

- Clinical Competency
  - Quarterly analysis of preceptor evaluations
  - Areas of assessment include but are not limited to:
    - Medical knowledge
    - Interpersonal skills
    - Clinical skills
    - Technical skills
    - Professional behaviors
    - Clinical reasoning and problem-solving abilities
    - Overall performance
- Preceptor Feedback
  - Feedback from preceptors from any source (e.g. in person, phone, email, written correspondence) should indicate that the student is meeting the minimum competencies.
- Clinical Experiences
  - Students must complete electronic submissions as outlined in the discipline-specific syllabus and the Clinical Policy Manual.

Discipline-specific learning outcome requirements and other clinical patient experiences necessary to complete the clinical education portion of the PA program are outlined in each rotation syllabus. Students are responsible for meeting these requirements prior to graduation and tracking their progress using the designated digital platforms.

UNSATISFACTORY PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROGRAM PERFORMANCE

A student's academic, clinical, or professional behavior performance may be reviewed at any time.

Academic and clinical performance is evaluated through the Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) policy, as well as through achievement of the program learning outcomes/competencies and meeting the technical standards. Students who fail to meet the program learning outcomes/competencies or technical standards will be reviewed by the Student Progress and Promotions Committee (SPPC) to determine whether remediation, intervention, or other action is necessary to support student progression.

Student's demonstrating professional behavior concerns based on program observation and/or information received by the PA program will be considered for remediation or disciplinary action. The program will make the appropriate intervention based on the type and severity of the student's misconduct. Violations of the program's Standards of Professional Conduct or University policy will be referred to the appropriate University official (i.e. Faculty Advisor, Dean of Student Affairs, Campus Director, Student Progress and Promotions Committee).

Students who do not meet the requirements of Good Standing Status in academic, clinical, or professional behavior performance will be referred to the SPPC. The student will be notified of the program's receipt of an unsatisfactory evaluation and informed of the potential impact on program standing. The SPPC, after applying programmatic policy and reviewing the violation of the standards, will render a decision on a course of action. The Program Director will notify the student of the decision.

If a student is being considered for placement in a status other than "Advance in Good Standing," the student will be given the opportunity to speak formally to the SPPC before the committee makes a recommendation and the Program Director renders a final decision. Please refer to the PA Program Student Handbook for further details regarding the SPPC.

Failure to meet the minimum academic standard may result in a loss of financial aid. Please refer to the Minimum Standards for Graduate Academic/Financial Aid Progress and Consequences for Failing to Meet Minimum Standards Policy in the Academic Catalog for further information regarding financial aid warning.

Students who are required to take additional coursework to meet the program learning outcomes, competencies, or graduation requirements will incur additional tuition and fees and will have a delayed graduation.

Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP):

Students who fail to meet the University's Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) standards will be managed through the process overseen by the Office of the Registrar and the University at the end of the quarter. The SAP policy is outlined in the South University Academic Catalog. Students will receive communication of their SAP status from both the program and the Registrar.

Other Academic, Clinical, or Professionalism Concerns:

All other matters related to academic performance, professionalism, or clinical progress outside of SAP will be evaluated by the Student Progress and Promotions Committee (SPPC). The SPPC, after applying programmatic policy and reviewing the violation of the standards for PA program academic, clinical, and/or professional behavior performance, will render a decision on a course of action. The Program Director will notify the student of the decision.

If a student is being considered for a status other than "advance in good standing," the student will be afforded the opportunity to formally address the SPPC before a final decision is rendered by the committee and the Program Director.

Failure to meet the minimum academic standard may result in a loss of financial aid. Please refer to the Minimum Standards for Graduate Academic/Financial Aid Progress and Consequences for Failing to Meet Minimum Standards Policy in South University Academic Catalog for further information regarding financial aid warning for failure to meet Satisfactory Academic Progress.

PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROGRAM ACADEMIC, CLINICAL, AND PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR PERFORMANCE WARNING

Students may be placed on professional behavior performance warning for any violation of the professional behavior performance standards of the Physician Assistant program. Acts that would garner a warning status for the student's enrollment include (but are not limited to):

A breach in the Physician Assistant Program standards in the following areas:

- Professional behavior
- Attendance
- Completion of clinical electronic submissions as outlined in the PA Program Student Handbook and Clinical Policy Manual
- Breach of patient confidentiality rules (HIPAA)
- Other serious violations of the Professionalism Standards for a Physician Assistant student

Physician Assistant program students who do not meet the requirements of Good Standing Status will be referred to the Student Progress and Promotions Committee.

For the duration of the programmatic performance warning, students must participate in a programmatic Performance Improvement Plans if they wish to continue their enrollment in the PA program. At the end of the warning period, the student's academic, clinical, and professional behavior performance will be evaluated by the SPPC who will recommend to the Program Director what action to take based on the student's progress in meeting the PA Performance Improvement Plan and other standards of the program.

Students who are already on programmatic performance warning of any type (academic, clinical, and/or professional behavior) who fail to achieve the minimum standards of performance in any of the three areas (academic, clinical, and professional behavior) will be dismissed from the Physician Assistant program.

DISMISSAL POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Dismissal can occur after review of the student's academic, clinical, or professional deficiency.

Students will be automatically dismissed from the Physician Assistant program for the following reasons:

- Failure to achieve and maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 in two consecutive quarters. (Please refer to the Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Policy in the Academic Catalog)
- Failure to achieve a grade of C or better (or a "Pass" in a "Pass/Fail course) in any course, in any quarter. (Please refer to the Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Policy in the Academic Catalog)
- Two consecutive or exceeding two cumulative quarters on warning or probation for any performance cause (academic, clinical, or professional behavior) during the student's enrollment. (Please refer to the Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Policy in the Academic Catalog)
- Violation of the College of Health Professions Background Check and Drug and Alcohol Screening Policy

Students may additionally be dismissed from the Physician Assistant program by the Student Progress and Promotions Committee for the following reasons:

- Failing to successfully complete Performance Improvement Plans (PIP), Remediation Plans, or achieve Program Learning Outcomes/Competencies
- Severe transgressions of ethical and moral conduct (including but not limited to violation of the Physician Assistant Program Standards of Conduct or Professionalism, stealing, or providing false documentation intended to deceive faculty or administration)

Any student who is dismissed from the South University PA Program must complete the checkout procedure. The checkout procedure is as follows:

- Complete an exit interview with financial aid
- Return their student ID badge, clinical facility badges, books, university supplies, and parking tag to security

A student dismissed from the PA program is prohibited from any further attendance in class or participation in medical training. The student may choose to appeal the decision and will not be allowed to continue program related activities until resolution of the appeal. Any dismissed student from any South University PA program who elects to reapply through CASPA will have their prior enrollment status considered and will not be guaranteed readmission.

STUDENT APPEAL PROCEDURES FOR DISMISSAL

Students seeking to appeal any dismissal (including academic/financial aid dismissal, Student Progress and Promotions Committee decisions, and/or Code of Conduct Violations) must do so in writing to the Department Chair within three business days of receipt of notification of their dismissal. If the student is not satisfied with the decision of the Department Chair, the appeal can proceed to the Assistant Dean of the College of Health Professions within three business days of receipt of notification of the prior decision. If the student is not satisfied with that decision, they can appeal to the Dean of the College of Health Professions within three business days of receiving the prior decision. The decision of the Dean of the College of Health Professions is final. Please see the Procedures for Appealing Academic/Financial Aid Dismissal and the Master of Science

in Physician Assistant Program Progression Policy in the South University Academic Catalog for more information on the appeal process.

If a final course grade challenge is denied by the instructor and subsequently results in the dismissal of a student, the student may submit a combined appeal of the course grade and academic dismissal following the procedures outlined above.

Students dismissed for failure to meet Satisfactory Academic Progress due to a cumulative grade point average below 3.0, where it is mathematically impossible to reach a cumulative GPA of 3.0 with one additional quarter of coursework, are not eligible to appeal the dismissal. In addition, any student who has previously been dismissed, granted reinstatement through an appeal, and subsequently dismissed again is not eligible to appeal the second dismissal.

PA PROGRAM REINSTATEMENT AFTER DISMISSAL

If a student is reinstated following a successful appeal of a Physician Assistant program academic, clinical, and professional behavior performance dismissal, they will be placed on academic, clinical, or professional behavior performance probation at the start of the quarter in which coursework resumes.

The student will be placed on a Performance Improvement Plan which will outline the expectations and performance requirements for continued enrollment in the Physician Assistant program. Requirements may include comprehensive evaluation, skills testing, or any other form of assessment deemed necessary by the Student Progress and Promotions Committee. The Program Director and the SPPC will continue to assess the student's progress under the plan during the quarter of probation. If a student successfully completes the probationary period plan as determined by the Program Director in consultation with the SPPC, the student will be recommended to continue in good standing at the start of the next quarter. Students who do not successfully complete the requirements of the reinstatement/PIP plan during the probationary period will be dismissed without the opportunity for appeal.

Students reinstated following a SAP dismissal must adhere to the academic standards of the South University Physician Assistant Program in place at the time of their reinstatement.

Minimum standards following successful appeal of a Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Dismissal:

- Readmitted students with a cumulative grade point average (CGPA) of less than 3.0 will re-enter the program on **Academic Probation**. They will have **one quarter to achieve a CGPA of 3.0 or higher**.
    - Students who fail to achieve a CGPA of 3.0 or higher will be dismissed from the program due to failure to meet satisfactory academic progress (SAP) without the opportunity for appeal.

- Readmitted students with less than a passing grade in a course (less than a "C" in a traditional letter graded course or "Fail" in a Pass/Fail course) must **repeat the course**.
    - **Didactic Phase**: Students with less than a passing grade in a course must repeat and pass the failed course before progressing through the didactic curriculum.
        - Didactic courses are deployed once annually; thus, the student will be required to decelerate and re-matriculate with the next cohort.
        - The Student Progress and Promotions Committee will devise a re-entry plan for the student that may include audited course work, repeated coursework, or Independent Study (PAS5499 or PAS5599).
        - Students who fail to earn a passing grade in a didactic course on the second attempt will be dismissed from the program without the opportunity for appeal.
        - Students who are decelerated will have delayed graduation and will incur additional tuition and fees for repeated and/or audited coursework.
    - **Clinical Phase**: Students with less than a passing grade in a course must repeat and pass the failed course before progressing through the clinical curriculum.
        - The Student Progress and Promotions Committee will devise a re-entry plan that may include Independent Study (PAS5499 or PAS5599) or immediate repeat of the failed clinical rotation course.
        - Additional coursework will delay graduation and the student will incur additional expenses related to tuition and fees.
        - Students who fail to earn a passing grade in a clinical course on the second attempt will be dismissed from the program without the opportunity for appeal.

APPEALS OF THE STUDENT PROGRESS AND PROMOTIONS COMMITTEE DECISIONS

Students may appeal decisions of the Student Progress and Promotions Committee. Any student wishing to appeal a decision of the Student Progress and Promotions Committee must do so in writing to the to the Department Chair within three business days of receipt. If the student is not satisfied with the decision of the Department Chair, the appeal can proceed to the Assistant Dean of the College of Health Professions within three business days of receipt. If the student is not satisfied with the decision, they can appeal to the Dean of the College of Health Professions within three business days of receiving the prior decision. The decision of the Dean of the College of Health Professions is final. Appeals submitted after this time will not be considered. Written appeals will only be considered for claims of the following:

- Failure of the program or University to follow due process
- New evidence pertinent to the student's case
- Punishment not appropriate for the situation

The student may be asked to appear in person during the review process when deemed necessary by the reviewer. The designated reviewer will send formal notification of the decision to the student and appropriate academic offices via the student's South University email address.

A student who has been dismissed and whose appeal is granted may be reinstated and, if otherwise eligible, receive financial aid. However, the student will be placed on probation at the start of the academic term. The granting of appeals for decisions other than dismissal may stipulate certain conditions as deemed necessary by the party granting the appeal for a student to continue in the program.

STUDENTS AT ACADEMIC RISK AND REMEDIATION

The program expects each student to obtain a basic competency in each area of medical knowledge, interpersonal skills, clinical skills, technical skills, professional behaviors, clinical reasoning and problem-solving abilities, and appropriate use of healthcare resources required for PA practice. However, the program also recognizes that each student may progress at different rates in obtaining these basic competencies. The program has developed the faculty advisor structure for numerous purposes. One of the primary purposes of the faculty advisor is to monitor student progress in achieving all competency domains.

Below, the program defines the process for the development of a formal Remediation Plan, Performance Improvement Plan (PIP), deceleration. These action plans are developed when students are identified as deficient in any of the following: individual performance/practical evaluations, learning outcomes, standardized skills assessment performance, satisfactory academic progression, programmatic progression, failure to meet the technical standards, and violation of professionalism and/or behavioral policies.

REMEDIATION AND STUDENT SUCCESS PLANS

The program develops a formal remediation plan when a student demonstrates global deficiency in medical knowledge, interpersonal skills, clinical skills, technical skills, clinical reasoning and problem-solving abilities, professionalism, and appropriate use of healthcare resources. A formal remediation plan may be initiated at the request of the Student Progress and Promotions Committee (SPPC) or as the result of an assessment failure. The purpose of remediation is to allow for students to review learning objectives, identify areas of misunderstanding, recognize weakness in knowledge or skills, and to correct these deficiencies in order to obtain basic mastery in the deficient area(s).

The course director is responsible for collaborating to develop a formal remediation plan. When appropriate, the course director may seek assistance from a content expert, the Director of Didactic or Clinical Education, or the SPPC, to ensure the plan is comprehensive. The formal remediation plan is documented on the Remediation Form (See Appendix G).

Individual remediation plans can include, but are not limited to: reading assignments, review of lecture materials or case studies, faculty-led tutoring sessions (especially for skill deficiencies), and breakout sessions. Once remediation is completed, the course director will evaluate the student's proficiency. This evaluation may include, but is not limited to: an oral question-and-answer session, a written exam, a written paper, or written responses to selected examination questions. The course director will determine if the student has met the expectations of the remediation process. All remediation must be completed as per the discretion of the course director and within the time frame and under the conditions determined by the course director. Should remediation result in a delay of graduation, the student will incur additional tuition and fees.

Remediation is required for all students with unsatisfactory performance, defined as scoring below:

- 70% on all exams during the didactic year
- 70% on an Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE), practical, or technical skills exam
- The established passing score for an End-of-Rotation Exam, Preceptor Evaluation, Clinical assignment, or PASS/FAIL activities as defined in the clinical syllabus of the rotation. *

*Programmatic progression during the clinical year is determined by the SPPC. Students who do not meet the required remediation objectives will be referred to the SPPC for further action regarding program progression. Students who are required to take additional coursework to meet the program learning outcomes, competencies, or graduation requirements will incur additional tuition and fees and will have a delayed graduation.

PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT PLANS

If a student is observed to be at academic or professional performance risk, they will be placed on a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP). Situations that may prompt a PIP include, but are not limited to:

- Patterns of poor academic performance
- Insufficient progress on program learning outcomes
- Failure to meet standards for quarterly academic progress
- Failure to meet professional behavior standards

A student will also be placed on a PIP if their cumulative GPA falls below 3.2, or if there is a noted deficit in learning outcomes or competency skills.

The PIP will be documented on the official Performance Improvement Plan form (See Appendix H). It is developed collaboratively by the student's faculty advisor with input from PA program faculty and the Student Progress and Promotions Committee (SPPC) and reviewed by the Program Director. Each plan will include specific steps for improvement and a timeline for completion. Students required to participate in tutoring as part of a PIP may be referred a content expert or other appropriate tutor. Students who fail to meet the requirements of a PIP will be referred to the SPPC for further review. While on a PIP, students remain responsible for maintaining satisfactory academic standards.

During the clinical phase, programmatic progression during is determined by the SPPC. Students who do not meet the established passing score for an End-of-Rotation Exam,

Preceptor Evaluation, clinical skills testing, technical skills testing, clinical logging, self-assessment activities, or other assessment defined in the clinical rotation syllabus will be referred to the SPPC for further action. At the discretion of the SPPC, these actions may include remediation, deceleration, or dismissal from the program.

Students are expected to demonstrate basic competency in professional behaviors. This includes following the program's Standards of Conduct and maintaining professionalism throughout both the didactic and clinical phases of the program. Violations of these standards will be referred to the appropriate University official (i.e. Dean of Student Affairs, Faculty Advisor, Student Progress and Promotions Committee). Depending on the severity of the violation, the SPPC may issue a professionalism warning, place the student on professionalism probation with a PIP, or recommend dismissal from the program.

DECELERATION POLICY

In the event the Student Progress and Promotions Committee (SPPC) determines that a student is deficient in any of the program learning outcomes, competencies, or technical standards, the committee may require deceleration. The SPPC has the exclusive authority to implement deceleration. Students cannot request this option. Deceleration results in a delay of graduation and students are responsible for additional associated tuition and fees. The SPPC will develop a reentry plan that may include Independent Study (PAS5499 Independent Study I and/or PAS5599 Independent Study II), auditing previously taken coursework, repeat rotation courses, professional or personal development requirements, and/or extracurricular assignments to remediate identified deficiencies.

During the didactic phase, if a student is placed on deceleration, they must delay reentry for up to one year. This delay occurs because these courses are only offered once per year. Upon reentry, the student will join the next cohort.

Students who successfully remediate and complete all program requirements will graduate at the end of the term in which all requirements are fulfilled. All curricular requirements of the Physician Assistant program must be completed within 45 months of their initial matriculation into the South University PA Program.

EMERGENCY LEAVE

A physician assistant student may be granted an official leave for extenuating personal or medical reasons no more than once during their enrollment. The student **must be in good standing to be eligible** to take an emergency leave.

- **Didactic Phase**: Students may be withdrawn from courses for a period of no more than four (4) consecutive quarters because didactic courses are only offered once annually, any reentry delayed beyond 12 months would exceed the program's 45-month completion requirement.
- **Clinical Phase**: Students may take a leave of absence for a period of one quarter or more, but not to exceed four (4) consecutive quarters.

Students requesting emergency leave must submit a written request to the Program Director including supporting documentation of the extenuating circumstance necessitating the leave. If approved, the Program Director will provide written notification to the student, Registrar, and Director of Financial Aid including applicable timeframes. If the leave requires the student to withdraw from classes, the withdrawal will not count against the student as a course attempt as outlined in the Withdrawal Policy of the Academic Catalog.

Students reentering the program after an emergency leave will be subject to a reentry plan designed by the Student Progress and Promotions Committee and approved by the Program Director. This ensures that the student is prepared for continuation in the program. Regardless of program phase, the reentry plan may require the student to participate in coursework or other educational activities to ensure retention of essential knowledge and skills (program competencies). Additional coursework will result in additional tuition and fees, which are the responsibility of the student. Reentry must be aligned with the 11-week term start dates.

Any student who fails to meet the PA program reentry plan requirements within the approved timeframe, including all published policies and procedures present at the time of the reentry, is withdrawn from the program and required to apply for reentry through CASPA. All students who matriculate in the PA program are required to complete the program within 45 months of initial matriculation and cannot be withdrawn for more than four (4) consecutive quarters.

WITHDRAWAL POLICY

All students will be required to abide by the South University withdrawal policies and procedures in the South University Academic Catalog. A student who elects to withdraw from the program must submit the request in writing to the Program Director. Before completing the withdrawal process, the student will be given the opportunity to meet with the Program Director, Dean of Student Affairs (if applicable), and a Financial Aid counselor to ensure understanding of the academic financial implications. If the student chooses to proceed, they must complete a formal check out process by returning their student ID badge, clinical facility badges, books, university supplies, and parking tag to security.

If a withdrawn student desires to re-enter the program, they must re-apply through CASPA and are not guaranteed readmission. If accepted as a reapplicant, the student will be required to repeat all curriculum previously attempted.

Please refer to the Physician Assistant Program Course Withdrawal Policy in the South University Academic Catalog for further information.

CLINICAL PHASE POLICIES

Clinical Experiential Learning and Travel Policy

All students may be required to travel/commute and/or relocate for any given clinical rotation. While many rotations are located within a commutable distance from the program, students may be assigned to clinical rotation sites outside the local campus geographical area and should anticipate the need to travel or temporarily relocate for those assigned rotations. Students are responsible for all costs associated with travel, transportation, housing, credentialing, and living expenses during the clinical year. These expenses will vary based on the location of each clinical rotation site. Please refer to the program website for further details on clinical travel. During the pre-clinical phase, students have the opportunity to share their scheduling preferences, which the Clinical Education Team will consider when making rotation assignments. The program cannot guarantee preferred locations or clinical sites. Clinical rotation assignments can be altered at any time due to unforeseen circumstances. Further Policies for the clinical phase of the program are published annually in the Student Clinical Year Handbook.

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROGRAM GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

To receive a Master of Science in Physician Assistant degree a student must satisfy the following requirements:

- The student must complete all course and program requirements outlined in the Academic Catalog in effect at the time of enrollment and/or, if applicable at the time of reentry.
- The student must receive a minimum grade of "C" or better in all courses.
- The student must have a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher for all coursework taken while in the South University Physician Assistant program.
- The student must demonstrate achievement of the program learning outcomes/competencies including successful completion of course required evaluations and program comprehensive evaluations.
- The student has met the technical standards throughout the program.
- The student must successfully complete the summative evaluation before graduation.

Note: It is the responsibility of each potential graduate to complete an application for graduation and pay the required graduation fee. The application should be submitted during pre-registration for the last quarter in which the student will be enrolled at South University.

PROGRAM COMPLETION DEADLINE

The typical pace of the Physician Assistant program curriculum is 27 months. Students must complete all graduation requirements for the Master of Science of Physician Assistant Degree within 45 months of their initial matriculation into the South University PA program.

IV. PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

The South University Student Handbook defines a Code of Conduct that must be followed by all students. South University publishes its Master of Science in Physician Assistant Code of Conduct in the South University Academic Catalog. All students enrolled in the South University Physician Assistant Program are expected to abide by this code.

Failure to comply with general University policies may result in dismissal from the program and the University according to defined disciplinary procedures. All disciplinary actions will be reported to the Student Progress and Promotions Committee and will be considered relative to the student's suitability for continued participation in the program and/or entry into the PA profession.

STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONALISM

One of core tenets of the South University Physician Assistant Program is that physicians and PAs are called to the highest standards of honor and professional conduct. It is essential for students to understand that this responsibility begins at the start of their medical education, not upon graduation. Students must uphold the following standards which reflect these values and are intended to foster an atmosphere of honesty, trust, and cooperation among the students, faculty, patients, and society.

Students in the South University Physician Assistant Program are expected to demonstrate behavior appropriate for a career in medicine. This includes, but is not limited to: honesty trustworthiness, professional demeanor, respect for the rights of others, personal accountability, and concern for the welfare of patients – all of which are outlined below. Violations of these Standards of Professionalism may result in referral to the Student Progress and Promotions Committee (SPPC).

Honesty: Being truthful in communication with others.

Trustworthiness: Maintaining the confidentiality of patient information; admitting errors, and avoiding intentional misrepresentation, self-promotion at the patient's expense, or misleading others.

Professional demeanor: Interacting thoughtfully and respectfully with patients and their families; maintaining composure under fatigue, stress, or personal difficulties; and presenting a neat, clean appearance with attire that is appropriate to the patient population served.

Respect for the rights of others: Interacting with healthcare team members, peers, staff, and patients with consideration and cooperation; demonstrating equity toward all persons encountered in a professional capacity regardless of age, race, color, national origin, disability, religion, gender, sexual preference, gender identity, socioeconomic status, or veteran/Reserve/National Guard status; respecting patient rights to be informed, to participate in decisions and to maintain modesty and privacy.

Personal accountability: Participating responsibly in patient care under appropriate supervision; completing clinical duties diligently; and notifying supervisors if unable to perform clinical tasks effectively.

Concern for the welfare of patients: Treating patients and families with respect and dignity both in person and in discussion with others; seeking supervision or advice when needed; recognizing limitations and requesting assistance when appropriate; avoiding alcohol or drug use that could impair performance; refraining from romantic, sexual, or other nonprofessional relationships with patients or preceptors.

Personal aptitude for medicine: Graduation from the program requires faculty determination that a student is suitable for medical practice based on personal characteristics, conduct, and academic achievement.

Students in the South University Physician Assistant Program are preparing for positions of critical responsibility as healthcare providers. Accordingly, they are evaluated not only on academic and clinical skills, but also on interpersonal skills, reliability, appearance, and professional conduct. Deficiencies in any of these areas may result in probation, suspension, or dismissal. Academic grades alone do not sufficiently meet promotion, progression, or graduation. **The program reserves the right to dismiss any student whose behavior does not align with the professional standards or whose presence detrimental to the program, peers, or society.** Faculty will refer professionalism concerns to the SPPC. Students should be aware that placement on

Professionalism Warning or Professionalism Probation may negatively impact clinical credentialing both during and after the program.

Students are expected to develop habits and behaviors consistent with professional practice. The **American Academy of Physician Assistants Guidelines for Ethical Conduct** outlines the values and principles that uphold these high standards. Students must review, understand, and follow these guidelines which are available on the American Academy of PAs website.

The primary purpose for enforcing non-academic discipline in the South University Physician Assistant Program is to preserve the quality of the educational environment and uphold campus community standards. This is founded upon the following expectations:

- The South University Physician Assistant Program and the University at large requires high standards of courtesy, integrity, and responsibility in all of its members.
- Each student is responsible for their own conduct.
- Continuation in the program depends on compliance with the Standards of Professionalism and the University and Physician Assistant Program Code of Conduct.

The South University Physician Assistant Program reserves the right to take necessary and appropriate action to ensure the safety and well-being of the campus community. The Dean of Student Affairs is charged with the welfare of all students. Accordingly, in emergency situations, this individual has full authority to deal with student conduct according to the exigencies of the emergency and for its duration. The Dean of Student Affairs is delegated responsibility pertaining to all student organizations and student government and has both the responsibility and authority to discipline such organizations whose members are students within the program.

The program is not designed or equipped to rehabilitate students who do not abide by the Honor Code and it may be necessary to dismiss such students.

NATIONAL COMMISSION ON CERTIFICATION FOR THE PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT (NCCPA) CODE OF CONDUCT

The South University Physician Assistant Program expects students to abide by the Code of Conduct set forth by the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants.

Breaches in this Code of Conduct while a student is enrolled in the program will be grounds for referral of that student to the program's Student Progress and Promotions Committee.

South University does not guarantee third-party certification/licensure. Outside agencies control the requirements for taking and passing certification/licensing exams and are subject to change without notice to South University.

The NCCPA Code of Conduct is designed to protect the integrity of the PA profession and to ensure that certified and certifying physician assistants uphold the highest standards of professionalism, ethics, and patient safety. The Code emphasizes honesty in examinations and credentialing, accurate representation of certification status, and compliance with all laws and professional standards governing clinical practice. It requires PAs to maintain patient confidentiality, respect professional boundaries, avoid behaviors that compromise patient safety or trust, and practice free from impairment. PAs are also obligated to report adverse legal, regulatory, or credentialing actions, as well as convictions of certain crimes, within 30 days, and to cooperate fully with NCCPA inquiries or disciplinary proceedings.

Students are expected to review the full NCCPA Code of Conduct, which is available on the NCCPA website, and to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with these principles throughout their enrollment in the program.

VIOLATIONS OF STANDARDS OF CONDUCT OR PROFESSIONALISM

Violations of the program's Standards of Conduct or Professionalism, or University policy will be referred to the to the appropriate University official (i.e. Faculty Advisor, Dean of Student Affairs, Student Progress and Promotions Committee).

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

Please refer to the South University Academic Integrity Policy in the South University Academic Catalog.

Violations of the South University Academic Integrity Policy will be referred to the Program's Student Progress and Promotions Committee (SPPC) for review. If the SPPC determines that there is adequate evidence of an Academic Integrity Policy violation, the student will be referred in accordance with the South University Academic Integrity Policy.

Above and beyond the penalties imposed according to the Academic Integrity Policy, the Student Progress and Promotions Committee has the authority to add additional sanctions, remediation, and the recommendation for dismissal.

PROFESSIONAL IMAGE AND ATTIRE

Students, faculty, and staff of the South University Physician Assistant Program are expected to uphold the highest standards for personal behavior and professional appearance. Professionalism in dress and demeanor conveys respect, builds patient trust, supports effective communication, and reflects sensitivity to diverse cultural values.

This section outlines the standards for attire and appearance that place patient comfort and welfare first while preparing students for their role as a healthcare professional. Because patient trust and confidence are strongly influenced by appearance and behavior, students must present themselves in a manner that demonstrates respect, inspires confidence, and ensures patient comfort.

While trends in clothing, body art, and body piercing may be acceptable socially, they may not be appropriate in a healthcare environment. Therefore:

- **Identification**: Student's must wear their South University name tag during their first didactic quarter and during all clinical education experiences for the duration of the program. A campus badge must also be worn at all times while on campus.
- **Professional Representation**: Students represent the PA profession and should ensure their attire reflects this responsibility.
- **Accountability**: Students who arrive in inappropriate attire may be dismissed until they return dressed appropriately.

The following standards of personal image and attire are to be observed while on campus, in clinical settings, and during other educational activities as outlined below:

Classroom Setting: Expected dress code for the PA Program is **business casual**.

- Clothing must be clean, neat, and allow freedom of movement without inappropriate exposure.
- Acceptable dress for women includes blouses/sweaters and slacks or knee-length skirts/dresses.

- Acceptable dress for men includes dress shirt, slacks or collared shirt and khaki pants.
- Dress length must be appropriate for a dignified and professional appearance, allowing room for modest movement without indecent exposure.
- Shoes must be clean and professional; open-toed shoes and sandals may be worn during the didactic year (except in labs/clinical settings). Flip-flops are not permitted in any setting.
- Hair must be clean, neat, of a natural human color in a professional style.
- Fingernails must not extend beyond the fingertip.
- Makeup and jewelry should be appropriate for the professional setting.
- Visible tattoos and body piercings should be limited to those that do not distract from patient care or professionalism. Small piercings (such as ear or nose studs) are permitted. Students may be asked to cover tattoos or remove piercings if they are deemed inappropriate for the professional healthcare setting.
- Maintain good personal hygiene. Avoid strong fragrances, smoke odors, or halitosis.

Laboratory Setting: Expected dress code for the PA Program is **South University Scrubs.**

- South University scrubs may be worn on designated lab days. Sneakers are permitted.
- At times, clothing that allows modest physical examination by another student (e.g., exercise wear, shorts, sports bras) will be required. Questions or concerns should be directed to the course director.

Clinical Settings: Students will follow **site-specific** expectations.

A higher standard of dress is required during clinical rotations and Applied Learning Experiences. Students are expected to abide by all requirements of the clinical site. In addition to the **classroom guidelines above**, the following should also be observed:

- A clean waist-length clinical jacket with name tag must be worn at all times in clinical and hospital settings.
- Clothing must be clean, neat and modest. Tank tops and spaghetti straps are not permitted.
- No clothing with sequins, fur, glitter, or shedding material.
- Closed-toe shoes are required: athletic shoes are only permitted with scrubs. Excessively high heels are discouraged.
- Hospital scrubs are required in the operating room, and only when specified otherwise.

After Hours: Students may wear casual attire (scrubs or casual clothes) while studying on campus outside of regular class hours. Professionalism in appearance is still expected.

Professional Image and Attire Violations:

These standards apply to all educational and clinical settings unless otherwise directed by the Directors of Didactic or Clinical Education. Students in violation of attire standards may be restricted from class, labs, clinical sites, or facilities until appropriately attired. Repeated non-compliance may result in referral to the Student Progress and Promotions Committee for consideration of disciplinary action.

SOCIAL MEDIA STATEMENT

As members of the South University Physician Assistant Program, students must comply with all applicable professionalism and conduct policies when utilizing social media. In addition, all students must follow university privacy and confidentiality policies, such as those outlined by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Sharing patient information —including photos or any identifiable details— is strictly prohibited. Social media behavior violations of program professionalism standards will be referred to the Student Progress and Promotions Committee.

STUDENT IDENTIFICATION

South University PA students will be clearly identified to distinguish themselves from physicians, residents, and other health professional students. In clinical settings, PA students will wear short white laboratory coats with an embroidered name or name tag attached. This will clearly state the student's name with an underlying title of Physician Assistant Student (PA-S). The South University patch must be affixed to the left sleeve of the lab coat. If a situation arises when the lab coat is not worn, the name tag must be worn. Name tags are to be worn on the left side of the chest. Additionally, many of the hospitals and clinics in which program students are affiliated require them to wear distinguishing name tags or security badges while working at those facilities. Students must wear the appropriate South University identification, as well as the institution's required badge.

Students are required to wear their identification badges at all times while on the South University campus.

RECORDING POLICY

Students are not permitted to tape or digitally record any class without receiving prior written permission from the instructor and the Program Director. Students must print the Recorded Lecture Policy Agreement (see Appendix F) and obtain both the instructor and Program Director's signatures.

COMMUNICATION EXPECTATIONS

Students are required to maintain an active South University e-mail and cellular telephone account at all times. Throughout the course of study at South University, a variety of events occur (some unexpected, some matters of routine business) making it necessary for students to be reached. Phone numbers, mailing addresses, and e-mail addresses are required to be current and on file in the program office and the clinical logging system and updated appropriately. All student email correspondence with the program must be through their South University student email account. Students are required to check their South University student e-mail daily. The South University Physician Assistant Program is not responsible for information missed by students who have not maintained up-to-date, reliable contact information with the University and have not checked their South University email daily.

In addition, students will be requested to register for South University's *My Campus Alert* system in order to be contacted in the event of a campus emergency. The *My Campus Alert* system is managed by the Office of Student Affairs and more information can be found in the Health and Safety section of the South University Student Handbook.

V. FINANCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

PROFESSIONAL LIABILITY INSURANCE

Students in the program are covered by a malpractice policy that insures all employees and students at South University. This policy covers any liability risks that may be incurred by a student or instructor of the program. This also covers liability risks incurred by clinical preceptors or their employing institutions. For most PA students, this coverage meets their needs. Those wishing to extend their coverage may purchase a personal liability insurance policy.

COLLEGE OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS DRUG AND ALCOHOL POLICY

Due to the nature of the practice of health professions programs, the College of Health Professions maintains a **zero-tolerance policy** for any violation. Please refer to the College of Health Professions Substance Abuse and Screening Policy published in the South University Academic Catalog.

TUITION

Tuition and fees are subject to change at the end of any term. The tuition cost for a full-time course load does not include expenses for additional required items such as textbooks medical equipment, background check, drug screen fees, and credentialing costs. PA students are not eligible for part-time enrollment. In-state and out-of-state tuition are the same. Upon graduation, students will no longer have access to digital and textbook resources. For more information on tuition and fees please refer to the Tuition section of the South University Academic Catalog.

MEMBERSHIP

Students enrolling in the Physician Assistant program will incur a one-time fee for membership in the American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA). The fee covers membership for the entire duration of PA training. Membership includes a monthly subscription to the Journal of the American Academy of Physician Assistants (JAAPA), periodic newsletters, and discounted admission to AAPA's annual national continuing education meeting. The current fee of $75 is subject to change. Students are also required to join their state chapter Physician Assistant Associations for a nominal fee.

ADDITIONAL FEES, FINANCIAL AID, AND STUDENT FUNDING

For all other estimated costs and associated fees which are subject to change for the MSPA Degree, please refer to the Fees section of the South University Academic Catalog and the program's website. For details on the payment and student funding process, please refer to the Student Funding &Financial Aid sections of the South University Academic Catalog.

REFUND POLICY

Please refer to the Refund of Tuition section of the South University Academic Catalog.

STUDENT RECORDS

Educational transcripts for each student enrolled in the South University Physician Assistant program will be maintained by the South University Registrar permanently following the student's graduation, withdrawal, or termination from the program. The program maintains a file on each student which includes documents pertinent to students' admission and progression through the program. Student files are maintained digitally on a secure drive. Students are granted access to their own personal academic file only as requested by the student in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Please see the South University Academic Catalog for more information on FERPA.

Students do not have access to academic records or other confidential information of other students or faculty and are not permitted in areas that house this material without permission and the accompaniment and supervision of a faculty or staff member. Please refer to the South University Website for details on the transcript request process. Official transcripts are available for order through a third-party vendor, Parchment.

VI. HEALTH, SAFETY, AND COMPLIANCE

STUDENT HEALTH

All students entering the South University Physician Assistant program must meet the following requirements submitted through the designated compliance verification company:

- Provide proof of personal health insurance throughout the entire program.
- Provide proof of a satisfactory physical examination.
- Provide proof of negative tuberculosis testing (positive results may require further evaluation).
- Provide proof of immunization as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Students are not permitted to seek personal health care advice or care from any full time or part time faculty member, instructional faculty, preceptor, program staff member, the program director, the medical director, guest lecturers, or guests of the program. Students in violation of this rule will be referred to the Program's Student Progress and Promotions Committee.

At no time is a full-time or part-time faculty member, instructional faculty, program staff member, the program director, or the medical director allowed or expected to participate in the provision of health care to a student enrolled in the South University Physician Assistant program. Violation of this policy may be grounds for disciplinary action including termination.

In an emergency, faculty and/or staff may assist any student who may be in imminent danger in accordance with their scope of practice and current standards of care.

IMMUNIZATIONS

The South University Physician Assistant Program Immunization Policy is in compliance with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

After acceptance into the program, but before registration can be successfully completed, all students must complete immunizations, health screening, Basic Life Support (BLS)

certification, background, and drug testing screening through the program's designated compliance company. Additional immunizations and drug testing screening may be required by some clinical training sites and are the students' responsibility. If students choose not to be vaccinated, they will not be allowed to rotate at clinical sites that require immunizations unless expressly permitted in writing to the program by the facility and/or preceptor at that site. If any of the core (required) rotations cannot be completed because the student voluntarily chose not to be vaccinated as required by the clinical rotation site, the student will not be eligible for graduation from the program. In addition, if the clinical sites available to students who have not been vaccinated do not meet graduation requirements, those students will not be eligible for graduation.

HEALTH INSURANCE

All PA students are required to carry adequate health insurance throughout their enrollment in the program. Evidence of health insurance coverage must be provided at the time of matriculation. Confirmation of coverage will be carried out prior to the inception of the clinical phase of the program. Lack of health insurance will suspend student participation in program activities/courses until proof of insurance is provided.

SOUTH UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS BACKGROUND CHECK POLICY AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND SCREENING POLICY

Please refer to the Comprehensive Background Check - College of Health Professions and the College of Health Professions Substance Abuse and Screening Policy and for more information.

VII. APPENDICES AND FORMS

APPENDIX A: PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROGRAM INFECTION CONTROL

POLICY

The objective of the following guidelines is to prevent the spread of infection and avoid exposure to blood and body fluid pathogens.

GENERAL

It is the policy of the South University Physician Assistant program to follow the guidelines and recommendations made by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regarding STANDARD PRECAUTIONS. Before beginning any clinical education experience through the South University Physician Assistant program, students must receive training regarding CDC STANDARD PRECAUTIONS.

STANDARD PRECAUTIONS

Standard Precautions are the minimum infection prevention practices that apply to all patient care, regardless of suspected or confirmed infection status of the patient, in any setting where healthcare is delivered. Standard Precautions combine the major features of Universal Precautions and Body Substance Isolation and are based on the principle that all blood, body fluids, secretions, excretions, non-intact skin, and mucous membranes may contain transmissible infectious agents.
These practices include:

- Hand hygiene
- The use of personal protective equipment (PPE) (e.g., gloves, gowns, masks) for mouth, nose, eye protection
- Safe injection practices
- Properly handle, clean, and disinfect patient care equipment and instruments/devices. Clean and disinfect the environment appropriately.
- Respiratory hygiene/cough etiquette
- Ensure appropriate patient placement.
- Handles textiles and laundry carefully.

In addition to Standard Precautions, students will receive training in the three categories of Transmission-Based Precautions:

- Contact Precautions

- Droplet Precautions
- Airborne Precautions

Transmission-Based Precautions are used when the route(s) of transmission is (are) not completely interrupted using Standard Precautions alone.

EXPOSURE TO BLOODBORNE PATHOGENS

Strict adherence to STANDARD PRECAUTIONS and other infection control measures should prevent a student's exposure to blood borne pathogens. Should a student sustain a possible exposure (including a needle stick injury) to blood borne pathogens during a clinical training experience, the student is responsible for immediately notifying their supervisor, instructor, preceptor, or department manager. The student should then follow the steps outlined in the section titled "Post-Exposure Procedure" and "Student Injuries or Exposures". Exposure is defined as a demonstrated skin, eye, mucous membrane, or parenteral contact with blood or other potentially infectious materials.

THE FOLLOWING PROCEDURE SHOULD BE INITIATED AND FOLLOWED AFTER AN EXPOSURE

POST-EXPOSURE PROCEDURE

- Aggressive local wound care to the site of exposure should be initiated immediately. Percutaneous wounds should be expressed to promote bleeding. The site should be cleansed thoroughly with soap and water using a surgical hand brush when possible. It may be beneficial to use an antiseptic such as chlorhexidine gluconate (Foam Carer CHG), an iodophor (EZ Scrub, Betadine), or Dakins solution (dilute 1:9 buffered sodium hypochlorite). Difficult to scrub areas should be soaked in chlorhexidine gluconate (Foam Carer CHG) or other antiseptic. Non-intact skin should be cleansed with soap and water. It may be beneficial to use an antiseptic as described above.
- Mucous membrane exposures (e.g., eye splashes) should be irrigated thoroughly with tap water using the nearest eye washing station (or faucet if none available).
- The incident should be reported immediately to the student's supervisor, instructor, preceptor, or department manager.
- Post Exposure Prophylaxis protocol should be initiated if indicated. The student may access current guidelines through the National Clinician Consultation Center.

Access to emergency health care is recommended, and the student is urged to become informed about current PEP guidelines in order to receive most effective treatment within the recommended time frame.

Finally, the student must notify the Director of Clinical Education or if unavailable, the Education Clinical Coordinator or Program Director. In addition, the South University Physician Assistant Program incident form must be completed and sent to the program.

STUDENT INJURIES

Incidents involving an injury to a student (such as a fall, or other accidental injury) during a clinical education experience will follow a similar protocol.

- The injury should be reported to the student's supervisor, instructor, preceptor, or department manager.
- Students should report to the nearest Emergency Room for treatment.
- The program should be notified as soon as it is possible to do so. The student must notify the Program Director or if unavailable, the Director of Clinical Education or if unavailable, the Education Clinical Coordinator. In addition, the South University Physician Assistant program incident form must be completed and sent to the South University Physician Assistant Program.

If a potentially infectious exposure occurs, do not allow feelings of embarrassment, a large workload, or misplaced peer pressures to prevent you from reporting the event immediately. Needle sticks and other exposures can be life-threatening. Responsible health care providers recognize that unintentional injuries and occupational exposures may occur and must be evaluated by competent, objective, and experienced medical professionals.

IMPORTANT

All charges incurred by PA students for evaluation and management related to an injury, needle stick; blood or body fluid exposures are the student's responsibility. Students must maintain health insurance throughout their educational experience at the South University Physician Assistant program. All medical or health care services (emergency or otherwise) that the student receives or requires are the student's responsibility and are at the student's expense.

APPENDIX B: PROGRAM INCIDENT FORM

PROGRAM INCIDENT FORM

South UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS

Student Name: _____

Incident Date: _____ Time: _____ AM/PM

Location of Incident: _____

Nature of Incident: _____

Incident Cause: _____

Give brief description of incident, including predominating and contributing causes as well as actions taken following the incident:

State corrective action taken to prevent recurrence. Indicate if further investigation is warranted.

Did you seek medical care? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Date/Time/Method Program was notified:_____

Date/Time of Report to preceptor/clinical department manager: _____

Name of Faculty/Advisor reviewing the report:_____

Signature of Injured Student: _____

APPENDIX C: Records Release Form

CONSENT FOR RELEASE AND EXCHANGE OF STUDENT RECORDS

Name: _____

Student ID #: _____

Students in the College of Health Professions participate in clinical experiences and rotations which are part of the requisite course work for the Master of Science in Physician Assistant degree offered by South University.

To enable South University and the clinical sites/facilities to evaluate a student's eligibility to participate in clinical experiences and rotations and to evaluate a student's performance on clinical rotations, it is necessary for South University and the clinical sites/facilities to exchange educational records and information about that student. The educational records and information subject to release and exchange include grade reports, transcripts, evaluations, attendance records, examination results, background check results, health and safety compliance, and records of conduct and disciplinary investigations and proceedings. Release and exchange of educational records and information is between and among faculty members, administrators, and other designees of South University and the facilities which have an agreement with South University to provide clinical experiences and rotations.

I hereby consent to the release and exchange of my educational records and information as described above.

I acknowledge receipt of a copy of this signed form.

Student Signature _____ Date _____

Student Printed Name _____

APPENDIX D: Consent for Drug and Alcohol Screening

Name: _____

Student ID #: _____

I, _____, hereby voluntarily agree to provide urine, blood, or hair as required for testing for the presence of drugs and/or alcohol. I authorize that the results of my drug screen be released to South University and the Physician Assistant Program.

I understand that the results of the drug screen will be used to determine:

1) Eligibility for clinical placement
2) Fitness for duty
3) Violation of substance abuse policy
4) Disciplinary action against me, up to and including dismissal from programs within the College of Health Professions

I understand that the results of the drug and alcohol test will be shared with clinical placement sites as required. I understand that my willingness to submit to the requested screening is completely voluntary and that I have the right to refuse. I am aware that my refusal to submit to the drug and alcohol screening is grounds for disciplinary action and further actions as outlined in the Substance Abuse and Screening Policies of the College of Health Professions and South University.

I have read and agreed to the terms of the Substance Abuse Policy for the South University College of Health Professions.

I acknowledge receipt of a copy of this signed form.

Student Signature _____ Date _____

Student Printed Name _____

APPENDIX E: Participation of Students as Human Subjects Form

There are multiple physical examination and skill activities taught during the program. In addition to educating students in their roles as practitioners, having students fill the role of patients during these activities helps them become more sensitive to the patient perspective. Furthermore, active participation and repetition reinforce learning. Therefore, the South University PA program:

- Requires the participant of students as human subjects during selected courses.
- Expects its students to willingly participate in all aspects of physical exam and technical skills training in a professional and cooperative manner.
- At various times, students will be required to wear clothing that will easily allow physical examination by another student. Examples of modestly appropriate attire include sports bras, exercise wear, and shorts.

It is possible that during a learner's course of study, incidental medical findings may be noted. These incidental findings may include previously unknown pathological findings or normal variants. These discoveries may occur during physical examination, point of care ultrasound, or laboratory sessions, among other educational settings. When an incidental finding is noted, faculty will maintain confidentiality and instruct the student to follow up with their primary care provider, or emergency services, as indicated for consideration of diagnosis and management. Any student privy to a peer's incidental finding due to engagement in the curricular activity that led to its finding must also maintain confidentiality.

For any questions or concerns with this policy, please contact the course director.

I hereby signify that I have read and understand this policy and am willing to participate as a human subject as described.

Student Signature _____ Date _____

Student Printed Name _____

APPENDIX F: Recorded Policy Agreement

You have been permitted to tape or digitally record class lectures for your personal study only. Lectures taped for this purpose may not be shared with other people without the consent of the lecturer. Information contained in the recorded lecture is protected under federal copyright laws and may not be published or quoted without the express consent of the lecturer and without giving proper identity and credit to that person.

In order to maintain the integrity of the services offered and to honor copyright law, I certify and agree to abide by the following rules for obtaining and using recorded course materials:

- I will not copy or reproduce the educational material (recordings) being provided nor allow anyone else to do so.
- I will not allow anyone else to use the educational material (recordings).

Violation of this Agreement may be considered a violation of the Student Code of Conduct and may result in penalties including suspension and expulsion. Violations may also constitute a violation of federal and/or state laws and may result in civil or criminal prosecution, payment of fines or other moneys to the copyright holder, and/or incarceration.

I, the undersigned student, understand the rules listed above and will comply.

Student Signature _____ Date _____

Student Printed Name _____

Faculty Signature _____ Date _____

Program Director Signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX G: Remediation Form

Remediation Improvement Contract

Student Name: _____ Course Title: _____

Date:_____ Course Director:_____ Grade: _____

Remediation Content:_____

1. Areas of difficulty/Student comments after reviewing Test Report:

☐ Carelessness ☐ Material Unfamiliar (Book/Lecture) ☐ Misread/Misinterpreted

_____
_____
_____
_____

☐ Student reviewed and understands errors made.

2. Plan of Action (Objectives):

☐ Academic Success Center Referral

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Course Director Signature: _____ Date: _____

3. Remediation Improvement Contract Objectives Achieved:

☐ Reassessment completed/ Objectives achieved

☐ Reassessment not completed/ Objectives not achieved

Reassessment Format:
☐ Oral question answer session ☐ Written exam ☐ Written paper
☐ Written responses to selected examination questions

☐ OSCE/clinical or technical skills examination

Reassessment Date: _____Reassessment Final Score: _____

Comments:
_____
_____
_____

If not achieved, please list why:
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Course Director Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX H: Performance Improvement Plan

Performance Improvement Plan (PIP)

Student Name: _____

Form Completed by: _____ Date:__/___/____

Rationale for Entering Student in Performance Improvement Plan:

Description of the Performance Improvement Plan (Must include timeline):

Results:

Acknowledgement of Performance Improvement Plan:

I acknowledge understanding of and agree to the Performance Improvement Plan set forth above.

Student: _____

Advisor:_____ Date:__/_____/_____

Program Director: _____ Date:__/_____/_____

Successful Performance Improvement Plan Completion Verification:

Advisor: _____ Date:__/_____/_____

Program Director: _____ Date:__/_____/_____

APPENDIX I: Professionalism Evaluation

South University Richmond Physician Assistant: Summative Professionalism Evaluation

Performance Category	Performance Criteria	Competent	Not Competent
Upholding the Physician Assistant Student Standards of Conduct	Respects the diversity of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, disability, and socioeconomic status of all individuals.	☐	☐
Upholding the Physician Assistant Student Standards of Conduct	Maintains professional integrity and academic honesty including, but not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, or HIPAA violations.	☐	☐
Upholding the Physician Assistant Standards of Conduct	Consistently exhibits behaviors, attitudes, and language consistent with the PA Student Standard of Conduct.	☐	☐
Relationship with Students, Faculty, and Staff	Student promotes a positive and proactive learning environment.	☐	☐
Relationship with Students, Faculty, and Staff	Establishes and maintains appropriate boundaries in learning situations with faculty, staff, preceptors, patients, and fellow students.	☐	☐
Self-improvement and Adaptability	Student invites constructive feedback by accepting corrections or feedback in a gracious manner. Demonstrates a willingness to correct shortcomings.	☐	☐
Self-improvement and Adaptability	Student exhibits flexibility by being willing to accept change in the academic, clinical, and group setting.	☐	☐
Reliability and Responsibility	Contributes to an atmosphere conducive to learning by being careful not to distract others by socializing, sleeping, looking at unrelated material, and/or doing a class assignment for another course.	☐	☐
Reliability and Responsibility	Regularly attends class, which includes arriving on time and staying for the entire class.	☐	☐
Reliability and Responsibility	Completes group assignment task in a timely and reliable manner.	☐	☐
Reliability and Responsibility	Works well in a group setting. Makes sufficient contributions for effective teamwork to take place without dominating the group or being overly reliant on others. Makes a genuine effort to work effectively with others.	☐	☐

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Final Professionalism Competency Evaluation

The following professionalism standards have been reviewed by the Physician Assistant Program's Student Progress Committee.

Professionalism Standards and Attributes	Competent	Not Competent
Accountability	☐	☐
Self-Awareness/Self-Reflection	☐	☐
Ethical Behavior: Honesty and Trustworthiness	☐	☐
Appearance	☐	☐
Demeanor/Respect: Including the rights of others	☐	☐
Concern for the Welfare of Patients	☐	☐
Reliability	☐	☐
Preparedness	☐	☐
Quality of Work	☐	☐
Interpersonal Effectiveness/Collaboration	☐	☐
Communication	☐	☐
Adherence to Code of Conduct	☐	☐

☐ This student displays Personal Aptitude for Medicine in terms of his/her personal characteristics and conduct.

☐ This student lacks competence and Personal Aptitude for Medicine in terms of his/her personal characteristics and conduct.

Program Director Signature:_____Date:_____

APPENDIX J: Student Handbook Acknowledgement

SOUTH UNIVERSITY PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROGRAM

STUDENT HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I, _____, have read the information contained within the South University Physician Assistant Program Student Handbook. I understand my obligation to successfully complete all curriculum requirements in the outlined time frame.

I fully understand this information and hereby agree to abide by the Physician Assistant Program policies and procedures contained within the South University Physician Assistant Program Student Handbook. Additionally, I agree to abide by all rules and regulations as set forth in the South University Academic Catalog, South University Student Handbook, and in the South University Physician Assistant Program Clinical Policy Manual.

I understand the outlined requirements including program learning outcomes/ competencies for graduation from the South University Master of Science in Physician Assistant Program.

The South University Physician Assistant Program reserves the right to modify curriculum requirements as necessary to ensure the academic integrity of its program. Students will be notified of any changes in curriculum or program requirements prior to implementation in accordance with ARC-PA standards.

Student Signature _____ Date _____

Student Printed Name _____

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