Research for Physician Assistant Requirements

What type of experience/clinical should a biology student do to be competitive for a PA program?

School and employer responses below.

**St. Francis:**
Here at SFU we take into account how long they have been completing the health care experience, has it been recent or not and what type of patient contact and/or evaluation is being done. More points for experience with patient evaluation, higher amounts completed and recent activity.

**Saint Vincent:**
What she needs to do is shadow a PA. Different PA programs require different numbers of hours, so she needs to look at what schools she wants to attend and check to see how many hours are required. Most of the programs that I have worked with require anywhere from 40-100 hours of shadowing experience. If the student does more than required, it looks good. What will also look good is splitting the hours between 2 or 3 different places. She should do about 20 hours at each place. This will give her experience in different areas of PA practice such as in a general practitioner office and a pediatrics office. Community service looks good no matter what program a student wants to go into.

**Gannon University:**
Each PA Program has different requirements. She should check the requirements for the schools she will be applying to. Our program requires 30 hours of hands on experience such as volunteering at a hospital. We do not count shadowing but some schools do. Our program is full for fall but we will have a few openings fall of 2015 for post bachs.

Physician Assistant Department
Gannon University

**Marywood:**
She needs direct patient care, she could shadow a physician assistant, doctor, nurse practitioner. Not sure exactly what she does, but nurses’ aides, EMT’s, etc all count toward those hours.

**Anne Arundel Community College:**
Thanks for your inquiry about our PA program and Patient Contact Experience. We have quite a few applicants who come to us with biology majors seeking ways to get patient contact experience. One of the things I do recommend to students is to take a one semester course in Emergency Medical Technician or Patient Care Technician. Once they complete the course, they will be able to start earning the experience. Please have your student visit our website and look at the “Am I qualified and competitive” checklist. This will also help. We have an online information session as well, both on www.aacc.edu/physassist. Please have the student contact me below and I will be glad to assist her.

**Delmarva Heart:** (Mentor)
That is a great question for the PA program at UMES. I did have a student from UMES who shadowed with me before he applied for the program. Apparently there are so many clinical hours (with a preceptor) before the student is admitted into the program. That is different than the NP programs because the students in the NP programs already have clinical experience as nursing students and nurses. She really needs to talk to a PA program and find out what will make her competitive. I don't know any of the administrators at the UMES program.

**Frostburg:**
We currently do not have a PA program but are currently looking into it. However, I think the answer is that she needs to shadow a PA or several and get a wide variety of shadowing experience. The other thing that some do is get jobs as scribes or techs at hospitals that gives them some Health care experience. While I am certainly not the expert, this has been what I have seen both from a personal experience with my daughter looking into PA school and looking into it during our investigative process here.

**Hofstra:**
She would best be served obtaining hands on, clinically related experience. Examples would include: patient care technician, emergency medicine services (EMT or Paramedic), phlebotomist, or a medical scribe.

**Mentor:**
To be honest, PAs are a little different than NPs and my understanding is that PAs typically have a biology degree prior to getting admitted to a program. However, she could also have a degree in something else and get admitted to the program; she may just have a few more pre-reqs to get through. I think this student is already on the right track and could probably try to get into the program right away. However, if she was insistent on taking some time off, she would be wise to become a medical assistance and get some hands on experience in the medical field. That normally doesn't take too long to get certified.

**Joseph Kim, DO-Mentor**
She should talk with the health career advisor at the Henson school. She should also observe a PA to get more clinical experience.

University of Penn:
Unfortunately we do not offer a PA program.
I can tell you that for our direct enter BSN-MSN program, we really want students that have shadowed RNs and Nurse Practitioners and have been exposed to various health care settings hospitals, clinics, primary care, etc.

Dr. Diane Davis (Program Director, Medical Laboratory Science Program/Director, Health Professions Advising Program/Salisbury University, Department of Health Sciences) lecture about all aspects of a PA program-especially requirements to gain admission.

www.salisbury.edu/henson/hpap/davis