
Pathologists' Assistant Program

Questions Frequently Asked by Applicants (FAQs)

Do you prefer the GRE or the MCAT, what are competitive scores, and is there a lower limit (minimum score)?

- Applicants must submit GRE scores. MCAT scores are not accepted in lieu of the GRE
- Competitive applicants have scores in the 50th percentile or greater in all categories
- Any score below the 20th percentile in any category is unacceptable

Must I take the general or a specific subject GRE?

- Applicants must take the general GRE

What is the minimum undergraduate GPA required for applicants?

- The minimum acceptable GPA is 2.8, but most competitive applicants have undergraduate GPA's of 3.0 or above
- Applicants with an undergraduate GPA of less than 3.0 **and** GRE Quant score of less than the 50th percentile are not academically eligible for admission
- Prerequisite courses must be completed no more than 5 years before application (starting from the date of college graduation)

What courses must I take to be eligible to apply for the program?

- NAACLS, our accrediting agency, requires the following as absolute prerequisites:
 1. College mathematics at least to the level of algebra
 2. General biological and chemical sciences
 3. *Either* organic chemistry or biochemistry (**we require both**)
- To be competitive, you should have two semesters each of general biology, general chemistry, organic chemistry/biochemistry

What other courses do you recommend?

- Human physiology is very strongly recommended
- Other courses that strengthen an application are:
 1. Cell biology
 2. Genetics
 3. Gross Anatomy
 4. Histology/Microscopic Anatomy
 5. Immunology
 6. Microbiology
 7. Molecular Biology

What is the earliest I can apply and when is the application deadline?

- Applications will be accepted from July 1 of the previous year until January 15 of the year in which you wish to matriculate.

Pathologists' Assistant Program

What are the current essay question prompts?

- In addition to academic and professional health background experiences, what life experiences have been formative to your growth as a person and have led to your interest in the profession of pathologists' assistant at the Duke Pathologists' Assistant Program? (500 words or less)
- What is your definition of success? (250 words or less)

Who can provide a letter of recommendation?

- We suggest that references be provided by someone who can assess your academic potential, a supervisor or manager, and/or a pathologists' assistant or anatomic pathologist that you have shadowed
- Letters will be submitted through the online Slate portal request format

How many students are accepted for each class?

- We accept 8 students per year

How many applications do you receive per year?

- We receive an average of 60-70 applications for each class

What work experience is necessary to be eligible for application?

- Work experience in surgical and autopsy pathology may be difficult to obtain. Therefore, we do not require that our applicants have actually been employed in anatomic pathology laboratories. However, applicants must have a minimum of 10 hours shadowing experience in surgical pathology, preferably with a pathologists' assistant or, if that is not possible, an anatomic pathologist, to be competitive for admission.

What are the requirements for shadowing?

- At least 8 hours of shadowing in surgical pathology gross analysis is required
- Shadowing of a Pathologists' Assistant is preferred, but shadowing of an anatomic pathologist in surgical and autopsy pathology is acceptable
- Shadowing in surgical pathology is mandatory for admission and observing an autopsy is strongly recommended, if possible
- Shadowing at more than one site is recommended

Do you conduct open houses for prospective applicants?

- We do not conduct general open houses. However, if a prospective applicant wishes to make an appointment with the director for a general information question and answer session and facilities tour, this can be arranged on an as needed basis.

Pathologists' Assistant Program

I am interested in forensics and crime scene investigation. Is the Pathologists' Assistant Program a good way to further my career in this area?

- No, the Duke Pathologists' Assistant Program is not a forensics program. Although we provide a 2-week introduction to forensic technique at the North Carolina Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, the focus of our training is anatomic pathology, predominantly surgical pathology and hospital autopsy pathology.

How long is the program?

- Nearly 2 calendar years. We begin in early August, and the training is completed almost 2 years later in mid-July, including both summers.

Can this program be completed on-line?

- No, we do not offer any of our courses on-line

Is on campus housing available?

- Very limited on campus housing is available for graduate and professional students—most of our students live in community housing which is widely available. Information regarding on and off-campus housing can be found at the Duke Student Affairs website at: <http://gradschool.duke.edu/admissions/admitted/housing.php>

Can international students apply and what are the requirements?

- We welcome applications from all eligible candidates, including those outside the US. In addition to the general requirements (undergraduate degree, prerequisite courses, official transcripts, GRE scores, letters of recommendation, etc.), applicants must:
 1. Submit all transcripts from institutions outside the US for course by course evaluation by one of the companies which provide this service. The selected company will then forward the official evaluation to us.
 2. If English is not your first language, provide proof of English proficiency with either academic IELTS (preferred) or internet-based TOEFL scores no more than 2 years old. The minimum acceptable IELTS score is 8 and the minimum TOEFL score is 115.

I am a graduate of a foreign medical school. Will you waive the requirement for GRE/MCAT?

- We are unable to waive this or any other requirement for anyone wishing to apply to the program, regardless of prior education or experience

I am already an on-the-job trained "pathology assistant" and wish to become certified by the ASCP. If I complete the didactic portions of the program can I use my previous experience as the practical portion of the training?

- No, in order to be certified by Duke as eligible to sit for the ASCP board exam, you must complete the entire 2 years of training

Pathologists' Assistant Program

Can I complete the didactic portion of my training on site and then choose where I want to do my practical rotation?

- No, all practical rotations are to be completed on site and at our official affiliate institutions

This sounds like an expensive proposition! Are there grants or scholarships available? What kind of financial aid can I expect?

- We do not offer any grants or scholarships. The medical center financial aid office works with our accepted applicants to provide enough aid to cover tuition, fees, living expenses, etc. Duke operates under a need-blind admissions policy, and no one with need is denied admission to the program because of lack of funds. According to the current students, the awards are generous enough to provide a comfortable (although not extravagant) existence.
- ASCP award scholarships to medical laboratory students. Visit www.ascp.org/scholarships for more information on eligibility criteria and deadlines.

How many hours per day are devoted to classes and rotations? Will I be able to work while I am a student?

- The first-year didactic curriculum is quite rigorous and we strongly discourage first-year students from holding jobs. Although the length of time spent in class and lab may not be a full 8-hour day, the necessary study time precludes employment.
- Second-year students are on practical rotations following their preceptor's schedules, which range from 8:00 AM until 6:30 PM daily during week days, so a traditional job is difficult to fit into that schedule. We do, however, allow students to hold positions that do not interfere with the rotations, and even have several student worker positions available in the pathology department specifically designated for Pathologists' Assistant students.