

UK Preceptor Handbook

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Introduction

We would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to our preceptors for their hard work and dedication to this program and our physician assistant (PA) students. The clinical experiences the student will obtain in your office or clinic are of critical importance to a successful learning experience in the program. The clinical setting *synthesizes* concepts and application of principles for quality health care delivery. You, as a clinical preceptor, are the key to successful learning experiences in the clinical setting. The PA student will work closely with you, learning from your advice and example. Through your supervision, the student will progressively develop the skills and clinical judgment necessary to become a practicing PA. Thank you for your commitment to PA education.

General Goals of the Clinical Year

The clinical year takes students from the theoretical classroom setting to an active, hands-on learning environment to prepare them for a lifetime of continued refinement of skills and expanded knowledge as a practicing PA. To this end, the goals of the clinical year include:

- Apply didactic knowledge to supervised clinical practice in a variety of settings and across the lifespan.
- Develop and sharpen clinical problem-solving skills
- Expand and develop the medical fund of knowledge
- Perfect the art of history taking and physical examination skills
- Sharpen and refine oral presentation and written documentation skills
- Develop an understanding of the PA role in health care delivery
- Prepare for the Physician Assistant National Certifying Exam
- Develop interpersonal skills and professionalism necessary to function as part of a medical team

In addition, each clinical clerkship's syllabus includes learning objectives specific to that discipline and setting.

Physician Assistant 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." (NCCPA)

Definition of the Preceptor Role

The preceptor is an integral part of the teaching program. Preceptors will serve as role models for the student and, through guidance and teaching will help students perfect skills in history taking, physical examination, effective communication, physical diagnosis, succinct recording and reporting, problem assessment, and plan development including a logical approach to further studies and therapy.

Preceptor Responsibilities

Preceptor responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Orient students at the onset of the rotation to:
 - Practice/site location policies, procedures, and safety protocols
 - Review the expectations and objectives for the rotation
- Provide ongoing and timely feedback regarding:
 - History taking and Physical examination skills
 - Verbal and written communication skills
 - Clinical decision-making skills (development of differential diagnosis list, working diagnosis, diagnostic investigation and results, patient management/treatment plans)
 - Knowledge base
 - Critical thinking skills.
- Supervise, demonstrate, teach, and observe clinical activities in order to aid in the development of clinical skills and ensure proper patient care
- Delegate to the student increasing levels of responsibility for clinical assessment and management as appropriate to the student's experience and clinical setting
- Participate in the evaluation of clinical skills and medical knowledge base through the following mechanisms:
 - Informal formative feedback
 - Formal evaluation at the end of the clerkship
 - Completion of the Preceptor Evaluation of Student Performance (PESP) that will be sent as a link via email
- Promptly notify the PA program of any circumstances that might interfere with the accomplishment of the above goals or diminish the overall training experience
- Maintain an ethical approach to the care of patients by serving as a role model for the student
- Demonstrate cultural competency through interactions with all members of the healthcare team, including student learners.

The Preceptor–Student Relationship

The preceptor should maintain a professional relationship with the PA student and at all times adhere to appropriate professional boundaries.

Attendance

Students are expected to follow the rotation schedule as determined by the site/preceptor at the beginning of the rotation. Some rotations may have evening, night shifts, or on-call expectations. Preceptors log excused and unexcused absences on the PESP. In the event of inclement weather, the student is to communicate directly with the preceptor/site regarding work hours.

It is the responsibility of the student to

- Notify the preceptor and the program of any excused or unexcused absence.
- Work with the preceptor to make up any clinical hours missed prior to the end of the clerkship

Students should not work more than 14 hours in any 24-hour period. At no point is a student to be left alone in a clinical setting without supervision by a licensed healthcare provider.

The UK PA program complies with the University of Kentucky Attendance Policy, which defines excused absences as any of the following:

- Significant illness
- Death of a family member
- Trips for members of student organizations sponsored by an educational unit
- Major religious holidays
- Interview for graduate/professional school or full-time employment post-graduation
- Other circumstances found to fit “reasonable cause for nonattendance” by the instructor of record

The following Federal Holidays are observed by the University of Kentucky and PA students are excused from clinical duties on these days:

- New Year’s Day
- Martin Luther King, Jr Day
- Memorial Day
- Juneteenth
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Christmas Day

Additionally, the UK PA Program considers the following to be approved absences:

- Travel days to and from a confirmed international or out of state rotation
- Attending programmatic activities such as the UK PA Job Fair and May Commencement.
- Representing UK in scholarly activities such as poster presentations

Unexcused Absences include the following:

- Extra sight-seeing days or personal vacation days
- Student initiated study days

Supervision of the PA Student

During a student's time at the clinic or hospital, the preceptor must be available for supervision, consultation, and teaching, or designate an alternate preceptor. Although the supervising preceptor may not be with a student during every shift, it is important to clearly *assign* students to another MD, DO, PA, or NP who will serve as the student's preceptor for any given time interval.

Students are not employees of the hospitals or clinics and, therefore, work entirely under the preceptor's supervision. Students are not to substitute for paid clinicians, clerical staff, or other workers at the clinical sites. The preceptor can provide direct supervision of technical skills with gradually increased autonomy in accordance with the PA student's demonstrated level of expertise. However, every patient must be seen and every procedure evaluated by a precepting provider prior to patient discharge. The preceptor must document the involvement of the PA student in the care of the patient in all aspects of the visit. The preceptor must also specifically document that the student was supervised during the entirety of the patient visit.

Documentation

If allowed by the preceptor and/or facility, PA students may enter information in the medical record. Preceptors should clearly understand how different payers view student notes as related to documentation of services provided for reimbursement purposes. Any questions regarding this issue should be directed to the clinical coordinator. Students are reminded that the medical record is a legal document. All medical entries must be identified as "student" and must include the PA student's signature with the designation "PA-S." The preceptor cannot bill for the services of a student. Preceptors are required to document the services they provide as well as review and edit all student documentation. Although student documentation may be limited for reimbursement purposes, students' notes are legal and are contributory to the medical record. Moreover, writing a succinct note that communicates effectively is a critical skill that PA students should develop.

Prescription Writing

The precepting provider must sign all prescriptions. The student's name is not to appear on any prescription. For clinical rotation sites that use electronic prescriptions, the preceptor **MUST** log into the system under his/her own password and personally sign and send the electronic prescription. These guidelines must not be violated by the student or the preceptor.

Essential Skills

Essential Skills are a list of skills determined by the program to be foundational skills that an entry level primary care provider should be adept in performing. Each student must demonstrate the ability to competently perform each of these skills to program faculty by the completion of the clinical curriculum.

The Essential Skills are as follows:

- Venipuncture (the ability to safely negotiate a needle to the appropriate space)
- Suturing (the ability to perform common wound closure)
- Aseptic technique (the ability to differentiate and maintain a sterile field)
- Splinting (the ability to appropriately immobilize a joint)
- EKG interpretation (the ability to methodically and systematically interpret an EKG)
- Chest x-ray interpretation (the ability to methodically and systematically interpret a chest x-ray)

Standards of Professional Conduct

As health care practitioners, PAs are required to conform to the highest standards of ethical and professional conduct. These include, but are not limited to:

- Respect
- Flexibility
- Academic integrity
- Honesty and trustworthiness
- Accountability
- Cultural competency

PA students are expected to adhere to the same high ethical and professional standards required of certified PAs. The professional conduct of PA students is evaluated on an ongoing basis throughout the professional phase (i.e., the didactic and clinical years) of the program. Violations of standards of conduct are subject to disciplinary actions administered by the university and by the physician assistant program.

If preceptors observe any concerns about a student's professionalism, please contact the clinical coordinator immediately.

Student Compliance

All UK PA students complete a thorough credentialing and compliance process to maintain good standing with the program. All UK PA students attending clerkships have completed the following:

- Background check
- Drug Screen
- TB Screening, and up to date on appropriate immunizations*
- Bloodborne pathogen training
- HIPAA training
- EPIC Electronic medical record training
- Donning and doffing personal protective equipment
- Basic Life Support
- Advanced Cardiac Life Support
- Crisis Prevention Institute training (nonviolent crisis intervention)

**COVID-19: The UK PA Program complies with University of Kentucky and CDC guidance as it pertains to COVID-19. Students are advised to contact healthcorps@uky.edu (859-218-7233) for guidance regarding COVID-19 exposure/infection.*

Additionally, students are expected to comply with any additional requirements of the clinical site prior to start of the clerkship experience. All UK PA students are required to maintain health insurance coverage throughout the clinical curriculum.

Bloodborne Pathogen Exposure Process

Any student who experiences a bloodborne pathogen exposure is expected to:

- Perform basic first aid
- Notify preceptor and appropriate person on-site (nurse manager, clinic manager, infection control, etc)
- Report the exposure
 - Call 859-323-2778 Monday-Friday 8 am – 4:30 pm
 - Call 859-323-5321 if after 4:30 pm and before 8 am, on weekends, or holidays
- Notify the Clinical Coordinator

Liability Insurance

All students, while enrolled at the University of Kentucky, are covered by medical liability insurance in the excess of \$1,000,000. Preceptors are not required to increase their own personal coverage while precepting students. Upon confirmation of a clerkship placement the UK PA Program will provide a copy of the liability insurance and a letter of good standing for the student.

Office of Civil Rights

The following link to the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights (OCR) provides information about federal laws that protect students against racial, sexual, or age discrimination: <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/know.html>

The Preceptor–Program Relationship

The success of clinical training of PA students depends on maintaining good communication among the student, the PA program, preceptors, and the clinical coordinator. All members of the team should share contact information.

If a preceptor has a question or concern about a student, they should contact the clinical coordinator. The program strives to maintain open faculty–colleague relationships with its preceptors and believes that, should problems arise during a rotation, by notifying appropriate program personnel early, problems can be solved without unduly burdening the preceptor. In addition, open communication and early problem solving may help to avoid a diminution in the educational experience.

Contact Information

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