

Comparison of ARC-PA Accreditation *Standards* for Physician Assistant Education, 3rd edition (2006) , To the Competencies for the Physician Assistant Profession (2005)

The Accreditation *Standards* for Physician Assistant Education “constitute the minimum requirements to which accredited PA programs are held accountable and provide the basis on which the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA) will confer or deny program accreditation. They reflect the realization that a commonality in the core professional curriculum of programs remains desirable and necessary in order to offer curricula of sufficient depth and breadth to prepare all PA graduates for practice in a dynamic and competitive health care arena. The *Standards* allow programs to remain creative and innovative in program design and the methods used to enable students to achieve program goals and acquire the competencies needed for entry into clinical practice. They support the underlying rights of the sponsoring institution as it works with the program to meet the *Standards*.”¹

The purpose of the Competencies for the Physician Assistant Profession “is to communicate to the PA profession and the public a set of competencies that all physician assistants regardless of specialty or setting are expected to acquire and maintain throughout their careers. This document serves as a map for the individual PA, the physician-PA team and organizations that are committed to promoting the development and maintenance of these professional competencies among physician assistants.”²

While the purposes of the two documents are different and do not have word for word correlation, they are complimentary. Not all components of the Competencies are addressed in the *Standards*, nor should they be. The Competencies document addresses competencies achieved throughout the entire career of a PA, well into the practice setting and even beyond.

This comparison is provided only as a point of reference to demonstrate that many of the competencies are addressed, to some degree, by PA programs as they comply with accreditation *Standards*.

1 *Accreditation Standards for Physician Assistant Education*, third edition, Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant, Inc., March, 2005

2 *Competencies for the Physician Assistant Profession*, National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants, March, 2005.

Competencies

The clinical role of PAs includes primary and specialty care in medical and surgical practice settings. Professional competencies for physician assistants include the effective and appropriate application of medical knowledge, interpersonal and communication skills, patient care, professionalism, practice-based learning and improvement, systems-based practice, as well as an unwavering commitment to continual learning, professional growth and the physician-PA team, for the benefit of patients and the larger community being served. These competencies are demonstrated within the scope of practice, whether medical or surgical, for each individual physician assistant as that scope is defined by the supervising physician and appropriate to the practice setting.

MEDICAL KNOWLEDGE: Medical knowledge includes an understanding of pathophysiology, patient presentation, differential diagnosis, patient management, surgical principles, health promotion and disease prevention. Physician assistants must demonstrate core knowledge about established and evolving biomedical and clinical sciences and the application of this knowledge to patient care in their area of practice. In addition, physician assistants are expected to demonstrate an investigatory and analytic thinking approach to clinical situations. Physician assistants are expected to:

Standards

Introduction: PAs are academically and clinically prepared to practice medicine 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.

The role of the PA demands intelligence, sound judgment, intellectual honesty, appropriate interpersonal skills, and the capacity to respond to emergencies in a calm and reasoned manner. An attitude of respect for self and others, adherence to the concepts of privilege and confidentiality in communicating with patients, and a commitment to the patient's welfare are essential attributes of the graduate PA.

B1.01 The curriculum must include core knowledge about the established and evolving biomedical and clinical sciences and the application of this knowledge to patient care.

B1.02 The curriculum must be of sufficient breadth and depth to prepare the student for the clinical practice of medicine.

B1.04 The program must assist students in becoming critical thinkers who can apply the concepts of medical decision making and problem solving.

B3.03 The program must provide instruction in clinical medicine covering all organ systems.

Competencies	Standards
understand etiologies, risk factors, underlying pathologic process, and epidemiology for medical conditions	B3.04 The program must provide instruction in the important aspects of patient care including a) preventive.
identify signs and symptoms of medical conditions	B2.02 Instruction in the professional phase of the program must include instruction in e) the genetic and molecular mechanisms of health and disease.
select and interpret appropriate diagnostic or lab studies	B3.03 The program must provide instruction in clinical medicine covering all organ systems.
manage general medical and surgical conditions to include understanding the indications, contraindications, side effects, interactions and adverse reactions of pharmacologic agents and other relevant treatment modalities	B3.03 The program must provide instruction in clinical medicine covering all organ systems.
identify the appropriate site of care for presenting conditions, including identifying emergent cases and those requiring referral or admission	B3.02 The program must provide students with instruction in patient assessment and management, including d) ordering and interpretation of diagnostic studies. B2.02 Instruction in the professional phase of the program must include instruction in d) pharmacology and pharmacotherapeutics.
identify appropriate interventions for prevention of conditions	B3.02 The program must provide students with instruction in patient assessment and management, including h) appropriate referral of patients.
identify the appropriate methods to detect conditions in an asymptomatic individual	B3.04 The program must provide instruction in the important aspects of patient care including a) preventive.
differentiate between the normal and the abnormal in anatomic, physiological, laboratory findings and other diagnostic data	B2.02 Instruction in the professional phase of the program must include instruction in the following basic medical sciences: a) anatomy. b) physiology. c) pathophysiology.
appropriately use history and physical findings and diagnostic studies to	B3.02 The program must provide students with instruction in patient assessment and

Competencies	Standards
formulate a differential diagnosis	management, including c) generation of differential diagnoses.
provide appropriate care to patients with chronic conditions	B3.04 The program must provide instruction in the important aspects of patient care including c) chronic.
INTERPERSONAL AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS: Interpersonal and communication skills encompass verbal, nonverbal and written exchange of information. Physician assistants must demonstrate interpersonal and communication skills that result in effective information exchange with patients, their patients' families, physicians, professional associates, and the health care system. Physician assistants are expected to	B3.01 The program must provide instruction in interpersonal and communication skills that result in the effective exchange of information and collaboration with patients, their families, and other health professionals.
create and sustain a therapeutic and ethically sound relationship with patients	B3.01 The program must provide instruction in interpersonal and communication skills that result in the effective exchange of information and collaboration with patients, their families, and other health professionals.
use effective listening, nonverbal, explanatory, questioning, and writing skills to elicit and provide information	B3.01 The program must provide instruction in interpersonal and communication skills that result in the effective exchange of information and collaboration with patients, their families, and other health professionals.
appropriately adapt communication style and messages to the context of the individual patient interaction	B3.01 The program must provide instruction in interpersonal and communication skills that result in the effective exchange of information and collaboration with patients, their families, and other health professionals.
work effectively with physicians and other health care professionals as a member or leader of a health care team or other professional group apply an understanding of human behavior	B6.03 The program must provide instruction on c) the physician-PA team relationship B4.02 The program must provide instruction in: a) normal psychological development of

Competencies	Standards
demonstrate emotional resilience and stability, adaptability, flexibility and tolerance of ambiguity and anxiety	pediatric, adult, and geriatric patients. b) detection and treatment of substance abuse. c) human sexuality. d) end of life issues. e) response to illness, injury and stress. f) principles of violence identification and prevention.
accurately and adequately document and record information regarding the care process for medical, legal, quality and financial purposes	B3.02 The program must provide students with instruction in patient assessment and management, including g) documentation of patient data. B6.01 The program must provide instruction in d) quality assurance and risk management in medical practice e) legal issues of health care
PATIENT CARE: Patient care includes age-appropriate assessment, evaluation and management. Physician assistants must demonstrate care that is effective, patient-centered, timely, efficient and equitable for the treatment of health problems and the promotion of wellness. Physician assistants are expected to	B1.02 The curriculum must be of sufficient breadth and depth to prepare the student for the clinical practice of medicine. B3.02 The program must provide students with instruction in patient assessment and management, including: a) techniques of interviewing and eliciting a medical history. b) performance of physical examinations across the life span. c) generation of differential diagnoses. d) ordering and interpretation of diagnostic studies. e) development and implementation of treatment plans. f) presentation of patient data in oral form. g) documentation of patient data. h) appropriate referral of patients.
work effectively with physicians and other health care professionals to provide patient-centered care	C3.04 The program must assess and document student demonstration of professional behaviors.

Competencies	Standards
demonstrate caring and respectful behaviors when interacting with patients and their families	B3.01 The program must provide instruction in interpersonal and communication skills that result in the effective exchange of information and collaboration with patients, their families, and other health professionals. B6.03 The program must provide instruction on c) the physician-PA team relationship
gather essential and accurate information about their patients	B3.01 The program must provide instruction in interpersonal and communication skills that result in the effective exchange of information and collaboration with patients, their families, and other health professionals. B3.02 The program must provide students with instruction in patient assessment and management, including a) techniques of interviewing and eliciting a medical history, b) performance of physical examinations across the life span.
make informed decisions about diagnostic and therapeutic interventions based on patient information and preferences, up-to-date scientific evidence, and clinical judgment	Introduction: Physician assistants are academically and clinically prepared to practice medicine with the direction and responsible supervision of a doctor of medicine or osteopathy.....Within the physician-PA relationship, PAs make clinical decisions and provide a broad range of diagnostic, therapeutic, preventive, and health maintenance services.
develop and carry out patient management plans	B3.02 The program must provide students with instruction in patient assessment and management, including e) development and implementation of treatment plans.
counsel and educate patients and their families	B4.01 The program must provide instruction in basic counseling and patient education skills necessary to help patients and families: a) cope with illness and injury. b) adhere to prescribed treatment plans. modify their behaviors to more healthful patterns.
competently perform medical and surgical procedures considered essential in the	B3.05 The program must provide instruction in technical skills and procedures based on

Competencies	Standards
area of practice provide health care services and education aimed at preventing health problems or maintaining health	current professional practice. B3.04 The program must provide instruction in the important aspects of patient care including a) preventive.
PROFESSIONALISM: Professionalism is the expression of positive values and ideals as care is delivered. Foremost, it involves prioritizing the interests of those being served above one's own. Physician assistants must know their professional and personal limitations. Professionalism also requires that PAs practice without impairment from substance abuse, cognitive deficiency or mental illness. Physician assistants must demonstrate a high level of responsibility, ethical practice, sensitivity to a diverse patient population and adherence to legal and regulatory requirements. Physician assistants are expected to demonstrate:	B1.08 Programs must educate students regarding issues related to intellectual honesty and academic and professional misconduct. B1.09 The program must prepare students to provide medical care to patients from diverse populations.
understanding of legal and regulatory requirements, as well as the appropriate role of the physician assistant	B6.03 The program must provide instruction on: h) licensure. i) credentialing. j) professional liability. k) laws and regulations regarding prescriptive practice.
professional relationships with physician supervisors and other health care providers	Introduction: The physician-PA team relationship is fundamental to the PA profession and enhances the delivery of high quality health care. B3.01 The program must provide instruction in interpersonal and communication skills that result in the effective exchange of information and collaboration with patients, their families, and other health professionals.
respect, compassion, and integrity	B6.03 The program must provide instruction on c) the physician-PA team relationship C3.04 The program must assess and document student demonstration of

Competencies	Standards
responsiveness to the needs of patients and society	professional behaviors. Introduction: The ARC-PA acknowledges ongoing change in the delivery of health care and in the education of health professionals. The needs of patients and society at large should be considered by the ARC-PA, the sponsoring institutions, and the programs.
accountability to patients, society, and the profession	Introduction: The ARC-PA acknowledges ongoing change in the delivery of health care and in the education of health professionals. The needs of patients and society at large should be considered by the ARC-PA, the sponsoring institutions, and the programs.
commitment to excellence and on-going professional development	
commitment to ethical principles pertaining to provision or withholding of clinical care, confidentiality of patient information, informed consent, and business practices	B6.02 The program must provide instruction in medical ethics to include: a) the attributes of respect for self and others. b) professional responsibility. c) the concepts of privilege, confidentiality, and informed patient consent. d) a commitment to the patient's welfare.
sensitivity and responsiveness to patients' culture, age, gender, and disabilities	Introduction: The ARC-PA acknowledges ongoing change in the delivery of health care and in the education of health professionals. The needs of patients and society at large should be considered by the ARC-PA, the sponsoring institutions, and the programs. Establishing an environment that will foster and promote diversity is considered essential to educating PAs to provide service to others that is not exclusionary of any group, race, or culture. The various insights and resources offered by a diverse faculty, staff, and student body will increase the overall impact the PA profession can have on the future of the global community.
self-reflection, critical curiosity and initiative	

Competencies	Standards
<p>PRACTICE-BASED LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENT: Practice-based learning and improvement includes the processes through which clinicians engage in critical analysis of their own practice experience, medical literature and other information resources for the purpose of self-improvement. Physician assistants must be able to assess, evaluate and improve their patient care practices. Physician assistants are expected to:</p>	
<p>analyze practice experience and perform practice-based improvement activities using a systematic methodology in concert with other members of the health care delivery team</p>	
<p>locate, appraise, and integrate evidence from scientific studies related to their patients' health problems</p>	<p>B5.01 The program must provide instruction to equip students with the necessary skills to search, interpret, and evaluate the medical literature in order to maintain a critical, current, and operational knowledge of new medical findings including its application to individualized patient care.</p>
<p>obtain and apply information about their own population of patients and the larger population from which their patients are drawn</p>	
<p>apply knowledge of study designs and statistical methods to the appraisal of clinical studies and other information on diagnostic and therapeutic effectiveness</p>	<p>B5.01 The program must provide instruction to equip students with the necessary skills to search, interpret, and evaluate the medical literature in order to maintain a critical, current, and operational knowledge of new medical findings including its application to individualized patient care.</p>
<p>apply information technology to manage information, access on-line medical information, and support their own education</p>	<p>B5.01 The program must provide instruction to equip students with the necessary skills to search, interpret, and evaluate the medical literature in order to maintain a critical, current, and operational knowledge of new medical findings including its application to individualized patient care.</p>
<p>facilitate the learning of students and/or other health care professionals</p>	

Competencies	Standards
recognize and appropriately address gender, cultural, cognitive, emotional and other biases; gaps in medical knowledge; and physical limitations in themselves and others	Definitions: Diversity: Differences within and between groups of people that contribute to variations in habits, practices, beliefs, and values B1.09 The program must prepare students to provide medical care to patients from diverse populations.
SYSTEMS-BASED PRACTICE: Systems-based practice encompasses the societal, organizational and economic environments in which health care is delivered. Physician assistants must demonstrate an awareness of and responsiveness to the larger system of health care to provide patient care that is of optimal value. PAs should work to improve the larger health care system of which their practices are a part. Physician assistants are expected to:	
use information technology to support patient care decisions and patient education	B5.01 The program must provide instruction to equip students with the necessary skills to search, interpret, and evaluate the medical literature in order to maintain a critical, current, and operational knowledge of new medical findings including its application to individualized patient care.
effectively interact with different types of medical practice and delivery systems	B6.01 The program must provide instruction in b) health care delivery systems and health policy.
understand the funding sources and payment systems that provide coverage for patient care	B6.01 The program must provide instruction in c) reimbursement, including documentation, coding, and billing.
practice cost-effective health care and resource allocation that does not compromise quality of care	B6.01 The program must provide instruction in a) The impact of socioeconomic issues affecting health care. b) Health care delivery systems and health policy.
advocate for quality patient care and assist patients in dealing with system complexities	B6.01 The program must provide instruction in a) The impact of socioeconomic issues

