

# Pathologists' Assistant, M.H.S.

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## Degree Offered

- Master of Health Science (MHS)

## The Profession

A pathologists' assistant (PA) is a healthcare professional who is qualified through academic and practical training to provide services in anatomic pathology under the direction of a qualified pathologist. Pathologists' assistants are responsible for processing surgical pathology specimens from dissection and description to submission of tissue to histology. In autopsy practice, the PA is involved in evisceration, prosection, and selection of tissue for submission to histology. The PA can also assist the pathologist with the provisional anatomic diagnosis and with composing the clinical history for the autopsy report. Many PAs are involved in laboratory management, teaching at the university level, training of residents and medical students, forensic investigation, or research.

## Nature of Program

This is a twenty-four month, full-time, master's-level program that begins each January. The first year is mostly didactic learning with introductory gross room rotations each semester. During the second year, students receive practical experience through clinical rotations in both surgical and autopsy pathology, including hospital and medical examiner autopsy rotations. A current list of clinical rotations at medical facilities associated with the program can be found on the program website (<https://medicine.hsc.wvu.edu/pa/curriculum/clinical-rotations/>).

Current students at WVU in the BS degree of Biomedical Laboratory Diagnostics in either the Medical Laboratory Science or Histotechnology Programs are eligible to apply as a direct admit during their junior year if their cumulative grade point average is 3.25 or higher. These students could receive a provisional offer of admission and begin the program following completion of their undergraduate degree. Please refer to program website (<https://medicine.hsc.wvu.edu/pa/admission/admission-classifications/>) for details.

## Certification

Graduates of the program are eligible to take the American Society for Clinical Pathology (ASCP) Board of Certification exam to be a certified pathologists' assistant and use the credentials, ASCP, after their name. Please note that graduation from the program **is not** contingent upon passing the ASCP Board of Certification exam.

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## ADMINISTRATION

### PROGRAM DIRECTOR

- Michelle Costas - MHS, PA(ASCP) (Quinnipiac University)  
Assistant Professor

### CLINICAL COORDINATOR

- Justin Falcon - MHS, PA(ASCP) (West Virginia University)  
Assistant Professor

### MEDICAL DIRECTOR

- David Howell - MD, PhD (West Virginia University)  
Assistant Professor

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## FACULTY

### ASSISTANT PROFESSORS

- Amelia Adams - MHS, PA(ASCP) (West Virginia University)
- Carie Boykin - MHS, PA(ASCP) (West Virginia University)
- Michelle Costas - MHS, PA(ASCP) (Quinnipiac University)  
Program Director
- Justin Falcon - MHS, PA(ASCP) (West Virginia University)  
Clinical Coordinator
- Miranda Janucik - MHS, PA(ASCP) (West Virginia University)
- Samantha Pan - MHS, PA(ASCP) (West Virginia University)

## ADJUNCT ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

- Alyssa Hoffman - MHS, PA(ASCP) (West Virginia University)

## Admissions for 2026-2027

**For the most up-to-date information on admission requirements, please refer to the program's website** (<https://medicine.hsc.wvu.edu/pa/admission/application-requirements/>).

All students seeking admission to the Master of Health Science, Pathologists' Assistant Program, must meet the following requirements:

- Have a baccalaureate degree in any discipline from a regionally accredited U.S. or Canadian academic institution of higher education.
- Successfully complete the specific prerequisite coursework with a "C" or higher.
- Have a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0.
- Submit two letters of recommendation electronically, as part of the application.
- Complete a shadowing experience with a certified PA in surgical pathology or have equivalent work experience.
- Meet all minimum technical requirements as outlined in the essential functions form (<https://medicine.hsc.wvu.edu/pa/admission/essential-functions/>).

## PREREQUISITE COURSES

Requirement	Description
College Prep	Baccalaureate Degree
Prerequisite Courses	8 hours of Biology with laboratory
Prerequisite Courses	3-4 hours of Human Anatomy (can be taken in combination with Physiology)
Prerequisite Courses	8 hours of College Chemistry with lab
Prerequisite Courses	3-4 hours of Organic Chemistry (CHEM 231 at WVU) or 3-4 hours of Biochemistry
Prerequisite Courses	3-4 hours of Microbiology, Immunology, Parasitology, or Virology
Prerequisite Courses	3 hours of college Algebra or higher
Prerequisite Courses	3 hours of English Composition or higher
Grade Point Average required	3.0 cumulative
Grade Point Average preferred	3.0 in the prerequisite courses
Recommendations	Two letters of recommendation
Interview	A personal interview with the Pathologists' Assistant Program Admissions Committee

**Please note the following information about prerequisite courses:**

- Prerequisite courses must be completed at a regionally accredited 2- or 4- year U.S. or Canadian university.
- Semester hours represents credit hours.
- Advanced placement (AP) courses will only be accepted for the Math and English requirements.
- Combined Anatomy and Physiology courses are accepted; mammalian anatomy will not be accepted.
- There will be no waivers or exceptions to the requirements.

## SHADOWING OR WORK EXPERIENCE

Applicants must complete a shadowing experience with a practicing pathologists' assistant in surgical pathology, or have applicable work experience. A shadowing form regarding this experience is found on the program's website (<https://medicine.hsc.wvu.edu/pa/admission/application-requirements/>) and is required for the application to be considered complete. Please contact the program specialist for assistance if necessary.

## ADMISSIONS CLASSIFICATIONS

Students must have a baccalaureate degree prior to beginning the program. The program has established the following admissions classifications:

- General Admission:** All applicants who have successfully completed their undergraduate degree (BS or BA) and who meet all criteria for admissions can apply during the application period of December 1 to March 15.
- Direct Admit:** For current WVU students in the Biomedical Laboratory Diagnostics major in either the Histotechnology (HTL) or Medical Laboratory Science (MLS) Programs **only**. Students completing in the HTL and MLS programs who have a cumulative GPA of 3.25 by the end of their junior year may apply to the Pathologists' Assistant Program as a direct admit. Qualified students will submit an application and follow the same interview

process as general admission applicants. Any offer of admission as a direct admit is contingent upon successfully completing the HTL or MLS undergraduate degree.

- **Current Undergraduate Students:** Students enrolled in their final year of undergraduate studies are eligible to apply if the degree will be completed in May following the end of the application period (December 1 to March 15). Students should submit their transcripts showing courses that are "in progress." Any offer of admission to the program is contingent upon successful completion and conferment of the baccalaureate degree.

## SELECTION PROCESS

Each year, the Pathologists' Assistant Program accepts 16 students. Applications are accepted between December 1 and March 15 for the class beginning the following January. The application fee is sixty dollars. A completed admissions packet contains the following:

- Completed electronic application form.
- Shadowing form (<https://medicine.hsc.wvu.edu/pa/admission/application-requirements/>).
- Transcripts (unofficial or official) from all institutions attended.
  - Unofficial transcripts can be sent initially for the application to be reviewed; however, the university must receive the official transcripts for all schools attended before an applicant can be officially accepted.
- CV or resume.
- Two recommendation letters.
- Signed essential functions form (<https://medicine.hsc.wvu.edu/pa/admission/essential-functions/>).

Each applicant must arrange for transcripts to be sent directly from all institutions attended to the Office of Graduate Admissions. When the application is complete, the file is sent to the Pathologists' Assistant Admissions Committee. Recommendation letters can be from faculty in a pre-requisite course, a lab professional with whom the applicant has worked, current employer, or professional peer. Interviews are granted to qualified applicants after the committee has reviewed the completed admissions packet.

## INTERVIEWS

### Preliminary Interviews

Preliminary interviews are offered to qualified individuals and are conducted via teleconference by two or three members of the admissions committee. A limited number of onsite interviews will be offered after the evaluation of the preliminary interview. These onsite interviews will be conducted in two cycles:

- The first cycle of interviews will be conducted mid to late February of the application period.
- The second cycle of onsite interviews will be conducted at the conclusion of the application period in March.

***An applicant may be given an offer of admission during the first cycle of interviews.***

### Onsite Interview

Applicants will interview individually with members of the admissions committee in the form of a panel interview. After the panel interview, the applicant will complete a written component and activity. At the conclusion of the interview and activities, applicants will have a guided tour of the facilities with current PA students. The entire process takes around two hours. The interview, writing component, and activity are all scored.

## FINAL SELECTION PROCESS

A total of 16 students will be admitted to each class. The committee will evaluate the applicants using the interview, writing, and activity scores along with the cumulative GPA.

Applicants accepted to the program will receive an official offer of admission through their preferred email with a link to the online Declaration of Acceptance form. Those accepting a seat in the class will have one week to complete this form. Once completed, the applicant will be sent an invoice from the WVU Graduate Admissions Office for a non-refundable deposit of \$250 which will be due two weeks of receipt of the invoice. The deposit will be applied to the first semester tuition. Failure to pay the deposit within the required time period will result in forfeiture of the seat.

An offer of admission may be revoked or an enrolled student may be dismissed if any materials submitted in the application are found to be falsified. Prerequisite courses listed as "in progress" or applicants graduating in May of the application period must have their final official transcripts sent once courses are completed and the degree is conferred.

Major Code: 8357

## Degree Requirements

Code	Title	Hours
MICB 702	Microbiology	5
PA 507	Human Anatomy 1	3
PALM 465	Medical Laboratory Management	2

PA 527	Human Anatomy 2	3
PALM 605	Advanced Microanatomy	2
PALM 610	Pathology Assistant Education Methods	1
PALM 620	Clinical Pathology Seminar	2
PALM 625	Anatomical Pathology Techniques	4
PALM 627	Pathology Assistant Practicum 1	9
PALM 628	Pathology Assistant Practicum 2	9
PALM 629	Pathologists' Assistant Practicum 3	7
PALM 630	Pathology Review 1	2
PALM 631	Pathology Review 2	2
PSIO 743	Fundamentals of Physiology	5
PALM 648	Surgical and Autopsy Pathology Procedures	3
PALM 750	Systemic Pathology for Pathologists' Assistant Students	6
PALM 650	Introduction to Disease Mechanisms	4
PALM 652	Histology for Pathologists' Assistants	3
PALM 600	Pathologists' Assistant Microanatomy	2
Total Hours		74

## SUGGESTED PLAN OF STUDY

### First Year

Fall	Hours	Spring	Hours	Summer	Hours
MICB 702		5 PA 507		3 PALM 620	2
PSIO 743		5 PALM 600		2 PALM 750	6
PALM 465		2 PALM 625		4 PA 527	3
PALM 605		2 PALM 610		1	
PALM 648		3 PALM 650		4	
		PALM 652		3	
		17		17	11

### Second Year

Fall	Hours	Spring	Hours	Summer	Hours
PALM 629		7 PALM 627		9 PALM 628	9
PALM 631		2 PALM 630		2	
		9		11	9

Total credit hours: 74

## GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Students are required to maintain an overall GPA of at least 3.0 as a graduate student while enrolled in the pathologists' assistant program. A minimum 3.0 GPA is required to graduate from the program.

## Major Learning Outcomes

### PATHOLOGISTS' ASSISTANT

The Pathologists' Assistant Program prepares students to be highly skilled allied health professionals providing services in both surgical and autopsy pathology. Individuals are prepared both academically and professionally to be contributing members of the healthcare team.

Graduates will:

- Demonstrate proficiency in surgical pathology
  - Distinguish between normal and abnormal tissue both grossly and microscopically
  - Choose the appropriate tissue to submit based on clinical history
  - Gross complex surgical cases using the most recent cancer staging protocols
  - Choose the appropriate stains - routine, special, or IHC, - to assist the pathologist in making a diagnosis
- Demonstrate proficiency in autopsy pathology

- Perform an autopsy using different techniques
- Gather pertinent clinical history and all necessary documentation for a case
- Compose a gross description for the autopsy report
- Select tissue for processing
- Demonstrate concepts in medical laboratory management
  - Apply management principles to regulation and professional oversight
  - Compare healthcare delivery systems
  - Discuss ethical principles and decision making
  - Identify basic management concepts, functions, and styles
- Determine a differential diagnosis for tumors based on gross appearance and clinical history
- Engage in activities and behavior that promote the profession and positively represent the program
- Instruct residents, medical students, and other health professionals in surgical and autopsy techniques

## Accreditation

The WVU Pathologists' Assistant Program is accredited by the National Accrediting Agency for Clinical Laboratory Sciences (NAACLS), 5600 N. River Road, Suite 720, Rosemont, IL 60018, and (773) 714-8880.