



**Physician Assistant Program Policy Manual  
Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies  
Academic Year 2024-2025**



**Physician Assistant Studies**  
at Slippery Rock University

# Contents

- Introduction..... 5
- Institutional Accreditation..... 5
- Program Accreditation..... 5
- State Licensure/Certification..... 5
- Notice of Non-Discrimination..... 6
- Program Mission and Visionary Goals..... 6
  - Mission..... 6**
  - SRU PA Program Goals..... 6**
- Uniqueness of the Physician Assistant Program at Slippery Rock University..... 13
- Program Competencies & Student Learning Outcomes..... 13
  - Slippery Rock University Physician Assistant Program Competencies..... 13**
  - Student Learning Outcomes..... 16**
- Certification..... 16
- Slippery Rock Physician Assistant Program Faculty and Staff..... 17
- Program Communication..... 24
- Academic Advisement..... 24
- Travel and Housing..... 24
- Technical Standards and Essential Functions..... 25
- Physician Assistant Code of Conduct and Core Values..... 25
  - Professionalism..... 26**
  - RESPECT..... Error! Bookmark not defined.**
  - FLEXIBILITY..... Error! Bookmark not defined.**
  - HONESTY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS..... Error! Bookmark not defined.**
  - STUDENT ROLE AND ACCOUNTABILITY..... Error! Bookmark not defined.**
  - CONCERN FOR THE PATIENT..... Error! Bookmark not defined.**
  - PROFESSIONAL APPEARANCE..... 29**
- Slippery Rock University Physician Assistant Program social media policy..... 30
- ATTENDANCE..... 31
- Student Hospitalization..... 31
  - Prior to Return to the PA Program..... 33**
- Additional Program Policies..... 33
  - Solicitation of Clinical Sites – ARC-PA Standard A3.03..... 33**
  - Student Employment – ARC-PA Standards A3.04, A3.05, A3.06..... 33**
  - Health and Immunization Documentation – ARC-PA Standards A3.07, A3.19; Immunizations –A3.07..... 33**
  - Criminal Background Check and Screening..... 36**
- Program Assessment..... 36
  - Assessment Process..... 36**

<b>Didactic Year Assessment</b> .....	<b>38</b>
<b>Clinical Year Assessment</b> .....	<b>38</b>
<i>Academic Standards and Curricular Requirements-</i> .....	39
<b>Remediation</b> .....	<b>39</b>
Program Academic Requirements.....	40
<b>Course Grade Requirements</b> .....	<b>40</b>
VIOLATION OF PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROGRAM POLICIES.....	42
PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROGRAM PROBATION.....	42
PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROGRAM DECELERATION.....	43
PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROGRAM DISMISSAL.....	45
PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROGRAM WITHDRAWAL.....	47
Student Referral: Academic, Health, & Other Services – ARC-PA Standard A3.10 .....	48
<b>Academic Records &amp; Registration</b> .....	<b>48</b>
<b>Academic Tutoring</b> .....	<b>48</b>
<i>Writing Center</i> .....	48
<b>University Library</b> .....	<b>48</b>
<b>Financial Aid</b> .....	<b>48</b>
<i>Services for Students with Disabilities</i> .....	49
<i>Student Health Services</i> .....	49
<i>Student Counseling Center</i> .....	49
<i>Career Education &amp; Development</i> .....	50
Student Complaints & Harassment – A3.11, A3.15.....	51
<b>Student Mistreatment</b> .....	<b>51</b>
<b>Grade Appeal</b> .....	<b>51</b>
<b>Student Complaints</b> .....	<b>51</b>
<b>Allegation of Harassment</b> .....	<b>52</b>
Appendix A- Receipt and Acknowledgement Form.....	53
Appendix B- Required Immunizations .....	54
Appendix D- Emergency Contact Form .....	57
Appendix E Request for Absence Form .....	58

### **NOTICE: Policy Manual Updates**

The PA Program Policy Manual provides information on the policies, requirements, services, and expectations while enrolled in the Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies (MSPAS) program. The PA Program Policy Manual follows Slippery Rock University (SRU) policies/procedures, ARC-PA Standards, APSCUF Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), and is in compliance with the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education Board of Governors' Policies, and Middle States Commission on Higher Education Standards.

The PA Program Policy Manual for the Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies (MSPAS) contains policies and procedures unique to the MSPAS program and it is first distributed to students as they begin the didactic year. The program policies contained within the PA Program Policy Manual apply to all students. Students are required to read and acknowledge the policies and procedures detailed in the PA Program Policy Manual (Appendix A, Receipt and Acknowledgement Form).

Where no specific MSPAS program policy exists, students are to refer to the Program Director and the policies of SRU.

The MSPAS program reserves the right to update the PA Program Policy Manual without prior notice. The most recent PA Program Policy Manual will supersede all previously distributed versions. Should revision be necessary in the midst of a cohort, students will be notified in writing (via SRU email) of the change and the impact to the students. **A student's continuation in the MSPAS program will be contingent upon submission of a signed and dated 'Receipt and Acknowledgement' form (Appendix A) for the most recent update of the PA Program Policy Manual** (Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA) Standard A3.01, A3.02).

## Introduction

Slippery Rock University, founded in 1889, is a member of Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education. The University is shaped by its normal school heritage and characterized by its commitment to intellectual development, leadership and civic responsibility. SRU provides students with a comprehensive learning experience that intentionally combines academic instruction with enhanced educational and learning opportunities that will help them succeed in their lives, professional careers and to be engaged citizens.

## Institutional Accreditation

The University is accredited by the [Middle States Commission on Higher Education](#) 3624 Market Street Philadelphia, PA 19104. (267)-284-5000

The PA Program is housed in the College of Health Professions. With a shared commitment to learning in the classroom, in the laboratory, and in the clinical setting, the faculty in the program provide a robust educational experience to students. Dr. Breanne Blake serves as the Program Director.

SRU's MSPAS program is a 24-month program that includes a combination of academic and clinical instruction, team instruction, and collaborative outreach taught in unique learning environments. Academically and professionally qualified faculty, clinicians, and experts will provide a strong foundation in evidence-based practice, direct patient/client management, and prevention and wellness services that focus on the life cycle needs of the U.S. population.

The program provides an emphasis on special populations interwoven throughout academic and clinical years, which makes SRU's PA Program unique. SRU graduates will learn to adapt to the ever-changing medical profession. After successfully passing the Physician Assistant National Certifying Exam (PANCE), the student will have the skills to practice as an advanced practice provider.

## Program Accreditation

The Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant, Inc. (ARC-PA) has granted **Accreditation-Continued** status to the **Slippery Rock University Physician Assistant Program** sponsored by **Slippery Rock University**. Accreditation-Continued is an accreditation status granted when a currently accredited program is in compliance with the ARC-PA *Standards*.

Accreditation remains in effect until the program closes or withdraws from the accreditation process or until accreditation is withdrawn for failure to comply with the Standards. The approximate date for the next validation review of the program by the ARC-PA will be **2030 March**. The review date is contingent upon continued compliance with the Accreditation Standards and ARC-PA policy.

The program's accreditation history can be viewed on the ARC-PA website at [SRU PA Accreditation History](#)

## State Licensure/Certification

Slippery Rock University is approved to offer programs that may lead to licensure/certification in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. SRU cannot confirm that the PA program meets the requirements for licensure/certification in any other state or commonwealth. If you are considering enrolling in the PA education program and being certified/licensed in a state other than Pennsylvania, please check the specific requirements for licensure in your state. If you are considering working as a PA in other states that may require certification/licensure, you should first seek guidance on your state's requirements. For more information, please consult the American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA) on the [specific state information](#).

### **Notice of Non-Discrimination**

Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, religion, age, disability, age/or veteran status in its programs or activities in accordance with Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and other applicable statutes and University policies. Inquiries may be directed to the Assistant Vice President of Diversity and Equal Opportunity/Title IX Coordinator 305 Old Main Building 104 Maltby Avenue Slippery Rock University Slippery Rock, PA 16057 724.738.2016.

### **Program Mission and Visionary Goals**

#### ***Mission***

The program's focus is to train and develop Physician Assistants with an emphasis on providing care to special populations. The program will aspire to instill life-long learning skills while advancing the health needs of the region served by the University. Graduates will possess skills and leadership talents to make a difference in the quality of life in the healthcare environment in which they will work.

#### ***SRU PA Program Goals***

#### ***1. Recruit and enroll a diverse student body qualified through academics and experience for the Physician Assistant program.***

- **BENCHMARKS FOR SUCCESS:**
- 15% of each cohort comprised of underrepresented groups (ethnic minority) in the PA Profession
- Cohort average cumulative undergraduate GPA >3.50 on a 4.00 scale
- Direct Patient Care and Healthcare Experience hours >2,000 average total hours per cohort.

#### **SUCCESS OF GOALS**

- Underrepresented Populations
  - Cohort Class of 2019
    - 13% Underrepresented Ethnic Minorities
    - 19% Male Gender
  - Cohort Class of 2020
    - 16% Underrepresented Ethnic Minorities
    - 19% Male Gender
  - Cohort Class of 2021
    - 15% Underrepresented Ethnic Minorities
    - 19% Male Gender

- Cohort Class of 2022
  - 20% Underrepresented Ethnic Minorities
  - 40% Male Gender
- Cohort Class of 2023
  - 10% Underrepresented Ethnic Minorities
  - 8% Male Gender
- Cohort Class of 2024
  - 17% underrepresented minorities
  - 13% Male Gender
- Class 2025
  - 5% underrepresented minorities
  - 20% Male Gender

#### Cumulative undergraduate GPA

- Cohort Class of 2019
  - Cumulative Undergraduate GPA Average: 3.53
- Cohort Class of 2020
  - Cumulative Undergraduate GPA Average: 3.67
- Cohort Class of 2021
  - Cumulative Undergraduate GPA Average: 3.67
- Cohort Class of 2022
  - Cumulative Undergraduate GPA Average: 3.78
- Cohort Class of 2023
  - Cumulative Undergraduate GPA Average: 3.68
- Cohort Class of 2024
  - Cumulative Undergraduate GPA Average: 3.69
- Cohort Class 2025
  - Cumulative Undergraduate GPA Average: 3.74

#### Direct Patient Care and Health Care Experience Hours

- Cohort Class of 2019
  - Cohort Average: 2, 041 hours
- Cohort Class of 2020

- Cohort Average: 1,326 hours
- Cohort Class of 2021
  - Cohort Average: 2,166 hours
- Cohort Class of 2022
  - Cohort Average: 2,105 hours
- Cohort Class of 2023
  - Cohort average 1,929 hours
- Cohort Class of 2024
  - Cohort Average 2,746 hours
- Cohort Class of 2025
  - Cohort Average 1,522

***2. Develop Physician Assistants who have an awareness of special populations, health care disparities, and cultural sensitivity.***

**BENCHMARK FOR SUCCESS**

- Preceptor Evaluation of Student Performance in Demonstrating Cultural Sensitivity and Awareness Benchmark > 3.5/5.0
- Student End of Didactic Phase Survey – Preparation for caring for diverse patients: Benchmark > 3.5/5.0
- Student Graduate Exit Survey – Preparation for caring for diverse patients: Benchmark > 3.5/5.0

**SUCCESS OF GOALS**

- Preceptor Evaluation of Student Performance in Demonstrating Cultural Sensitivity
  - Cohort Class of 2018: Cohort Average: 4.77
  - Cohort Class of 2019: Cohort Average: 4.74
  - Cohort Class of 2020: Cohort Average: 4.79
  - Cohort Class of 2021: Cohort Average 4.76
  - Cohort Class of 2022: Cohort Average 4.75
  - Cohort Class of 2023: Cohort Average 4.75
- Student End of Didactic Phase Survey Preparation for caring for Diverse patients (addition of survey in 2020)
  - Cohort Class of 2021 3.9
  - Cohort Class of 2022 3.63
  - Cohort Class of 2023 4.91
  - Cohort Class of 2024: 3.96



- Student Graduate Exit Survey preparation for caring for diverse patients
  - Cohort Class of 2020: 4.3
  - Cohort Class of 2021: 3.54
  - Cohort Class of 2022: 3.86
  - Cohort Class of 2023: 4.86
- *\*The Physician Assistant Program updated their Goals in August 2020, additional data is currently in the process of being collected and analyzed to provide evidence of the program's effectiveness in meeting their goals.*

### **3. Graduate Physician Assistants who are prepared to become competent healthcare providers**

#### **BENCHMARK FOR SUCCESS**

- Preceptor Evaluation of Students' Performance Overall Performance >3.5/5.0
- Cohort Average of >75% on Summative Examination
- PANCE Performance at or above the National Average for First-time pass rate.

#### **SUCCESS OF GOALS**

- Preceptor Evaluation of Students' Overall Performance
  - Cohort Class of 2018: Overall Performance Average: 4.7
  - Cohort Class of 2019: Overall Performance Average: 4.6
  - Cohort Class of 2020: Overall Performance Average: 4.6
  - Cohort Class of 2021: Overall Performance Average; 4.6
  - Cohort Class of 2022: Overall Performance Average: 4.6
  - Cohort Class of 2023: Overall Performance Average: 4.6
- >75% Class Average on the Written Summative Examination
  - Cohort Class of 2018: Cohort Average on Written Summative Examination: 80%
  - Cohort Class of 2019: Cohort Average on Written Summative Examination: 76.4%
  - Cohort Class of 2020: Cohort Average on Written Summative Examination: 76.0%
  - Cohort Class of 2021: Cohort Average on Written Summative Examination: 80.1%
  - Cohort Class of 2022: Cohort Average on Written Summative Examination: 82%
  - Cohort Class of 2023: Cohort Average on Written Summative Examination: 84%
- PANCE Performance at National Average for First time pass rate.
  - Cohort Class of 2018: Program First-Time Pass Rate: 96%
    - National Average: 98%

- Cohort Class of 2019: Program First-Time Pass Rate: 91%
  - National Average: 93%
- Cohort Class of 2020: Program First-Time Pass Rate: 84%
  - National Average: 95%
- Cohort Class of 2021: Program First Time Pass Rate: 93%
  - National Average: 93%
- Cohort Class of 2022: Program First Time Pass Rate: 91%
  - *National Average: 92%*
- Cohort Class of 2023: Program First Time Pass Rate: 87%
  - *National Average: 92%*

**4. Provide a curriculum that includes opportunities for students to prepare for clinical practice using simulation and standardized patients to replicate real life practice scenarios.**

#### **BENCHMARK FOR SUCCESS**

- Student End of Didactic Phase Survey
  - Preparation for Clinical Rotations Using Simulation > 3.5/5.0
  - Preparation for Clinical Rotations Using OSCEs > 3.5/5.0
- Student Graduate Exit Survey
  - Preparation for Clinical Practice Using Simulation > 3.5/5.0
  - Preparation for Clinical Practice Using OSCEs >3.5/5.0
- Faculty Eval of Curriculum
  - Preparation of Students for Clinical Practice Using Simulation/ Benchmark > 3.5/5.0
  - Preparation of Students for Clinical Practice Using OSCEs/ Benchmark > 3.5/5.0

#### **SUCCESS OF GOALS**

- Student End of Didactic Phase Survey
  - Preparation for Clinical Rotations Using Simulation > 3.5/5.0
    - Cohort Class of 2021 3.78
    - Cohort Class of 2022: 2.57
    - Cohort Class of 2023: 4.45
    - Cohort Class of 2024: 3.35
  - Preparation for Clinical Rotations Using OSCEs > 3.5/5.0
    - Cohort Class of 2021: 3.87

- Cohort Class of 2022: 2.79
  - Cohort Class of 2023: 4.27
  - Cohort Class of 2024: 3.61
- Student Graduate Exit Survey
  - Preparation for Clinical Practice Using Simulation > 3.5/5.0
    - Cohort Class of 2020: 3.9
    - Cohort Class of 2021: 3.62
    - Cohort Class of 2022: 3.46
    - Cohort Class of 2023: 4.45
  - Preparation for Clinical Practice Using OSCEs >3.5/5.0
    - Cohort Class of 2020: 3.8
    - Cohort Class of 2021: 3.62
    - Cohort Class of 2022: 3.38
    - Cohort Class of 2023: 4.32
- Faculty Evaluation of Curriculum
  - Preparation of Students for Clinical Practice Using Simulation/ Benchmark > 3.5
    - Academic Year 2020: 3.78
    - Academic Year 2021: 4.50
    - Academic Year 2022: 4.5
    - Academic Year 2023: 4.5
  - Preparation of Students for Clinical Practice Using OSCEs/ Benchmark > 3.5
    - Academic Year 2020: 3.58
    - Academic year 2021: 4.50
    - Academic Year 2022: 4.5
    - Academic Year 2023: 4.6

***5. Graduate Physician Assistants who exhibit effective interpersonal communication skills and work collaboratively within a health care team.***

**BENCHMARK FOR SUCCESS**

- Interpersonal Skills
  - Preceptor Evaluation of Student Performance in Interpersonal Skills: Benchmark > 3.5/5.0
  - Student Graduate Exit Survey Preparation in Interpersonal Skills: Benchmark > 3.5/5.0

- Work collaboratively with a Health care team
  - Preceptor Evaluation of Student Performance Work collaboratively with a healthcare team: Benchmark >3.5/5.0
  - Student Graduate Exit Survey Preparation to Work collaboratively with a healthcare team: Benchmark > 3.5/5.0

**SUCCESS OF GOALS**

- Interpersonal Skills
  - Preceptor Evaluation of Student Performance Interpersonal Skills > 3.5/5.0
    - Cohort Class of 2018: Cohort Average: 4.88
    - Cohort Class of 2019: Cohort Average: 4.77
    - Cohort Class of 2020: Cohort Average: 4.84
    - Cohort Class of 2021: Cohort Average: 4.77
    - Cohort Class of 2022: Cohort Average 4.68
    - Cohort Class of 2023: Cohort Average 4.93
  - Student Graduate Exit Survey (Preparation in Interpersonal Skills) > 3.5/5.0
    - Cohort Class of 2020: 4.44
    - Cohort Class of 2021: 4.12
    - Cohort Class of 2022: 3.85
    - Cohort Class of 2023: 4.55

Work collaboratively with a healthcare team

- Preceptor Evaluation of Student Performance: Work collaboratively with a Health care team >3.5/5.0
  - Cohort Class of 2018: Cohort Average: 4.85
  - Cohort Class of 2019: Cohort Average: 4.82
  - Cohort Class of 2020: Cohort Average: 4.77
  - Cohort Class of 2021: Cohort Average: 4.80
  - Cohort Class of 2022: Cohort Average: 4.77
  - Cohort Class of 2023: Cohort Average: 4.93
- Student Graduate Exit Survey (Preparation to Work collaboratively with a healthcare team) Benchmark > 3.5/5.0 (*new survey 2020*)
  - Cohort Class of 2020: 4.3
  - Cohort Class of 2021: 4.00

- Cohort Class of 2022: 4.07
- Cohort Class of 2023: 4.82

### **Uniqueness of the Physician Assistant Program at Slippery Rock University**

Interwoven through both years of the curriculum are courses focusing on the concerns of special patient populations, making this PA Program unique among PA Programs nationwide and fulfilling a need in the community, state and beyond. This places our PA Program on the forefront of PA education, meeting the growing needs of these populations and demonstrating how a PA Program can address such changes and while producing PAs who are trained to meet the growing demand of primary and specialty care providers.

### **Program Competencies & Student Learning Outcomes**

#### ***Slippery Rock University Physician Assistant Program Competencies***

#### **1. Medical Knowledge (Knowledge)**

1.1. Evaluate patient(s) needs for preventative care and health maintenance to detect conditions in asymptomatic patients.

1.2 Evaluate both history physical findings to establish differential diagnoses, order and interpret appropriate diagnostic and imaging, and perform procedures necessary to diagnose, treat and manage acute and chronic illness.

1.3 Analyze possible etiologies, risk factors, underlying pathologic processes, epidemiology, signs and symptoms for medical and surgical conditions while developing an appropriate treatment plan individualized for each patient.

1.4 Demonstrate effective education and counseling for patients and their families while providing patients the opportunity to participate in their own care.

1.5 Apply established and emerging principles of scientific concepts and clinical sciences to diagnostic and therapeutic decision making, clinical problem-solving and other aspects of evidence-based health care.

#### **2. Interpersonal, Communication and Collaboration (Interpersonal Skills)**

2.1 Demonstrate effective communication skills to communicate with physicians, other health professionals and health care teams to collaborate within an interprofessional setting.

2.2 Utilize effective communication skills to elicit and provide information while adapting to the context of the interaction.

2.3 Demonstrate the ability to accurately document medical information satisfying requirements for medical, legal, quality and financial purposes.

2.4 Describe how professionals can collaborate to integrate clinical care and public health interventions to optimize healthcare needs.

### **3. Patient Care**

3.1 Demonstrate the ability to work collaboratively with physicians and other health care professionals to provide patient-centered care.

3.2 Demonstrate compassionate, empathetic, and respectful behaviors when interacting with patients and their families.

3.3 Demonstrate the ability to safely and competently perform medical and diagnostic procedures essential for the patient encounter.

3.4 Provide appropriate referral of patients, including ensuring continuity of care throughout transitions between providers or settings.

### **4. Professionalism and Ethics**

4.1 Demonstrate respect, compassion, integrity and accountability to the needs of patients and their families.

4.2 Demonstrate a commitment to ethical principles pertaining to provision or withholding of care, confidentiality, patient autonomy, informed consent, and business practices in compliance with laws, policies and regulations.

4.3. Demonstrate the ability to maintain professionalism in difficult conversations with colleagues, patients and their families.

4.4 Demonstrate ethical decision making in the practice of medicine.

4.5 Recognize one's limits, admit mistakes and errors, accept constructive feedback, and establish healthy boundaries to support partnerships with colleagues, patients and within society.

### **5. Practice Based Learning and Improvement**

5.1 Differentiate between various types of health systems, revenue streams, and payer regulations while recognizing the financial impact on the provision of healthcare.

6.1 Recognize the individual provider's value to health care teams in terms of cost.

7.1 Demonstrate the ability to use constructive feedback and self-awareness of knowledge, skills, and emotional limitations to identify strengths, weaknesses, and limitations in knowledge and expertise.

8.1 Create goals that foster improvement while enhancing learning to address gaps in knowledge, skills and professional attitudes.

### **6. Society and Population Health**

- 1.1 Recognize the cultural practices affecting the health and wellness of the individual and community being served.
- 2.1 Identify the impact of healthcare disparities on illness while demonstrating accountability and responsibility for removing barriers to healthcare.
- 3.1 Recognize the impact of genetics, socioeconomic, environmental and additional population-level determinates of health on individuals and a community.
- 4.1 Demonstrate cultural sensitivity and utilize effective communication to provide equitable and respectful holistic patient care.
- 5.1 Evaluate each patient in the context of their stage of life (including environmental influences, culture, and disease processes) to understand and define their health status.

\*\*\*Updated December 2023

Competencies for the PA Profession can be found here: <https://www.nccpa.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/PACompetencies.pdf>

\*\* The SRU PA program created and adapted these competencies through information drawn from: the current competencies of the PA Profession, PAEA's Core Competencies for New graduates, The National Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services in Health and Health Care standards, and the Englander et al article "Toward a common taxonomy for competency domains for the health professions and competencies for physicians."

### ***Student Learning Outcomes***

1. Apply basic science knowledge to the medical sciences.
2. Demonstrate competency in clinical procedures performed by physician assistants.
3. Demonstrate ability to perform a complete history and physical examination.
4. Demonstrate ability to diagnose disease and create an appropriate treatment plan.
5. Demonstrate the use of evidence-based medicine to effectively diagnose and treat patients.
6. Demonstrate cross-cultural and socioeconomic sensitivity in clinical practice settings involving special patient populations.
7. Demonstrate effective communication skills in a healthcare setting.
8. Demonstrate the ability to collaborate within an inter-professional health care team.
9. Demonstrate ethical decision making in the practice of medicine.
10. Participate in professional societies that promote PA practice and advancement.

### **Certification**

All graduates of Physician Assistant Programs accredited by the ARC-PA are eligible to sit for the PANCE offered by the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA).

For information on registration for the PANCE please visit the [NCCPA site](#). Most states require graduates to take and successfully pass the national boards to continue employment. Please refer to the link below for exam scheduling requirements.

Once certified through the NCCPA, each graduate must obtain and report 100 hours of accredited CME every two years. In addition to the CME requirement, recertification examinations are also required.

<https://www.nccpa.net/>



## Slippery Rock Physician Assistant Program Faculty and Staff

**Dr. Breanne Blake** DPAS MPAS, PA-C,

Associate Professor

[breanne.blake@sru.edu](mailto:breanne.blake@sru.edu)

Dr. Blake is Board Certified as a Physician Assistant by the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants. She graduated from Chatham University in 2014 with a Master's degree in Physician Assistant Studies. Prior to attending Chatham University, Professor Blake earned a Bachelor's degree in Exercise Science from Slippery Rock University. Ms. Blake became involved with the inaugural SRU Physician Assistant class as an adjunct professor in 2016. She accepted a full-time position with the program beginning in January 2019. Ms. Blake has clinical experience in Family Medicine, Urgent Care Medicine and Psychiatry. She is a member of the American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA) and Pennsylvania Society of Physician Assistants (PSPA). Her current research focus is in post-partum depression as she has a special interest in the peri-natal period of medicine. Her current service involves the local Neonatal Intensive Care Units. She has had the opportunity to present information on post-partum depression at the PSPA conference in 2022.

**Dr. Megan Borger**, Ed.D., MSPAS, PA-C

Associate Professor

[megan.borger@sru.edu](mailto:megan.borger@sru.edu)

Dr. Borger joined the faculty in the Slippery Rock PA program in 2016. Dr. Borger completed her Physician Assistant training at Kings College in Wilkes-Barre, PA graduating with a Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies in 2008. She also completed her undergraduate training at Kings College with a Bachelor of Science in Medical Studies in 2007. Dr. Borger completed her Doctor of Education in Health Professions Education at A.T. Still University in 2020. She served as preceptor for Physician Assistant and Nurse Practitioner students as well as provided many shadowing opportunities for future healthcare students. She has attended PAEA workshops and PAEA forums. Previously she practiced clinically in family practice in a rural health clinic in Port Allegany, Pennsylvania and in New Castle, PA. Currently she continues to practice in emergency medicine. In addition, she serves as an ARC-PA site visitor.

**Natalie Brahm**, DPAS, MS, PA-C

Assistant Professor

[natalie.brahm@sru.edu](mailto:natalie.brahm@sru.edu)

Dr. Brahm obtained her Doctor of Physician Assistant Studies degree from The University of Pittsburgh in April of 2024, where she completed a Capstone project titled, "Advocating to Improve PA Education for Postpartum Depression Screening Methods." Dr. Brahm continues to work on the next phases of this project at SRU. Dr. Brahm attended Seton Hill University where she earned her Master of Science in Physician Assistant degree in 2012. Prior to completing her master's degree, she graduated Cum Laude from Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey with a Bachelor of Science in Exercise Science and Sports Studies. She is a board-certified Physician Assistant from the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants. She has been a preceptor for PA Students from

Duquesne University, Seton Hill University, and Slippery Rock University. Also, Dr. Brahm has been shadowed by numerous high school students and Pre-PA Students. She has taught Family Medicine Residents, Podiatry Residents, and Medical Students as well. Dr. Brahm has practiced in General & Vascular Surgery and Urgent Care. She is currently practicing in General & Vascular Surgery and Wound Care, including Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy. Dr. Brahm is a member of the American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA), Pennsylvania Society of Physician Assistants (PSPA), Physician Assistant Education Association (PAEA), and the Undersea & Hyperbaric Medical Society (UHMS).

**Olivia Buterbaugh, MSPAS PA-C**

Assistant Professor

[olivia.buterbaugh@sru.edu](mailto:olivia.buterbaugh@sru.edu)

Professor Buterbaugh completed her Physician Assistant training at Duquesne University where she graduated with a Bachelor of Health Science and Magna Cum Laude with a Masters of Physician Assistant Studies. She is Nationally board-certified by the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA). She has clinically practiced as a Physician Assistant in Pediatrics for 8 years as well as 1 year of practice within a Federally Qualified Health Center caring for patients within underserved medical communities. She has served as a clinical preceptor for Duquesne University and Slippery Rock University Physician Assistant Programs, as well as for first- and second-year medical students within the Lewis Katz School of Medicine at Temple University. She began with the Slippery Rock University Physician Assistant Program as a Clinical Assistant Professor in March of 2019 and accepted the role of Clinical Coordinator in May of 2019. She is a member of the American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA), Pennsylvania Society of Physician Assistants (PSPA) and Physician Assistant Education Association (PAEA). She is an active networking member within the PAEA Clinical Coordinators Workshops and Retreats as well as an active member in support of the mission for the organization: PA's for Women Empowerment.

**Dr. Heather Fritz, DHSc, MBMS PA-C**

Associate Professor

[heather.fritz@sru.edu](mailto:heather.fritz@sru.edu)

Dr. Fritz recently completed her Doctorate in Health Science from California University of Pennsylvania where her research centered around mental health and wellness of graduate students. She completed her Master of Physician Assistant and Biomedical Science training at Medical College of Ohio (University of Toledo) in 2003. She also holds a Bachelor of Health and Human Services from Bowling Green State University. She worked clinically as an orthopedic PA for 12 years and has been teaching at SRU since 2017. She currently teaches Clinical History and Physical Diagnosis and Skills Lab. She also assists with the clinical year students. She is a member of the American Academy of Physician Assistants, Pennsylvania Society of Physician Assistants, Association of Standardized Patients and the Physician Assistant Education Association. She is the faculty advisor for the student organization SAAPA and Chairs the simulation committee.

**Audra Kessler, MPAS, PA-C,**  
Assistant Professor  
[audra.kessler@sru.edu](mailto:audra.kessler@sru.edu)

Professor Kessler graduated from Duquesne University in 2010 where she earned a Master of Physician Assistant Studies and a Bachelor of Health Science. Prior to teaching in our PA Program, she practiced clinically as a Physician Assistant in the field of nephrology for 8 years. During this time, she served as an academic advisor to Carnegie Mellon University students working to complete their Capstone projects. She also worked to develop a software program that helped to manage chronic kidney disease education. She specialized in dialysis, transplant, and chronic kidney disease education. In 2016, she joined our Physician Assistant Program at Slippery Rock University as an Assistant Professor. She serves as clinical faculty for the clinical year. She teaches the clinical year courses, Clinical Clerkship Experience I, II, III, and IV. She also serves as Chairperson of the Admissions Committee. She is a member of AAPA (American Academy of Physician Assistants) and PAEA (Physician Assistant Education Association).

**Barbara Ragnelli, MSN, FNP-c**  
Assistant Professor  
[barbara.ragnelli@sru.edu](mailto:barbara.ragnelli@sru.edu)

Professor Ragnelli has been with the PA Program as full-time assistant professor since 2018. She currently teaches both the didactic and clinical year curriculum. She obtained her Master's of Science in Nursing, Family Nurse Practitioner degree from La Roche College, Pittsburgh, PA in 1996. She has Certification through the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners since 1998. She has worked as a Family Nurse Practitioner since graduation at Lawrence County Medical Associates, New Castle, PA. She has experience in the office setting, as well as hospital, nursing home and hospice care. She also has experience in cardiac care as a nurse, prior to her FNP. She has experience in management in both the hospital setting as well as in the medical office. She is a member of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners, Pennsylvania Coalition of Nurse Practitioners, Physician Assistant Education Association and American Academy of Physicians Assistants.

**Heather Rapp, MPAS, PA-C,**  
Assistant Professor, Special Populations Coordinator  
[heather.rapp@sru.edu](mailto:heather.rapp@sru.edu)

Ms. Rapp completed her Physician Assistant training at Duquesne University, PA graduating with a Bachelor of Health Sciences in 2009 and a Master of Physician Assistant Studies in 2010. She has served a Preceptor to PA students as well as providing undergraduate shadow experiences. She was previously an adjunct faculty with the Slippery Rock University Physician Assistant Program since 2017, providing grading and involvement with guest lectures. She continues to practice clinically in Neurosurgery with a concentration in Spine since 2010. She also participates in community events and inter-professional educational experiences related to her area of expertise. She is a member of the American Academy of Physician Assistants.

**Justin Siebert**, Ph.D., MS.M.Ed,  
Assistant Professor  
[justin.siebert@sru.edu](mailto:justin.siebert@sru.edu)

Dr. Siebert completed his undergraduate education at the State University of New York (SUNY) College at Oneonta, in Oneonta NY in the spring of 2004, he earned his B.S. in biology (Cum Laude) with a minor in chemistry. Dr. Siebert attended the SUNY Upstate Medical University, where he earned his Ph.D. in Cell Biology and Anatomy in the summer of 2010. His doctoral research focused on studying axonal regeneration and remyelination following spinal cord injury. Following the conclusion of his Ph.D., he spent a year as a post-doctoral fellow at Cornell University (Ithaca N.Y. campus) in the department of Biomedical Engineering. In the spring of 2015, he earned a Master of Science degree in Medical Education (M.S.M.Ed) from the Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine (LECOM). His teaching experience includes undergraduate and graduate education. As a graduate assistant he taught medical neuroanatomy for three years. Dr. Siebert began as an Assistant Professor of Anatomy at LECOM in the summer of 2011 at the school's Seton Hill campus located in Greenburg, P.A. While at LECOM Seton Hill, he was course director for the medical histology and human anatomy courses, he facilitated numerous groups of problem-based learning, participated as a facilitator in the human sexuality and medical ethics course, and became the director of examination management for the first-year osteopathic medical class. While at LECOM he was also a member of the Student Promotion and Graduation committee, which dealt with student academic and disciplinary issues. He joined the faculty of Slippery Rock University in the fall of 2016 as an Assistant Professor and received an appointment in the PA program in summer 2017 teaching the Clinical Anatomy & Physiology course sequence, and Evidence Based Public Health Class.

**Elise A Somers**, DHSc, MPAS, PA-C,  
Assistant Professor  
[elise.somers@sru.edu](mailto:elise.somers@sru.edu)

Dr. Somers completed her Doctor of Health Sciences at East Stroudsburg University in May 2024. Her dissertation focus was adolescent sex education in rural Northwestern Pennsylvania. Dr. Somers graduated from Chatham University in 2010 with a master's degree in physician assistant studies. She also holds a bachelor's degree in chemistry from Juniata College and has a minor in criminal justice. She is Board Certified as a Physician Assistant by the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants. Dr. Somers was an Adjunct Professor for Slippery Rock University's Physician Assistant program prior to starting her full-time position at Slippery Rock University. She has presented several poster presentations on simulation in the Slippery Rock Program at the Pennsylvania Society of Physician Assistants (PSPA). Ms. Somers has 10 years of clinical experience as a Physician Assistant in Family Practice as well as 2 years in General and Vascular Surgery and 1 year in Urology. She is a member of the American Academy of Physician assistants (AAPA), the Pennsylvania Society of Physician Assistants (PSPA), the Physician Assistant Education Association (PAEA), and the Association of Standardized Patient Educators (ASPE). Her current research focuses include the health and wellness of students as well as simulation.

## **Shelly Suski MPAS PA-C**

Assistant Professor

[Shelly.Suski@sru.edu](mailto:Shelly.Suski@sru.edu)

Professor Suski completed her undergraduate degree at California University of Pennsylvania in 2011 receiving a Bachelor of Science in Biology. She then went on to earn a Master of Science in Physician Assistant from the University of Pittsburgh in 2013. Following graduation from the University of Pittsburgh, she practiced one year in Internal Medicine and then moved to Pediatrics, which she has been practicing in since 2014. She became a board-certified lactation consultant in 2018. She has a special interest in pediatric developmental disorders, healthcare disparities, and interprofessional collaboration. She currently teaches the Pediatrics course to the didactic year students as well as serves as clinical faculty to the second-year students. She has been a preceptor to multiple PA programs over the years, including Slippery Rock University and the University of Pittsburgh. She also has been shadowed by high school students as well as Pre-PA students. She is accredited by the NCCPA and IBCLC and is a member of the PAEA.

## **Medical Directors**

**John Reefer, MD, FACP,**

Medical Director

[john.reefer@sru.edu](mailto:john.reefer@sru.edu)

Dr. Reefer is a diplomat of the American Board of Internal Medicine and Fellow of the American College of Physicians. He became involved with the SRU PA program during its planning stages and has since served as a co-medical director. Dr. Reefer graduated from the Johns Hopkins University with a bachelor's degree in Natural Science. He then attended the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine where he graduated as a Doctor of Medicine. After completing his residency in internal medicine at UPMC Presbyterian Hospital, Dr. Reefer relocated to Butler, PA where he practiced internal medicine for over 30 years. While in private practice, he held many leadership positions including Chairman of the Department of Medicine, President of the Medical Staff, and member of the Butler Memorial Hospital Board of Directors. He then served as Chief Medical Officer and subsequently Chief Operations Officer at Butler Memorial Hospital until his retirement in 2018.

**Charles Spingola, MD, FAAOS,**

Medical Director

[charles.spingola@sru.edu](mailto:charles.spingola@sru.edu)

Dr. Spingola has practiced orthopedic surgery in Pennsylvania for over 30 years and has served as the co-medical director of the SRU PA Program since the preliminary planning stages of the program. Dr. Spingola graduated from the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (currently re-named Rutgers Medical School). He is a Diplomat of the American Board of Orthopedic Surgery and a fellow of the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgery. He has held multiple leadership positions in the Butler

Health System, including the President of the Medical Staff and Chairman of Surgery and as a member of the Board of Directors. Throughout the course of his career, he has instructed and mentored countless physician assistants.

**Support Staff**

**Brenda Rensel**

Program Secretary

Brenda.Rensel@sru.edu

**Lana Leali**

Program Secretary

Lana.Leali@sru.edu

**Brandi Weber-Mortimer**, Graduate Admissions [brandi.mortimer@sru.edu](mailto:brandi.mortimer@sru.edu)

**Samantha Kelly**, Assessment & Accreditation [samantha.kelly@sru.edu](mailto:samantha.kelly@sru.edu)

In addition to those listed, the PA Program is supported by part-time instructional faculty, clinical preceptors, graders, guest lecturers, and the Dean of the College of Health Professions.



### **Program Communication**

While enrolled as a student in the program, the email address of record shall be the Slippery Rock University email address assigned upon admission to the program. Students should check email on a daily basis. Faculty will make all attempts to respond to emails within 24 hours during the work week and business hours. It is expected that students will regularly check their email accounts during the work week and respond to faculty **within 24 hours**.

Out of respect for your classmates and lecturers, cell phones are to be turned off during class. Cellular phones should not be used during class time.

### **Academic Advisement**

All students in the PA Program will have a minimum of one advisement meeting with their advisor of record per semester. Additional meetings will be required depending on performance in the program, both academically and professionally.

Students with academic course concerns should address the issue first with the course instructor. Should a student require further assistance, he/she should consult with their faculty advisor. The advisor will involve the Program Director or other university or program personnel as the situation warrants.

Your advisor will aid you in identifying areas of strength and weakness to help you focus your studies. When problems arise, your advisor will discuss them with you in an attempt to clarify your options and devise a plan of action.

In the situation that the advisor feels the student needs more directed remediation, the advisor may refer the student to the Academic Progress Committee. This team is composed of PA faculty that will assist the student in further developing the skills necessary to work toward program success.

No advisor, medical director, or faculty member may provide any medical care for students except in the case of an emergency (ARC-PA Standard A3.09). Medical concerns of students should be addressed to their personal provider or Student Health Services. Any concerns about violations of this policy should be directed to the Program Director. Your advisor is also not able to act as a mental health counselor for you. If you have non-academic problems that require formal counseling, your advisor will be happy to help you access mental health services available at SRU.

### **Travel and Housing**

Throughout the program students will be required to travel for didactic and clinical experiences. Students must have a reliable form of transportation throughout the program. All costs associated with travel are the responsibility of the student.

All housing associated costs are the responsibility of the student during both the didactic year and the clinical year. Students should expect to travel for clinical rotations. It is the student's responsibility to locate, secure and pay for all costs associated with travel and housing. Slippery Rock University and the Physician Assistant program do not pay for costs associated with housing.



## Technical Standards and Essential Functions

A candidate for the Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies degree at Slippery Rock University must demonstrate the ability to acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to complete the core educational requirements. The following abilities and characteristics, defined as technical standards, are requirements for admission, retention, promotion, and graduation.

The technical standards are **not intended to deter** any candidate from applying, for whom reasonable accommodation will allow the successful completion of the program. All students are asked to attest to their ability to meet the technical standards on a yearly basis.

**Observation:** Students should be able to obtain information from demonstrations and experiments in the basic sciences. Students should be able to assess a patient and evaluate findings accurately. These skills require the use of vision, hearing, and touch or the functional equivalent.

**Communication:** Students should be able to communicate with patients in order to elicit information, detect and succinctly and effectively document changes in mood and activity. Students must be able to perceive and appropriately respond to the patient in order to establish a therapeutic relationship and to communicate in person and in writing via English. Students must be able to establish rapport and maintain sensitive, interpersonal relationships with individuals, families, and groups from a variety of social, emotional, cultural and intellectual backgrounds.

**Motor:** Students should, after a defined period of time, possess the capacity to perform a physical examination including diagnostic maneuvers. Students should be able to execute all motor movements with the strength and dexterity required to provide both general and emergent care to patients at a level consistent with currently accepted standards of medical practice. Such actions require coordination of both gross and fine muscular movements balance and equilibrium sufficient to safely provide this level of care.

**Intellectual; Conceptual; Integrative and Quantitative:** Students should be able to assimilate detailed and complex information presented in both didactic and clinical coursework, and engage in problem solving. As such, all students must be able to: measure, calculate, analyze, and synthesize subjective and objective data, comprehend three-dimensional relationships and understand the spatial relationships of structures, making decisions about patient care through the thoughtful deliberation and integration of all these elements, with the knowledge of the foundational biomedical and clinical sciences. Students must be able to read and search the medical literature independently, and apply findings to the diagnosis and treatment of patients. In addition, students should be able to adapt to different learning environments and modalities.

**Social and Behavioral:** Students must exhibit sufficient maturity and emotional stability to enable full utilization of their intellectual abilities, which includes, but is not limited to, the exercise of good judgment and the prompt completion of responsibilities associated with the diagnosis and care of patients. Students must exhibit integrity,

honesty, professionalism, compassion, and are expected to display a spirit of cooperation and teamwork. Students should be able to tolerate physically taxing workloads and to function effectively under stress. They should be able to adapt to changing environments, to display flexibility and learn to function in the face of uncertainties inherent in the clinical problems of many patients. Students must accept responsibility for learning and exercising good judgment and are expected to contribute to collaborative, constructive learning environments; accept constructive feedback from others; and take personal responsibility for making appropriate positive changes.

**Ethics and professionalism:** Students should maintain and display ethical and moral behaviors commensurate with the role of a physician assistant in all interactions including physical and virtual platforms with patients, faculty, staff, students and the public. The student is expected to understand the legal and ethical aspects of the practice of medicine and function within the law and ethical standards of the medical profession at all times.

---

All students must meet the technical standards delineated above with or without accommodation. The Slippery Rock University Physician Assistant program recognizes the value that comes from a diverse learning student body, including students with disabilities.

Students who, after review of the technical standards, determine that they require an accommodation to engage in the program fully, should contact the ODS office to discuss their accommodations needs confidentially. All requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Given the clinical nature of the program, additional time may be needed to implement accommodations. Accommodations are never retroactive; therefore, timely requests are essential.

During any time in the program, if a student may require further discussion regarding accommodations to meet the technical standards they may be referred to the Office of Disability Services as outlined above.

Slippery Rock University  
Office of Disability Services (ODS)

Dr. Natalie Burick  
[Natalie.Burick@sru.edu](mailto:Natalie.Burick@sru.edu)  
724-738-4877  
[Office of Disability Services](#)

## **Physician Assistant Code of Conduct and Core Values**

### ***Professionalism***

PA students must recognize themselves as clinicians providing services to both the physician supervisor as well as to the patient. PA students must be aware that, even as students, they are viewed by both patients and medical providers as part of the larger medical community. It is critical, therefore, that professional development be assessed, just as academic and clinical skills are measured, during a student's growth.

As healthcare practitioners, physician assistants are required to conform to the highest standards of ethical and professional conduct. PA students also are expected to adhere to the same high ethical and professional standards required of physician assistants.

The American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA) has identified four primary bioethical principles – autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice – that form the foundation of the Statement of Values of The Physician Assistant Profession. The Statement of Values provides a guideline for ethical conduct by physician assistants. (A complete discussion of the ethical conduct required of physician assistants can be found at the American Academy of Physician Assistant website, [www.aapa.org](http://www.aapa.org)). In addition to the AAPA’s guidelines, The National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA) recently adopted a code of conduct for certified and certifying physician assistants. The NCCPA’s code of conduct “outlines principles that all certified or certifying physician assistants are expected to uphold.” A complete discussion can be found at:

<http://www.nccpa.net/Code-of-conduct>

In addition to understanding and complying with the principles and standards promulgated by AAPA, NCCPA, and ARC-PA, physician assistant students are required to know and comply with the policies, procedures, and rules of the MSPAS program and the university (including, without limitation, the Guiding Principles of Conduct that may be found in the Slippery Rock University Student Handbook, <http://www.sru.edu/offices/student-conduct/code-of-conduct>). They are also required to know the policies, procedures, and rules of each clinical site to which the student is assigned. Further, physician assistant students are required to conduct themselves in a manner that complies with the following principles and standards below. Violation of the standards listed below will lead to professional probation, deceleration or dismissal pending disciplinary committee evaluation and action.

### ***Respect***

Slippery Rock University provides an environment that respects, encourages, and promotes the talents and contributions of all. Slippery Rock University values a community with a shared sense of purpose, where people demonstrate mutual respect and appreciation. Slippery Rock University values diversity that honors and includes all persons regardless of age, creed, disability, ethnic heritage, gender identity, race, religion, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status in academic and extracurricular endeavor, in the working environment, and in the daily life of the university community.

Physician assistant students are expected to treat all patients, faculty, staff, clinical preceptors, healthcare workers, and fellow students with dignity and respect. For example:

- PA students must recognize and embrace their roles as members of a team and interact with others on the team in a cooperative and considerate manner.
- PA students train closely with other students, including in physical examinations of fellow students and discussion groups that may reveal personal information. Students must maintain and exhibit respect for the privacy and confidentiality of fellow students.
- Students should offer feedback or suggestions in a thoughtful and reasoned manner that fosters respect and trust.
- When confronted with conduct by another member of the team that may be inappropriate, students are not to respond angrily; rather, they must remain calm and respectful, and respond in accordance with the standards of professional conduct required of physician assistant students.

### ***Flexibility***

Although every effort is made to provide training activities at times and places scheduled in advance, physician assistant students often will be required to be flexible because of changes in the schedule. For example, clinical

sites create the student schedules for each rotation, and such schedules may require PA students to work weekends and nights.

***Honesty and Trustworthiness***

PA students shall be honest and truthful in all respects. Students shall not intentionally mislead others.

***Student Role and Accountability***

PA students have a unique role in health care delivery. In that role, students are accountable for things such as:

- Students shall perform only those procedures authorized by the program, clinical site, supervisor, and/or preceptor.
- Physician assistant students at clinical sites must always work under the supervision of a preceptor and are prohibited from assuming primary responsibility for a patient's care. For example, students shall not treat or discharge a patient without prior consultation with, and approval of, a clinical preceptor or supervisor.
- Students are responsible for timely completion of all assignments and duties effectively and to the best of their ability.
- Students are responsible for identifying and reporting unprofessional, unethical, and/or illegal behavior by healthcare professionals and students, faculty, and staff of the MSPAS program. If a PA student has a reasonable belief that such conduct has occurred, he or she should report it to the Program Director, preceptor, supervisor, or faculty advisor, as may be appropriate under the circumstances.
- PA students are expected to accept and apply constructive feedback. PA students are always required to exercise sound judgment.

### ***Concern for the Patient***

Physician assistant students must, by their words and behavior, demonstrate concern for the patient. Concern for the patient is manifested in many ways, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Physician assistant students must treat patients and their families with dignity and respect.
- At all times, the physical and emotional comfort of the patient are of paramount importance.
- Students must use appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication to convey concern, pleasantness, compassion, and professionalism to the patient.
- The patient's modesty should be considered and respected at all times.
- Students shall deliver healthcare services to patients without regard to their patients' race, religion, national origin, age, sex, marital status, citizenship, sexual orientation, creed, disability, medical condition, socioeconomic status or political beliefs, or any status protected by law.
- Students may not accept gifts or gratuities from patients or their families.
- Sexual or romantic relationships with patients are prohibited and will not be tolerated.

### ***Professional Appearance***

The Slippery Rock Physician Assistant program requires all students to abide by certain standards of professional appearance in an effort to maintain the highest degree of professionalism in preparation for their careers as Physician Assistants. The appearance and conduct of the Slippery Rock Physician Assistant program students directly affect the image of both the Physician Assistant program and Slippery Rock University.

### **Guidelines**

- Body hygiene and cleanliness must be maintained at all times.
- No low cut, midriff, halter tops, or pajamas are permitted.
- Jewelry must not interfere with personal, or patient safety as determined by faculty, preceptor or site policy.
- Visible body art and tattoos must be covered while a student is participating in a PA program event or clinical experience.
- Fragrances should be used sparingly, must be discontinued at request and should not be worn in the clinical setting.
- For all experiences in a clinical setting (including but not limited to laboratory sessions, clinical practicum and clinical rotations) artificial nails, nail extenders and artificial attachments to the nail are prohibited. Nails should be kept neatly trimmed.
- Shoes should be clean and in good condition. No open-toed shoes during laboratory sessions or clinical experiences are permitted.

- Dress requirements for the Clinical History and Physical Diagnosis Lab as well as the Clinical Skills Lab include scrubs which the students will purchase at their convenience. If needed, additional lab attire will be detailed in the appropriate course syllabi.
- Throughout the didactic year students will be required to be professionally dressed for specific events. Business casual will be required for experiences including but not limited to practical exams, events and/or class with guests, clinical practicum experiences and at the request of the program.
- During the clinical year students are expected to be professionally dressed and groomed throughout every clerkship. **All dress must meet the OSHA standards and the standards correlated with that clinical site. The clinical site dress requirements supersede program requirements.**

Emergency Medicine or General Surgery clerkships may require students to wear scrubs. You should arrive at the site professionally dressed and change into the proper attire for that clinical site.

White lab coats should be taken along to all clerkships; a preceptor may ask a student not to wear it that is at the discretion of the preceptor. Lab coats must be clean and pressed.

All students must have their Slippery Rock University Physician Assistant Student ID, many sites will require you to have an ID badge through their site, and you must have this as well. It is the student's responsibility to obtain this ID badge according to the site. (These should be worn on the left jacket pocket.)

\*\*\*Failure to comply with the dress code during both didactic and clinical year will result in disciplinary action.

### **Slippery Rock University Physician Assistant Program social media policy**

Students are to be aware they are representing themselves, the Physician Assistant program and Slippery Rock University when participating in social media. Discretion using social media is mandatory. In absolutely no circumstances may any student post any patient information or pictures in any form. Social media is not to be used during class time. This is grounds for dismissal from the program.

#### **Social Media**

Slippery Rock University Physician Assistant Program recognizes the use of online modalities and social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc.) is inevitable. All students within the program must adhere to the expectations listed below.

1. In compliance with Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA), a student is forbidden to post any patient information on social media, including photographs and de-identified information even with patient consent.
2. In preparation for a professional career, all students should maintain a professional profile on all social media platforms. If a student would not feel comfortable sharing information, ideas, photos, etc. with

an employer, coworker, professor, preceptor then it should not be included on the social media platform.

3. Students should refrain from the public posting of any references to, or pictures of, unprofessional behavior as such, but not limited to, intoxication, drug use, inappropriate dress on the social media platform. Furthermore, students should not identify their affiliation with Slippery Rock University's Physician Assistant Program when partaking in what could be deemed unprofessional behavior or language.
4. Students should be aware that unprofessional actions on a social media platform may have future implications when seeking employment upon completion of the program.
5. Unprofessional behavior on-line will be held to the same standards and subject to the same disciplinary action as would face-to-face interaction.

## ATTENDANCE

Attendance at all class, laboratory, clinical rotation, and testing sessions is mandatory. This includes virtual and face-to-face instruction. An unexcused absence is defined as an absence that does not have supportive documentation or the permission of the instructor of record. Students should refer to the individual course syllabus for repercussions of an unexcused absence.

An excused absence is defined as an absence from classes that is supported with necessary documentation (i.e. provider's note). Given the demands of the program, students that acquire multiple excused absences are encouraged to meet with their academic advisor to discuss their options and academic progress within the program.

If a student believes they cannot safely make it to class due to extenuating circumstances (i.e., extreme weather conditions) they should contact their instructor of record to discuss their absence.

Bereavement a student may miss three (3) days for the death of an immediate family member. Members of the immediate family shall be defined as father, mother, brother, sister, son, daughter, grandparents, husband, wife, domestic partner, or parent-in-law. Students will be asked to present the obituary of the deceased for documentation of the absence. (Please refer to individual course policies regarding absences).

***The above does not excuse the student from the content of the course. It is the responsibility of the student to obtain any content missed from their course instructors. For each absence (excused/unexcused) the student must complete the program absence form (See Appendix E)***

Behaving professionally also includes being on time for all lecture, laboratory, and assessment periods and clinical rotations. A student's tardy arrival is disruptive to the teaching of a class/laboratory session and distracting during testing sessions.

In addition, there will be multiple program orientations and workshops throughout didactic and clinical years that students must attend. These will be communicated to students within a timely manner.

## Student Hospitalization

The health and wellness of SRU PA students is of the utmost importance. Students who are hospitalized as a result of a physical or mental health condition and wish to return to campus and the program must complete the steps below through the **Office of Student Support** to ensure access to resources and options.

It is the responsibility of the student/designated guardian/health care facility or campus personnel aware of the situation to notify the Office of Student Support of hospitalization/pending release for a physical or mental health condition. The **University Office of Student Support** recommends that the hospitalized student/guardian/health care facility take the following steps:

**1. When hospitalized:**

Phone the **Director of Student Support at 724-738-2121** for notification of absence. This notification will be provided to faculty and university housing as applicable. This notification will be provided as a courtesy. It does not excuse the student from any of the work required in class, but only to make pertinent individuals aware of the situation. The student should discuss any missed assignments or exams with faculty upon return to campus.

**2. Prior to return to the University:**

To continue enrollment in good standing the student must submit evidence of release of information to allow the hospital, treatment facility, and/or assessing clinician to release information to the Student Support.

- a. Students must also be evaluated by a licensed clinician, and provide a typewritten letter printed on letterhead from the licensed clinician stating a description of the condition for which the student was treated, recommendations for a treatment plan-including medications and dosages, if applicable and the clinician's assessment of the student's ability to meet academic requirements.
- b. If the student resides in university housing, the documentation should include the student's capacity to observe the community standards of residential living. All materials can be submitted to Student Support; c/o Director, Student Support (contact information provided above).

**3. Upon return to the University:**

Once a student returns to campus it is the expectation that the student meet with the Director of Student Support or designee. The purpose of this meeting is to review any needs identified in the recommended treatment plan from the medical provider and to confirm access to support systems necessary for the health and well-being of the student. Some examples of things that may be discussed are missed coursework, safe housing, how to talk to friends/teammates about hospitalization, parental notification, support systems, and follow up care.

**4. To make an appointment to meet with the Director of Student Support the student should call the Director of Student Support at 724-738-2121 and ask to schedule a post hospitalization meeting with the Director of Student Support.**

\*\*\* The above steps are also available on the Student Support Website (<https://www.sru.edu/life-at-sru/health-and-wellness/student-support/hospitalization>).



### ***Prior to Return to the PA Program***

The student must meet with the PA program director prior to returning to classes within the PA program post hospitalization. This meeting must occur after meetings have occurred with the Office of Student Support. Students must bring a copy of their medical clearance to return to the program as including an attestation that they meet the technical standards of the PA program.

### **Additional Program Policies**

#### *Solicitation of Clinical Sites – ARC-PA Standard A3.03*

Students are NOT permitted to solicit/provide clinical sites or preceptors. Clinical sites and preceptors are identified by the Clinical Coordinator and the Program Faculty. If a student in the Program is interested in a specific clinical site, he/she may provide the name of the facility to the Clinical Coordinator (limit of 3 sites/rotations will be considered in this way). Students are not permitted to have a clinical rotation with a 1<sup>st</sup> degree family member. Failure to follow this policy will be considered a breach in professionalism and the student **will be placed on professional program probation**.

#### *Student Employment – ARC-PA Standards A3.04, A3.05, A3.06*

While it is the intention of the PA program to utilize graduate assistants (GAs), GAs cannot be current PA students. Current PA Students are not permitted to perform clerical or administrative work for the program. During clinical rotations, PA students will not be used to substitute for regular clinical and/or administrative staff. Current students may not substitute for or function as instructional faculty.

The Physician Assistant program schedule is variable and requires intensive academic preparation, it is recommended that students do not work or work only minimal hours while enrolled in the PA Program. If a student chooses to work while enrolled, the work schedule/load must not interfere with class performance, attendance, or clinical rotation schedules.

#### ***Health and Immunization Documentation – ARC-PA Standards A3.07, A3.19; Immunizations –A3.07***

A medical history, physical examination and completion of titers including Hepatitis C are **required prior to entering the program**. The PA Program provides necessary health forms to all students accepted into the Physician Assistant Studies Program. The forms include tests and immunizations, which are required by agencies to protect both the student and the patient. All immunizations and proof of same must be consistent with the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's standards](#).

The student must also submit a Health Record Release Form, indicating they permit the PA Program to release their immunization information to prospective clinical sites.

PA Program student health records are confidential and are maintained through Castle Branch. Access to these records is limited to the faculty member charged with ensuring that students have met the immunization and tuberculosis screening requirements for the didactic and clinical years which may be maintained and released with

written permission from the student. Student health records will not be released without written permission from the student.

In addition to standard immunizations, an initial two-step Mantoux TB skin test (or chest x-ray for converters) and completion of Hepatitis B immunizations per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines are required along with standard immunizations.

All students must obtain an annual one-step TB test updates (or chest x-ray every 2 years for converters) while enrolled in the program. Using a TB blood test as testing is also acceptable; this does not require two-step testing and is not affected by BCG vaccination. The process for baseline testing using a TB blood test is as follows: Students with a positive TB skin test must be evaluated by a healthcare provider annually. If a student tests positive for tuberculosis, as designated by the CDC, student must be treated for active TB per CDC recommendations

**\*The COVID-19 series is strongly recommended by the program. Clinical sites for clinical education experiences (didactic and clinical) may require that students are fully vaccinated to participate in educational opportunities at the site.**

All students who participate in clinical rotations must provide proof of compliance with current CDC guidelines as appropriate for any experience which includes but is not limited to additional immunizations or titers. All students must adhere to any specific hospital, institutional, practice guidelines prior to clerkship at the hospital, institution, or practice. All students who participate in clinical rotations must provide proof of compliance with current CDC guidelines as appropriate for any experience which could include additional immunizations or titers.

**Students will not be permitted to participate in clinical education experiences and rotations if health paperwork, immunizations (including updates and specific clinical site requirements), and proof of health insurance are not completed for clinical experiences. This will result in delayed graduation.**

Required Immunization are based on current CDC recommendations in consultation with the SRU Student Health Services (Appendix B).

### **Health Insurance**

Health insurance is required for all students. Proof of current health insurance must be submitted through Castle Branch **prior** to matriculation. Students are **not permitted** to begin the program until all health requirements have been submitted through Castle Branch.

Questions may be directed to [Student Health Services](#), McLachlan Student Health Center, Rhoads Hall, Slippery Rock University, Slippery Rock PA 16057 | Phone: 724-738-2052 | Fax: 724-738-2078.

### **Exposure to Infectious and Environmental Hazards –ARC-PA Standard A3.08**

#### *Exposure to Infectious and Environmental Hazards*

Before matriculation and clinical rotations, students must complete OSHA training via the education module in Castle Branch.

Accidents may occasionally occur in the laboratory or in the clinical setting. If a student is injured in a laboratory or classroom setting, the instructor of record for the course or rotation should be notified immediately. An incident report (Appendix C) should be submitted to the instructor as soon as possible, however, students should not delay

prompt evaluation and treatment to complete paperwork. The incident report will be forwarded by the instructor of record to the program director and university.

In the event a student is injured by a contaminated “sharp” or is exposed in any manner to blood or potentially infectious bodily fluids in the course of their assigned clinical work, the following steps should be followed for proper treatment and follow-up for the student.

1. Wash your hands with soap and water. Eyes and mucous membranes should be copiously flushed with water. Notify your clinical preceptor immediately.
2. Follow facility protocols regarding evaluation. Most facilities will require you to report immediately to employee health or the emergency department following exposure which may require further laboratory testing. It is required that the program director is notified that this protocol was followed. Failure to follow up properly may make it difficult or impossible to obtain source patient blood in facilities in cases in which this may be possible.
3. In sites without employee health or emergency departments, or if the site protocol is unclear, proceed immediately to the nearest emergency department for assessment. In cases in which prophylactic medical treatment is indicated, it is believed to be most effective when administered as quickly as possible.
4. The treating healthcare professional will request information about your medical history, the source patient’s history (if known) and the nature of the exposure. They may request permission to draw baseline laboratory studies. They will discuss your risk of contracting a blood borne disease and the risks and benefits of prophylactic treatment. In deciding whether to receive post-exposure prophylactic treatment, students might also wish to consult with the National Clinicians Post-Exposure Prophylaxis Hotline: 888-448-4911.
5. Students should follow up as directed by their treating healthcare provider. Ongoing follow-up may take place at the initial treating facility, or the student may be referred to a healthcare provider with expertise in infectious disease. The program may be able to assist the student in finding an infectious disease specialist as requested or required.
6. ***Since students are neither employees of Slippery Rock University nor the clinical sites, payment for assessment and treatment is the responsibility of the student and their insurance carrier.***

Students who are potentially exposed to blood borne pathogens should seek prompt evaluation. Evidence suggests that prophylactic medications are more likely to be effective when taken soon after and exposure. Students should also consider contacting **the National Clinicians’ Post-Exposure Prophylaxis Hotline: 888-448-4911.**

Exposure to blood borne pathogens is a risk assumed by all healthcare providers. Students will receive training to minimize their risk during orientation and in the classroom. Individual clinical sites may also provide orientation sessions regarding blood borne pathogens. Observing universal precautions is one method to reduce risk.

The principle of universal precautions recognizes that any patient may be infected with microorganisms that could be transmitted to other persons. Of particular concern are the primarily blood-borne pathogens HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) and HBV (hepatitis B virus). However, body fluids other than blood, secretions, and excretions are included in universal precautions. Since infected patients may be asymptomatic, it becomes necessary to use basic precautions with every patient. Observance of universal precautions will help to provide better protection for every staff member. Students should also familiarize themselves with the hospital/clinical sites’ specific policies regarding universal precautions.

### **Universal Precautions Guidelines:**

- Act as though all patients you have contact with have a potentially contagious blood borne disease.
- Avoid direct contact with blood, body fluids, secretions, excretions, mucous membranes, non-intact skin, and lesions.
- Avoid injuries from all “sharps”.
- Avoid direct contact with items, objects, and surfaces contaminated with blood, body fluids, secretions, and excretions.
- Dispose of all “sharps” promptly in special puncture resistant containers.
- Dispose of all contaminated articles and materials in a safe manner prescribed by law. In practice, using Universal Precautions also requires:
  - Washing hands frequently and thoroughly, especially if they become contaminated with blood, body fluids, secretions, and excretions.
  - Depending on job duties and risk of exposure, using appropriate barriers, including gloves, gowns, aprons, caps, shoe covers, leggings, masks, goggles, face shields, and equipment such as resuscitation devices to protect skin and mucous membranes, especially eyes, nose, and mouth.
- NOTE: These items of protective apparel, including gloves are removed after each use and are properly disposed. The same pair of gloves, etc., are NOT to be worn from one patient or activity to another.
  - Students will wear protective equipment as directed by their clinical preceptor or facility protocol.
  - All patient specimens are bagged per facility protocol before transport to the laboratory.

### ***Criminal Background Check and Screening***

Criminal background check and screening requirements including fingerprinting, child abuse clearance, and drug screening are required to matriculate into the program, participate at clinical sites, and progress through the program. Students are financially responsible for this process, and this will be repeated annually or more frequently as required by clinical sites. Adverse results at any time can prevent a student from matriculating into the program, progressing through the program, or placement at clinical sites. Results including felony and misdemeanor convictions can limit the ability for clinical training experience, national certification or licensure.

- Students who have been convicted of a felony or misdemeanor may be denied certification and/or licensure as a healthcare professional. Information regarding eligibility may be obtained from appropriate licensing and certification boards. Clinical rotation sites may not permit participation in the clinical experience with a conviction of a misdemeanor or felony. Additional program policies apply to students. A student must self-report to the program director within 3 business days of any charges or any legal action taken against them outside of traffic violations.

### **Program Assessment**

#### ***Assessment Process***

Students will participate in a comprehensive, robust programmatic assessment process. It is essential that students take ownership of assessment methods. This constitutes a professional development opportunity for students to positively impact future classes. The program self-assessment process provides an opportunity for students to professionally provide constructive feedback in preparation for their careers as physician assistants.

The leadership and faculty of the MSPAS program at SRU are dedicated to a process of continuous self-evaluation and analysis of all aspects of program operations. The Faculty Executive Committee, Curriculum Committee, Academic Progress, and Assessment Committee (described below) are committees involved in program assessment.

**Faculty Executive Committee:** this committee is comprised of all faculty and staff chaired by the program director. This committee oversees and votes on programmatic decisions, both assessment and operational.

**Curriculum Committee:** this committee is composed of PA faculty members that review data focused on curricular aspects of the program and makes recommendations for improvement to the Faculty Executive Committee.

**Assessment Committee:** this committee is composed of PA faculty members that analyze data generated from the programmatic self-assessment process and makes recommendations for improvement to the Faculty Executive Committee and/or Curriculum Committee.

**Academic Progress Committee:** this committee is composed of PA faculty members that review student progress to identify students who may benefit from assistance earlier in their academic career. The committee members will work with students individually and/or in small groups to develop and initiate plans for academic and professional improvement.

In addition to student evaluations, assessment of the program will also occur throughout both academic and clinical years, as per ARC-PA standards. If at any time, the program is determined not in compliance with its accrediting body standards, it will be documented and a plan will be devised, implemented and assessed; thereby, closing the feedback loop. Principal faculty and program director will actively participate in the evaluation of the MSPAS program. Evaluation of the program will be continuous and comprehensive and will be discussed at faculty meetings and at faculty retreats. The on-going assessment process will be initiated for the inaugural class and maintained throughout the program. At each faculty retreat, the ongoing development and maintenance of curricular standards will be benchmarked against program competencies, ARC-PA standards and NCCPA blueprint topics. Measurement of whether the program is meeting the learning outcomes and goals will be embedded into an annual review. Data collected annually will be analyzed for any weaknesses and will be triangulated with student evaluations of instruction, faculty self-assessment of teaching performance and program director evaluations of faculty as per CBA. Results from the MSPAS assessments will be tabulated and analyzed and the faculty will make the necessary adjustments to the curriculum, pedagogical methods, incorporating changes for the upcoming year as needed.

*Didactic Year Assessment*

- Course-embedded assessments as described in course syllabi including but not limited to practical examination, written examinations, oral examinations, and OSCE.
- Complete History and Physical Examination (Spring)
- Physician Assistant Clinical Knowledge Rating and Assessment Tool (PACKRAT I, Spring)

*Clinical Year Assessment*

- Course-embedded assessments as described in course syllabi.
- Physician Assistant Education Association (PAEA) End of Rotation™ Exam (EORE) scores for Core Rotations
- PACKRAT II (Fall)
- Summative Exam (Spring)
  - 300 question comprehensive exam

Objective Standardized Clinical Examination (OSCE)

- Assesses clinical and technical skills, clinical reasoning and problem-solving abilities, interpersonal skills, medical knowledge and professional behaviors.

***\*\*\*Additional assessments including summative examinations and milestone evaluations may be added at the discretion of the program faculty and program director.***

## ***Academic Standards and Curricular Requirements-***

ARC-PA Standard A3.15

### **Remediation**

The program curriculum is rigorous and requires a full commitment from both students and faculty. It is important to the program that all students be successful. As such, the program will regularly monitor student progress to identify students who could potentially be at academic risk.

The following will be implemented:

- Advisors and instructors are to notify the Program Director of students who exhibit signs of academic risk ASAP.
- Academic progress of students will be reviewed weekly at faculty meetings.
- Students are encouraged to speak to advisors, instructors or Program Director if feeling overwhelmed or concerned about their academic progress.
- A minimum of one regular advisor session will be scheduled during each semester. Student academic advisement forms will be used at advising sessions and maintained in student files.
- Students may be required to meet with their advisors more frequently as determined by the program.
- Early intervention/remediation/referrals will be implemented as needed.
  - In the situation that the advisor feels the student needs more in-depth remediation, they can make a referral to the academic progress team for evaluation of the remediation need and cause along with encouraging further in-depth remediation.
- A student with an exam or evaluation score below 82% will be required to remediate his/her exam. A remediation date ***must be*** scheduled with the instructor of record within one week of the grade notification. The student and instructor of record will determine the best course of action for the remediation that is done for that course. On the first failure to schedule a meeting within one week of the grade notification, the student will receive a written warning. On the second failure to schedule a meeting within one week of grade notification, the student will be placed on professional probation.
- If a student's performance is determined to be deficient during a competency, practicum, or clinical rotation, he/she will be required to remediate at the discretion of the course instructor, evaluator or preceptor, regardless of the points earned for the assignment. This remediation can include additional hours at the clinical rotation at the discretion of the program director, clinical coordinator and instructor of record. Remediation during the clinical year can result in delayed graduation.
- During the clinical year, if students fail a core EORE, he/she must remediate that EORE. Remediation consists of creating a study tool based on the "keywords" missed. The Keywords will be provided by PAEA following the exam. This will be due the second Monday of the following rotation to their faculty of record for the failed EORE. Students will be required as part of their remediation to take the other version of the EORE. This will be completed during the second week of the following rotation requiring the students to return to campus. If students do not pass the second exam, the student will fail the rotation and they will be required to repeat the rotation which requires registering for PA-

776. This will result in delayed graduation. A student will only be allowed to repeat one rotation. If the student fails to pass the second EORE exam on two rotations or fails the first attempt on three different EOREs, they **will be dismissed** from the program.

- If the student violates patient safety during a competency, practicum, or clinical rotation, he/she will be required to remediate as determined by the course instructor regardless of the points earned for the assignment.

### **Program Academic Requirements**

#### ***Course Grade Requirements***

All completed courses will be graded on a letter grade basis of A, B, C, D or F. Passing grades are considered a “C” or better. All courses must be passed to graduate. If a student earns a “D” or an “F” in a course, the student **will be dismissed** from the program.

#### ***Requirements to Progress from Didactic to Clinical***

- Cumulative GPA of at least 3.000 for Didactic year
- Students must also satisfactorily complete a comprehensive clinical assessment comprised of a comprehensive history and physical examination on a simulated patient
- Completion of PACKRAT examination
  - A student should be within one standard deviation of the national average (This is a formative assessment, which will not be used for grading purposes)
  - If a student does not achieve one standard deviation below the national average, they must complete a PACKRAT remediation plan as determined by their advisor and the Academic progress committee.
- *Satisfactory completion of an updated criminal background check and fingerprints.*
- *Satisfactory drug screen prior to the beginning of the clinical year as outlined in clinical orientation.*
- Satisfactory immunizations, clearances, and site documentation prior to the beginning of the clinical year as outlined in clinical orientation.
- Satisfactory physical exam prior to the beginning of the clinical year as outlined in clinical orientation.

All of these components must be satisfied in order for a didactic year PA student to progress to the clinical phase of the program. If these components are not satisfied prior to the clinical phase of the program, they will not be allowed to enter their first rotation. **This will lead to delayed graduation and deceleration.**

#### ***Graduation Requirements***

- Degree candidates must have a 3.000 or better cumulative GPA on a 4.000 scale for all graduate courses attempted at Slippery Rock University to graduate.
- Pass Summative exam and OSCE exam
  - Criteria for passing these exams will be determined by the Faculty Executive Committee
- Completion of formal application to graduate sent to the Office of Academic Records and Summer School by March 1 for spring graduation.

***A student who does not successfully pass the Summative Examination will be required to remediate the examination. This will delay student graduation.***

All requirements must be completed within a six-year period commencing with the first graduate course taken at SRU. Requests for extension will be considered by the Dean on a case-by-case basis only through special request with an absolute statute of limitations of ten years.



**It is the student's responsibility to complete all degree/certificate requirements and to know the program's and university's requirements for graduation.**

## **VIOLATION OF PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROGRAM POLICIES**

Students who fail to adhere to the Slippery Rock University Physician Assistant Program policy manual will face disciplinary consequences. The PA program Disciplinary Committee will convene and request a meeting with a student to review alleged violations. Sanction recommendations will be provided to the program director and communicated to the student.

### **PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROGRAM PROBATION**

#### **Academic Probation Didactic**

- A student who fails to maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.000 or better for one semester.

#### **Academic Probation Clinical**

- Any student who fails two end of rotation examinations (1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> attempts)
- A student who fails to maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.000 or better for one semester.

**Students may be subject to professional probation for the following reasons:**

#### **Professionalism Probation:**

- Not completing a remediation assignment by the agreed upon (or stated) date.
- A lapse in professionalism, which can include but is not limited to:
  - Solicitation of clinical site
  - Breach of chain of command
  - Dishonest and/or unethical behavior (including but not limited to lying or falsifying or omitting any required documents.
  - Uncooperative, hostile, disruptive, negative, disrespectful, or verbally abusive behavior manifested toward the program staff, patients, instructors, clinical preceptor(s), the PA Program, the University, medical staff, visitors, or fellow students (this includes disruptive behavior in the classroom)
  - Refusing to see patients or perform a task as requested by a preceptor, faculty member, or staff.
  - Insubordination to a preceptor or faculty member including refusal to accept constructive feedback or criticism.

- Failure to adhere to the defined dress code.
- Inappropriate, accusative, derogatory, argumentative, disrespectful, or privileged information included in any kind of written materials, electronic mail, conversations, or comments in any open setting at the University or clinical site.
- Use of profane, vulgar, abusive, obscene, or threatening language of any sort while participating in university activities.
- Any violation of requirements set forth in a PA course syllabus.
- Use of an electronic device that is disrespectful, distracting or not dedicated to the topic of instruction. This includes in appropriate use at clinical rotation sites.
- Lack of respect for the privacy or property of others
- Any other situation or condition not addressed in this list of behaviors will be considered independently according to the individual case.
- Failure to meet with their academic advisor at least one time during the semester.

A student will receive written notice of their probationary status from the Program Director. The letter will describe how the student has failed to meet expected standards, it will stipulate the expectations and conditions to remain in and/or graduate from the program. It will also include steps that should be taken to remediate a deficiency or improve performance.

Failure to comply with the conditions established for professional probation constitutes grounds for further disciplinary action, including deceleration and dismissal from the program.

### **PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROGRAM DECELERATION**

**Student(s) will be decelerated for the following reasons:**

- A student fails to maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.000 or better for two semesters.
- A student does not have a cumulative GPA of 3.000 at the end the Spring semester prior to the clinical year.
- A student does not have a cumulative GPA of 3.000 at the end of the Spring semester they are scheduled to graduate.
- A student fails all practical exams in one semester of Skills Lab (PA 603 and PA 607) and/or History and Physical Diagnosis Lab (PA 640, PA 642, PA 644)
- Not completing a second remediation assignment by the agreed upon (or stated) date.
- Not meeting probationary requirements as outlined in program communication
- Professionalism infractions that are considered independently to the individual case.

A student will receive written notice of their deceleration from the Program Director. A student may be reactivated within the program one year after deceleration notification. The student must inform the PA Program of their intent to return 90 days prior to the semester that they intend to return. The student will be required to submit a letter requesting reactivation and a letter of recommendation from a health care professional. The PA Executive Committee will review these letters, along with their most current transcript. The PA Executive Committee will make a recommendation to the Dean and the Dean will approve/not approve student reactivation. If the student will be reactivated, Graduate Admissions will be notified. When a student is reactivated, the student will be allowed back into the program on probationary status. The student will receive a written notice that will stipulate the expectations and conditions to remain in/or graduate from the program. It will also include steps that should be taken to remediate a deficiency or improve performance. Failure to comply with the conditions established constitutes grounds for dismissal from the program.

## PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROGRAM DISMISSAL

### Students will be dismissed for the following reasons:

- A student fails to maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.000 or better during the semester the student returned after deceleration.
- A student earns below a “C” in any course.
- A student fails to pass the second EORE exam on two rotations or fails the first attempt on three different End of Rotation Examinations.
- A student is determined to be cheating or in violation of the program, university or PAEA academic integrity policies.
  - Including but not limited to cheating, dissemination of restricted information, plagiarism, fabrication, forgery, and other forms of dishonest behavioral as determined by the faculty executive committee.
  - This includes all program assignments/ documents including but not limited to falsification of patient logs, falsification of timesheets, and/or other clinical documentations.
  - Falsification/plagiarism of any application material for the PA program prior to matriculation
- A student falsifies or forges medical records and/or documents.
- Exceeding the PA student scope of practice
- Impersonating a PA or other health care professional
- Violation of HIPAA standards in any form
- Abusive, harassing, argumentative, or threatening behavior that is directed toward any student, faculty, program staff, patients, instructors, clinical preceptor(s), the PA Program, the University, medical staff, or visitors.
- A student is convicted of or entered a guilty plea, nolo contendere, or no contest to:
  - A felony
  - Any misdemeanor relates to healthcare practice, violence, drug offenses, sex offenses, or fraud.
  - Any other misdemeanor or felony (not including traffic infractions)
  - *A Student must self-report to the program director within 3 business days of charges or legal action taken against them.*
- Failure of a student to self-report to the program director within 3 business days of charges or any legal action taken against them.

- Illegally obtaining, possessing, selling, or using controlled substances
- Using or being under the influence of drugs or alcohol while participating in any program activity or while present in any facility where program activities occur.
- Being dismissed from clinical site based upon inappropriate behavior or unprofessional conduct.
- Suspension or dismissal from Slippery Rock University.
- A student on professionalism probation who commits additional infraction(s).

A student will receive written notice of their dismissal from the Program Director. If the student is on campus, the Program Director will attempt to schedule a meeting in person to give the written notice to the student. If the student is not on campus an alternative meeting via zoom or another modality will be held. A student will be provided with a copy of the letter via email or Certified mail if requested.

### **PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROGRAM WITHDRAWAL**

Students withdrawing from the Physician Assistant program must meet with the PA Program Director for an exit interview. Students who withdraw from the program and wish to be readmitted will be required to reapply through CASPA and successfully complete all admission criteria for that CASPA cycle. Students who wish to withdraw from the University must complete an exit interview with a Student Success Coach, which can be scheduled by calling the Office for Inclusive Excellence at 724.738.2700. If receiving financial aid, a student may also be required to meet with financial aid.

Medical Withdrawals are reserved for students with medical circumstances making it difficult or impossible to complete coursework during the semester in which they are enrolled. Information for University medical withdrawals can be found. <https://www.sru.edu/life-at-sru/health-and-wellness/student-support>.

A student who has medically withdrawn from the University and wishes to return to the program will be required to meet all University readmission criteria. The student must first meet with the Office of Student Support to successfully complete University readmission criteria. In addition, the student must submit a letter to the PA Program requesting to return to the program along with an academic plan for their success within the program. This must be submitted 90 days prior to the start of the semester the student plans to return. The PA Executive Committee will review the student's information as requested. PA Executive Committee will make a recommendation to the Dean and the Dean will decide if the student will be reactivated. If the student will be reactivated, Graduate Admissions will be notified.

### **Student Referral: Academic, Health, & Other Services – ARC-PA Standard A3.10**

Academic support and advisement are available for current students, in addition to specific programs and resources offered for students with disabilities.

#### **Academic Records & Registration**

For information about transcripts, attendance verification, course registration, class and final exam schedules, or graduation, contact the Office of Academic Records and Registration. The Office of Academic Records & Registration serves to support of the university's mission by providing faculty, administrators, staff and students with the information and services required to excel and be successful in their roles within the university community.

For more information, visit the link below or contact the office at: 724-738-2010 [academic.records@sru.edu](mailto:academic.records@sru.edu)  
<http://www.sru.edu/academics/academic-services/academic-records>

#### **Academic Tutoring**

Academic tutoring is provided by the program faculty as a part of remediation. Additional tutoring is available through the program at the discretion of program faculty and the academic progress committee.

#### **Writing Center**

The SRU Writing Center is located in Bailey Library. Assistance with the following: papers, writing, tone, organization, thesis development, formatting, and citations.

For more information, contact the Writing Center at 724-738-2654.

#### **University Library**

Bailey Library is the intellectual, interdisciplinary center of the university. The strength of the library reflects Slippery Rock University's ongoing commitment to education and research, and Bailey Library is an active partner in the education mission of Slippery Rock University. ACCESS Medicine (electronic database) is available through Bailey Library for students and is staffed with discipline specific librarians to assist students with research needs.

There is a collection of program specific materials located in Room 103 of the Harrisville Building. For more information, visit the link below or contact the library at 724-738-2058 <http://www.sru.edu/academics/bailey-library>

#### **Financial Aid**

The SRU Financial Aid Office supports the mission and vision of the University and the Division of Academic & Student Affairs by helping to remove the financial barriers to higher education. The Financial Aid Office is committed to providing a high level of service and to offering a coordinated



delivery of comprehensive student aid programs that are supportive of the recruitment and retention of students.

The Office of Financial Aid provides information and resources related to the following: applying for financial aid (and forms), types of aid available, estimated costs, satisfactory academic progress, return of Title IV funds, military education benefits, external financial aid resources, and more.

For more information, visit the link below or contact the office at: 724-738-2044 or [financial.aid@sru.edu](mailto:financial.aid@sru.edu)

<http://www.sru.edu/admissions/financial-aid>

### ***Services for Students with Disabilities***

Services for Students with Disabilities are available to any enrolled Slippery Rock University student having a documented disability. SRU is committed to accommodating students with disabilities and helping them to achieve academic success. The Office of Disability Services provides students with reasonable accommodations and services to ensure equal access to education as intended by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008. Services include assistance with, but not limited to, the following disabilities: learning, physical, hearing, vision or psychological.

Students requiring an accommodation must submit an Accommodation Request Form and adhere to all policies and procedures of the Office of Disability Services.

For more information or to request accommodation visit the links below or contact the office at: 724-738-4877 or [natalie.burick@sru.edu](mailto:natalie.burick@sru.edu)

<http://www.sru.edu/academics/academic-services/services-for-students-with-disabilities>

Accommodation Request Form

[https://sru-accommodate.symplicity.com/public\\_accommodation/](https://sru-accommodate.symplicity.com/public_accommodation/)

### ***Student Health Services***

The mission of Student Health Services is to enhance the educational process by providing quality health care and promoting an optimal level of health and wellness among the student body.

To fulfill our mission the Student Health Services staff will: provide quality health care; adhere to ethical, professional and legal standards; offer health promotion activities to advance student growth and development; refer students for services not available on campus; and monitor for and respond to public health concerns.

For more information, visit the link below or contact Student Health Services at: 724-738-2052

<http://www.sru.edu/offices/student-health-services>

### ***Student Counseling Center***

In line with the Slippery Rock University diversity statement, the SRU Student Counseling Center aims to provide counseling services inclusively to a diverse range of students. Diversity is defined broadly to include all students that may require counseling services. Faculty and trainees are committed to all students including those from underrepresented groups and seek professional development that enhances their training to work with all student populations.

The Counseling Center staff consists of a diverse group of counseling faculty with varied professional counseling and psychology related backgrounds. The mission of the Counseling Center at Slippery Rock University supports and promotes the psychological, academic and holistic health of Slippery Rock University students.

For more information, visit the link below or contact the Counseling Center at: 724-738-2034

<http://www.sru.edu/life-at-sru/health-and-wellness/counseling-center>

### ***Career Education & Development***

Life is about learning and change, education and development. The SRU Office of Career Education and Development supports students and alumni in their learning and career development through appointments, career management tools, speaking events, networking venues, on-campus employer interviews, and both on and off campus career expos and job fairs.

For more information, visit the link below or contact the Office of Career Education & Development: 724-738-2028

or [career.education@sru.edu](mailto:career.education@sru.edu)

<http://www.sru.edu/life-at-sru/career-education-and-development>

### **Student Complaints & Harassment – A3.11, A3.15**

The Slippery Rock PA program provides opportunities for students to voice their concerns while in the program. Students should first attempt to informally resolve issues with their advisor and/or instructor of record. Students may submit an informal complaint to the program director. In addition, Slippery Rock University provides policies and procedures for student complaints addressed below.

#### **Student Mistreatment**

The program does not condone student mistreatment in the didactic or clinical phases of the program. Student mistreatment is defined as a student being treated unfairly compared to other students. The PA program student mistreatment policy is separate from the university policies for harassment, sexual harassment, academic appeals and student grievance. If students believe they are being treated unfairly, the student should first contact the program director. If the situation remains unresolved, the next step is to contact the dean of the college of health professions.

Students who wish to appeal a grade may do so through the university policies and procedures. The final grade appeal policies and procedures can be found here [Final Grade Appeal Policies and Procedures](#).

Students who wish to appeal a program decision may appeal through a written letter describing the basis for the legitimate disagreement associated with the program decision. Legitimate disagreements regarding program decisions may include but are not limited to significant and unwarranted deviation from program policies and procedures outlined in the PA program policy manual, decisions made that are arbitrary and capricious based on whim, impulse, or caprice, and through no fault of their own a student was not provided with the same opportunity within the program as other students. This appeal letter is to be sent to the Dean of the College.

#### **Grade Appeal**

The purpose of the following procedure is to provide students with a system by which to grieve complaints of alleged academic injustice(s) relating to a final grade and/or professional responsibilities.

Students who believe that their final course grade reflects unsubstantiated academic evaluation may initiate and pursue a grade change appeal in accordance with the provisions of this document. At the same time, all academic rights and privileges of faculty members are to be honored in this process, which includes careful review of the course syllabus. Changes in final course grades will occur only when, as a result of this grade appeal process, there is clear evidence of unsubstantiated academic evaluation. Because the grade process involves the instructor's judgment of the academic performance of a student the only issue under consideration in the grade appeal process is whether the student can present clear evidence that the assignment of the grade was based on factors other than the academic judgment of the instructor.

Additional information and the complete explanation of the procedure and process are available at the following link: <https://catalog.sru.edu/academic-policies/grade-appeal-policy/>

#### **Student Complaints**

SRU participates in Federal student aid programs that are authorized under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965. Participating institutions must be legally authorized to operate within the state in which they are located. Title 34 CFR §600.9 requires states to have a "process to review and appropriately act on complaints concerning

the institution including enforcing applicable State laws.” Title 34 CFR§668.43(b) requires that institutions: “make available for review to any enrolled or prospective student upon request, a copy of the documents describing the institution’s accreditation and its State, [Federal, or tribal approval or licensing](#). The institution must also provide its students or prospective students with contact information for filing complaints with its accreditor and with its state approval or licensing entity and any other relevant State official or agency that would appropriately handle a student’s complaint.”

To comply with this regulation, SRU provides the following information to our prospective students, current students, and the community. SRU makes every effort to handle student complaints internally using policies and procedures outlined on the SRU website consumer information page – <https://www.sru.edu/students/student-consumer-information>.

**Please see the graduate catalog for Academic Complaints**

<https://catalog.sru.edu/graduate/academic-policies/academic-complaints/>

**Allegation of Harassment**

Slippery Rock University’s discrimination and harassment policy seeks to provide an environment that is free from discrimination, including the form of discrimination recognized as harassment based upon race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, religion, age, disability, age/or veteran status in accordance with applicable federal and state laws and regulations.

It is the policy of Slippery Rock University that discrimination is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. The university will take action to prevent discrimination and harassment, including, if necessary and as appropriate, disciplining any individual whose behavior violates this policy

For the complete policy and procedure visit the links below or contact the Office for Diversity and Equal Opportunity: 724-738-2016.

**Notice of Non-Discrimination:**

<https://www.sru.edu/offices/human-resources-and-compliance/notice-of-nondiscrimination>

**Appendices**

**Appendix A- Receipt and Acknowledgement Form**

**PA PROGRAM STUDENT POLICY MANUAL RECEIPT AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I acknowledge that I have received and read the 2024-2025 Slippery Rock PA Program Policy Manual. I have had an opportunity to have any questions answered regarding its content.

I have been made aware that I am bound by policies and procedures contained in the SRU PA Program Policy Manual, Slippery Rock University Code of Conduct, and University Catalogue. The MSPAS program reserves the right to update the PA Program Policy Manual without prior notice. The most recent PA Program Policy Manual will supersede all previously distributed versions. My continuation in the MSPAS program will be contingent upon submission of a signed and dated 'Receipt and Acknowledgement' form for the most recent update of the PA Program Policy Manual.

I agree to abide by the policies and procedures contained therein.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix B- Required Immunizations

### 1. MMR / MEASLES, MUMPS, RUBELLA VACCINE –

This combination vaccine is given because it protects from Measles, Mumps and Rubella. Two doses are required for entry into the SRU PA Program. One must have been received at 12 months of age or later and in 1971 or later. The second dose must have been received at least 30 days after the first dose and in 1990 or later. Provide lab evidence of immunity by doing a blood test to check for antibodies for Rubella. Submit lab evidence of immunity and complete Immunization Form.

NOTE: All titers must include a lab report.

**REQUIRED: EVERYONE born after Dec. 31, 1956.**

### 2. HEPATITIS B VACCINE –

Provide lab evidence of immunity by doing a blood test to check for antibodies for hepatitis B. Submit lab evidence of immunity and complete Immunization Form.

NOTE: All titers must include a lab report.

**REQUIRED: All Enrolled PA Program Students**

### 3. MCV4 (MENACTRA/MENVEO) / MENINGOCOCCAL MENINGITIS VACCINE –All Enrolled PA Program Students are encouraged to receive this vaccination but not required. The CDC recommends that those who are routinely exposed to isolates of *N. meningitides* should get one dose. (**STRONGLY ENCOURAGED: All Enrolled PA Program Students**)

### 4. TUBERCULOSIS SCREENING –

Students must have a two-step test PPD. The second part of the PPD is administered within 1-3 weeks of initial testing. Using a TB blood test for initial or baseline testing does not require two-step testing and is not affected by BCG vaccination. The process for baseline testing using a TB blood test is as follows: NOTE: If both PPD and MMR are given, they must be given on the same day for the PPD to be accurate or given 30 days apart. PPDs must be read between 48-72 hours of administration. The result must be listed in “mm” and indicated whether negative or positive in the space indicated. If the PPD is positive, submit a copy of the chest X-ray report done on or after PPD placement. If you do the blood test— Interferon-based Assay (QFT or Tspot)—submit a copy of the laboratory report. If the PPD is positive or the Interferon-based Assay is positive, submit a copy of the chest X-ray report.

**REQUIRED: All Enrolled PA Program Students**

### 5. TDAP (Tetanus/Diphtheria/Pertussis) –

A one-time dose of Tdap is required, if you have not received Tdap previously (regardless of when previous dose of Td was received). Td boosters are required every 10 years thereafter. Pregnant students need to get a dose of Tdap during each pregnancy.

**REQUIRED: All Enrolled PA Program Students**

### 6. VARICELLA (Chickenpox) –

Provide proof of two doses of varicella vaccine OR provide results of a blood test on a lab form verifying immunity to Chickenpox/Varicella. Submit lab evidence of immunity and complete Immunization Form. NOTE: All titers must include a lab report.

**REQUIRED: All Enrolled PA Program Students**

7. INFLUENZA –

This is required annually for all student enrolled in the PA Program.

**REQUIRED: All Enrolled PA Program Students**

8. COVID-19 Vaccine-

The COVID-19 series is strongly recommended by the program. Clinical sites for clinical education experiences (didactic and clinical) may require that students are fully vaccinated to participate in educational opportunities at the site.

**Students will not be permitted to participate in clinical education experiences and rotations if health paperwork, immunizations (including updates and specific clinical site requirements), and proof of health insurance are not completed for clinical experiences. This will result in delayed graduation.**

# SLIPPERY ROCK UNIVERSITY

## Incident Documentation Form

---

Date of Incident \_\_\_\_\_ Time of Incident \_\_\_\_\_

Individual Filling Out the Report \_\_\_\_\_

Title (if employee) \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Incident \_\_\_\_\_

Name/Contact Information of Witnesses:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Brief description of Incident:

Was an injury sustained?                      Yes                       No   
(If yes, please fill out University Accident/Injury Report Form)

Name of Supervisor (if employee) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Person Submitting Report \_\_\_\_\_

Return to:  
Office of Environmental Health and Safety  
Slippery Rock University  
100 Buildings & Grounds Rd.  
Slippery Rock, PA 16057

For Questions, Contact:  
Paul M. Novak, Executive Director  
Maintenance Building Room 200  
724-738-2055

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



**Appendix D- Emergency Contact Form**

Emergency Contact Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Birth Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Primary Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Alternative Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

In case of an emergency contact:

	Name	Relationship	Phone #
1.			
2.			
3.			

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

*It is the responsibility of the student to notify the PA program if there any changes to the above emergency contact information.*

Slippery Rock PA Program

Documentation of Student Absence

Name of Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Year: Didactic  Clinical

Date of Absence: \_\_\_\_\_

Reason for Absence: \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\* In order for absence to be considered excused, supporting documentation must be attached\*\*\*

Academic Requirements Missed:

Class	Missed Work	Course Instructor Signature	Excused (Y/N)

I understand that unexcused absences may result in the inability to make up any missed work, thus earning grades of "0" on any and all missed assignments/assessment, due to an absence being unexcused

I understand that I may be allowed to make up and missed assignments/assessments if the absence is considered excused, and that the make-up dates will be worked out with the individual Course Instructor.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Requesting Absence

\_\_\_\_\_  
Academic Advisor