



## Academic Standards and Progression

### Program Progression

Prior to attempting the program's summative exam before graduation, students in the PA program are required to achieve the following benchmarks on formative assessments and courses described in the Didactic Course Requirements and Clinical Rotation Requirements sections below. This level of achievement on formative assessments demonstrates that the student has acquired the necessary competencies to succeed in the summative exam and in clinical practice. It is important that students do not progress in the program if they have not acquired the necessary level of achievement related to program competencies, as we are responsible to ensure that they will provide safe care to patients. In addition, it is in the students' best interest not to progress if they are not adequately prepared to pass their certification exam. Students will be eligible to graduate from the program once they have completed all curricular components at the minimum level of achievement described below, indicating that they have demonstrated all required program competencies.

**All courses in the PA curriculum must be passed with an overall performance  $\geq 75\%$ .** If a student fails to achieve the minimum standard in an individual class, they will be suspended from the program (see Academic Probation and Suspension Policy). Students will participate in a variety of patient simulations during both the didactic and clinical years. At the end of the didactic and clinical years, students will participate in summative evaluations. Students are required to pass all patient simulations with a minimum score of 75% (C+).

### Didactic Course Requirements

Within each didactic course, unless otherwise indicated, major assignments and exams must be passed with a  $\geq 75\%$  achievement level. Individual instructors may set alternative requirements by clearly stating the expectation in the syllabus. Any student who does not meet the minimum requirement for achievement on a didactic assignment will be referred to the Progress & Remediation Committee and Process to create a plan for a remediation.

On the didactic summative exam, students are required to pass with an overall average of 75%. Any student who does not achieve the 75% minimum requirement will be referred to the Progress and Remediation (P&R) Committee to discuss a remediation plan, and their clinical year may be delayed to allow for remediation.

### Clinical Rotation Requirements

Students are expected to achieve  $\geq 75\%$  on each assessment within the clinical rotation courses, including class participation, end-of-rotation exams, professionalism, and preceptor evaluation. (EOR scores are based on the sliding-scale described in the course syllabi.) Failure to achieve 75% on an assessment in the course will result in referral to the PA Progress and Remediation Committee to discuss a remediation plan. Based on feedback and evaluations, students experiencing difficulty may be given an additional rotation course or be assigned additional time for clinical experience in the relevant area.

### Professional Behavior

At end-of-term advising meetings, faculty will conduct evaluations of student professional behavior. Any student with serious or repeated unprofessional behaviors in the program will be referred to the Progress and Remediation Committee. Professional behavior is a vital aspect of academic and clinical practice, and unprofessional behavior, as assessed using the Professionalism Evaluation or any other program rubric, is grounds for adverse action including dismissal from the program.

Most courses in the program have a pass/fail professionalism requirement, and failure to demonstrate required professional behaviors may result in a failing grade for this component, leading to failure of the course. Just as practicing PAs are required to complete evaluations, submit documentation, and attend required meetings, PA students will be expected to fulfill these requirements for the program. **Failure to complete at least 80% of required evaluation forms (for guest speakers, events, etc.) will be considered a failure of this requirement.** Students will be alerted through course syllabi, Northwestern email, and on Blackboard of required professional activities.

### **Program Summative Assessments**

Within the final four months of the program, students will complete a summative exam (B4.03). All steps to the exam assess student acquisition of program outcomes/competencies. Information regarding passing each Summative Assessment is described in the Summative Exam Steps below.

#### Summative Exam Step 1 – Skills Stations

Summative Step 1 testing will be administered during the May end of term week at the conclusion of term 6. Grades will be recorded in the PAS 701 PA Capstone: Certification, Licensure, and Summative course, given during the final term of the program.

A total of 18 skills will be tested over the course of 10 stations, each designed to assess one or more specific program competency through simulated skill stations. Students must score  $\geq 75\%$  for skills related to each program competency. If multiple stations evaluate the same program competency, an average of the scores will be used to assess competency related to the outcome. If a student does not achieve 75% on any individual learning outcome assessment, they will be allowed one re-take in the area of deficiency without any remediation requirements. Repeat failure would result in referral to the P&R committee for further recommendations.

#### Summative Exam Step 2 – End-of-Curriculum (EOC) Exam

Summative Step 2 EOC exam will be administered during the May end of term week at the conclusion of term 6. Grades will be recorded in the PAS 701 PA Capstone: Certification, Licensure, and Summative course, given during the final term of the program. The End-of-Curriculum exam blueprint provided by the PAEA is available to guide student preparation for the exam at <https://paeaonline.org/assessment/end-of-curriculum/content>.

#### End of Curriculum (EOC) exam scoring policy

The PA Program has elected to adopt a Percent-by-Percent with Performance Bands Grading Method for assigning grades to the End of Curriculum (EOC) Exam, which is consistent with the scoring policy for the End of Rotation Exam exams administered throughout the clinical year. This technique is referenced in the Grading Case Studies section on the PAEA's Website. The EOC exam is graded by setting performance bands that are determined using the standard deviation (SD) and mean score determined by national data provided by PAEA for the EOC exam. The PA Program has established the following performance bands for scoring the EOC exam.

A =  $\geq +1.5$  SD above the PAEA national average

A- =  $+1.0$  SD above the PAEA national average &  $< +1.5$  SD above the PAEA national average

B+ =  $+0.5$  SD above the PAEA national average &  $< +1.0$  SD above the PAEA national average

B =  $-0.5$  SD below the PAEA national average &  $< +0.5$  SD above the PAEA national average

B- =  $-1.0$  SD below the PAEA national average &  $< -0.5$  SD below the PAEA national average

C+ =  $1.5$  SD below the PAEA national average &  $< -1.0$  SD below the PAEA national average

C =  $2.0$  SD below the PAEA national average &  $< -1.5$  SD below the PAEA national average

C- =  $2.5$  SD below the PAEA national average &  $< -2.0$  SD below the PAEA national average

D+ =  $3.0$  SD below the PAEA national average &  $< -2.5$  SD below the PAEA national average

D =  $3.5$  SD below the PAEA national average &  $< -3.0$  SD below the PAEA national average

D- =  $4.0$  SD below the PAEA national average &  $< -3.5$  SD below the PAEA national average

F = <4.0 SD below the PAEA national average

The EOC exam is scored using a scale score rather than a raw or percentage score. The NWC PA Program has created individual scale score and percent grade associations for the EOC exam based on the above performance bands established using national data provided by the PAEA and the PA Program's standard grading scale for all courses shown below. Refer to Appendix M for an example of individual scale score and percent grade associations.

<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Letter Grade</u>
94.00%	A
90.00%	A-
87.00%	B+
84.00%	B
80.00%	B-
75.00%	C+
73.00%	C
70.00%	C-
67.00%	D+
64.00%	D
60.00%	D-
<60.00%	F

**Students are required to pass the EOC exam with a score  $\geq 75\%$  (C+),** which is consistent with the benchmark score for passing all exams and major assessments in the program. Any student who does not achieve the 75% minimum requirement will be referred to the P&R Committee to discuss a remediation plan, which may include remedial work and a repeat of the EOC examination at the expense of the student. Graduation from the program may be delayed to allow time for sufficient remediation.

#### Summative Exam Step 3 – Capstone Papers

As part of the PAS 701 PA Capstone: Certification, Licensure, and Summative course, students will submit written assignments addressing program competencies. Students will write a plan for their clinical practice, integrating their understanding of professional issues and requirements. Students will also submit the final draft of their manuscript and complete a reflection assignment regarding application of their medical research in clinical practice as evidence of program outcomes related to written communication and appropriate use of medical literature. Students must obtain  $\geq 75\%$  (C+) passing score on each assignment. Failure to obtain a passing score will result in a referral to the P&R committee for further recommendation and remediation requirements.

#### **Grading Scale for All Courses**

<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Letter Grade</u>
94.00%	A
90.00%	A-
87.00%	B+
84.00%	B
80.00%	B-
75.00%	C+
73.00%	C
70.00%	C-
67.00%	D+
64.00%	D
60.00%	D-
<60.00%	F

**Program Competency Milestones**

As students move through the program, their progress toward acquiring each program competency will be tracked. To help track student competency, certain assessments in the program are used as “milestones,” and students will discuss their performance on milestone assessments with their faculty advisors at the end of each term. If a student is struggling with a particular program competency, instructors and advisors may recommend a meeting with the P&R Committee to discuss remedial instruction options. A student may also request a meeting with the committee at any time.