

**DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT STUDIES**

**DIDACTIC COMPONENT**  
**STUDENT HANDBOOK**

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## **WELCOME TO THE DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT STUDIES**

What an exciting time as you embark on your studies to be a physician assistant. The faculty and staff of the department of Physician Assistant Studies are glad you are here. We are sure that you will find the pursuit of your education as a physician assistant both challenging and rewarding. The time you are with us will go quickly and there is a lot to learn. Work hard, be flexible, and enjoy the camaraderie of your future colleagues.

This handbook is intended to provide guidance and assist you regarding compliance with department policy, define the graduate competencies to be achieved, outline student responsibilities, and serve as a resource regarding department procedures. During orientation we will take time to review selected portions of this handbook. However, it is strongly suggested that you read the handbook thoroughly. Although every attempt is made to make the handbook comprehensive, it may not address every possible situation. When confronted with a situation not covered in the handbook, seek guidance from your faculty advisor and use your good judgment in the interim. Students are also reminded to review the ASHS Catalog and the ATSU Student Handbook for additional policies that may impact you as a student.

Michael Goodwin, PA  
Chair/Program Director

# ***PROGRAM POLICIES AND STANDARDS FOR THE DIDACTIC STUDENT***

## **Introduction**

The Didactic Component Student Handbook of the Department of Physician Assistant Studies (DPAS) describes policies and procedures pertinent to student success during the didactic phase of training. Students are expected to adhere to both A. T. Still University (ATSU) and Program policies.

The Program reserves the right to alter, change, add, or delete the content in this handbook. Students will be notified in writing of any changes.

## **Purpose Statement**

*The purpose of the ASHS Department of Physician Assistant Studies is to educate competent and dedicated physician assistants to provide professional, knowledgeable and compassionate health care for a diverse patient population.*

The Department advocates and values the following:

- The A. T. Still “Body/Mind/Spirit” philosophy of healing
- The development of lifelong learning practices to maintain competencies
- Adherence to medical ethics
- Respect for the diversity of patients
- The values of compassion and empathy toward patients
- Professionalism in attitude and demeanor
- A respect for fellow medical professionals
- A commitment of service to community

The Department educates physician assistants with a philosophy that patients come first. We instill in students the concept of addressing the entire patient through the Body, Mind, and Spirit. This philosophy has, at its core, the tenant that healing is more than treatment of a medical diagnosis. Our practitioners recognize the interconnection of the **Body** (physical nature), the **Mind** (psychological and emotional) and the **Spirit** (spiritual and/or religious). Our graduates address the “whole patient” through competent medical treatments, application of educational and preventive strategies, psychological support and value of the individual’s spiritual beliefs.

## **PA Definition**

Physician Assistants (PAs) are academically and clinically prepared to provide health care services with the direction and responsible supervision of a doctor of medicine or osteopathy. The physician-PA team relationship is fundamental to the PA profession and enhances the delivery of high quality health care. Within the physician-PA relationship, PAs make clinical decisions and provide a broad range of diagnostic, therapeutic, preventive and health maintenance services. The clinical role of PAs includes primary and specialty care in medical and surgical practice settings. PA practice is centered on patient care and may include educational, research and administrative activities.

To provide compassionate, competent and efficient healthcare, graduates from the ASHS Department of PA Studies will achieve the following:

### **Competency I**

**History Taking:** ASHS PA graduates will approach a patient of any age group in any setting and elicit an accurate, detailed patient history (appropriate to the situation) and record that data in an acceptable fashion.

#### **Objectives:**

1. Establish effective rapport with the patient and their family.
2. Open an interview with the use of facilitation, open-ended questions or bridging phrases.
3. Assist the patient's narrative with appropriate support, reassurance, empathy, confrontation, reflection, interpretation, silence, and touch.
4. Focus upon interview topics through inquiry, reflection, probing, and summation.
5. Properly use and interpret body language.
6. Identify the patient's major problem(s).
7. Obtain a history of present illness to include onset, location/setting, chronology, quality, quantity, and contributing factors of symptoms.
8. Elicit a medical history to include past health, hospitalizations, surgeries, injuries and childhood illnesses.
9. Elicit a history of medication use, allergies/reactions, and develop a list of current medications, including non prescription and herbal treatments.
10. Record the patient's personal and social history to include life situation, education, occupational history, travel, and use of alcohol, tobacco, caffeine and drugs.
11. Elicit the family history with attention to familial predisposition to disease and illness.
12. Develop strategies to deal with the following difficult situations: suicidal patients, mentally impaired patients, dysphasic patients, non-English speaking patients, hearing impaired patients and manipulative, fearful, uncooperative, and depressed patients.
13. Elicit an interval history in patients with chronic illness.
14. Elicit a brief but pertinent history from patient, friend or family in an emergency situation.
15. Communicate historical information in a clear, concise and relevant manner.

## **Competency II**

**Physical Examination:** ASHS PA graduates will perform a complete or focused physical examination of a patient of any age, sex or condition in any setting.

### **Objectives:**

1. Utilizing the techniques of examination: inspection, palpation, percussion and auscultation.
2. Perform a complete physical examination in a logical and orderly fashion.
3. Adapt the physical examination to the needs of each individual and circumstance.
4. Perform an appropriate focused exam when indicated.
5. Demonstrate the use of instruments for the physical examination to include:
  - Ear Curette
  - Fluorescein Dye
  - Hypodermic Syringe/Needle
  - Ishihara Plates
  - Oto-Ophthalmoscope
  - Pap Smear Spatula/Curette
  - Pediatric Screening Devices
  - Percussion Hammer
  - Sphygmomanometer
  - Surgical Gloves
  - Stethoscope
  - Speculums
  - Tests for Occult Blood
  - Tongue Depressor
  - Tuning Forks
  - Visual Acuity Charts
  - Wood's Lamp
6. Select various components (by system) of a complete exam to perform for signs of a particular disease based on knowledge of history and the presentation of symptoms.
7. Recognize normal and abnormal findings based on patient's age, race, and gender.
8. Record normal and abnormal findings.

### **Competency III**

**Diagnostic Skills:** ASHS PA graduates will order or perform, and interpret common laboratory, radiologic, cardiographic, and other routine diagnostic procedures used to identify pathophysiologic processes.

#### **Objectives:**

1. Identify indicated procedures/tests, and discuss appropriate differential diagnosis based on symptoms and physical findings.
2. Interpret routine hematological, chemical, bacteriological, and cytological tests.
3. Know the common diseases with which abnormal findings are most often associated.
4. Know serial tests utilized to monitor a patient's condition and/or effectiveness of therapy.
5. Know methods, indications, contraindications, and complications of diagnostic tests and procedures.
6. Demonstrate sterile technique in procedures.
7. Collect patient specimens:
  - Bacteriological samples, aerobic and anaerobic
  - Aerobic and anaerobic venous blood.
  - Gastric contents
  - Sputum: sterile and non-sterile
  - Stool
  - Urine: sterile and non-sterile
8. Perform and/or interpret basic laboratory tests:
  - Glucose meter testing
  - KOH prep/Wet prep
  - Office pregnancy test
  - PPD/tine tests
  - Strep screen
  - Urinalysis (dipstick & micro)
  - H & H
  - Hemocult
9. Perform and interpret a 12-lead EKG or rhythm strip:
  - Recognize normal sinus rhythm, major abnormalities and dysrhythmias
10. Order and make preliminary assessment of routine x-ray studies.
11. Obtain pap smears, collect vaginal or urethral cultures.
12. Be familiar with techniques of:

Anoscopy	Arthrocentesis
Bronchoscopy	Colonoscopy
Cardiac stress test	Transesophageal Echocardiography
Endoscopy	Excisional biopsy
Gastroscopy	Lumbar puncture
Oxytocin challenge	Paracentesis
Pericardiocentesis	Proctoscopy
Sigmoidoscopy	Swan-Ganz insertion
Thoracentesis	

## **Competency IV**

**Differential Diagnosis/Diagnostic Impression:** ASHS PA graduates will develop a differential diagnosis and diagnostic impression considering the database.

### **Objectives:**

1. Develop a differential diagnosis and diagnostic impression at each stage of data collection.
2. Demonstrate ability to organize and integrate data from the medical history, physical examination, and diagnostic studies.
3. Demonstrate the skills necessary to accurately record and present data in a manner appropriate to the setting.
4. Be familiar with common medical conditions and their mode of presentation.

## **Competency V**

**Therapeutic Skills:** ASHS PA graduates will perform routine procedures such as injections, immunizations, suturing and wound care. They will be able to manage conditions produced by infection or trauma, assist in the management of complex illness and injury, and take initiative in performing evaluation and therapeutic procedures in response to life-threatening situations.

### **Objectives:**

1. Perform venous and arterial punctures.
2. Set-up and administer intravenous infusions, and be familiar with intraosseous infusion.
3. Administer injections by a variety of routes including intradermal, subcutaneous, intramuscular and intravenous.
4. Catheterize the urinary bladder of both male and female patients.
5. Insert nasogastric tube.
6. Perform a variety of methods of skin closure, including use of Dermabond type agents, various techniques of wound suturing (including sub-Q closure) and wound stapling.
7. Demonstrate basic splinting and casting skills, and identify problems/complications that may develop in splinted/casted patients.
8. Practice universal precautions as they pertain to patient care and OSHA regulations.
9. Be familiar with:
  - Chest tube insertion techniques and complications.
  - Medications commonly added to IV solutions.
  - Relationships between serum electrolytes and IV therapy.
  - Problems of hyper- and hypovolemia.
  - Blood and blood products utilized in IV therapy and the indications and complications of their use, including transfusion reactions.
  - Peritoneal dialysis.
10. Have knowledge of the local health care delivery system (pre-hospital, outpatient, home care, long term care, and inpatient) to be able to meet patient needs in various settings.

## **Competency VI**

**Emergency Skills:** ASHS PA graduates will recognize and manage life threatening or harmful situations. They will work alone or as a team member in a medical emergency.

### **Objectives:**

1. Recognize emergencies and take appropriate action to minimize injury or sustain life.
2. Know medico legal aspects of emergency medicine and the emergency medical system.
3. Appropriately utilize the techniques of basic life support and advanced cardiac life support
4. Initiate appropriate hemostasis in patients with hemorrhage.
5. Assess and treat hypovolemic shock.
6. Recognize, support and treat a patient having an anaphylactic reaction.
7. Communicate in a clear and concise manner the current status of a patient to a physician or other allied health professional.
8. Advise patients appropriately in cases of accidental ingestion, or attempted suicide.
9. Be familiar with reference sources pertaining to toxic substances:
10. Be familiar with laboratory tests, diagnostic studies and interpretation of results, necessary in the diagnosis and treatment of patients seen in an emergency department setting.
11. Have a working knowledge of the care and approach to common presenting illnesses and injuries in the emergency department setting.
12. Be familiar with the presentations and treatment of infections seen in emergency settings.
13. Recognize altered mental status and its common causes and treatment.
14. Be familiar with triage procedures in mass casualty situations.
15. Understand use of, contraindications and indications for standard emergency medications.
16. Have knowledge to respond to civil emergencies and assist with care of mass casualties.

## **Competency VII**

**Communication:** ASHS PA graduates will communicate in a professional manner.

### **Objectives:**

1. Effectively present a synopsis of a patient's current illness, pertinent positive and negative findings and the diagnostic and therapeutic regimen proposed or instituted.
2. Communicate effectively with patients and family.
3. Write orders in an organized fashion.
4. Write clear, concise and relevant progress notes in the SOAP format.
5. Prepare lab, EKG and radiographic request forms.
6. Maintain up to date problem and medication lists.
7. Initiate requests/referrals for patient evaluation and support services including medical consultations and nursing care.
8. Report communicable diseases utilizing appropriate forms.
9. Communicate and work effectively with members of the health care team.
10. Provide emotional support to patients and their family/support system.
11. Deliver care that is culturally and linguistically appropriate.
12. Code clinical encounters appropriately.
13. Maintain professional communication with health care colleagues.

### **Competency VIII**

**Attitude:** ASHS PA graduates will assess the health problems of individual patients as well as those of population groups and approach each with an attitude of professional concern.

#### **Objectives:**

1. Appreciate the physical, emotional, social and economic distress created by health issues.
2. Maintain objectivity necessary to permit perspective, assessment, and solution of health problems.
3. Recognize the importance of patient education and health promotion/disease prevention in effecting change in the health status of both individuals and groups.
4. Appreciate the difficulty encountered by patients in their attempts to comply with therapeutic regimens while dealing with the health care delivery system.
5. Utilize prepared patient education materials and document teaching/counseling efforts.
6. Respect the right of the patient to be informed regarding physical status, efficacy of recommended treatment, costs, therapeutic options, prognosis, and alternative services.
7. Respect patient rights to privacy and treat confidential information with professional discretion and legal compliance.
8. Develop a personal philosophy regarding the dignity and quality of human life.
9. Develop a culturally competent practice style.
10. Address the complete patient by recognizing issues of spirituality.

### **Competency IX**

**Professionalism:** ASHS PA graduates will possess the skills, attributes and behaviors necessary to function as a physician assistant and as a member of the professional medical community.

#### **Objectives:**

1. Adhere to and follow statutes, rules, and regulations governing physician assistants.
2. Utilize medical technology applications including the Internet, search engines and computing devices.
3. Analyze medical literature information and identify evidence-based treatment strategies for patient care.
4. Develop presentations that deliver information to professional colleagues and the public.
5. Recognize the importance and responsibility of participating as a member of the professional medical community.
6. Develop the professional role of the physician assistant.
7. Commit to maintaining medical skills and life-long learning.

## **Competency X**

**Medical Knowledge:** ASHS PA graduates will possess the medical knowledge in biomedical sciences, health promotion, and disease intervention necessary to competently and compassionately care for the patients and perform the other competencies in this document.

### **Objectives:**

1. Understand risk factor analysis, pathophysiologic processes and epidemiologic factors that play a role in disease.
2. Identify strategies to maintain the patient's health and prevent the occurrence of conditions (including detection of conditions in asymptomatic persons).
3. Differentiate between normal and abnormal conditions, test results and other diagnostic data.
4. Identify the natural history and presenting signs and symptoms of disease.
5. Direct the care of the patient to the appropriate healthcare system entity (including primary, secondary and tertiary care as needed).

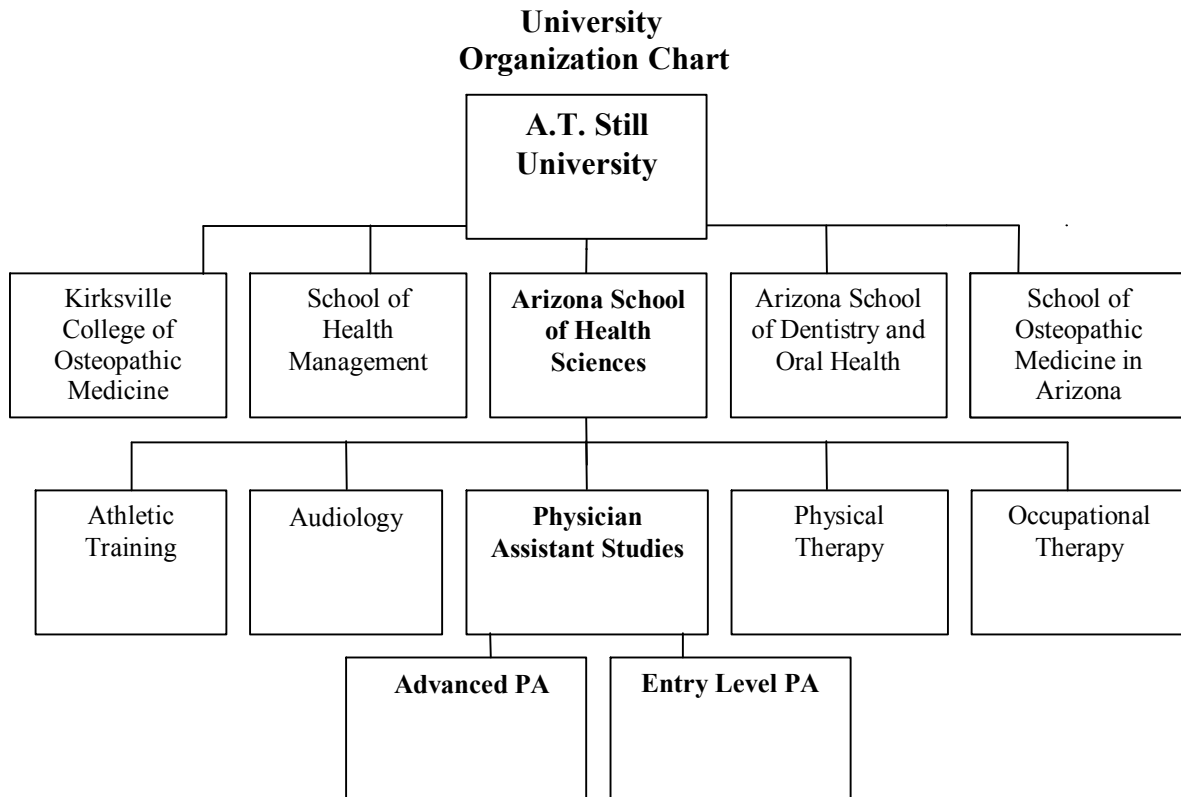
# PROGRAM OVERVIEW

## Department of Physician Assistant Studies Programs

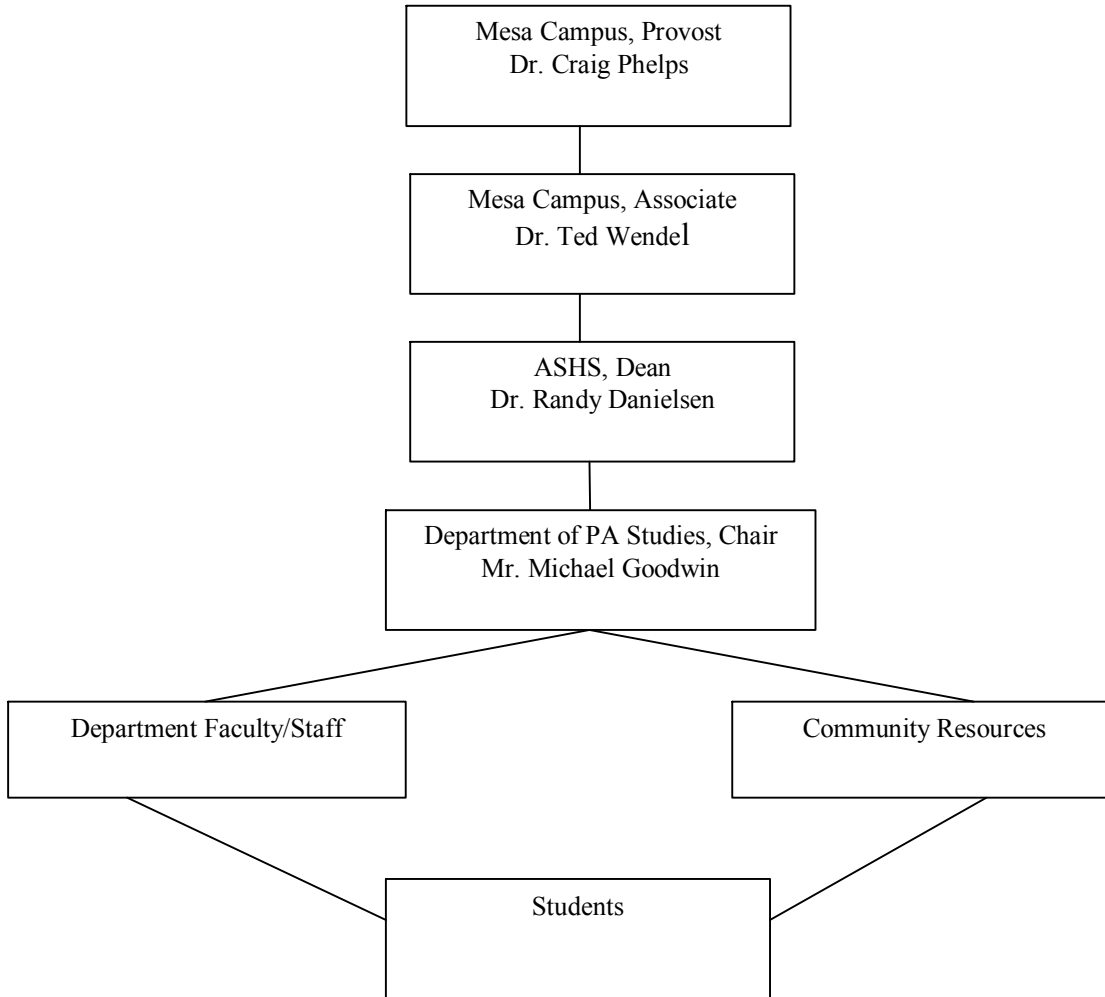
There are two educational PA programs offered by the ASHS Department of Physician Assistant Studies: the Entry Level PA Program and the Advanced PA Program.

Students enrolled in the Residential Entry Level PA Program take courses in a traditional format on the ASHS main campus and complete the PA program in 26 months. Upon completion, students are awarded a Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies degree. Within the residential program, we have a Native American Physician Assistant initiative designed to increase the number of American Indian/Alaskan Native/Native Hawaiian PAs, especially those who desire to practice in their home communities.

The Advanced Physician Assistant program is designed for graduate PAs who are furthering their education. Upon completion of this distance education program, students are awarded a Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies degree.



**Arizona School of Health Sciences  
Administration Organizational Chart**



## **DIDACTIC COURSE DESCRIPTIONS**

### **PA500 - Clinical Anatomy:**

Clinical anatomy provides a comprehensive review of human anatomy using a regional approach. Both lecture and laboratory components of this course will emphasize the clinical relevance of each area considered. Normal radiological anatomy will also be reviewed. Students are required to study human cadavers.

### **PA501 - Introduction to Patient Assessment:**

Introduction to Patient Assessment provides fundamental methods for obtaining and presenting a comprehensive medical history. Techniques for a screening physical examination are covered. Instructional methods will include lecture, group discussion, role-playing, and physical examination labs. Students will conduct interviews and physical examinations under supervision and will review their performance with an instructor. Students will be expected to spend additional time outside of class conducting assigned interviews and physical exams and presenting this information.

### **PA502 - Medical Physiology:**

Medical Physiology provides a comprehensive and advanced review of cellular, organ system and whole body physiology. Emphasis is placed on the importance of homeostasis and how the body normally maintains optimal functioning; how physiological functions deteriorate as a consequence of pathological processes and the subsequent impact on the body; and discussing the clinical relevance of physiological facts, concepts and principles.

### **PA503 - Healthy Community:**

Healthy Community provides information about various aspects of health promotion and disease prevention in the primary care setting based on Healthy People 2010. A wide range of variables will be discussed to include lifestyles, nutrition, cultural diversity and social-economic factors. Current strategies (tests, evaluations, examinations) used in preventive medicine will be covered by age groups and gender.

### **PA504, 515, 524, 532 - History and Physical Examination I-IV:**

History and Physical Examination I-IV is designed to introduce the use of medical diagnostic equipment, patient history taking, and patient communication skills. The student will develop the skills needed to perform a complete and problem specific physical examination. Courses contain both lecture and laboratory formats to properly develop and refine skills in history taking and physical examination. Students will examine assigned lab partners, real and simulated patients to gain the requisite knowledge skills and attitudes to conduct a thorough examination and history. Clinical experiences are incorporated into the courses. Class topics and course content correlate with the clinical medicine series.

**PA505, 513, - Pathophysiology I-II:**

Pathophysiology I-II is designed to teach the general pathology and pathophysiology of structural and functional disorders that occur to the body as a result of disease. The mechanisms and manifestations of inflammation and cellular response to injury and general therapeutic principles are highlighted. Topics and course content correlate with the clinical medicine sequence as much as possible, and infectious disease topics will be covered.

**PA506, 514, 523, - Clinical Pharmacology & Pharmacotherapeutics I-III:**

Clinical Pharmacology and Pharmacotherapeutics I-IV is designed to teach the principles of pharmacology including the concepts of drug absorption, distribution, metabolism, and elimination. Included in these courses is a review of the autonomic nervous system and its relation to drug actions within the body. Medications covered correlate with the clinical medicine sequence courses. Introduction to prescription writing is presented and herbal medication use is discussed. A comprehensive review of antibiotics, antivirals and anti-fungals are covered and general cancer chemotherapy is reviewed.

**PA507 - Clinical Medicine: EENT**

EENT is designed to present the common disorders of the ear, eye, nose and throat seen by the primary care clinician. Emphasis is placed on the clinical approach to the diagnosis and treatment of common diseases.

**PA508 - Clinical Medicine: Dermatology**

Dermatology is designed to cover diagnosis and management of common cutaneous diseases. Diseases are presented visually with their characteristics and common variations. The student will learn the use of topical and systemic therapy, prescription writing, and special diagnostic and therapeutic procedures as they pertain to dermatology.

**PA509 - Clinical Medicine: Neurology**

Neurology is designed to provide practical clinical knowledge in neurology as it pertains to primary care. The class will be presented in lecture and case study format and will cover the diagnosis and treatment of neurological disorders found throughout all stages of life.

**PA510 - EBM & Medical Research Design:**

Evidence Based Medicine and Medical Research Design is designed to introduce common research methodology and critical thinking tactics for literature review as a basis for medical decision making. Also covered is how to construct valid clinical questions based on patient problems and how to perform medical literature searching strategies that yield optimal results. Methods for critically appraising the medical literature are emphasized throughout the course, as well as strategies for keeping up with new medical findings beyond PA school. Basic techniques of medical writing are also discussed in relationship to the development of a Capstone Project.

**PA511 - PAs in American Medicine:**

Physician Assistants in American Medicine presents information about the PA student's chosen profession within the context of the modern and evolving U.S. health care system. The course reviews the healthcare work force, history, organizations, and roles of various health care professionals with an emphasis on their function as a team in patient care. The course also examines the development and current status of the PA profession, including the legal, political, and economic aspects; regulatory and policy issues; and the various roles of PAs.

**PA516 - Clinical Medicine: Endocrinology**

Endocrinology provides an overview of common endocrine disorders in terms of their etiology, clinical manifestations, diagnosis, treatment & prognosis. Type I and type II diabetes mellitus, thyroid disorders, adrenal disorders and pituitary pathologies are emphasized.

**PA517 - Clinical Medicine: Gastroenterology**

Gastroenterology provides an overview of the common disorders in gastroenterology seen by the primary care clinician. Emphasis is placed on etiology, diagnostic and treatment patterns, and surgery of common disorders.

**PA518 - Clinical Medicine: Pulmonary Medicine**

Pulmonary medicine is designed to cover the pulmonary system and its associated disease processes. Emphasis is placed on prevention, etiology, diagnosis, and treatment of specific diseases and disorders encountered in general practice.

**PA519 - Clinical Medicine: Behavioral Medicine**

Behavioral medicine is designed to cover the necessary knowledge, skills and sensitivity in order to intervene effectively for a variety of psychiatric, emotional, and social concerns that are presented by patients in various health care settings. Students will gain skills in the evaluation, counseling, diagnosis and management of patients with mental illness. The student will also learn the normative responses to stress and how individuals cope with stress as well as issues and stages related to death and dying.

**PA520 - Clinical Medicine: Geriatrics**

Geriatrics is designed to teach the physiology of aging and the presentation, diagnosis and management of common geriatric disorders encountered in clinical practice. Clinical implications, demographics and epidemiology will be discussed as well as issues related to long-term care and end-of-life issues.

**PA521 - Clinical Medicine: Nutrition**

Nutrition is designed to provide an overview and working knowledge of nutrition directed at common clinical problems encountered in primary care. Discussion includes the major macronutrients and their physiologic interplay in metabolism. Emphasis will be placed on practical information and strategies regarding selection of food to maintain a healthy lifestyle, such as grocery shopping, food selection, reading labels and portion control. The learner will be equipped to counsel patients on proper nutritional approaches to combat/prevent obesity, hypertension, diabetes mellitus and cardiovascular disease. The course will contain an analysis of many fad diets found in the lay literature.

**PA525 - Clinical Medicine: Musculoskeletal**

Musculoskeletal is designed to cover orthopedic and rheumatology disorders. Emphasis is placed on common disease process and associated etiology, clinical manifestations, diagnosis, treatment & prognosis.

**PA526 - Clinical Medicine: Cardiology/EKG**

Cardiology and EKG is designed to present the common disorders in the cardiovascular system seen by the primary care clinician. Emphasis is placed on the clinical approach of diagnostic and treatment guidelines. The course also assists the student in mastering basic ECG interpretation. Lectures are presented on electrophysiology, normal and abnormal heart rhythms, conduction blockages and pacemaker therapy.

**PA527 - Clinical Medicine: Genitourology**

Genitourology is designed to cover nephrology and urology. Emphasis is placed on the clinical approach of diagnostic and treatment of common disorders.

**PA528 - Clinical Medicine: Pediatrics**

Pediatrics is designed to teach the basic components of the physical examination of the newborn and infant, along with developmental assessment. This course will emphasize pathophysiology, prevention, etiology, clinical signs and symptoms, treatment and complications of common pediatric disorders. Organ systems will include ENT, dermatology, gastrointestinal, hematological, respiratory, cardiac, and genitourinary disorders. Preventive health will focus on infant feeding and immunizations. Additionally, common pediatric emergent conditions such as fevers and febrile seizures, and pediatric trauma and child abuse will be discussed.

**PA529 - Medical Law, Ethics, and HCDS:**

Medical Law, Ethics and Healthcare Delivery Systems is designed to provide a basic foundation in the major theories of medical ethics, ethical principles and structure/function of the US healthcare system. A focus on both of these broad subjects will be from the physician/PA team perspective.

**PA533 - Clinical Medicine: Women's Health**

Women's Health is designed to cover obstetrics and gynecology. It covers normal pregnancy, labor, and puerperium. Pathology of pregnancy, diagnostic methods, and treatment are included as well. The gynecology portion includes a review of the anatomy and physiology of the organs of reproduction. Common gynecological diseases are covered, as well as family planning, contraception, infertility, and gynecologic oncology.

**PA534 - Clinical Medicine: Hematology/Oncology**

Hematology and oncology presents the etiology, diagnosis, and treatment of common hematological and oncologic disorders. Laboratory evaluation and radiology is covered in depth and case studies are used to illustrate the material.

**PA536 - Clinical Medicine: Emergency Medicine**

Emergency medicine is designed to teach the recognition of the signs, symptoms, and clinical findings of specific conditions requiring immediate medical intervention and the initial management of these conditions.

**Note:** The didactic course sequence and curriculum calendar can be found online in the *Student Lounge* section of the PA Program's current course management system.

# ACADEMIC POLICIES

## Academic Progression

Progression in the Program is contingent on continued mastery of program objectives, course content, and demonstration of behaviors consistent with a healthcare professional as outlined in the *Professionalism* section of this handbook. Students who fail one or two program course(s) will be placed on academic probation and must repeat the course(s) on a schedule determined by the Program. Course repetition may cause a delay in graduation. Students who fail two courses must go before the Academic Progress Board for review. Students who fail three courses will be recommended for dismissal. Students dismissed from the Program may wish to consult the *ASHS Catalog* to review the appeal process.

## Academic Standing

A student who is in good standing in the DPAS will have met the following criteria:

1. Maintain an overall grade point average (GPA) of 2.0 or higher and achieve a “C”/passing or better letter grade in all didactic and clinical courses required by the ASHS DPAS.
2. Meet the defined DPAS *Professionalism Expectations* and be in compliance with all DPAS and University policies and procedures.

## Academic Probation

Students who fail to maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.0 or who fail an ASHS PA Program course or do not meet *Professionalism Expectations* will be placed on Academic Probation. In written notification, the Program Chair will specify the reason(s) for academic probation, the requirements for restoration of good standing (if applicable), and the deadline for completing requirements. A pro-rated tuition fee will be charged for repeat courses.

## Academic Assistance

Faculty are expected to provide assistance and guidance to students in reviewing and assessing their competency. Students may be offered and referred for tutorial assistance through services provided by the University. The DPAS will utilize second year PA students, peer tutors, faculty, and graduate PAs as tutors whenever possible.

## Academic Progress Board

This board is composed of DPAS faculty with a minimum of four members to constitute a quorum. The Academic Progress Board will be convened by the Program Chair to consider PA students who do not meet standards for progression (beyond failure of one course). The student is invited to submit a written statement to the board. The board may require the student to attend the meeting via conference call or in person to clarify issues or answer questions. After consideration of the individual case, the Program Chair will notify the student of the board's decision via written communication.

## **Academic Dishonesty**

The *Code of Academic Conduct* is outlined in detail in the *ASHS Catalog*. Students should read the code and make sure they understand all content. Additionally, the *ASHS Catalog* outlines the procedure for reporting and investigating violations of the code to the Peer Review Council (PRC) of the Student Government Association (SGA).

## **Student Evaluation**

There are many characteristics that are desirable in a PA. These include comprehensive medical *knowledge*, *skill* in applying knowledge through the provision of medical care, and *professionalism* in conduct. A PA must possess attention to detail, reliability, punctuality, and the ability to work as a team player.

In the didactic component of study, ASHS PA students are expected to demonstrate these traits, and at progressively higher levels, as they move towards completion of didactic training. Thus, the evaluation of ASHS PA students includes consideration of *knowledge*, *skill*, and *professionalism*. *Knowledge* is assessed through oral, written and practical testing. *Skill* is assessed via ASHS DPAS faculty evaluation. *Professionalism* is assessed through cooperation with the program faculty and staff, attendance at mandatory functions, participation in conferences and group exercises, and adherence to the guidelines of this handbook.

### **Objective Structured Clinical Encounters (OSCEs)**

These proctored graded simulations, during the History and Physical courses, focus on aspects of patient encounters and may include: history taking, physical exam skills, critical thinking, developing a differential diagnosis and management plans, patient education, and oral communication skills.

### **Comprehensive Examination**

Students will take the Physician Assistant Clinical Knowledge Rating and Assessment Tool (PACKRAT) examination at the end of the didactic training component. This statistically referenced exam will be used by students for self-assessment purposes.

### **Requirements for Completion of Didactic Component**

1. Follow all rules and regulations published by ATSU and the DPAS
2. Complete with a passing grade (C or better) all didactic courses
3. Submit documentation of compliance with the ATSU Health and Immunization policy
4. Maintain BLS and achieve ACLS certification
5. Comply with the *Professionalism* section of the handbook

# ***PROFESSIONALISM***

An important aspect of any professional educational curriculum is the development of professional behaviors and role identity. Evidence shows that unprofessional behavior exhibited during training is a predictor of future problems with state regulatory boards and the need for disciplinary actions (Papadakis, Hodgson, Teherani and Kohatsu, 2004).

Unprofessional behavior presents a potential danger to the provision of good patient care and relates to the credibility of the profession. Professionalism therefore shares equal importance to content knowledge and manual skills at ATSU. The DPAS considers violation of professional conduct a significant deficiency.

Recognizing the responsibility for professional behavior, the DPAS sets expectations for and evaluates students on their professional conduct. Students must demonstrate acquisition of these important behaviors.

The National Board of Medical Examiners has identified behaviors consistent with professionalism. These behaviors are listed below. As a mechanism to assist students in the acquisition of these professional skills, a monitoring system has been established to identify unprofessional behaviors and to provide mentoring and guidance. Students identified as exhibiting unprofessional behavior will be provided with remediation opportunities. Students who reflect a pattern of unprofessional behavior (deficiencies identified in two or more courses or clinical experiences) will be placed on academic probation and will receive documentation of these deficiencies. Severe infractions of professional behavior may be grounds for academic dismissal.

## **Professionalism Expectations**

### **Altruism**

1. Helps colleagues and team members
2. Takes on extra work to help the team
3. Serves as a knowledge or skill resource to others
4. Advocates for policies, practices and procedures that benefit patients
5. Endures inconvenience to meet patient needs

### **Honor and Integrity**

1. Admits errors and takes steps to prevent reoccurrence
2. Deals with confidential information appropriately
3. Does not misuse resources (i.e. school or clinical site property)
4. Attributes ideas and contributions appropriately for other's work
5. Upholds ethical standards in research and scholarly activity
6. Requests help when needed

### **Caring and Compassion**

1. Treats patients as individuals, and considers lifestyle, beliefs and support systems
2. Shows compassion to patients and families
3. Maintains appropriate boundaries in professional relationships

4. Responds to patient needs appropriately
5. Optimizes patient comfort and privacy when conducting examinations

### **Respect**

1. Respects institutional colleagues, faculty, and staff
2. Demonstrates respect for patients
3. Participates constructively as a team member
4. Adheres to institutional and departmental policies and procedures
5. Adheres to dress code

### **Responsibility and Accountability**

1. Presents self in an appropriate manner
2. Completes assignments and tasks in a timely manner
3. Responds promptly when notified
4. Intervenes when unprofessional behavior presents a clear and present danger
5. Responds appropriately to an impaired colleague
6. Responds professionally to other's lapses in conduct and or performance
7. Elicits patient's understanding to enhance communication of information
8. Facilitates conflict resolution
9. Remains flexible to changing circumstances and unanticipated changes
10. Balances personal needs and patient responsibilities
11. Provides constructive feedback

### **Excellence**

1. Has internal focus and direction
2. Sets goals to achieve excellence
3. Takes initiative in organizing and participating with peer groups and faculty
4. Maintains composure under difficult situations

Adapted from Behaviors Reflecting Professionalism National Board of Medical Examiners.

# ***STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES***

## **Student Technical Standards**

In addition to the A. T. Still University “*Minimal Technical Standards for Admission and Matriculation*”, found in the ASHS Catalog. The ASHS PA Program, in order to assure patient services are provided in a competent and efficient manner, require students to be capable of performing the following on their own or with reasonable adaptations:

- maintain an attitude of respect for self and others
- adhere to the concepts of privilege and confidentiality in communicating with patients
- demonstrate a commitment to the patient’s welfare
- have the mental capacity and physical abilities to assimilate large amounts of complex information and apply that information in an interpreted fashion to solve clinical problems and formulate therapeutic and diagnostic plans accurately and efficiently
- remain calm and reasoned in a high stress environment and respond quickly and appropriately in emergencies
- be able to speak fluent English to relate to most patient situations
- have the ability to adjust communication to the patient's level of understanding
- demonstrate interactive verbal and written communication skills
- possess adequate auditory acuity to accurately use a stethoscope, tuning forks, etc.
- possess adequate visual acuity for the use of an ophthalmoscope
- possess adequate depth perception for surgical/technical procedures, and the accurate use of an oto-ophthalmoscope and microscope
- have accurate visual and auditory acuity for the interpretation of diagnostic procedures
- have the ability to record diagnostic and other findings accurately and efficiently
- possess flexibility, dexterity and strength of extremities for use in surgical and technical procedures
- have a degree of coordination in motor skills needed to respond to emergency situations quickly and appropriately

## **ADA Statement**

*See ASHS catalog or Student Handbook.*

## **Fair Practices**

PA students have equal access to facilities and programs of the Arizona School of Health Sciences as do students of other programs. ASHS is committed to equality of opportunity and does not discriminate against applicants, students, or employees based on race, religion, color, creed, national origin, gender, age, sexual orientation, or disability. All policies concerning equal opportunity/affirmative action, sexual harassment, discrimination, and conflicts of interest are found in the *ASHS Catalog*.

## **Communication**

Communication between ASHS faculty and PA students is accomplished through a variety of modes that include personal visits, phone calls, voice mail, and ATSU electronic mail. The ATSU electronic mail address is the official means of communication at the University. Communication between students and all ATSU personnel should be via ATSU assigned e-mail accounts. Students are required to check e-mail on a daily basis.

## **Conflict Resolution**

Problems during didactic training can occur, be they academic, professional, or personal in nature. Students should use the following guidelines in dealing with problems:

1. Talk with the course instructor (if applicable). If this does not resolve your concern or if the problem does not relate to a specific course:
2. Talk with your assigned faculty advisor. If the issue is not resolved:
3. Talk with the Department Chair

If a student is experiencing personal problems, the student should speak with their faculty advisor. The advisor will guide the student to appropriate resources such as student services or referral to outside agencies.

## **Attendance**

Attendance at all classes, laboratories, clinical experiences, and events scheduled by the department are mandatory. Roll may be taken unannounced at any time. Absences are excused only at the discretion of the course instructor. Students are expected to attend all scheduled ASHS PA Program courses and to be punctual for all classes. Repeated tardiness or absences are inconsistent with the *Professional Expectations* noted in this handbook. Make up classes or lab assignments are provided solely at the discretion of the instructor. Course instructors reserve the right to lower a final course grade for excessive or extended absences.

## **Examinations**

Examination content is derived from course objectives, assigned readings, classroom, and lab experiences. Re-scheduling an examination may occur under the following circumstances:

- A personal illness with medical attention from a health care provider. (A signed medical statement on official letterhead may be required);
- Illness of a family member. (Documentation may be required);
- Death in the immediate family.

If you cannot attend an examination, students should notify the instructor of record and the academic coordinator as soon as possible. Missing an exam or assignment is not consistent with the *Professional Expectations* and may be cause for referral to the Program *Academic Progress Board*.

## **Test Security**

All examinations are the property of the Department. Copying of examinations and related testing materials, in full or part, for any reason will be regarded as cheating and theft, and disciplinary actions will be instituted. Students receiving, viewing, or duplicating stolen examination materials will be treated as an accomplice, and subject to disciplinary action. Tests will not be administered early. If a test is not taken by a student, a make-up test may be given at the discretion of the instructor. Make-up tests may be in a different format from the original.

## **Dissemination of Examination Results**

Feedback on student examination performance will be disseminated using various methods. If a student wishes to review a previous test, they should contact the instructor of record. Review of old tests will not be allowed during finals week.

## **Electronic Testing**

Course instructors may use electronic testing to assess knowledge. The following parameters apply to all electronic examinations:

- All backpacks, notes, cell phones, and any items other than your computer must be removed from the table and put to the front/side of the room prior to the start of the test. If a colored piece of scratch paper is handed out by the instructor, you may use this during the test to write on. It must be turned in with your name on it to the instructor at the end of the test.
- No questions will be permitted during a test. If you have a question about the test, please contact the instructor of record after all students complete the test. Please raise your hand if you are having computer difficulties.
- When a test is open, no other windows may be open simultaneously. The testing screen must be fully maximized.
- You should have an ethernet cable in use or readily available during all tests.
- When you have completed a test, please exit the room quietly. Do not open course material related to the test while in the testing room.

## **Grading Scale**

Grades for each PA student will reflect the evaluation criteria as stated in the course syllabi. Final course grades for ASHS PA Program didactic courses will be expressed using the following scale:

A=90-100

B=80-89.99

C=70-79.99

F= < 70

I=Incomplete

Please note: Rounding up of final grades will not be permitted.

### **Incomplete Grades**

PA students whose academic work at the end of a course is incomplete may be given, at the course instructor's discretion, a grade of incomplete (I). Consult the *ASHS Catalog* for more details.

### **Classroom Etiquette**

Activities that distract from the classroom environment and interfere with the conduct of the educational process are prohibited. Such activities include emailing, instant messaging, cell phone usage or receiving calls, surfing the Internet except as directed by faculty, bringing animals to class, bringing children to class (except as requested by faculty), conducting conversations outside of class participation, and distracting peers or faculty. Faculty have responsibility to maintain the classroom environment and will ask those who engage in distracting activity to leave the room. Frequent breaks are given during the day. Please make every attempt to limit your exit and entry during class by using break time appropriately.

### **Current Contact Information**

Students are expected to provide the Program with current address and phone number information at all times. If your address and/or phone number change, please submit information immediately.

### **Records**

Student records are maintained by the ATSU Registrar for five years and then placed on microfilm. See the *ASHS Catalog* for further information.

### **ATSU E-mail Account**

It is imperative that students check ATSU e-mail account daily (including weekends). Many PA program faculty and staff use e-mail as an important means for dispersing information.

### **Health Requirements**

Prior to matriculation, all applicants to ASHS must submit certification of immunizations. Failure to maintain year-to-date immunizations can prevent a student from progressing in the program. For a list of the required immunizations, consult the *ASHS Catalog* or see attached appendix (Appendix A).

Health insurance is required while you are attending the Arizona School of Health Sciences. The *ASHS Catalog* and the document at the end of this handbook describe the minimum medical coverage requirements that must be maintained. Noncompliance at any time during a student's enrollment may result in disciplinary action. In particular, students should have insurance coverage for or accept personal responsibility for infectious disease exposure.

Students can access personal counseling by contacting Student Services.

### **Advising**

Students are assigned a faculty advisor. You should consider the advisor a key support and primary contact during the academic training. Your faculty advisor will:

- Assist in the understanding of policies and practices of the Program and ASHS.
- Respond to questions or concerns about course requirements and expectations, performance criteria, academic standing, and professionalism.
- Provide feedback on academic progress, graduate competencies and program goals.
- Provide support for your personal and professional growth. This support may include referring you to appropriate professionals if difficult situations arise.
- Discuss academic performance in an effort to optimize your learning experiences.
- Assist with plans to address issues of academic difficulties on an as needed basis.
- Mentor progress for the Capstone Project.

The Clinical Coordinator will be advisor for the students regarding clinical rotations. Students should contact the Coordinator as needed during their rotations. Please note your Advisor may not act as your medical provider or professional counselor.

### **ASHS Property**

In several courses, you will be required to submit papers, presentations and/or notes. All assignments and projects submitted for any course are the property of the ASHS DPAS and may not be available for return to the student.

### **Assignments**

Students are advised to keep a copy of all course assignments/paperwork. If an assignment is not posted or is misplaced, a grade of zero will be given if the student does not have a backup copy. Acceptance of late submissions of assignments/paperwork is at the discretion of the course instructor.

### **Leave of Absence**

See *ASHS Catalog* or *Student Handbook*.

### **Withdrawal from the Program**

See *ASHS Catalog* or *Student Handbook*.

### **Proper Identification**

Students must always identify themselves as a “physician assistant student” to faculty, patients, clinical site staff, and never present themselves as physicians, residents, medical students, or graduate physician assistants. While in the ASHS PA program, students may not use previously earned titles (i.e. RN, MD, DO, EMT, Ph.D., Dr. etc.) for identification purposes. ASHS identification badges must be worn at all times while on campus and during clinical training.

### **Confidentiality**

Students must respect the confidentiality of patients and fellow students and are not permitted to discuss patients or fellow students by name outside the clinical or academic setting. For academic presentations and assignments, please use patient initials or first name only.

### **Employment**

Because of the intensity of the ASHS PA program, students are strongly discouraged from seeking or maintaining employment during the entire program. If a PA student chooses to work during the program, it is his/her responsibility to ensure that employment does not interfere with or hinder academic progress. Having a job is not an excuse for missing lectures, examinations, clinical labs, or assignments.

### **Textbook Policy**

It is expected that students will obtain textbooks as listed in the course syllabus. It is considered an infringement of copyright law to copy an entire textbook. If the student has a financial concern regarding the purchasing of a required textbook, he or she should consult with the Academic Coordinator or Program Chair.

### **Faculty Access**

In addition to teaching, PA faculty members have administrative, college and clinical responsibilities. Time spent with faculty should be for counseling, advisement, academic questions or other concerns related to the ASHS PA program. PA faculty members generally maintain an “open door” policy for student access. Please use good judgment and respect faculty members' time. If extended periods of time are needed, please consult the faculty member to make appointments.

## Dress Code

Students should maintain a professional appearance and dress appropriately whenever they are representing ASHS and the PA profession in any setting. This includes the campus, clinical sites, meetings, and special events. Being neatly dressed and well groomed exemplifies professionalism. Students should adhere to the following dress code:

- CLOTHING:** Business casual attire. Clothing should allow for adequate movement during patient care, and should not be tight, short, low cut or expose the trunk or undergarments. Students are not to wear flip-flops, shorts, cut-offs, hats, jeans, clothing with rips/tears, sweat clothing, workout attire, short skirts/tops, halter type tops or T-shirts.
- JEWELRY:** Watches, wedding bands and/or engagement rings are permissible.  
Earrings - no more than two earrings per ear, no dangling or oversized earrings.  
No excessive jewelry.  
No other visible body piercing permitted.
- NAILS:** Fingernails should be kept trimmed and when in surgical settings or rotations without polish or artificial nails
- TATTOOS:** Students may not exhibit tattoos.
- PERFUME / AFTER-SHAVE:** No excessive or heavy perfumes or after-shave/colognes.
- HAIR:** Hair should be clean and arranged so as not to interfere with providing patient care. Facial hair should be neatly trimmed.
- NAMETAGS:** Proper identification as a PA student is mandatory at all times. ATSU ID must be worn while in the classroom and on clinical sites. Some individual sites also require wearing separate security I.D. badges; these badges will be arranged during orientation at the beginning of the rotation.
- PROFESSIONAL ATTIRE:** A student type white coat should be worn in clinical settings. No open-toed shoes in patient care settings.
- H&P LAB:** Clean/neat scrubs, a lab coat, and closed toed shoes are to be worn on H&P lab days.
- EXCEPTIONS:** Established dress codes at clinical rotation sites supersedes those of the Program (except required ATSU ID badges). All other exceptions will be considered on a case by case basis by the program Chair.

Clinical supervisors, preceptors, or DPAS faculty reserve the right to ask a student who is inappropriately dressed to leave the clinical site.