



**UNIVERSITY OF
NEW ENGLAND**

INNOVATION FOR A HEALTHIER PLANET

**PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROGRAM
STUDENT HANDBOOK**

Class of 2027

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WELCOME TO THE UNE PA PROGRAM

Dear UNE Physician Assistant Student,

Welcome to the Master of Science Physician Assistant Program at the University of New England! The faculty and staff are proud to work with you through the journey that will lead you to an exciting and rewarding career as a physician assistant. You have entrusted the faculty and staff with your medical education, and we look forward to developing strong relationships by assisting you through this growth experience. The next few years will be filled with personal, academic, and professional growth that will lead you to an exciting career as a physician assistant. We invite you to work hard, study diligently, and strive for excellence in all that you do.

We are excited about embarking on this journey with you to become a competent and compassionate PA. Since its inauguration in 1996, we are proud to be the only accredited PA program in Maine. Currently, the PA program accepts 50 students into a class. The 24-month curriculum consists of a didactic and a clinical phase. The didactic portion lasts 12 months and the clinical portion lasts 12 months.

To meet our program mission, the Program's experienced faculty and staff are committed to student support and success. Teaching and learning may take place in online, hybrid, or face to face platforms. Pedagogical methodologies employed to facilitate learning include simulations, standardized patient encounters, case-based learning, interprofessional education, and lectures from subject matter experts. The ability to navigate through a changing healthcare landscape not only requires knowledge, but also leadership abilities.

This Student Handbook has been developed to provide you with the essential information about the academic policies and procedures adopted by the PA Program and the University. It serves to clarify the administrative and logistical aspects of both the didactic and clinical phases of the program. Students are highly encouraged to read the handbook carefully in its entirety, as well as refer back to it during your training as questions arise. An additional Clinical Handbook for your second-year clinical phase will be provided during your clinical orientation.

Each student is required to sign the accompanying attestation form acknowledging the receipt and review of the Handbook. **Signature Form:** <https://forms.office.com/r/d4WYMvGHbf> to be uploaded to Exxat.

Your signature further denotes your receipt and understanding of the handbook, and the content of the other supportive handbooks and policies referenced in the document. If you have any questions, please seek clarification from the program faculty. On behalf of the faculty and staff, thank you for choosing the UNE PA program to provide your medical education. Please contact me if you have any additional questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Robert Hawkes, MSPA, PA-C
Program Director / Associate Clinical Professor
Physician Assistant Program

SECTION I: GENERAL PROGRAM INFORMATION

Introduction

The University of New England (UNE) Physician Assistant (PA) Program Student Handbook outlines specific policies and procedures pertaining to the PA Program. The Student Handbook is designed to supplement existing University policies and procedures with additional policies and procedures specific to the PA Program.

Students are responsible for the information in this Student Handbook, the UNE Student Handbook, and the Westbrook College of Health Professions (WCHP) Graduate Program Progression Policies. Before the clinical phase of the program, students will be responsible for information in the PA Clinical Year Handbook. The PA Program Student Handbook is to be **used in conjunction** with the policies and procedures outlined in the following handbooks and documents, and it is required that students will:

- Read, understand, and adhere with the policies and procedures outlined in the **PA Program Student Handbook** for your specific cohort.
- Read, understand, and agree to comply with the policies and procedures outlined in the **UNE Student Handbook** (access: <https://www.une.edu/student-affairs/student-conduct/student-handbook>), including the University Conduct Code, which governs the conduct of all UNE students and applies to all on-campus and UNE-sponsored off-campus activities, including clinical observations, clinical rotations, and community service.
- Read, understand, and comply with the policies and procedures outlined in the **Westbrook College of Health Professions Graduate/Professional Program Progression Policies**. <https://www.une.edu/sites/default/files/2025-04/Westbrook%20College%20of%20Health%20Professions%202025-2026%20Program%20Progression%20Policies.pdf>
- Read and comply with the **Code of Ethics for the PA Profession**. <https://www.aapa.org/download/56983/> for the delivery of safe, competent care and related services, all of which underscore all aspects of professional practice. Students are expected to demonstrate behaviors that uphold those standards.

Program policies apply to all PA students, staff, principal faculty, medical director, and the program director regardless of where instruction occurs.

The policies contained in this handbook may be amended or appended during your enrollment in the PA program. Revisions to this handbook will apply to all students, staff, faculty, medical director, and the program director. The PA program will provide written updates to any changes to program policy. As changes occur in policies, students will be notified via their UNE e-mail.

Upon meeting all program and graduation requirements of the 24-month curriculum, the student is awarded the Master of Science Physician Assistant degree. The graduate is then eligible to sit for the Physician Assistant National Certifying Exam (PANCE) administered by the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA).

Program Length

The program length is 24 months and 6 semesters. The first 12 months are the didactic or classroom portion of the program. The final 12 months are the clinical phase of the program where students receive instruction with licensed preceptors with out-patient and inpatient facilities. All students must complete the program within 36 months including students who have taken a program approve leave.

Program Mission

Mission Statement:

The mission of the University of New England Physician Assistant Program is to prepare PAs who will provide compassionate, evidence-based, person-centered health care through interprofessional teams to people of all communities.

Physician Assistant Program Competencies

The mission of the program is accomplished by having graduates who meet the goals of the educational process. Graduates of the PA Program will show competency in the following areas:

1. Knowledge for Practice

PA students must demonstrate core knowledge about established and evolving biomedical and clinical sciences and the application of this knowledge to patient care. In addition, PA students are expected to demonstrate an investigative and analytical thinking approach to clinical situations.

- a. Apply principles of clinical sciences to diagnose disease while utilizing therapeutic decision-making, clinical problem solving, and other evidence-based practice skills
- b. Recognize among acute, chronic, and emergent disease states.
- c. Effectively utilize technology resources to improve quality and cost-effectiveness in health care.

2. Interpersonal and Communication Skills

PA students must demonstrate verbal, nonverbal and written communication skills that result in effective information exchange with patients, patients' families and health professionals.

- a. Communicate effectively with patients, their families, and health professionals to elicit and provide information.
- b. Accurately and adequately document medical information for clinical, legal, quality, and financial purposes.
- c. Conduct difficult conversations with sensitivity, compassion, and empathy.
- d. Deliver therapeutic communication and care in a culturally competent manner

3. Person-Centered Care

Person-centered care includes patient-specific and setting-specific assessment, evaluation and management. PA students must demonstrate care that is effective, safe, high-quality and equitable.

- a. Effectively obtain accurate and essential patient information through history-taking, physical examination, and diagnostic testing.
- b. Integrate knowledge of physiologic changes across the lifespan to provide person-centered evaluation and management
- c. Professionally counsel, educate, and empower patients and their families to participate in their care and enable shared decision-making.

4. Interprofessional Collaboration

Demonstrate the ability to engage with a variety of other healthcare professionals in a manner that optimizes safe, effective, person- and population-centered care.

- a. Communicate effectively with other health professionals to provide collaborative, person-centered care.
- b. Recognize the need to refer patients to other disciplines to ensure optimal care.

5. Professionalism and Ethics

PA students must demonstrate a high level of responsibility, ethical practice, sensitivity to a diverse patient population and adherence to legal and regulatory requirements.

- a. Demonstrate compassion, integrity, and empathy for others.
- b. Demonstrate understanding and responsiveness to all patient populations.
- c. Show commitment to ethical principles pertaining to collaborative, person-center care.
- d. Uphold ethical principles and compliance in business practices with relevant laws, policies, and regulations.

6. Practice-Based Learning and Quality Improvement

PA students must engage in critical appraisal of their own performance and analyze evidence-based resources for practice improvement and lifelong learning.

- a. Exhibit self-awareness to identify strengths, address deficiencies, and recognize limits in knowledge and expertise.
- b. Identify improvement goals and perform learning activities that address gaps in knowledge, skills, and attitudes.
- c. Demonstrate knowledge of the business of the healthcare in delivery of cost-effective patient management

7. Society and Population Health

PA students must integrate knowledge of societal determinants of health to promote well-being of the individual and the community.

- a. Recognize the influence of socioeconomic, environmental, and other determinates on the health of the individual and community.

Physician Assistant Program Technical Standards

Students in the PA program must have abilities and skills in five categories: observation, communication, motor, intellectual, and behavioral/social. All students admitted to the program must meet all of the technical standards upon matriculation and maintain these standards while enrolled in the program. In the event a student is unable to fulfill these technical standards, with or without reasonable accommodation, the student will be subject to dismissal. The student must request accommodations through the Student Access Center.

Candidates for and students of the program must have somatic sensation and the functional use of the senses of vision and hearing. Candidates' and students' diagnostic skills will also be lessened without the functional use of the senses of equilibrium, smell, and taste. Additionally, they must have sufficient external sense (touch, pain, and temperature), sufficient proprioceptive sense (position, pressure, movement, stereognosis, and vibratory) and sufficient motor function to permit them to carry out the activities described in the section above. They must be able to consistently, quickly, and accurately integrate all information received by whatever sense(s) employed, and they must have the intellectual ability to learn, integrate, analyze, and synthesize data.

Please refer to [Appendix A](#) for the list of technical standards.

Competencies for the Physician Assistant Profession

Competencies for the PA profession, as adopted by the four national PA organizations, defines the specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes as well as the required educational experiences needed in order for PAs to acquire and demonstrate these competencies. While these competencies are ultimately for

clinically practicing PAs, the program will work toward fostering the development and acquisition of these competencies throughout the program.

Please refer to the following link or [Appendix B](#) for the list of Competencies for the PA Profession.
<https://www.aapa.org/download/90503>

Professional Organizations

Students are required to join the following PA professional organizations:

- The American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA) <https://www.aapa.org/>
- The Student Academy of the American Academy of Physician Assistants (SAAAPA): the student chapter of AAPA. Students are informed of important SAAAPA issues effecting PA education and practice. <https://www.aapa.org/about/aapa-governance-leadership/student-academy/>
- The Maine Association of Physician Assistants (MEAPA): the state chapter for AAPA. <https://www.maineapa.com/>, <https://www.facebook.com/meapa4me/>

Students may also wish to join one of the AAPA constituent specialty organizations. These are not required. <https://www.aapa.org/advocacy-central/constituent-organizations/>

Faculty and Staff Contact Information

<u>Name</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Phone#</u>	<u>Email</u>
Robert Hawkes	Program Director	207-221-4350	rhawkes@une.edu
John Griffin, MD	Medical Director	207-221-4529	jgriffin8@une.edu
Chris Bates-Withers	Assistant Program Director Assistant Clinical Professor	207-221-4633	cbateswithers@une.edu
Diane Visich	Associate Director of Assessment Clinical Professor	207-221-4266	dvisich@une.edu
MacKenzie Towns	Assistant Clinical Professor	207-221-4552	mbohlen@une.edu
Meredith Wall	Academic Coordinator Associate Clinical Professor	207-221-4527	mwall1@une.edu
Elizabeth Held	Assistant Clinical Professor	207-221-4440	eheld@une.edu
Thomas White	Clinical Professor	207-221-4524	twhite4@une.edu
Elizabeth Cavallaro	Clinical Placement Coordinator	207-221-4528	escottcavallaro@une.edu
Amy LaBelle	Program Coordinator	207-221-4529	agrindell@une.edu
Thea Nelson	Program Assistant	207-221-4526	tnelson13@une.edu
Joseph Wolfberg	Medicine Bag	207-221-4465	jwolfberg@une.edu

Clinical Team Email: unepa_clinical@une.edu

The PA program offices are located on the 2nd Floor of the Pharmacy Building on the Portland Campus. Administrative hours are 8:00am to 4:30pm. Each staff member has remote day, but are available by email Monday-Friday.

SECTION II: PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Health Insurance

All full-time students are required to have and maintain health insurance throughout their entire time in the PA program. Information regarding student health insurance is available at:

<https://www.une.edu/student-health-insurance>. Students purchasing non-University health insurance coverage should ascertain what is and what is not covered by their policy and should be certain that it includes coverage for bloodborne pathogen exposure, since this is the most commonly encountered injury during clinical training.

Physical Examination

All matriculating students in any health professions program at UNE are required to undergo a physical exam prior to the start of classes. All students must have these completed with results submitted to the University Health Center portal (<https://une.medicatconnect.com/>). Links to forms and the Student Health Portal are found here: <https://www.une.edu/studentlife/shc>

Student health records are considered confidential and are not accessible to or reviewed by the program including all faculty and staff. Immunization and screening results are maintained for program review and verification. Results of immunization and screening may be released to clinical affiliates for student credentialing with written permission from the student.

Immunization Requirements

All students in health profession programs at UNE are required to have specific immunizations which are outlined below. PA students must meet the immunization requirements for healthcare professionals set forth by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and state specific mandates. Students in the PA program may be granted **only** medical exemptions for vaccinations.

Students are required to provide proof of all required immunizations, tuberculosis (TB) tests (see below section on Student Health Records Management for more information), and titer testing prior to matriculation. All students must have these completed with results submitted to Exxat and the University Health Center portal (<https://une.medicatconnect.com/>). Varicella and Hepatitis B repeat series may be in process. Students are also responsible for providing the PA program with a signed health information access waiver and a copy of their immunizations posted to *Exxat*. Students must also keep all required immunizations current. If there is any lapse in immunization status, the student may not be allowed to attend classes or clinical rotations, resulting in delayed graduation.

Required Immunizations and Documentation:

- Measles-Mumps-Rubella (MMR) – both dose 1 and 2.
- Hepatitis B (HepB) – doses 1, 2, and 3.
- Varicella – doses 1 and 2 OR provide date of disease.
- Tetanus-Diphtheria-Pertussis – must have TDaP form within last 8 years and be current until the date of graduation.
- Influenza – must be current and renewed annually each fall by October 1st.

Required Titers and Documentation (quantitative proof of immunity):

- Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR) – MMR IgG antibody titers, **only** needed if no documentation of vaccination exists.

- Varicella – Varicella IgG antibody titers **only** needed if no documentation of vaccine or prior infection exists. Positive titer indicates immunity to varicella. If titer is negative, the student is considered a non-responder and will need two doses of varicella vaccine separated by a least 4 weeks. A second titer is not needed according to the CDC due to the second series being sufficient for acquiring immunity.
- Hepatitis B (HepB) – **all students** must have titers performed, even if fully vaccinated.
 - Positive titer indicates immunity to HepB. If titer is negative, the student is considered a non-responder and will need a repeat series (three doses) of HepB vaccine.
 - If titer is still negative after 2 series of the HepB vaccine (considered a non-responder), the student must then be tested for HBsAg (HepB surface antigen) to determine if already infected with HepB and for anti-Hbc (Hepatitis C antibodies) to test for possible Hepatitis C co-infection. Those who are not infected with HepB or HepC should be counseled by a healthcare provider on the risks of acquiring the disease and prevention strategies as they are considered susceptible to infection. Those who are infected should be evaluated by a healthcare provider and counseled on ways to prevent infecting others and options for treatment. Students must provide this counseling documentation to the program. Students should also refer to UNE’s Bloodborne pathogen protocol.
 - No specific work or clinical rotation restrictions are recommended for non-responders, though students should inform themselves of ways to prevent infection from the CDC and other sources such as: http://www.immunize.org/askexperts/experts_hepb.asp#hcw
- Tuberculosis (TB) – **all students** must obtain either a two-step Tuberculin Skin Test (TST) or blood test for TB such as a Quantiferon Gold or TB SPOT.
 - Two-step TST is defined as a TST on two separate occasions separated by at least two weeks, and completed within one year. This test is essentially a 4 step PPD with 2 placements and 2 readings. Annual TST is required thereafter. Proof of administration and results must be documented by an appropriate healthcare provider within the year in which the student begins matriculation at UNE as well as between January 1st and May 1st in the year that clinical rotations begin.
 - If the TST or blood test for TB is considered positive, a chest x-ray must be performed yearly to assess for latent TB. If the chest x-ray is negative, the student is considered negative for TB. If the chest x-ray is positive for latent TB, the student should be evaluated by a healthcare provider and counseled on way to prevent infecting others and options for treatment. A yearly questionnaire will be given to positive students regarding TB symptoms by the Student Health Center.

Information regarding required immunizations is available at: <http://www.une.edu/student-health-center>

Note: For Mediat, students only need to upload: Meningococcal Vaccine, MMR 2 dose series (2 vaccines or a titer), Tdap, Physical Examination. However, students must upload all immunization documents and technical standard forms (including PE) to Exxat.

Program Faculty as Health Care Providers

Principal faculty, program director, and medical director shall not participate as health care providers for students matriculated in the PA program. Exceptions may be made in an emergency situation.

Drug Screenings

Students are required to complete drug screening for illicit substances prior to clinical rotations and occasionally at times during clinical rotations as needed. Additional drug screens and testing may be required by certain clinical sites (e.g. proof of protective immunization through additional testing, two-

step PPD, chest x-ray, drug screens, etc.). Students should note that clinical rotations sites require this information before the start of the rotation and that many sites will not allow the student to start the rotation until such information is provided. Sites may also have additional requirements that must be completed prior to starting the rotation. Students are responsible for all costs associated with background checks, immunizations, and drug screenings.

While recreational and medical marijuana are considered legal in the state of Maine, marijuana use is prohibited by any institution that receives federal funding including UNE. Clinical affiliates and medical sites may have more stringent requirements than the local/state laws and students rotating at those sites should assume that any drug use, including medical and/or recreational marijuana, is prohibited.

Background Checks

Students in the program are subject to background checks in order to meet requirements for off campus experiences and clinical rotations. Students in the program are subject to criminal background checks in order to meet requirements for the Interdisciplinary Geriatric Education Program (IGEP) in the didactic phase and again during the clinical year. Any discrepancy between a criminal background reported on a CASPA application and discovered through a criminal background check is grounds for dismissal. Students are responsible for all of the costs associated with the initial and any subsequent background checks. It is the responsibility of the student to contact licensing boards to ensure that any adverse findings on a background check will not be a barrier to certification or licensure.

Financial Responsibility

Students are responsible for all financial costs associated with compliance of University, Westbrook College of Health Professions (WCHP), PA Program and clinical affiliate policies and procedures. Including, but not limited to, the following: background checks, health screenings, maintaining health insurance, immunizations, and drug screenings.

Student Health Records Management: EXXAT

The PA Program, clinical site affiliates, and licensing boards have requirements relative to criminal backgrounds, immunizations, certifications, and drug screenings. The PA Program utilizes Exxat's platform to track this information, along with the UNE Student Health Center. It is your professional responsibility as a matriculating PA student to use this platform and keep all information current and up-to-date with both Exxat and the UNE Student Health Center (Medicat) while enrolled in the program.

Each student is responsible for-uploading proof of the following to Exxat and Medicat:

- Date of pre-matriculation physical examination.
- Immunizations (see <http://www.une.edu/student-health-center>).
- TB testing (**Note:** The PA Program, rotation sites, and Exxat require a 2-step PPD or Quantiferon Gold annually which differs from (and replaces) the UNE requirement.).
- Current American Heart Association BLS certification.
- Background checks: completed.

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Training Requirements

Students must maintain their Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) training each year through the University HIPAA Compliance Office. Students must complete HIPAA certification and renew annually. The training link will be sent via email. The Full HIPAA Policy and Manual may be found at: <http://www.une.edu/research/compliance/hipaa-and-une>.

Student Exposure Risk Training Requirements

Safety of students, patients, and other healthcare providers is critical to their health and wellbeing. PA students can reasonably anticipate that they will come in contact with blood and/or other potentially infectious materials. Therefore, all students must complete the UNE OSHE/Student Exposure Risk training prior to any educational activities which would place them at risk. Students must also complete annual UNE OSHA training recertification. Students must be compliant with OSHA and universal precaution requirements including the use of gloves, care of sharp objects, use of eyewear, protective clothing, and other precautionary measures. The UNE OSHA training link will be provided to students.

FIT testing will be completed during the program. Prior FIT testing at other institutions will not be accepted as a replacement or advanced placement for this requirement. Facial hair must be shaved so that it does not interfere with the fit of the respirators (e.g., mustaches instead of beards/goatees). Some clinical sites may require additional FIT testing specific to their institutions mask type and requirements.

Basic Life Support (BLS) and Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS)

Students are required to be certified in *Basic Life Support for Healthcare Provider* **through the American Heart Association** prior to matriculation. Students must keep current BLS certification throughout the entirety of the 24-month program. BLS recertification courses are available throughout the year by the University. Only BLS HCP through the American Heart Association will be accepted.

In addition, students must successfully complete an AHA Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS) course during their didactic year spring semester provided by the PA program regardless of prior certification status. This will ensure quality content for all students and allow for certification to remain valid throughout the clinical year and after graduation while the credentialing process for clinical positions is being completed. Students must be currently certified in BLS in order to take the ACLS course, so it is imperative to remain BLS certified. Students who fail to obtain or maintain certification will be delayed and/or removed from clinical participation.

Matriculation Assignments

Medical Terminology

Students will be required to complete an online self-assessment medical terminology exam within the first two weeks of the program. This test will not include symbols or pharmacologic terms. If students feel their professional background has not provided a foundation in medical terminology, it is highly recommended they prepare for this exam via utilization of a medical terminology study guide – numerous are available via book suppliers.

“Surviving PA School” Reading

Matriculating students are required to read and be prepared to discuss the following book: Bielinski, John Jr. *Surviving PA School: Secrets You Must Unlock to Excel as a Physician Assistant Student*. 2nd ed. Deerfield, IL: RTC Publishing, March 2020. ISBN-13: 978-1939418982, ISBN-10: 193941898.

SECTION III BOOKS, EQUIPMENT, AND DRESS CODE REQUIREMENTS

Book List

The booklist will be sent out to all incoming students prior to matriculation in a letter from the Program. Many of the required books are available online through the UNE library. Some required books must be purchased through the UNE Bookstore or other sites of your choice.

Scrubs, White Jackets, and Name Tags

- **Scrubs:** Students will need to purchase at least two sets of slate/charcoal-colored scrubs with their first and last names embroidered legibly on the tops, i.e. John Doe. Students may put PA-S after their name. The font should be in print, not cursive, for legibility. Scrubs are worn at least three times a week in the first semester and at least once a week thereafter for the anatomy, clinical assessment, and integrating seminar courses. For the anatomy course, students may choose to have a separate pair of scrubs that is less expensive than their clinical assessment scrubs to be used while in the cadaver lab due to chemical and tissue exposures.
- **Short White Jacket/Coat:** You are required to purchase a short white clinical coat with long sleeves to be used for all clinical and simulation experiences. Your class may decide to purchase new short white coats at the end of your didactic year for the White Coat ceremony and your clinical rotations. Short white coats denote student status. Once you graduate from the program and transition to a full-time clinician, you will wear long white coats.
- **Nametags, IDs, and Patches:**
 - Students are required to wear a UNE PA Program issued student name tag during their didactic and clinical rotations.
 - UNE Photo ID badges are produced during orientation and serve as a swipe card, allowing access into the skills lab practice area, study rooms, and main building entrances after hours/on weekends.
 - UNE PA student patches for the white coat are required for the clinical year only and can be purchased through the UNE bookstore prior to clinical rotations.
 - Students must wear their PA program issued name tag during clinical rotations. Students must be clearly identified in the clinical setting to distinguish them from other health profession students and practitioners.
 - Clinical affiliates may also require an additional institutional ID card while in rotations clearly identifying as a PA student.

Required Medical Equipment

As part of your program fees, you are provided with the necessary medical equipment you will use in the Clinical Assessment course, which begins in the summer. This equipment is yours to keep and utilize throughout your career. Additionally, you will be provided with an equipment bag in which to transport and store your equipment. These will be available for pick up your first week on campus. There is no need to purchase additional medical equipment.

We require an identifier such as a name tag on your medical bag, as all bags are identical.

- Oto-ophthalmoscope set (Welch Allyn full size/3.5-volt diagnostic set with traditional ophthalmoscope)
- Stethoscope (Littman Cardiology IV)
- Reflex Hammer
- Tuning forks – 128cps and 512cps
- Sphygmomanometer with child, adult, and large blood pressure cuffs

- Examination gown (“Johnnie”) that ties in the back
- Examination drape (flat twin sheet, white)
- Medical bag
- Metric tape measure
- 6” clear ruler

Computer Requirements

Each student is required to bring a laptop computer to class and exams. Due to incompatibility with certain software, speed of download, restricted keyboard space and storage capacity, the use of tablets is not allowed for taking exams. However, students do often use a tablet in addition to their laptop to take notes in class since they are more hygienic than laptops.

Student laptops must meet the following requirements for our Exam Soft testing program:

<https://examsoft.com/resources/examplify-minimum-system-requirements>. Examplify will not run on Chromebooks, Android, or Linux operating systems. It also does not support touchscreen input devices on Mac or Windows laptops. Students are responsible for having adequate internet speed and bandwidth to access University resources and submit assignments by their deadlines while not on campus.

Smartphones and Smartwatches

Smartphones are required to access medical apps during many classes, but are not allowed during examinations or other graded assessments.

Smartwatches are also prohibited during examinations or other graded assessments.

Dress Code Requirements

As you prepare for your career as health professionals, and in accordance with the Westbrook College of Health Professions policy, PA students are expected to maintain the highest possible standard of appearance and maintain a professional wardrobe. As is expected in the professional workplace, students are expected to be conservatively and neatly dressed in business casual and groomed throughout all phases of their professional education, whether on campus, in the community, or a clinical setting.

- Specifically, no shorts, jeans, tights, t-shirts, open-toed footwear, or flip flops are allowed.
- Leggings may be worn along with a long tunic reaching at least mid-thigh.
- Students should wear at minimum dress slacks and open collared shirts/blouses.
- Athletic shoes and scrubs are to be worn for anatomy and clinical assessment. See section above on “Scrubs” for specifics.
- Further information regarding dress code and specific course requirements will be discussed during orientation.
- Some courses may have more stringent requirements to be compliant with OSHA standards.
- Some courses will require tank top and shorts for physical exam practice with classmates.

The PA program and its preceptors reserve the right to require students who present for participation in a class or program activity inappropriately dressed or with poor body hygiene to leave the activity. Should this occur, the absence would be treated as unexcused.

SECTION IV: GENERAL PROGRAM POLICIES

School Cancellation or Delays

Occasionally, severe weather can cause cancellations or delays. A decision to delay the opening time or to cancel school at the University due to inclement weather will generally be made by 5:45am for classes and activities based on conditions at each campus and the immediate surrounding area after consulting with the weather service. The University's decision to cancel school or activities later in the day, evening, or weekends due to inclement weather will be made at least two hours prior to the class or event if weather conditions permit.

The University will alert employees and students of weather impacted opening and closing times. If an alert states that the University is closed, the closing pertains to both the Biddeford and Portland campuses unless otherwise specified. All classes, events, and activities scheduled during these closures will be canceled or postponed. Unless UNE announces a closing via the media, we are open. In certain circumstances, faculty may elect to cancel classes when the University is open. In this case, they are responsible for informing their students in a timely manner.

For further details surrounding the UNE cancellation/delay policy please visit:

<https://www.une.edu/about/cancellationdelay-policy>

In the event of a weather delay or cancellation, in order to keep the PA program didactic sequence on track, the instructor make elect to hold a lecture virtually or provide a voiced over lecture. The Zoom lectures during cancellations/delays will be recorded as we understand that cancellations due to inclement weather may have implications on power and internet services. Students are encouraged to attend the live virtual one, but are not required if they are unable. All students will be required to view the lectures within 2 days of the recording if they did not attend the live virtual event.

Students in the clinical year will follow the policies of the Clinical Year handbook. If the University is closed, students may still be required to attend their rotation as medical offices rarely close due to weather conditions.

Policy on Change of Address

Throughout the program, students are required to notify the program immediately when there is a change in their address or phone number. Students are required to update their demographics and addresses in *PRISM* bio section. The program will not be responsible for lost mail or late notifications when a student does not provide notification of a change. Students are also responsible for notifying all pertinent UNE departments of the change, including the Registrar's Office.

Policy on Communication

Email is the primary mechanism used to notify students of important information. Students are required to check their UNE email **at least** twice daily during the didactic semesters and once daily during clinical year. The program will not be responsible if a student has outdated or missed information because of not regularly attending to their email. All correspondence is to be made through your UNE email accounts, not personal email accounts.

Emails from UNE Program personnel should be answered within one business day of receipt. Program personnel check their emails between 8am and 5pm Monday through Friday, less frequently if they are out of the office or when they have an automatic reply on. Do not expect a response after 5pm or on weekends if it is not an emergency. For emergencies, please call the main PA program office number and

leave a message AND email Amy LaBelle and the Program Director an explanation of the emergency and support needed. A reply to the request/circumstance will be given during normal business hours.

Professional email courtesy requires that you use a professional salutation (Dear _____), and an appropriate closing and signature. If an email request is sent to you, a response to the sender is the professional expectation. If you send an email and it is answered, a follow-up confirmation of receipt is expected as a professional courtesy. Professors should be addressed as Dr. _____ or Professor _____ as indicated on their email signature.

Program Calendar and Schedule

The program calendar may differ from the posted UNE Graduate Academic Calendar. Students will be notified as soon as possible of any differences. The program will make every attempt to post and distribute the changes to the students prior to the start of the semester. There may be instances where additional changes may occur throughout the semester to accommodate our adjunct instructors and other factors that would interfere with the normal schedule such as cancellations or delays. Students will be notified as soon as any changes are made. Please consult the program prior to planning time away to check for any schedule differences.

Typical hours for classes are Monday through Friday 8am-5pm. However, students may be required to attend classes and/or activities during early morning (no earlier than 7am, evening (no later than 9pm), and weekend hours at times during the program. The program will make every attempt to post the schedule on Brightspace in a timely manner so that students can adjust schedules accordingly. Students should make every attempt to schedule appointments during non-class times. If this is not possible, please fill out a Student Time Away Request form [Appendix F](#) prior to the absence for program approval. Students who require ongoing appointments for medical issues must contact the Student Accessibility Center (SAC) and appropriate reasonable accommodations must be approved by the SAC.

Holiday and vacation times may differ from the University schedule. During the clinical year, please note that students will only have vacation during the December Holiday Break.

Classroom Behavior

Students, faculty, and the administration share the responsibility to maintain appropriate student conduct in the classroom. Students are expected to respect their peers' right to learn. All interactions should be with courtesy and respect. Disruptive student behavior that interferes with fellow students' ability to concentrate and learn in the classroom or that impedes an instructor in conducting class or a speaker in making a presentation are considered inappropriate and unprofessional. Guests (family members or friends) are not permitted into class, seminars, clinical rotations, or other learning sessions.

Virtual Classroom

The same professional behavior is expected for classes meeting via remote online conference platforms, such as Zoom. The program will expect the same rules and norms that apply in a physical classroom (like taking notes and being prepared to participate by asking and answering questions) to be followed. Professional courtesy dictates that video cameras must be turned on at all times. If this presents a challenge (e.g. camera not functioning, insufficient bandwidth, etc.), faculty must be notified in advance. Students must be mindful of their appearance and surroundings, and position themselves facing a light source so they can be seen clearly. Microphones must be muted unless that student is speaking. Students must use the raised hand, the chat function, or the follow the instructions of the lecturer to ask a question to avoid speaking over classmates. Students must join the course in as quiet a place available and be in the classroom prior to the class start time. Other browser tabs must be closed that not required for

participating in that class period. Multitasking is discouraged. The success of this form of learning depends on the same commitment brought to the physical classroom.

Faculty have the authority to identify disruptive students, instruct a disruptive student to refrain from such behavior, and require that students leave the classroom if, in the judgment of the instructor, their behavior is interfering with the learning environment. In addition, sanctions may be brought against any student as outlined in the UNE Student Handbook.

Standards of Conduct

Professionalism is as important as, and holds equal importance to, academic progress. Students are expected to demonstrate the legal, moral, and ethical standards required of a healthcare professional and display behavior which is consistent with these qualities. Professionalism and professional ethics are terms that signify certain scholastic, interpersonal, and behavioral expectations. The program expects nothing short of respect and professional demeanor at all times. Students enrolled in the PA program are expected to conduct themselves according to the following policies, procedures, guidelines, and expectations. Students are responsible for seeking clarification of any aspect of the conduct code about which they have questions, especially in the event of receiving written notice of conduct concerns and/or violations.

All students are required to adhere to the following additional handbooks and policies:

1. **UNE Student Handbook:** <http://www.une.edu/studentlife/handbook>
2. **Westbrook College of Health Professions Graduate Program Progression Policies:**

<https://www.une.edu/sites/default/files/2025-04/Westbrook%20College%20of%20Health%20Professions%202025-2026%20Program%20Progression%20Policies.pdf>

3. **Code of Ethics for the PA Profession:** <https://www.aapa.org/download/56983/>

Policy Nondiscrimination, Anti-Harassment, and Sexual Misconduct

The University of New England (“the University”) is committed to maintaining a fair and respectful environment for living, work, and study. To that end, and in accordance with federal and state law, and University policy, the University prohibits any member of the faculty, staff, administration, trustees, student body, vendors, volunteers, or visitors to campus, whether they are guests, patrons, independent contractors, or clients, from harassing and/or discriminating against any other member of the University community because of that person’s race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression, ethnicity or national origin, religion, age, creed, color, genetic information, physical or mental disability, HIV status, or status as a veteran. The University is required by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and the final Title IX regulations issued by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights in May 2020, not to discriminate on the basis of sex and the following policy is designed to address such discrimination. **Please refer to the UNE Student Handbook for further information and guidance regarding resources, reporting, student mistreatment and student grievances at** <http://www.une.edu/studentlife/handbook>.

Policy on Student Employment

The program highly discourages students from having any outside employment while enrolled in the program due to the full-time nature of the curriculum. Program expectations, assignments, deadlines, and responsibilities will not be altered or adjusted to accommodate working students. If students decide to work during their time in the program, any academic or clinical difficulties that may arise will be addressed by the Program Director and brought to the Student Development Committee for review on that student’s progression in the program.

Policy on Student Work to Benefit the PA Program

Students will not be required to perform any administrative work or instruction on behalf of the PA program. Students cannot substitute for or function as instructional faculty, clinical staff or administrative staff.

Policy on Student Solicitation of Clinical Sites/Preceptors

Prospective and matriculated students are not required to provide or solicit clinical sites or preceptors on behalf of the program.

Advanced Placement

The program does not offer advance placement for students with prior undergraduate, graduate or doctoral level work. Students will take all courses outlined in the program curriculum.

Experiential Learning

The program does not give credit for prior student education or work experience. The program does not award credit for prior ACLS certification.

Policy on Transfer Credit

The program does not accept transfer credit from other institutions.

Deferral

A student offered admission to the PA Program is expected to attend the cohort (class) for which the student was accepted. The program does not guarantee admission beyond the original cohort that is offered. A student who is unable to start in the cohort for which they are accepted will need to notify the Program Director in writing. The student's request for deferral of admission will be considered on a case-by-case basis and is not guaranteed. Applicants not granted deferral may reapply for the following year's class.

Policy on Needle Stick / Bodily Fluids Exposures

Students who suspect or have experienced a blood borne pathogen exposure/needlestick should follow the guidelines as set forth in [Appendix C](#). Students are required to complete the UNE training and any forms must be sent to the PA Program and Student Health Services within 24 hours at (207) 221-4242/ Fax (203) 523-1913.

Policy on Accident or Injury

Information regarding UNE Safety and Security are available at: <http://www.une.edu/studentlife/security>

Didactic year: If a student sustains any accidents or injuries during the didactic year while on campus or other activity site, the student must notify the on-site faculty IMMEDIATELY and seek medical attention commensurate with the nature of the injury, which may require a visit to the closest emergency room or an appointment with their personal healthcare provider. Educational and clinical sites are under no obligation to provide the student with free medical care. Students must notify the PA program within 24 hours of the exposure. Submit the *Student Accident Report form* located in [Appendix D](#) to the PA program via email (or fax from that healthcare facility) within 24 hours. Any and all expenses for the care and potential treatment are the responsibility of the student.

Clinical Year: If a student sustains any accidents or injuries at a clinical rotation site, the student must notify the supervising physician/preceptor or site supervisor IMMEDIATELY and seek medical attention commensurate with the nature of the injury, which may require a visit to the closest emergency room or an appointment with their personal healthcare provider. Students must notify the PA program within 24 hours of the exposure. Submit the *Student Accident Report form* located in **Appendix D** within 24 hours. Any and all expenses for the care and potential treatment are the responsibility of the student.

Policy on Social Media

The use of social media can be beneficial for communication with friends, family, and colleagues. Examples include but not limited to: Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Reddit, Discord, YouTube and X (formerly Twitter).

Professional Behaviors

PA students have an ethical and legal obligation to be professional in behavior and to maintain patient privacy and confidentiality at all times. It is the expectation that students are taking on the status of professionals and should conduct their online accounts in such a manner. If not used properly, use of electronic media can sometimes result in a lack of professionalism, and too much disclosure with social media could result in a violation of patient privacy and confidentiality.

- a) Postings within social media sites are subject to the same professionalism standards as any other personal interactions.
- b) The permanence and written nature of these postings make them even more subject to scrutiny than most other forms of communication.
- c) Students may be subject to disciplinary actions within the school for comments or postings that are either unprofessional or violate patient privacy.
- d) Interactions with patients within social media sites is strongly discouraged. This provides an opportunity for a dual relationship, which can be damaging to the provider-patient relationship and can also carry legal consequences.
- e) It is recommended that students do not connect with current faculty/staff, preceptors, or clinic/hospital staff on social media.
 - a. The exception would be LinkedIn, which is considered a business and employment-focused social media platform which is acceptable for connecting to current/former professors and current/former rotation site preceptors/personnel.
- f) Patients should not be connected on social media platforms.
- g) The legality of posting questionable comments, pictures, or video on social media does not exempt you from school or medical facility policies. You are still held accountable for unacceptable and unprofessional social media choices via your reputation as a professional, even if the post itself is not illegal on a federal, state, or local level.

Confidentiality

Medical advice is not to be given on social media while you are a student as you are not licensed/certified to practice medicine. Furthermore, commenting on cases on social media is discouraged as you have not seen/examined this patient and are not a licensed/certified medical professional.

- a) HIPAA regulations apply to comments made on social networking sites, and violators are subject to the same prosecution as with other HIPAA violations.
- b) Online discussions of specific patients shall be avoided, even if all identifying information is excluded. It is possible that someone could recognize the patient to which you are referring based upon the context.

- c) Under no circumstances should photos of patients, exam rooms, dictations areas, or other areas containing protected patient information shall be photographed or uploaded.
- d) Do not post pictures of patients, families, or any procedures on social media.
- e) Private patient information obtained on a social networking site should not be entered in the patient's medical record.
- f) Refrain from accessing personal social networking sites while in clinical work areas.

Privacy

- a) Due to continuous changes in these sites, it is advisable to closely monitor the privacy settings of your social network accounts to optimize their privacy and security.
- b) It is advisable that you set your privacy profile so that only those people whom you provide access may see your personal information and photos.
- c) Avoid sharing identification numbers on your personal profile. These would include address, telephone numbers, social security, passport numbers or driver's license numbers, birth date, or any other data that could be used to obtain your personal records.
- d) Others may post photos of you and may "tag" you in them. It is your responsibility to make sure that these photos are appropriate and are not embarrassing or professionally compromising. It is wise to "untag" yourself from any photos as a general rule, and to refrain from tagging others unless you have explicit permission from them to do so.
- e) Maintain the privacy of colleagues and other UNE students or clinical affiliate hospital employees when referring to them in a professional capacity unless they have given their permission for their name or likeness to be used.
- f) Make sure that you differentiate medical opinions from medical facts.
- g) Social media policies at clinical sites and future employers may differ from PA policies.
- h) Social media postings are available not only now to clinical sites and employers, but also what is posted now will all be accessible to them in the future. Do not expect that simply deleting a post or hiding it permanently removes it from the web.

Please refer to: [Appendix E](#) on Netiquette Policy.

The following guidelines minimize the risks associated with social media:

- Students must not share, post, or otherwise transmit any patient-related information, including images, unless there is a legitimate reason to do so or a patient care related need to disclose information.
- Limiting access to postings, through privacy settings is not sufficient to protect yourself professionally or to protect a patient's privacy.
- Students should never refer to faculty, staff, patients, co-workers, healthcare agencies, or their staff in a derogatory or disparaging manner.
- No photos or videos of people or patients should be taken on a personal device, including cell phones without written consent. Even if a picture is posted to a "limited" viewing social media site such as Snapchat, its disappearance from a user feed does not mean the image is removed from the internet all together. There is still an online record.
- When representing yourself as part of UNE or a medical professional, do not take or share a photo of anyone without the written consent of the person or, when relevant, their parent/guardian.
- Students should always maintain appropriate professional boundaries with colleagues and patients. Online contact with patients or former patients blurs the distinction between a professional and personal relationship and should be avoided.
- If in doubt, the student should consult the faculty for guidance about the appropriate use of electronic media.

- Inappropriate and unprofessional use of electronic/social media can lead to disciplinary action from the PA Program. Students can be held personally liable for postings on social media. Such violations may result in civil and criminal penalties including fines or possible jail time in accordance with applicable laws (HIPAA).
- Refrain from using foul language and hate speech on social media. Hate speech will not be tolerated by the program and if found, will lead to an SDC referral for review of proper professional conduct.
- When posting on social media, be sure to make clear in the post that it is your personal opinion, not that of the PA Program or institution to which you belong.
- Do not post any official communication from the PA Program or medical facilities to social media without written consent from UNE Communications Office, PA program, or the appropriate department of the medical facility.
- Before you post, ask yourself the following: Could this post violate HIPAA, patient trust, employer trust, my future professional self, or that of my fellow students? If so, then do not post.
- Social Media accounts should not be accessed and used while in class or lab, or during clinical rotations. Be respectful of the faculty or visitor providing you your education by giving them your attention while in class.
- Email can be considered here as a form of social media. Once you send an email, it can be shared by anyone who receives it. Anyone who receives it as a forward can also share it.

Adapted from: UNE College of Medicine Social Media Policy Guidelines

[Policy on UNE and PA program logos](#)

UNE logos may not be used with the written consent of the UNE Office of Communications. PA Program logos may not be used without the consent of the PA Program.

[Policy on Housing and Transportation](#)

Students are responsible for securing and paying for their own housing during their education. Students must plan ahead to ensure they have housing in time for the start of all clinical rotations. Failure to secure housing may result in forfeit or removal from that rotation block, which then will have to be rescheduled at the end of the clinical year potentially delaying graduation. The program does have an unofficial housing list available for students during their second year while on rotations, see PA program for more information. Note that this list is not vetted by the program or University and we do not assume responsibility for safety of these accommodations. Students must also have reliable transportation during both the didactic and clinical years. Lack of a functioning vehicle is not an acceptable excuse for missing a class or a clinical assignment.

[Policy on Travel](#)

Students must live in close enough proximity to be able to travel with reliable transportation daily to and from campus, to and from clinical experiences outside of the classroom, and to and from their assigned clinical rotations. Long commutes (over 45 minutes) will cut into study time and likely will negatively impact progress in the program. It is wise to consider “near home” commitments such as the care of loved ones, pets, medical needs, or other commitments that students may have while choosing a housing location. **All students will be assigned to rural and underserved clinical rotation areas** which will require travel and accommodations outside of the Portland area and to areas outside of Maine and possibly New England.

[Policy on Course and Lecturer Evaluation Forms](#)

Students are required to complete the PA Program, UNE, and WCHP course and instructor evaluations at the end of each semester. Students are required to complete program module and instructional faculty

evaluations as well. This information is extremely valuable when decisions are made about course content and structure.

Policy on Program Meetings

All program meetings are considered mandatory, unless otherwise stated by the program. Student meetings with faculty are confidential thus students are not allowed to bring parents, friends, or legal representatives to program related meetings unless there are specific accommodations by the SAC. Meetings may not be recorded in any manner by the student. This includes but not limited to Advisor meetings, SDC meetings, on campus or virtual meetings, and meetings with the Program Director.

SECTION V: ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE & PROGRESSION

Program Progression and Graduation Requirements

- Successfully complete the MSPA program and all curricular requirements as approved by the University, WCHP, and PA program.
- Satisfactorily completion of all didactic and clinical courses with a minimum GPA of 2.5 (C+) on a 4.0 scale.
- Successfully complete the PA program Summative evaluation.
- Comply with MSPA standards of conduct and guidelines for professional and ethical conduct.
- Meet all UNE and WCHP Graduate student requirements for graduation.
- Completion of the MSPA degree is required for eligibility to take the Physician Assistant National Certifying Examination (PANCE).

Successful academic preparation for physician assistant practice requires development of a broad range of knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to manage diseases across the spectrum of organ systems and pathologies. Physician assistants are held to a high standard of competency by the profession, state medical boards, institutional credentialing bodies, the legal system and the public. The PA Program strives to prepare students to be academically and professionally prepared for successful entry into PA practice.

Academically prepared students demonstrate being practice ready by successfully passing the Physician Assistant Certifying National Examination hence referred to as the PANCE. Successful passing of the PANCE on the first time is one of the indicators the program uses to evaluate its effectiveness of programmatic practices, methods and policies. The program understands that it has an obligation to support student success in the program. The program offers resources for student learning and remediation processes to help students succeed. However, the program also understands the obligation to recognize when student performance continues to not meet standards after all identifiable resources and aids have been offered and implemented. It is at this point when decisions need to be made about the student's ability to further succeed in the program and be successful in passing the PANCE, the gateway to clinical practice.

Purpose

- To ensure that students have achieved satisfactory academic preparation for licensure, and for safe and effective clinical practice as a PA

- To delineate a pathway of intervention for students who fail to meet academic standards of the PA program

Policy

Matriculated students in the PA program are governed by the policies on academic progression outlined in the WCHP student handbook. At minimum, this policy requires students to maintain a GPA of 2.5 (C+) for each semester in the year and for the overall program GPA. In addition, the PA program defines standards for progression in the didactic year and clinical year based upon demonstration of learning outcomes through periodic assessments and examinations. Students who fail to meet PA program learning outcomes are subject to a series of progressive interventions including focused intervention with the course instructor and/or academic advisor, academic warning, academic probation, mandatory deceleration, and program dismissal.

Academic warning and academic probation are mechanisms by which the PA Program addresses students whose academic performance places them at risk for inability to complete any phase of the program and/or obtain national certification needed for practice or completion of the program.

Academic warning is a program-specific status that provides early intervention surrounding academic progress. Academic warning is not reportable to credentialing and/or state licensing bodies. This status is a trigger for early intervention to improve academic performance, with a focus on identifying and removing barriers to facilitate student success. Academic warning remains in place until resolution of terms are met, such as no additional examination failures and successful completion of all recommendations made by the relevant course instructors, student's academic advisor, and the Student Development Committee.

Academic probation is a status designated for students who are unable to meet academic standards of the PA program and/or the PA profession despite early intervention and academic warning. PA program academic probation is a status that is reportable to credentialing and/or state licensure bodies and will appear on student transcripts. Academic probation status is always accompanied by a referral to the Student Development Committee (SDC). Academic probation is a precursor to PA program dismissal, and should be regarded by the student as a serious indication to make aggressive modifications to their behaviors and/or academic strategies to maintain their academic standing in the program. Once initiated, academic probation remains in place until resolution.

Procedure

Successful progression in the PA program is maintaining both a C+ average ($GPA \geq 2.5$) cumulative GPA AND semester GPA. Although the minimum course grade a student can receive and still progress is a "C" (74-76%), **this will only be allowed for a maximum of 2 (two) courses throughout the PA curriculum.** Students receiving a third final course grade of a "C" (74-76%) or below will be considered unsuccessful in meeting academic standards, regardless of GPA, and therefore not allowed to progress in the program. Students receiving 3 or more final course grades of a "C" (74-76%) will be dismissed from the Physician Assistant Program.

Students receiving a grade of <74% in a course will be considered to have failed the course. Falling below this standard results in referral to the Student Development Committee (SDC) for review and recommendations. Upon review, the following result shall occur: Program dismissal or a mandatory

deceleration (delay) in student progress by joining the newly matriculated cohort and successfully repeating the course the next time it is offered. **Students incur all costs associated with deceleration.** **For students retaking a failed course the next year, a minimum grade of a C+ (77%) is required for progression in the program. If this is not met, the student will be dismissed from the program.**

Note: There is no rounding of final course grades. Final course grade values with decimal points will be truncated to the whole number, for instance, a 72.2 will reflect as a 72 and a 72.9 will also reflect as a 72. The Physician Assistant Studies program follows the grade grievance policies set forth in the WCHP Student Handbook.

Additional policies related to assessment/examination failures in the didactic and clinical year apply and are outlined below:

Academic Progression in the Didactic Year

End-of-module assessment failures, such as end of module exams, will be tracked throughout the didactic year and will be utilized as a mechanism to ensure successful knowledge of content throughout the PA curriculum. Assessment failures are defined as a score <74%, or a score of “fail” on a pass/fail assessment unless otherwise defined and specified in advance by the PA program. Accrued end-of-module assessment failures form the basis for academic progression through the didactic year. Only primary assessment failures are included in the count of examination failures for academic progression purposes. Failure of minimum competency reviews is treated via a separate process, and these reviews are not included as primary assessment failures for purposes of this policy.

1. During the didactic year, the first end-of-module assessment failure is handled at the instructor and academic advisor level and does not trigger a program-level interventional action. It is the student’s responsibility to follow policy to arrange a minimum competency review (MCR) with the relevant course instructor(s). MCR does not constitute a grade change.
2. A second end-of-module assessment failure results in the student being placed on academic warning. Academic warning with a second end-of-module assessment failure occurring in the summer semester constitutes referral to the SDC. A second end-of-module failure occurring in the spring or fall semester is handled at the instructor and academic advisor level. It is *always* the student’s responsibility to contact their academic advisor within 24 hours of the second assessment failure. The student must also follow policy to arrange a minimum competency review with the relevant course instructor(s). The academic advisor will inform the program director of a student’s academic warning status, and the program director will issue a letter to the student informing them of their academic warning status.

Possible interventions, supporting student success, that may be recommended by the student’s academic advisor include, but are not limited to:

-Additional reading and independent student on the topics identified as academic deficiencies

-Peer tutoring at the Student Academic Success Center

-Work with a learning specialist in the Student Academic Success Center on topics such as time management, test-taking strategy, study strategies and test anxiety.

-Work with the Student Access Center to obtain any reasonable accommodations needed for disabilities affecting learning or academic performance

-Work with UNE Student Counseling Services or the student's personal mental health provider to address behavioral health concerns contributory to academic performance

-Work with UNE Student Health Services or the student's personal medical provider to address physical health concerns contributory to academic performance

3. A third end-of-module assessment failure in the summer semester only results in placing the student on academic probation. For students receiving a third end-of-module assessment failure in the didactic fall or spring semester, this initiates another academic warning. Students receiving a third assessment failure are referred to the Student Development Committee (SDC) to evaluate and intervene upon factors identified as contributing to failure to meet academic standards of the PA program. The Program Director will notify the student of their Program/Academic status in writing along with a referral to the Student Development Committee (SDC) for review of their progress in the program. The student must then reach out to their academic advisor to schedule a meeting within 24 hours of notification of Academic status. The advisor will discuss the SDC process with the student and help to gather information pertinent to the SDC meeting for review by the SDC chair.

Recommendations of the SDC will be reviewed by the Program Director, who will issue a final letter to the student with recommendations and stipulations for progression in the program. Removal of the student's academic status at the end of 90 calendar days is contingent upon successful completion of all recommendations made by the program director.

4. Approach to the fourth assessment failure in the didactic year depends upon whether the failure occurs in the first semester of the program, or in subsequent semesters. A more aggressive approach is taken in the first semester of the program so that students whose performance indicates they will not be successful in program progression do not unnecessarily accrue tuition expenses and/or student loan debt, and so that pursuit of an alternate path better suited to the student is not unnecessarily delayed.

- a. **Fourth end-of-module assessment failure in the first (summer) semester of the program**
Students who fail to demonstrate competency on four examinations in the first semester of the program do not meet the academic standards of the PA program and are not expected to be able to succeed in subsequent semesters of the program. Failure of a fourth examination in the summer semester of the program shall result in immediate dismissal from the PA program without remediation or referral to SDC.

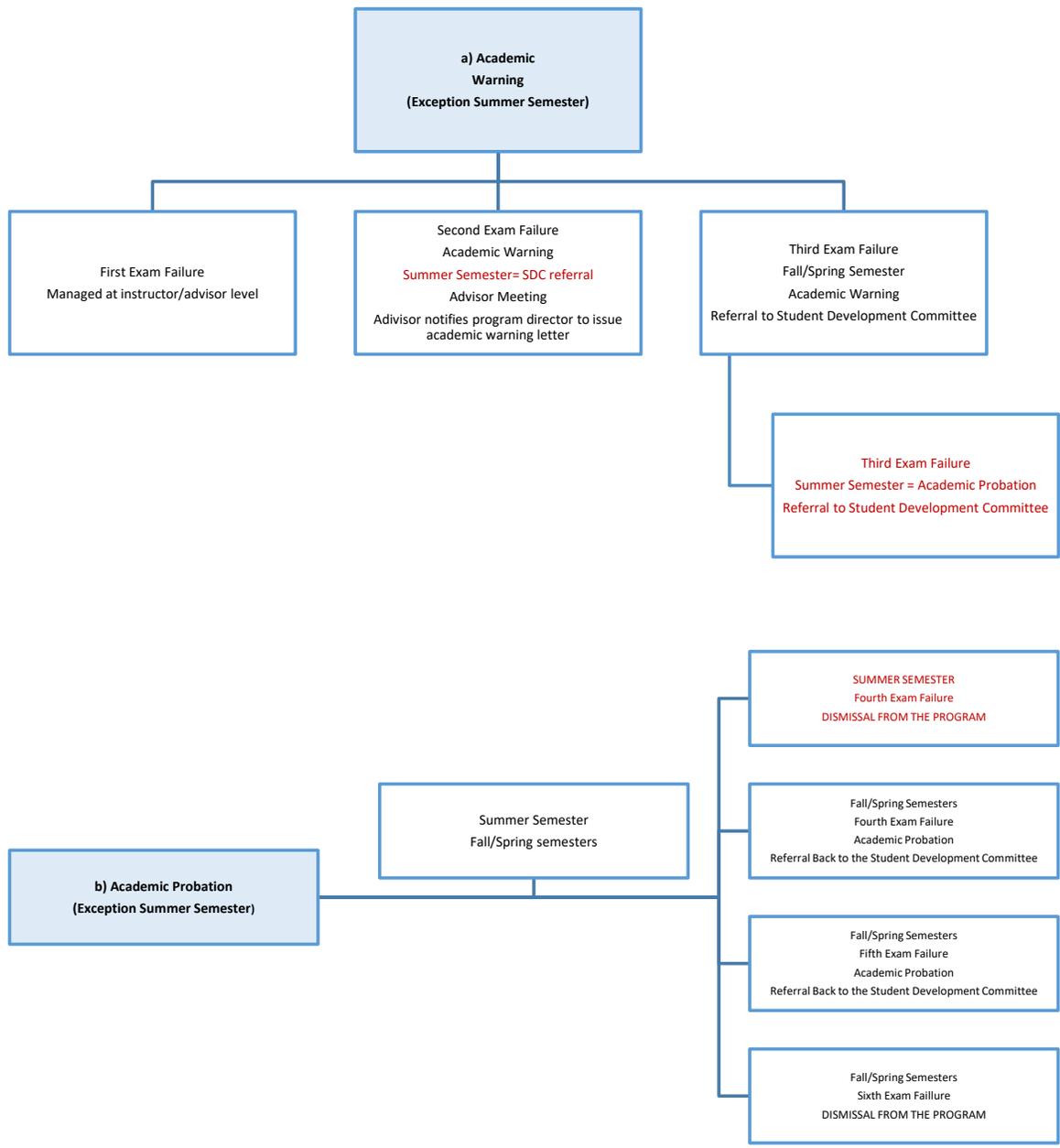
- b. **Fourth end-of-module assessment failure in subsequent (fall/spring) semesters of the program**
A fourth didactic year assessment failure occurring in the fall or spring semesters of the program initiates academic probation and referral to SDC. Recommendations of the SDC will be reviewed by the Program Director, who will issue a final letter to the student with recommendations and stipulations for progression in the program. Removal of the student's academic probation status is contingent upon resolution such as successful completion of all recommendations made by the program director.

5. A fifth didactic year end-of-module assessment failure occurring in the fall or spring semesters of the didactic year initiates another academic probation status, if the student has been removed from the

previous academic probation status. The student will be referred to the SDC for assessment and recommendations. Recommendations of the SDC will be reviewed by the Program Director, who will issue a final letter to the student with recommendations and stipulations for progression in the program. Removal of the student's academic status is contingent upon resolution, such as successful completion of all recommendations made by the program director

6. A sixth didactic year end-of-module assessment failure occurring in the fall or spring semesters shall result in immediate dismissal from the PA program without remediation or referral to SDC.
7. In the absence of an extenuating circumstance, no student who has accrued ≥ 4 examination failures in the first semester of the didactic year or ≥ 6 examination failure in the entire didactic year shall be allowed to remain enrolled in the program.

The pathway for progression through the didactic year academic warning/academic probation sequence is outlined in the figure below which should be provided to the student at each step in the intervention sequence.



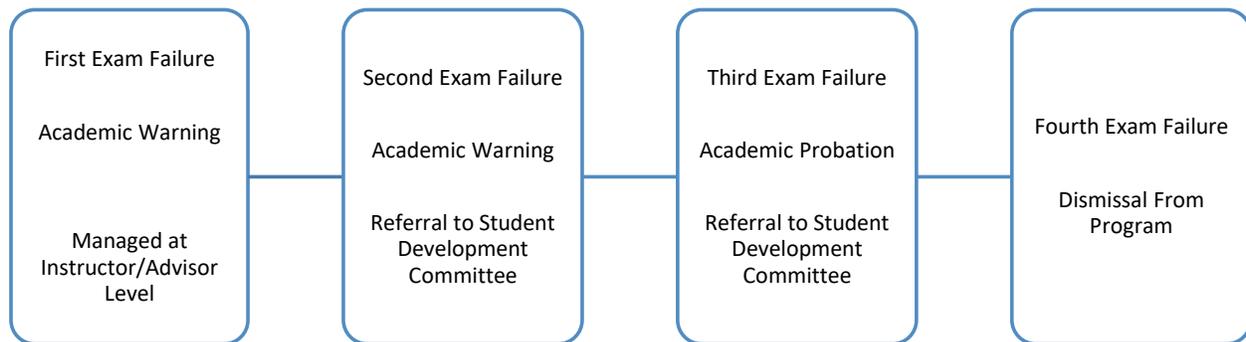
Academic Progression in the Clinical Year

In addition to the general policies and procedures for academic progression, assessment failures will be tracked throughout the clinical year and will be utilized as a mechanism to ensure successful completion of content throughout the PA curriculum. Assessment failures are defined as a score <74%, or a score of “fail” on a pass/fail assessment unless otherwise defined and specified in advance by the PA program. Accrued assessment failures form the basis for academic progression through the clinical year. Only primary assessment failures are included in the count of examination failures for academic progression

purposes. Assessments which are applied toward this policy in the clinical year include End-of-Rotation (EOR) examinations, clinical year Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCEs), skills evaluations, preceptor evaluations, the Capstone Project, and the End-of-Curriculum examination. Failure of minimum competency reviews is treated via a separate process, and these reviews are not included as primary assessment failures for purposes of this policy. The clinical year academic progression policy is followed *regardless of accrued examination failures in the didactic year*.

1. The first assessment failure in the clinical year results in the student being placed on academic warning. Academic warning is handled at the instructor and academic advisor level. It is the student's responsibility to contact their academic advisor within 24 hours of the second assessment failure, as well as following policy to arrange a minimum competency review with the relevant course instructor(s). The academic advisor will inform the program director of a student's academic warning status, and the program director will issue a letter to the student informing them of their academic warning status.
2. A second clinical year assessment failure results in continued academic warning status and referral to SDC. If a student has completed a prior academic warning in the clinical year, a new clinical year academic warning status results. The student is responsible for reaching out to their advisor within 24 hours of notification of SDC referral to discuss preparation for adjudication with SDC. Final discretion over recommendations issued to the student rests with the program director, and the student is responsible for successfully meeting all recommendations and stipulations in order for academic probation status to be considered resolved.
3. A third clinical year assessment failure results in academic probation and referral to SDC. The student is responsible for reaching out to their advisor within 24 hours of notification of Academic Probation status to discuss preparation for adjudication with SDC. Final discretion over recommendations issued to the student rests with the program director, and the student is responsible for successfully meeting all recommendations and stipulations in order for academic probation status to be considered resolved.
4. A fourth clinical year assessment failure shall result in immediate dismissal from the PA program without remediation or referral to SDC.
5. In the absence of an extenuating circumstance, no student who has accrued ≥ 4 examination failures in the clinical year shall be allowed to remain enrolled in the program.

The pathway for progression through the clinical year academic warning/academic probation sequence is outlined in the figure below which should be provided to the student at each step in the intervention sequence.



Minimum Competency Reviews (MCRs)

Students who fail an end-of-module assessment in the didactic or clinical year shall be offered a single opportunity, for each primary assessment, to demonstrate competency in areas of deficiency through Minimum Competency Review (MCR). Participation in Minimum Competency Review is mandatory. It is the responsibility of the student to contact the course coordinator within 24 hours of receipt of a failing assessment grade to arrange a Minimum Competency Review. Failure of the student to contact the course coordinator in a timely manner shall result in referral of the student to the Student Development Committee for unprofessional conduct.

1. The minimum passing score for a Minimum Competency Review is $\geq 74\%$ (C). Students achieving $\geq 74\%$ on an MCR may progress in the program without need for additional remediation. The initial grade received on the primary assessment will remain on record, and **will not** be replaced or averaged with the MCR score.
2. Failed OSCEs and End-of-Rotation (EOR) examinations require retesting of the entire assessment rather than targeted areas of deficiency, and as such, the original standard of competency of $\geq 74\%$ is used for MCRs of these two assessment types. Students achieving $\geq 74\%$ on an OSCE or EOR MCR may progress in the program without need for additional remediation. The initial grade received on the primary assessment will remain on record, and **will not** be replaced or averaged with the MCR score.
3. Students achieving a score $< 74\%$ on an MCR for examinations in the didactic year have not demonstrated minimum competency for the content tested. In order to remain in the program, students will need to pass the course AND remediate deficient content areas to a competency level of 74% or above prior to entering the clinical year. Additional remediation will take place during a mandatory deceleration at the end of the didactic year in accordance with the Policy on Deceleration. The student will continue to enroll in their summer semester of the clinical year. However, the student will miss their first rotation (6-weeks) in order to attend a mandatory remediation session to address areas of deficiency. The student must pass remediation assessment at or above 74% to pass the remediation session and be allowed to progress in the program. This deceleration will delay the student's ability to embark on their clinical rotations, and therefore will delay the student's graduation. **The student is responsible for all costs incurred associated with remedial instruction as a consequence of mandatory deceleration.** This includes tuition

and fees of enrollment in completing rotation requirements. Ability to place the student in clinical rotations at the end of the clinical year may be further delayed due to availability of clinical sites and the program's primary responsibility of placing non-decelerated students as a priority.

4. Students achieving a score of <74% on an MCR for examinations in the clinical year have not demonstrated minimum competency for the content tested. In order to remain in the program, students will need to pass the rotation AND remediate deficient content areas to a competency level of 74% or above in order to graduate. Remediation not completed during the clinical year will take place during a mandatory deceleration at the end of the clinical year in accordance with the Policy on Deceleration. The student will enroll in a second summer semester clinical year or summer clinical year course (depending on the enrollment option available) in order to complete remediation. The student must pass remediation assessments at or above 74%, complete and pass all program assessments and required rotations to graduate. Deceleration will delay the student's ability to graduate with the rest of the cohort. **The student is responsible for all costs incurred associated with the remedial course.** *If the remediation includes delayed placement in clinical rotations, the ability to place the student in clinical rotations may be further delayed due to availability of clinical sites and the program's primary responsibility of placing non-decelerated students as a priority.*
5. Students achieving a score <74 % on any remediation assessment at the end of the mandatory deceleration (at the end of didactic year) will be dismissed from the program. Students achieving a score of <74% on any remediation assessment at the end of clinical year deceleration will be dismissed from the program.
6. Under no circumstances shall a second MCR be offered as a remedy for MCR failure during a course. (Exceptions may apply to the clinical year.)

Note: The ability to repeat the course and remain in the program restarting with the next cohort of students is contingent upon availability of a seat in the next cohort. If no seat is available, the student seeking to repeat the course will have no other option than to be dismissed from the program.

[Academic Remediation Policy](#)

Background

The PA program is dedicated to student success. Remediation is the primary means by which the program supports student struggles in their academic and professional development. Remediation is a tool that re-teaches materials that the student has demonstrated deficiency in. The goal is for the student to achieve successful re-learning of the material, meeting program standards and expectations. The primary method used to determine student success in remediation is through successful completion of a Minimum Competency Review (MCR) assessment.

All student conduct and professionalism issues apply to remediation as well. Remediation of student conduct is dealt with on a case-by-case basis, depending on the size and nature of the misconduct.

Purpose

The goal of the PA program remediation policy is to identify students who are at academic or professional risk for successful progression in the PA program. At times, a student may not meet program expectations in regards to their progress toward academic knowledge, clinical knowledge, skills and/or professional

conduct. When this occurs, faculty members may find it to be in the student's best interest to initiate remediation in order to assist the student in reaching expectations as laid out by the program. The trigger for the program to initiate remedial instruction is when a student demonstrate academic deficiency such as with exam failures and course failures.

Policy

Only students whose GPA remains at or above 2.5 for each semester AND whose GPA is at or above a 2.5 overall in program will be offered remediation. Students falling below these thresholds will be dismissed from the program. It is important to ensure that students have a strong knowledge at the end of each module for each course as the program curriculum builds upon prior knowledge. Primary ways the program uses to help remediation students are as follows:

1. Course director and faculty advisor support. Course faculty are usually the first to recognize a student's struggle. When this is noted by poor exam performance, the instructor and the student's faculty advisor, will attempt to remediate the student.
2. Students are strongly encouraged to make full use of the services of the Student Academic Success Center (SASC): <https://www.une.edu/SASC>. The staff of the SASC may be involved in remediation plans and their recommendations may be incorporated in order to enhance achievement of the stated goals. These services are available to all students regardless of academic status or remediation.
3. The University offers a free tutorial assistance through Portland Campus SASC to all students in need of remediation and/or intervention. These services are also available to all students regardless of academic standing or remediation. Students are highly encouraged to use these services at any time they deem them necessary.
4. Free counseling services are offered to all students at UNE. The Student Counseling Center supports students in areas of mental and emotional health. Contact information can be found by following this link <https://www.une.edu/student-affairs/student-counseling-center>.

Procedure

Exam Failures

Remedial instruction occurs when a student fails to achieve an end of module exam score, OSCE Exam Score, skills exam score, EOR exam score, or any other heavily weighted assessment at 74% or above. When this occurs, a minimum competency review (MCR) with the course instructor is **required**. The purpose of the MCR is to ensure, after remedial instruction, that the student has sufficient comprehension of the material in order to progress forward in the program and ensure educational and professional success as a PA. The process to work through insufficient knowledge or performance during the MCR may involve a written assignment, oral exam, or other assessment the course instructor chooses that allows the student the opportunity to demonstrate proficiency.

Students must email the course instructor within 24 hours of notification of failure (i.e. grade release) to request an MCR. MCRs should be scheduled and completed prior the next module exam, ideally within a week. There may be times when this may overlap with the next module, which may impact the ability to focus on the new material. A score of 74% or higher is considered successful completion of an MCR. Course specific information surrounding MCRs can be found within each course syllabus.

Students who fail to contact the instructor within 24 hours of notification will be referred to the Student Development Committee (SDC) for a breach of professionalism and additional requirements may be assigned.

Inadequate performance on the MCR is receiving a score below 74%. Scores below 74% will result in mandatory deceleration at the end of the didactic year. Although this mandatory deceleration is meant to help the student achieve the minimal standards of the program in order to progress successfully, **it will delay the student's clinical year rotation start, resulting in a delay in graduation from the program. Unsuccessful remediation (>74%) at the end of the deceleration period will result in dismissal from the program.**

A student who must remediate MCR failures will do so the end of the didactic year during the first semester of their clinical year. At the start of the clinical year, instead of participating in their first clinical rotation, the student will attend a 6-week remediation session, which will allow them to remediate deficient areas of knowledge. However, since this will delay the start of their first rotation, graduation will also be delayed and the student will not finish on time with the rest of their cohort. The student will also need to re-enroll after the clinical year spring semester to complete the required rotation. **Students are responsible for all costs associated with the deceleration process including enrollment fees and tuition of courses outside of the standard curriculum.** Once a student has successfully completed all programmatic requirements, the student will be eligible to take the PANCE.

Course Failures

Since the program curriculum builds upon prior knowledge, students who are unable to keep pace academically resulting in course failure(s) may be given the opportunity to remediate the failed course(s). Course failure requires the student's academic progress to be reviewed by the Student Development Committee. Recommendations for remediation will be outlined for the individual student with the goal of addressing student deficiencies and needs, so that the student may be successful at the second attempt of passing the course(s).

Course failures fall under mandatory deceleration. A student failing at least one course during the didactic year will have the opportunity to repeat the course failure the next time the course is offered. This will automatically trigger a one-year mandatory deceleration process; the student will decelerate to the next matriculating cohort. **The ability to repeat the course and remain in the program restarting with next cohort of students is contingent upon availability of a seat in the next cohort. If no seat is available, the student seeking to repeat the course will have no other option than to be dismissed from the program.** In the clinical year, a student may repeat a rotation at a later date, which will delay graduation. Students are responsible for all costs involved with having to repeat a rotation, including tuition, fees, travel, housing. Students who are unable to successfully complete course requirements after a second attempt will be dismissed from the program.

There are two ways in which a course failure occurs:

1. Receiving a final grade of a C- or below in a course/rotation
2. Failure of a preceptor evaluation in the clinical year

The Student Development Committee

The Student Development Committee is charged with interpreting and enforcing academic policies and professionalism conduct policies, making recommendations to the Program Director concerning a student's academic and or professionalism standing, making stipulations for completing academic

warning and academic probation statuses, and working with the Program Director to alert students to any and all progress issues that may affect their graduation. The purpose of the Student Development Committee is to provide a forum to review student academic and professional progress, as needed, through the didactic and clinical portions of the curriculum. The committee considers efforts of faculty members, course directors, and university academic student support centers involved in the professional and academic success of its students. Student progress in Physician Assistant Studies depends upon adhering to the Physician Assistant student academic and professional conduct standards. Faculty may request a meeting with the SDC at any time for guidance regarding student remediation and/or issues of student progress in the program for any of the following:

- Academic performance
- Professional misconduct

More information about the Student Development Committee can be found at this link:

https://www.une.edu/sites/default/files/2024-03/Grad%20Prog%20Policies%20AY2024-2025_FINAL.pdf

Deceleration

Deceleration is a pathway for students to be able to complete requirements of the PA program in greater than the usual 24-months. There are two ways that deceleration occurs in the program. These are Leave of Absence and Mandatory Deceleration.

Leave of Absence. This is Voluntary Deceleration process initiated by the student for reasons such as personal, family, health, or academic concerns that will impact successful progress through the curriculum. Voluntary deceleration is considered a proactive decision on the part of the student before experiencing academic difficulty. Depending on the length of the Leave of Absence (LOA), the LOA may result in delayed progression in the program.

Mandatory Deceleration. Mandatory deceleration is a preventive measure to avoid further academic or professional difficulties for students who are not meeting the academic standards of the program, and will result in delayed progress in the program. Mandatory deceleration is not punitive, but is a mechanism to allow additional time for remediation of deficiencies in knowledge and skills that would not be possible for a student progressing through the standard curriculum. **Only students whose GPA remains at or above 2.5 for each semester AND whose GPA is at or above a 2.5 overall in program will be offered remediation. Students falling below these thresholds will be dismissed from the program.** The Student Development Committee will specify a plan for deceleration with the Program Director's approval, which will detail required activities and recommendations to be completed during the deceleration period. Students in the decelerated curriculum must successfully complete all required recommendations. There are three possible pathways for mandatory deceleration:

1. Deceleration to a new matriculating cohort: This path occurs following didactic year course failures. Deceleration to a new matriculating cohort allows the student to retake the failed course the next time it is offered as part of their plan of remediation. Upon decelerating into a new cohort matriculating class, students may delay their graduation by no more than one year, and must comply with the policies in the student handbook governing the new matriculating cohort. The student must also comply with any revisions in curriculum requirements and changes in tuition and fees of their new graduating class. Mandatory deceleration to the next cohort can only

occur once in the duration of the program. Subsequent course failures will result in dismissal. Deceleration to a new matriculating cohort is contingent upon availability of a seat in the class. PA program course capacity is capped at 50 students. Therefore, this type of deceleration may not be an option for some students.

2. Deceleration to clinical year: This path is a mechanism for remediation of content during the didactic year, and is triggered by failure of MCRs in courses as specified in the policy on Minimum Competency Review. Students at this stage of remediation will be delayed in their ability to take part in clinical rotations, which will in turn result in a delayed graduation. The length of a deceleration at the beginning of clinical year is a six-week remediation session. *The ability to place the student in clinical rotations once remedial instruction is complete may be further delayed due to availability of clinical sites and the program's primary responsibility of placing non-decelerated students as a priority.* Failure to successfully remediate at the end of deceleration, upon completion of the remedial session, results in program dismissal. Successful remediation is acquiring a 74% or above on the remediation assessment(s). Students incur all costs associated with mandatory deceleration.
3. Deceleration of graduation: This path is a mechanism for remediation of content during the clinical year, and is triggered by failure of clinical year MCRs or the need to repeat a rotation and complete program assessments. Students at this stage of remediation will be delayed in their ability to graduate with the rest of their cohort. The length of a deceleration at the end of clinical year is determined by the remedial instruction course/rotation the student must enroll in and the timeline to complete assessments. *The ability to place the student in clinical rotations may be further delayed due to availability of clinical sites and the program's primary responsibility of placing non-decelerated students as a priority.* Failure to successfully remediate results in program dismissal. Successful remediation is acquiring a 74% or above on the remediation assessment(s). Students incur all costs associated with mandatory deceleration.

Summary of Mandatory Deceleration Pathways

1. Deceleration to a new cohort
2. Deceleration to clinical year (automatically delays the start to rotations in clinical year, and results in a delay in graduation)
3. Delayed graduation

Program Dismissal

Program dismissal is reserved as an option for students who are not anticipated to be able to succeed academically, professionally or technically in a physician assistant role. Criteria for program dismissal include the following:

1. A GPA less than 2.5 for any semester of the program, or for the program overall;
2. A grade of C or below for 3 or more courses on the academic transcript;
3. Inability to complete a required course within two attempts;
4. Recurrent assessment failures, as defined by the following criteria:
 - a. After failure of the fourth assessment in the first (summer) semester of the didactic year
 - b. After failure of the sixth assessment in the didactic year
 - c. After failure of the fourth assessment in the clinical year;

5. Inability to successfully remediate with a score of 74% or higher at the completion of mandatory deceleration (at the start of clinical year or at the end of clinical year);
6. Egregious or recurrent instances of unprofessional conduct;
7. Inability to decelerate to the next cohort, restarting with the new matriculating class.
8. Students attest to their ability to perform all of the criteria within the Program's "Technical Standards" document with or without reasonable accommodations. If it becomes apparent to PA faculty and staff that the student cannot perform components of the Technical Standards with reasonable accommodations; or the accommodations are not reasonable and would put an undue hardship on the university; or that the performance of these functions would significantly increase the risk the harm or jeopardize the safety of others, the program may dismiss the student from the program.

Extenuating Circumstances

The policy on extenuating circumstances allows for accommodation of situations that do not allow a student to safely or reasonably complete the requirements of the program in the usual time allotted. It is not a pathway for leniency or special dispensation for students who are failing to meet PA program academic requirements. Students with qualifying extenuating circumstances are not exempted from PA program requirements, but are allowed to remediate in order to develop/demonstrate competency in deficient content areas in lieu of academic probation or dismissal. The presence of an extenuating circumstance does not afford additional attempts at MCR for a failed assessment. This policy covers the following situations:

-A temporary medical or mental health condition which prevents the student from safely being able to achieve requirements of the PA program. Students are not required to disclose details of their health condition, but must present a written excuse from a licensed medical and/or mental health provider. In addition, the student must submit approved medical clearance documentation, including approval of the UNE medical director, attesting to the student's ability to safely meet the technical standards of the program before resuming participation in PA program activities. In accordance with the policy on attendance, a medical leave of absence is recommended for students who need to be away from the program for more than five consecutive class days.

-A natural or manmade disaster situation directly impacting the student which affects safety and/or well-being while participating in the program. Supporting documentation (i.e. scene photographs) will be required.

-Death of a first degree relative (grandparent, parent, spouse/partner, step-parent, sibling or child) with supporting documentation.

-Any situation covered by Title IX

-Students who have failed multiple assessments in a single day may petition the Student Development Committee for consideration for an extenuating circumstance. This petition must be discussed with and cosigned by the student's academic advisor. Final determination of an extenuating circumstance exemption for multiple assessment failures in a single day rests with the program director.

Program Withdrawal

Students wishing to withdraw for any circumstance must complete the required University withdrawal form. Students are encouraged to review the UNE policies for withdrawals, dates, and the consequences

of the timing of the withdrawal submission. Official withdrawal also requires approval by the Program Director.

This form is available at:

<https://www.une.edu/sites/default/files/202010/University%20Withdrawal%20and%20LOA%20Request%201-18-18%20BGB%20FINAL%20Edits%20Fillable.pdf>

Leave of Absence

Leave of Absence (LOA): Students requesting a leave of absence are encouraged to begin the process with a discussion with their Academic Advisor. If a decision is made to proceed, the appropriate LOA form is completed by the student and submitted to the Program Director, who has final approval. Leaves of absence can be requested for academic, medical, or other personal reasons, and are granted for a period not to exceed one year. **If a student qualifies for a leave of absence, they must complete the entire program within three years (36 months) of initial matriculation.**

If the student returns from a LOA, the student should expect to participate in the courses already taken and passed in order to stay current in the PA curriculum in support of their academic success for progression in the program. Those semesters/courses that have not been successfully completed must be fully repeated by the student. Students are responsible for all costs incurred with a LOA, including tuition and fees.

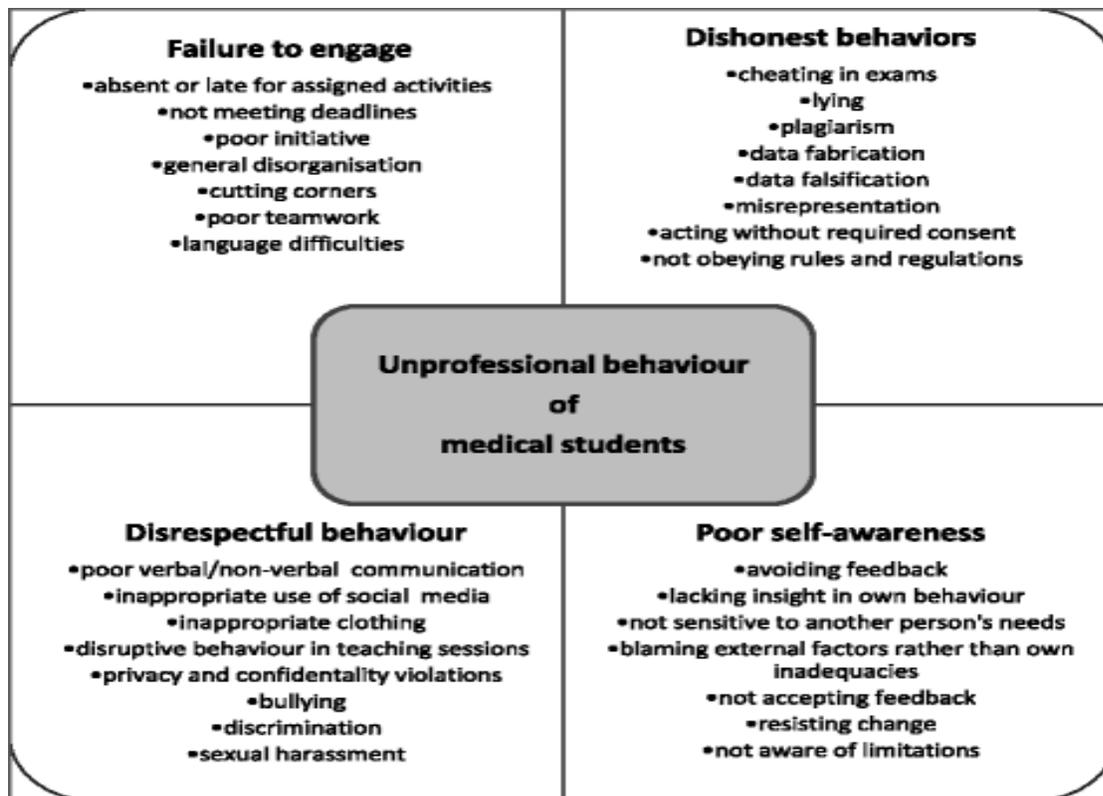
Professionalism Policy

Background:

When physician assistant students embark upon the journey to become health care professionals, they must demonstrate the personal and professional integrity necessary to maintain the fundamental trust that society places on respected individuals of the Physician Assistant profession. The Physician Assistant program fully expects students to demonstrate the interpersonal skills, professional comportment, ethical obligation, and positive attitudes necessary to function in a manner that is consistent with professional practice. Professional attitudes and conduct are expected of the student starting day one of the program.

Professionalism is as important as, and holds equal importance to, academic progress. Students are expected to demonstrate the legal, moral, and ethical standards required of a healthcare professional and display behavior which is consistent with these qualities. Professionalism and professional ethics are terms that signify certain scholastic, interpersonal, and behavioral expectations. The program expects nothing short of respect and professional demeanor at all times.

Categories where student behavior may fall below expectations are: Failure to engage, Dishonest Behaviors, Disrespectful Behavior, and Poor Self-Awareness. Below is an illustration delineating common unprofessional behaviors that may be noted and documented under these categories. This list is meant to provide examples of common unprofessional conduct observed in health profession students. It is not exhaustive of the conduct that may be observed and documented.



Reference: Mak-van der Vossen et al. BMC Medical Education (2017) 17:164

Purpose:

To prepare UNE Physician Assistant students to demonstrate the professional conduct expected and required of professional practice in medicine.

Policy

Students will be regularly evaluated throughout both the didactic and clinical phases of the PA curriculum/program. Regular evaluation includes observation of student behaviors when engaged in program activities, during the regularly scheduled time on campus, at a clinical site, or on a video conference platform. **Professional conduct will be reviewed and documented at each regularly scheduled advisor meeting.** Infractions of professionalism may be noted by faculty and staff in or out of the classroom. Infractions may also be noted by preceptors and clinical staff at rotations sites.

Furthermore, infractions may be noted by intellectual dishonesty, lack of academic integrity, improper use of social media, any violations of HIPAA standards and violations of state or federal statutes governing PA practice. When infractions of professionalism take place, attempts to remediate the student will be approached. In cases of egregious professionalism violations, such as those compromising safety and well-being, the program reserves the right to proceed immediately to more severe disciplinary actions. Each infraction no matter the nature of the issue, will be managed on a case-by-case basis. Individual courses may also have course-specific professionalism requirements or a portion of the grade that is determined by professionalism.

For infractions qualifying for remediation, the goal of remediation is student success. Student remediation may include, but is not limited to, additional assignments to better understand professional behaviors, assigned course(s) on professional behaviors, student meetings to discuss ways to improve on unprofessional or irresponsible behaviors. If there are repeated or more serious infractions of the professionalism policy, as determined by the SDC and Program Director on a case by case basis, course of action will be made based on the nature of the infraction or the repeated infraction of conduct or behavior. Outcomes could include, but are not limited to failure of an assignment, failure of a course or clinical rotation, professionalism warning, professionalism probation, or dismissal from the PA program. Please refer to the link below for the WCHP policies on Professionalism.

https://www.une.edu/sites/default/files/2024-03/Grad%20Prog%20Policies%20AY2024-2025_FINAL.pdf

Procedure:

When infractions of professionalism take place the student will be informed and the observed conduct will be noted in writing by faculty and/or staff. Depending on the severity of the infraction one of the three pathways will be pursued:

1. Instructor and or advisor remediates student conduct and documents intervention
2. Student is sent to SDC for further evaluation and intervention(s), resulting in program status of either Professionalism Warning or Professionalism Probation
3. Activation of Campus security or law enforcement involvement *

Unprofessional conduct that comprises patient safety, or the reputation of the PA program will be referred directly to the SDC.

In clinical year, the PA program reserves the right to remove the student from the clinical site during the adjudication process.

*Infractions that threaten the safety and/or well-being of the public, students or the program proceed automatically to pathway #3. This level of infraction will most likely result in automatic dismissal from the program.

Academic Integrity Policy

The University of New England values academic integrity in all aspects of the educational experience. Academic dishonesty in any form undermines this standard and devalues the original contributions of others. It is the responsibility of all members of the university community to actively uphold the integrity of the academy; failure to act, for any reason, is not acceptable.

Charges of academic dishonesty will be reviewed by the dean of the appropriate College and, if upheld, will result at minimum in a failing grade on the assignment and a maximum of dismissal from the University of New England. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to the following:

1. Cheating, copying, or the offering or receiving of unauthorized assistance or information.
2. Fabrication or falsification of data, results, or sources for papers or reports.
3. Actions that destroy or alter the work of another student.
4. Multiple submissions of the same paper or report for assignments in more than one course without permission of each instructor.
5. Plagiarism: the appropriation of records, research, materials, ideas, or the language of other persons or writers and the submission of them as one's own.

It should be noted that this would also include any posting of completed assignments, assessments (includes quiz and exam questions), or IS/OSCE cases to social media, Google drives, and/or other avenue that can disseminate this information to other students (former and/or current) and/or the general public.

Assignments generated by artificial intelligence (AI) are also considered a form of academic dishonesty.

If a student is found to have violated academic integrity, they will receive a zero on the assignment (if one is associated) and the student will automatically be placed on Academic Probation. The same process for Academic Probation will be followed as outlined above. If the student violates academic integrity again while on Academic Probation, they will be dismissed from the program. Furthermore, if a student is on Academic probation due to a violation of academic integrity, any one professionalism concern (verified by SDC) will lead to dismissal from the program.

For more information on Academic Integrity, please see the current UNE WCHP Graduate/Professional Program Progression Policies and the UNE Student Handbook.

[Submission of Assignments](#)

Meeting deadlines is a professional responsibility. Late assignments will receive a zero in the didactic year; however, the assignment must be satisfactorily completed and submitted. Late assignments in the clinical year will have 15% deducted from the grade if submitted within 24 hours of the due date, but will receive a zero if submitted after 24 hours of the due date. Again, the assignment must be satisfactorily completed and submitted.

Students must successfully complete all coursework and exams in order to progress forward in the program. In case of technical difficulty submitting assignments, email your instructor **prior to the deadline** with a copy of your assignment attached. In cases of a personal emergency, the student must contact the course coordinator **prior to** the assignment deadline for consideration of a late submission. Faculty may not respond after hours to the request; however, they will address it upon the next business day if able.

Written assignments must have references cited in American Medical Association (AMA) format unless otherwise specified by the course instructor. Word documents are required submission types, not Pages documents or pdfs, unless otherwise specified.

[Policy on Missing Assessments \(Examinations\)](#)

Assessments include all graded activities including course exams, objective structured clinical examinations (OSCEs), lab practicals, or other highly weighted graded assessment (excluding quizzes). If a student misses a scheduled assessment due to an emergency or unanticipated absence during the didactic year, the student must contact the Academic Coordinator **and** course coordinator in advance to request a rescheduled assessment. The student must also complete a Student Time Away Request form. Failure to do so will result in a grade of zero for the assessment (unless there is a significant extenuating circumstance) and the student may be referred to the Student Development Committee. Students calling out on assessment day for medical reasons will need medical clearance from a medical provider to miss the assessment and return to class.

Unless determined to be an emergency or unanticipated absence as outlined above, students who arrive late or are not in attendance for a scheduled assessment, laboratory practical, or other examination

requirements will neither be granted additional time to complete the assessment nor will they be allowed to reschedule that assessment.

Policy on Reviewing Examinations

There will be no reviewing of individual exams after grading. In select courses, areas of weakness (in ExamSoft Strengths and Opportunities reports) will be given to the student for further study, but no questions will be given to students to review. Only the Student Academic Success Center (SASC) may do a supervised exam review with the student during a consultation **if SASC feels it is needed and has consulted with the course instructor.**

Policy on Question Clarification Forms and Examination Grade Changes

Question Clarification Forms (QCFs) serve to make the course instructor aware of questions requiring further clarification. QCFs will be filled out only during the exam and given to the course instructor for review. Exam questions may or may not be modified with this input. Global trends may lead to the exam question(s) being modified to allow for more than one answer choice accepted or removal of the question from the exam, at the discretion of the course instructor. There will also be no changes in exam grades once finalized by the instructor and released on Brightspace. Exam question challenges or debates for grade changes are not allowed.

Policy on Grading

The PA program utilizes a letter grade system for grading. End-of-Module assessments in a course must be completed with a 74% or above for passing. Completion of every course and clinical rotation with a minimum grade of 74 percent is necessary to progress through the program. However, **a course grade of a “C” will only be allowed for a maximum of 2 (two) courses throughout the PA curriculum.** Students receiving a third final course grade of a “C” (74-76%) or below will be considered unsuccessful in meeting academic standards, regardless of GPA, and therefore not allowed to progress in the program. Students receiving 3 or more final course grades of a “C” (74-76%) will be dismissed from the Physician Assistant Program. Some courses have additional requirements for passing, listed in their individual syllabi. The program does not round course grades up.

Grading Scale

A	94-100	B-	80-83	D	64-69
A-	90-93	C+	77-79	F	< 64
B+	87-89	C	<u>74-76 Passing</u>		
B	84-86	C-	70-73 Failing		

Note: Fractional numeric final course grades are not rounded up.

Course Attendance

Background

The UNE PA program is an on ground educational experience. Students are expected to be present and prepared for all scheduled classes, labs, and other program activities. Students are expected to be actively engaged as evidenced by critical thinking and meaningful participation. There are times when circumstances dictate that courses, lectures, and exams may need to be moved on short notice. The learning platform may be in person, virtual or hybrid, and requests for changes based on convenience will not be entertained. Requests for changes to learning formats due to long commutes are not allowed and are considered unprofessional behavior.

Policy

While it is the policy of the program that students attend all classes, labs, rotations, and other program related functions, the program understands students may have circumstances which might keep them from classes, rotations, or program activities.

Students are expected NOT to take time off unless the time period falls over the program defined holiday schedule or breaks. Scheduled medical or personal appointments are to be scheduled around the class and rotations schedules as much as possible

Failure to attend and actively participate in course work may be considered unprofessional conduct under the Professionalism category of Failure to Engage.

Procedure

Any student requesting time away for an expected/anticipated event must complete and submit the Student Time Away Request form [APPENDIX F](#) and submit it to the Academic Coordinator during the Didactic Year or Director of Clinical Education during the clinical year **prior to** the foreseen absence. These requests will be reviewed and a response will be issued within 2 business days of receipt.

Student must submit request for time away at least 3 business days in advance of the anticipated absence.

For **unexpected events** such as illness, injury, or tragedy, time away will be reviewed on an individual basis and in correlation with the demands of the program. The student should also fill out a Time Away Request and submit as outlined above. If the time away requested is greater than two days, supporting documentation is required

Due to the rigorous demands of the program, time away in excess of 5 (five) consecutive class/rotation days cannot be granted, and a Leave of Absence will be recommended. A Leave of Absence taken in the didactic year will require the student to decelerate to the next year, re-enrolling with the new matriculating class. During the clinical year, a Leave of Absence will result in a delay of graduation process, delaying the student's ability to graduate and complete program requirements on time.

For approved time away requests, students are responsible for all material missed including examinations, quizzes, and any in-class activities/assignments. If a student will be missing an examination within an approved absence, they are required to take that exam immediately upon their designated return to campus. The make-up exam may be in a different format than the original exam. If a deliverable occurs during an **unexcused** absence, then no make-up opportunity will be provided and a grade of zero will be given to the student.

During clinical rotations, any hours missed for an approved absence are expected to be incorporated into the remaining weeks left in the rotation, if possible, as approved by the preceptor/site coordinator.

Clinical year students must communicate any absence(s) with both the Director of Clinical Education AND the preceptor/clinical site.

Academic Grievances

If a student does not understand the reason for a grade or sanction, it is the student's responsibility to consult the instructor. If after such consultation the student does not agree with the instructor's decision, the student may initiate an official academic appeal. The Academic Complaint/Appeal process can be found in the UNE, Division of Student Affairs, Student Handbook <https://www.une.edu/student-affairs/student-conduct/student-handbook>.

Appeals, Grievances, and Complaints Other Than Academic Progression

Per the WCHP policies, occasionally, a student may have a grievance or issue other than academic performance or professional conduct. A student grievance with a faculty member should be addressed first directly with the faculty member. If a student is not satisfied following this step, the student may request a review by contacting the PD/school dean. A student or class representative may bring grievance or complaint about programmatic issues to a faculty member or the PD/school dean. If this does not successfully resolve the concern, a single student or a group of students may bring their complaint or grievance to the College Dean or other relevant administrative unit as per the guidelines in the UNE Student Handbook: <https://www.une.edu/student-affairs/student-conduct/student-handbook>

SECTION VI: STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Faculty Advisors

All students are assigned a faculty advisor. The role of the faculty advisor is to provide academic advising relative to a student's academic progress and success in the program. In addition to regularly scheduled meetings, students are encouraged to meet with their advisor more frequently if they are having academic and/or personal challenges that may impact their performance in the program. Since faculty and staff may not provide medical care or advice to our students, other support services (see below) may be recommended for matters regarding a student's physical, psychological, and emotional health.

UNE Student Health Services

At the UNE, we take pride in the high-quality healthcare services we provide. For student convenience and ease of access, we offer health centers on both our Biddeford and Portland campuses. We are staffed with highly qualified practitioners and support staff to provide complete services compatible with primary care offices. <https://www.une.edu/studentlife/shc>

LOCATION

Linnell Hall, lower level, Portland Campus

APPOINTMENTS

To make an appointment, call (207) 221-4242 or stop by. Same-day walk-in appointments are not guaranteed.

For after-hours healthcare advice, please call 1-866-847-5338. For an Emergency, call 366 for UNE Security or 911 for EMS.

Counseling Services on Portland Campus

The Student Counseling Center at the UNE provides a variety of services designed to support the psychological and emotional health of the student populations. Individual, group, or couple counseling is available. Services are offered at no cost to UNE students. Sessions are scheduled by appointment, or in response to emergencies and crises.

In keeping with UNE's focus on health promotion and maintenance, services such as workshops, special issues groups, informational sessions, developmental programming, and consultation are designed to address the on-going needs of UNE's population. The PA Program encourages students to take full advantage of their services. <https://www.une.edu/studentlife/counseling>

Office: Lower Level, Linnell Hall, Portland Campus

Phone: (207) 221-4550

Student Academic Success Center (SASC)

The Student Academic Success Center (SASC), a department within Student Support Services, provides a comprehensive array of academic support services including placement testing, courses, workshops, tutoring, and individual consultations. The mission of SASC is to assist matriculated students in becoming independent learners, so that they are able to meet the University's academic standards and attain their personal educational goals.

To make an appointment for tutoring or any of their services go to une.tutortrac.com or visit the SASC website at <https://www.une.edu/SASC>

Office: Procter Center, First Floor Procter Hall on the Portland Campus

Phone: (207) 221-4247

Student Access Center (SAC)

The Student Access Center (SAC) works to ensure that the University promotes respect for individual differences and that no person who meets the academic and technical standards needed for admission and continued enrollment at UNE is denied benefits or subjected to discrimination due to a disability. Toward this end, and in conjunction with federal and state laws, the University provides reasonable accommodations for qualified students. Any student eligible for and needing academic adjustments or accommodations because of a disability must register with SAC before accommodation requests can be granted. <http://www.une.edu/student-access-center>

Our work to provide adjustments or accommodations for you is an ongoing collaborative process that involves continued communication, reassessment, and modification. As a student with a disability, you can self-disclose your disability at the time of your application to UNE, or at any point while you are enrolled at the University. If you are a matriculating student requesting accommodations or services, please contact SAC prior to Orientation. As the first exams begin within two weeks of the start of the summer semester, students should contact SAC prior to arrival on campus as to facilitate appropriate accommodations being in place for those first exams. For ease of PA program provision of approved accommodations or services, SAC approved documentation should be presented to your instructors at the beginning of the semester.

Requests surrounding accommodations for travel and clinical rotation assignments should be made to SAC <http://www.une.edu/student-access-center> or the Title IX Office <https://www.une.edu/title-ix-civil-rights-compliance>. The program will then be notified by those offices and accommodations will be honored, if feasible.

SAC on the Portland campus is located in the lower level of Linnell Hall and may be reached by calling (207) 221-4418.

SAC on the Biddeford campus is located in the lower level of Stella Maris Room 131 and may be reached by calling (207) 602-2815.

Title IX Office and Resources

The Title IX team receives specialized training to respond to questions, incidents, and concerns that you may have related to Title IX and sexual misconduct. View [our team and our training](#) to contact a member if you have any questions or to view the training they have received. Please contact any of the team members for information on this site, UNE's policies and procedures, or if you would like to discuss a concern. <https://www.une.edu/title-ix-civil-rights-compliance>

- UNE Discrimination and Harassment Policy: The PA program requires that all matriculating students abide by the UNE Policies as defined in the UNE Student Handbook. These are available on the UNE website at: <https://www.une.edu/studentlife/handbook>.
- The University policy on Discrimination and Harassment is available at: https://www.une.edu/sites/default/files/2021-11/UNE%20Non-Discrimination%20Anti-Harassment%20and%20Sexual%20Misconduct%20Policy_11-11-2021_Final.pdf

Student Safety

The program documents appropriate security and personal safety measures for PA students and faculty at all locations where instruction occurs. Students and faculty must be aware of their surroundings at all times. The UNE Office of Safety and Security are responsible for security on all UNE campuses. Students and faculty must familiarize themselves with the safety procedures at all clinical affiliate locations.

<https://www.une.edu/student-life/campus-safety>

In the event of an emergency, the student must UNE security officers and/or call 911 immediately for further assistance.

Emergency Phone Number: 366

Non-emergency Phone Number: 2298

From off campus: (207) 283-0176

If a student or faculty feels unsafe, address personal safety first such as moving to a safe location, call security/public safety/police. When safe to do so, report any safety issues, events, or concerns to the Program preferably by phone. The student should also notify the preceptor and/or clinical site personnel, as they can be of assistance in addressing safety and security concerns.

The following are safety tips with which the student should become familiar:

1. Personal Safety:
 - a. Have your cell phone on you, and make sure your battery has an adequate charge, in case you need to call for help.
 - b. Walk with a friend whenever possible.
 - c. If you are being followed, walk to a populated area and call 911.
 - d. Walk with your head up being aware of your surroundings, making eye contact.
 - e. Have your car keys ready at all times.

- f. Have your bags packed neatly before you leave the clinic, so that you do not appear disorganized and fumbling to get in your vehicle.
2. Keeping Your Property Safe
 - a. Always lock your vehicle no matter how long you will be gone.
 - b. Make sure all valuables inside the vehicle are either in the trunk or well hidden.
 - c. Do not leave personal property unattended in a public place, even for a short period of time.
 - d. Do not display large sums of money.
3. Report any suspicious behavior to authorities that you may observe.

Crisis and Self-Help Resources

UNE sponsored resources are available throughout your academic career in times of crisis.

<https://www.une.edu/self-help-resources>

Emergency Numbers

UNE SECURITY

From campus: Ext. 366

From anywhere:

(207) 283-0176

CRISIS RESPONSE

An off-campus resource, available 24 hours/day.

(888) 568-1112

If you are a Portland or Biddeford campus-affiliated student and are currently experiencing a mental health crisis, you can reach UNE's on-call counselor by calling (207) 602-2549 and then pressing 6.

Revisions of PA Program Handbook Policies and Procedures

These policies and procedures are reviewed a minimum of one time a year and are revised as needed to facilitate the mission of the PA program, the Westbrook College of Health Professions, and the University.

The PA program reserves the right to make changes to any and all aspects of this handbook. Students will be notified of any substantial changes to the policies and procedures outlined here and will be provided copies of such changes. Students are expected to remain current in all policies and procedures. Students are required to meet all defined policies and procedures included in this handbook, and the additional supportive handbooks and policies referenced within. Failure to meet those requirements will be considered a professional conduct infraction/violation and may result in discipline or dismissal from the PA program.

APPENDIX A : UNE Physician Assistant Technical Standards

A student in the Physician Assistant (PA) program must have abilities and skills in five categories: observation, communication, motor, intellectual, and behavioral/social. All students admitted to the program must meet the following abilities and expectations upon matriculation and maintain these standards while enrolled in the PA program. In the event a student is unable to fulfill these technical standards, with or without reasonable accommodation, the student will be subject to dismissal after admission.

Reasonable accommodation for persons with documented disabilities will be considered on an individual basis. However, a candidate must be able to perform these skills in an independent manner. Accordingly, the program requires each student to meet the following technical standards with or without accommodation:

❖ Observation

Students must have sufficient sensory capacity to observe in the lecture hall, the laboratory, the outpatient setting, the inpatient setting (including operating rooms), and the patient's bedside. Sensory skills adequate to perform a physical examination are required. The ability to acquire sensory input using, vision, hearing, and tactile sensation must be adequate to observe a patient's condition and to elicit information through procedures regularly required in a physical examination, such as inspection, auscultation, percussion, and palpation.

In any case where a student's ability to observe or acquire information through these sensory modalities is compromised, the student must demonstrate alternative means and/or abilities to acquire and demonstrate the essential information without reliance upon another person's interpretation of the information. It is expected that obtaining and using such alternative means and/or abilities shall be the responsibility of the student. The University will reasonably assist the student where necessary.

❖ Communication

The student must be able to effectively and efficiently communicate in the English language using verbal, written, and reading skills, in a manner that demonstrates sensitivity to fellow students, patients, their families, and all members of the healthcare team.

A student must be able to accurately elicit information, describe a patient's change in mood, thought, activity, and posture. Students must demonstrate established communication skills using traditional means which may include the use of assistive devices.

The student must be able to communicate complex findings in appropriate terms for patients/caregivers and other members of the healthcare team.

A student must be able to communicate clearly and audibly during interactions with classmates, professors, patients, and members of the healthcare team.

A student must be able to receive, write legibly, and interpret written and verbal communication in both clinical and academic settings.

The student must be able to interpret and record legibly observations in a manner that is efficient and accurate using handwritten, electronic and dictating formats.

❖ Motor

The ability to participate in basic diagnostic and therapeutic maneuvers and procedures (e.g. palpation, percussion, auscultation) is required. Students must have sufficient motor function to safely execute movements required to provide care to patients. Students must be able to negotiate patient care environments and must be able to move between settings, such as clinic, classroom building, and hospital. Physical stamina sufficient to complete the rigorous course of didactic and clinical study is required. Long periods of sitting, standing, or moving are required in the classroom, laboratory, and during clinical experiences.

The student must be able to execute motor movements reasonably required to provide general and emergency diagnosis and medical care such as airway management, placement of intravenous catheters, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, and suturing of wounds. At all times the ability to administer care to patients in a safe manner is paramount.

❖ **Intellectual**

Students must be able to measure, calculate, reason, analyze, and synthesize information effectively in a precisely limited time as would be appropriate for the individual's level of training in a given clinical setting, while under stress, and in an environment in which other distractions may be present. Problem solving, one of the critical skills demanded of PAs, requires all of these intellectual abilities. In addition, students should be able to comprehend three-dimensional relationships and understand the spatial relationships of structures.

Students must be able to read and understand medical literature. The student must be able to demonstrate mastery of these skills and the ability to use them together in a timely fashion in medical problem solving and patient care.

The student must be able to, with or without use of assistive devices, but without reliance on another person, interpret x-ray, and other graphic images and digital or analog representations of physiologic phenomenon (such as ECGs).

❖ **Behavioral and Social Attributes**

Students must possess the emotional health required for full utilization of their intellectual abilities, the exercise of good judgment, and the prompt completion of all academic and patient care responsibilities. The development of mature, sensitive, and effective relationships with patients and other members of the healthcare team are essential. Flexibility, compassion, integrity, motivation, interpersonal skills, and the ability to function in the face of uncertainties inherent in clinical practice are required.

Students must function professionally and effectively in any academic or clinical setting. Students must always demonstrate the psychological and emotional health required for full utilization of their intellectual abilities, the exercise of good judgment, and the prompt completion of all academic and clinical responsibilities.

The student must demonstrate mature, sensitive, and effective relationships with University faculty and staff, peers and classmates, patients and other members of the healthcare team. Flexibility, compassion, integrity, motivation, interpersonal skills, and the ability to function in the face of uncertainties inherent in clinical practice are all required.

APPENDIX B: Competencies for the PA Profession

Competencies for the PA Profession, created and adopted by four organizations (NCCPA, AAPA, ARC-PA and PAEA) which can be found at: <https://www.aapa.org/download/90503/>

Competencies for the PA Profession
(Adopted 2005, reaffirmed 2010, 2018, amended 2013, 2021)

Introduction

This document defines the specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes that PAs in all clinical specialties and settings in the United States should be able to demonstrate throughout their careers. This set of competencies is designed to serve as a roadmap for the individual PA, for teams of clinicians, for healthcare systems, and other organizations committed to promoting the development and maintenance of professional competencies among PAs. While some competencies are acquired during the PA education program, others are developed and mastered as PAs progress through their careers. The PA professional competencies include seven competency domains that capture the breadth and complexity of modern PA practice. These are: (1) knowledge for practice, (2) interpersonal and communication skills, (3) person-centered care, (4) interprofessional collaboration, (5) professionalism and ethics, (6) practice-based learning and quality improvement, and (7) society and population health. The PA competencies reflect the well-documented need for medical practice to focus on surveillance, patient education, prevention, and population health. These revised competencies reflect the growing autonomy of PA decision-making within a team-based framework and the need for the additional skills in leadership and advocacy.

As PAs develop greater competency throughout their careers, they determine their level of understanding and confidence in addressing patients' health needs, identify knowledge and skills that they need to develop, and then work to acquire further knowledge and skills in these areas. This is a lifelong process that requires discipline, self-evaluation, and commitment to learning throughout a PA's professional career.

Background

The PA competencies were originally developed in response to the growing demand for accountability and assessment in clinical practice and reflected similar efforts conducted by other healthcare professions. In 2005, a collaborative effort among four national PA organizations produced the first Competencies for the PA Profession. These organizations are the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants, the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant, the American Academy of PAs, and the Physician Assistant Education Association (PAEA, formerly the Association of Physician Assistant Programs). The same four organizations updated and approved this document in 2012.

Methods

This version of the Competencies for the PA Profession was developed by the Cross-Org Competencies Review Task Force, which included two representatives from each of the four national PA organizations. The task force was charged with reviewing the professional competencies as part of a periodic five-year review process, as well as to "ensure alignment with the Core Competencies for New Physician Assistant Graduates," which were developed by the Physician Assistant Education Association in 2018 to provide a framework for accredited PA programs to standardize practice readiness for new graduates.

The Cross-Org Competencies Review Task Force began by developing the following set of guiding principles that underpinned this work:

1. PAs should pursue self- and professional development throughout their careers.
2. The competencies must be relevant to all PAs, regardless of specialty or patient care setting.

3. Professional competencies are ultimately about patient care.
4. The body of knowledge produced in the past should be respected, while recognizing the changing healthcare environment.
5. The good of the profession must always take precedence over self-interest.

The task force reviewed competency frameworks from several other health professions. The result is a single document that builds on the Core Competencies for New PA Graduates and extends through the lifespan of a PA's career.

The competencies were drawn from three sources: the previous Competencies for the Physician Assistant Profession, PAEA's Core Competencies for New PA Graduates, and the Englander et al article Toward a Common Taxonomy of Competency Domains for the Health Professions and Competencies for Physicians which drew from the competencies of several health professions.¹ The task force elected not to reference the source of each competency since most of these competencies were foundational to the work of multiple health professions and are in the public domain. The task force acknowledges the work of the many groups that have gone before them in seeking to capture the essential competencies of health professions.

1. Englander R, Cameron T, Ballard AJ, Dodge J, Bull J, Aschenbrenner CA. Toward a common taxonomy of competency domains for the health professions and competencies for physicians. *Academic Medicine*. 2013 Aug;88(8):1088-94.

Competencies

1. Knowledge for Practice

Demonstrate knowledge about established and evolving biomedical and clinical sciences and the application of this knowledge to patient care. PAs should be able to:

- 1.1 Demonstrate investigative and critical thinking in clinical situations.
- 1.2 Access and interpret current and credible sources of medical information.
- 1.3 Apply principles of epidemiology to identify health problems, risk factors, treatment strategies, resources, and disease prevention/health promotion efforts for individuals and populations.
- 1.4 Discern among acute, chronic, and emergent disease states.
- 1.5 Apply principles of clinical sciences to diagnose disease and utilize therapeutic decision-making, clinical problem-solving, and other evidence-based practice skills.
- 1.6 Adhere to standards of care, and to relevant laws, policies, and regulations that govern the delivery of care in the United States.
- 1.7 Consider cost-effectiveness when allocating resources for individual patient or population-based care.
- 1.8 Work effectively and efficiently in various healthcare delivery settings and systems relevant to the PA's clinical specialty.
- 1.9 Identify and address social determinants that affect access to care and deliver high quality care in a value-based system.
- 1.10 Participate in surveillance of community resources to determine if they are adequate to sustain and improve health.
- 1.11 Utilize technological advancements that decrease costs, improve quality, and increase access to healthcare.

2. Interpersonal and Communication Skills

Demonstrate interpersonal and communication skills that result in the effective exchange of information and collaboration with patients, their families, and health professionals. PAs should be able

to:

- 2.1 Establish meaningful therapeutic relationships with patients and families to ensure that patients' values and preferences are addressed and that needs and goals are met to deliver person-centered care.
- 2.2 Provide effective, equitable, understandable, respectful, quality, and culturally competent care that is responsive to diverse cultural health beliefs and practices, preferred languages, health literacy, and other communication needs.
- 2.3 Communicate effectively to elicit and provide information.
- 2.4 Accurately and adequately document medical information for clinical, legal, quality, and financial purposes.
- 2.5 Demonstrate sensitivity, honesty, and compassion in all conversations, including challenging discussions about death, end of life, adverse events, bad news, disclosure of errors, and other sensitive topics.
- 2.6 Demonstrate emotional resilience, stability, adaptability, flexibility, and tolerance of ambiguity.
- 2.7 Understand emotions, behaviors, and responses of others, which allows for effective interpersonal interactions.
- 2.8 Recognize communication barriers and provide solutions.

3. Person-centered Care

Provide person-centered care that includes patient- and setting-specific assessment, evaluation, and management and healthcare that is evidence-based, supports patient safety, and advances health equity. PAs should be able to:

- 3.1 Gather accurate and essential information about patients through history taking, physical examination, and diagnostic testing.
- 3.2 Elicit and acknowledge the story of the individual and apply the context of the individual's life to their care, such as environmental and cultural influences.
- 3.3 Interpret data based on patient information and preferences, current scientific evidence, and clinical judgment to make informed decisions about diagnostic and therapeutic interventions.
- 3.4 Develop, implement, and monitor effectiveness of patient management plans.
- 3.5 Maintain proficiency to perform safely all medical, diagnostic, and surgical procedures considered essential for the practice specialty.
- 3.6 Counsel, educate, and empower patients and their families to participate in their care and enable shared decision-making.
- 3.7 Refer patients appropriately, ensure continuity of care throughout transitions between providers or settings, and follow up on patient progress and outcomes.
- 3.8 Provide healthcare services to patients, families, and communities to prevent health problems and to maintain health.

4. Interprofessional Collaboration

Demonstrate the ability to engage with a variety of other healthcare professionals in a manner that optimizes safe, effective, patient- and population-centered care. PAs should be able to:

- 4.1 Work effectively with other health professionals to provide collaborative, patient-centered care while maintaining a climate of mutual respect, dignity, diversity, ethical integrity, and trust.
- 4.2 Communicate effectively with colleagues and other professionals to establish and enhance interprofessional teams.
- 4.3 Engage the abilities of available health professionals and associated resources to complement the PA's professional expertise and develop optimal strategies to enhance patient care.
- 4.4 Collaborate with other professionals to integrate clinical care and public health interventions.

4.5 Recognize when to refer patients to other disciplines to ensure that patients receive optimal care at the right time and appropriate level.

5. Professionalism and Ethics

Demonstrate a commitment to practicing medicine in ethically and legally appropriate ways and emphasizing professional maturity and accountability for delivering safe and quality care to patients and populations. PAs should be able to:

- 5.1 Adhere to standards of care in the role of the PA in the healthcare team.
- 5.2 Demonstrate compassion, integrity, and respect for others.
- 5.3 Demonstrate responsiveness to patient needs that supersedes self-interest.
- 5.4 Show accountability to patients, society, and the PA profession.
- 5.5 Demonstrate cultural humility and responsiveness to a diverse patient population, including diversity in sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, culture, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, religion, and abilities.
- 5.6 Show commitment to ethical principles pertaining to provision or withholding of care, confidentiality, patient autonomy, informed consent, business practices, and compliance with relevant laws, policies, and regulations.
- 5.7 Demonstrate commitment to lifelong learning and education of students and other healthcare professionals.
- 5.8 Demonstrate commitment to personal wellness and self-care that supports the provision of quality patient care.
- 5.9 Exercise good judgment and fiscal responsibility when utilizing resources.
- 5.10 Demonstrate flexibility and professional civility when adapting to change.
- 5.11 Implement leadership practices and principles.
- 5.12 Demonstrate effective advocacy for the PA profession in the workplace and in policymaking processes.

6. Practice-based Learning and Quality Improvement

Demonstrate the ability to learn and implement quality improvement practices by engaging in critical analysis of one's own practice experience, the medical literature, and other information resources for the purposes of self-evaluation, lifelong learning, and practice improvement. PAs should be able to:

- 6.1 Exhibit self-awareness to identify strengths, address deficiencies, and recognize limits in knowledge and expertise.
- 6.2 Identify, analyze, and adopt new knowledge, guidelines, standards, technologies, products, or services that have been demonstrated to improve outcomes.
- 6.3 Identify improvement goals and perform learning activities that address gaps in knowledge, skills, and attitudes.
- 6.4 Use practice performance data and metrics to identify areas for improvement.
- 6.5 Develop a professional and organizational capacity for ongoing quality improvement.
- 6.6 Analyze the use and allocation of resources to ensure the practice of cost-effective healthcare while maintaining quality of care.
- 6.7 Understand how practice decisions impact the finances of their organizations, while keeping the patient's needs foremost.
- 6.8 Advocate for administrative systems that capture the productivity and value of PA practice.

7. Society and Population Health

Recognize and understand the influences of the ecosystem of person, family, population, environment, and policy on the health of patients and integrate knowledge of these determinants of health into patient care decisions. PAs should be able to:

- 7.1 Apply principles of social-behavioral sciences by assessing the impact of psychosocial and cultural influences on health, disease, care seeking, and compliance.
- 7.2 Recognize the influence of genetic, socioeconomic, environmental, and other determinants on the health of the individual and community.
- 7.3 Improve the health of patient populations.
- 7.4 Demonstrate accountability, responsibility, and leadership for removing barriers to health.

APPENDIX C: Needle Stick/Bodily Fluids Exposure Guidelines and Form

Procedure immediately after an exposure:

1. **Immediately** cleanse the affected area:
 - Wash needle sticks and cuts with soap and water.
 - Flush any areas of contact with clean water.
 - Irrigate eyes with clean water, sterile saline, or sterile irrigates.
2. If the exposure occurs during the Academic year at an IGEP, wound care, or other site, **immediately** report the exposure to the faculty member in attendance and proceed to step #3.

If the exposure occurs during the Clinical year at a rotation site, **immediately** notify the supervising physician/preceptor or other site supervisor and follow site-established protocols.

3. **Immediately** seek medical evaluation and treatment. If there is no established protocol on site, seek treatment at the closest Emergency Department.
4. Within 24 hours, notify the PA Program by phone or email.
5. Submit the *Needle Stick/Bodily Fluids Exposure form* located below to the PA Program and UNE Student Health Services within 24 hours at (207) 221-4242/ Fax (203) 523-1913. Any and all expenses for the care and potential treatment are the responsibility of the student.

Bloodborne Pathogen Exposure Form

This form is to be completed when there has been a student needlestick or bodily fluid exposure and submitted via email or fax (207-221-4711) within 24 hours of the incident.

Date: _____

Name of student: _____

Date and time of exposure: _____

Rotation # (clinical year only): 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Clinical rotation type: _____

Name of site: _____

Name of person notified at the site: _____

Date and time of site notification: _____

Name of witness(es) (if any) to the incident: _____

Please provide a detailed description of incident, including how the exposure occurred and location (body part).

Did you receive medical evaluation and/or treatment? Yes No

Was the PA program notified? Yes No

Date and time PA program was notified: _____

Name of person notified at the program: _____

Signatures:

Student: _____

PA Program: _____

APPENDIX D: Student Accident Report

Student Accident Report

Notify the program of the accident/injury within 24 hours of the event. Submit this report within 24 hours of accident/injury. (*This form is not for needle stick or body fluids exposures.*)

Student Name _____

STUDENT STATEMENT:

_____ was injured at _____
(print name) (location)

on _____ at _____.
(date) (time)

Please describe in full detail how the accident occurred.

Did you receive medical evaluation and/or treatment? ___ Yes ___ No

Was the PA program notified? ___ Yes ___ No

Date and time PA program was notified: _____

Did you miss time from the class or the clinical rotation? ___ Yes ___ No

If yes, how many day(s)? _____

NOTE: If your absence from class or a clinical rotation will exceed two (2) days, you will need a medical note from the provider who treated you in an office/clinic or hospital and the date you can resume didactic or clinical activities. You may not return to class or rotations until we have this note.

Signatures

Student: _____

Date _____

PA Program: _____

Date _____

APPENDIX E: Netiquette Policy

- Use proper language with proper capitalization and punctuation. This means no emoticons, text message language, or swear words. Your virtual context is like a workplace and is meant to be professional.
- Be sure to test run your camera and your microphone before online sessions.
- Please be sure that your camera is turned on and that you are visible for faculty and peers to interact with you in the virtual environment.
- Please consider your clothing and environment. Home spaces will require you to be strategic about backdrops, light sources, and distractors. Please do not wear hats or hoodies during your courses. Consider the lighting so that you are clearly visible while online.
- Run a spelling and grammar check before posting anything to a discussion board. This is especially important if your instructor is grading these comments.
- Read through your comments at least twice before hitting submit. (Some professors use settings that allow students to edit their responses, while others do not.)
- Do not type in ALL CAPS! If you do, it will look like you are screaming.
- Recognize and respect diversity. It is ok to ask questions to clarify things you do not understand. If you are not sure, email the professor privately for more information.
- Avoid biting sarcasm and dark humor. Take your posts seriously. Never say online what you would not say in real life to another person's face. Your posts are a permanent record, so think about the type of record you want to leave behind.
- If you are frustrated and finding the course material difficult, please reach out to the professor, use IT resources, your peers etc., as we will not be in person. Your communication is critical to resolve any issues and foster your success. A discussion board is not the venue to complain about why you need to take this course, how it is or is not meeting your expectations, or how hard you have to work, or how bored you might be.
- Do not wait until the last minute to make your post(s) or submit your assignment(s). On discussion boards, early posts allow time for other students to respond before the deadline. Likewise, do not wait to post your replies until the deadline; the author deserves an opportunity to address any questions you have or respond to points you make. They will not be able to do that if you are close to the deadline.
- Before asking a question, check the instructor's FAQs or search your Learning Management System resources and/or the internet to see if the answer is obvious or easy to find.
- Be forgiving. If your classmate or faculty makes a mistake, whether it is a typo or grammatical error, do not judge them for it. Just let it go, and the other students and/or faculty will do the same.
- The same rules apply for email. "Hey, teach, heeeelp!" is probably not the best way to ask your professor a question. You should communicate with your professor in the same way that you would speak to your boss or a potential employer. Also, any email you send your professor should always include your name and which class you are in.

APPENDIX F: Student Time Away Request Form

While it is the policy of the program that students attend all classes, labs, rotations, and other program related functions, the program understands students may have unexpected circumstances which might keep them from classes, rotations, or program activities. Any student requesting time away for an unexpected event must complete and submit this form and submit it to the Academic Coordinator (Didactic Year) or Clinical Year Coordinator (Clinical Year). These requests will be reviewed and a response will be issued within 2 business days of receipt.

As addressed in the PA Student/Clinical Year Handbook: Students are not expected to take ‘time off’ unless the time period falls over the program-defined holiday schedule or breaks. Medical or personal appointments are to be scheduled around the class and rotation schedules.

For **unexpected events** such as illness, injury, or tragedy, time away will be reviewed on an individual basis and in correlation with the demands of the program. If the time away requested is greater than **2 (two) days**, a medical note or other supporting documentation is required.

Due to the rigorous demands of the program, time away in excess of 5 (five) consecutive class/rotation days cannot be granted, and a Leave of Absence will be recommended.

<https://www.une.edu/sites/default/files/202010/University%20Withdrawal%20and%20LOA%20Request%201-18-18%20BGB%20FINAL%20Edits%20Fillable.pdf>

For approved time away requests, students are responsible for all material missed including examinations, quizzes, and any in-class activities/assignments. If a student will be missing an examination or assessment within an approved absence, they are required to take that exam/assessment immediately upon their designated return to campus. The make-up exam/assessment may be in a different format than the original one. If a deliverable is not submitted during a non-excused absence, then no make-up opportunity will be provided and a grade of zero will be given to the student.

Date Submitted:

Requested date(s) off:

Courses that will be missed:

Course coordinator(s) on record:

Reason for Request:

Supportive Documentation (i.e. Medical note, other documents):

Student Name (PRINT):

Student Signature:

Program Use Only

Request Approved: _____

Not Approved: _____

Date:

Signature (Faculty):

Comments: