Pathologists' Assistant (PA ASCP)

- Pathologists' assistants provide anatomical and pathology services under the supervision of a pathologist (a physician—either an MD or DO).
- Pathologists' assistants perform a variety of tasks including gross examination of surgical pathology specimens; frozen section preparation; postmortem exams; dissection and preparation of specimens; obtaining clinical histories; preparing tissues for histological processing; photographing pertinent gross specimens; conferring with physicians; and administrative, supervisory, and teaching duties.
- Pathologists' assistants work mostly in surgical pathology with fewer of them performing autopsies. This is based largely on the sharp declines in autopsy rates in the United States.
- Pathologists' assistants work in a variety of settings including hospitals, private labs, forensic pathology labs, reference labs, government healthcare, medical teaching facilities, and businesses.

Education & Licensure

- To attend one of the accredited Pathologists' Assistant programs, a bachelor's degree completed in any major with prerequisite courses is required.
- Programs generally consist of a year of courses and 10-12 months of clinical work.
- Once clinical training is successfully completed, students must pass the national certification exam and be licensed in a state as an American Society of Clinical Pathology PA (ASCP).
- Most programs take 22-24 months and result in a master's degree.

Preparation

- Shadow a Pathologists' Assistant to make sure this is the right field and you truly understand what a pathologists' assistant does.
- Take an aptitude test if it is needed to apply to the graduate program(s) of interest to you.
- Both the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) and/or the Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT) are generally accepted. If English is not your first language, a TOEFL exam may also be required.
- Although programs do not have a standard set of requirements, many similarities in their requirements do exist.
- Initial courses are similar to other professional health care fields such as MD programs, but some further courses are required.
- Research possible programs of interest early in your academic career to make all requirements are met.

Common Prerequisite Courses (required courses determined by each graduate program but similar to this list)

Requirements	Course	Purdue Equivalent (specific courses may vary by major)
Biology	Intro Biology with lab	BIOL 11000-11100 **or** BIOL 13100 & BIOL 23100 & 23200 (lab) **or** BIOL 23100 & ABE 22600* **&** upper-level biology (with lab) **or** BME 29500* **&** lab (BME 24300* **or** BME 32001* **or** BME 35400*) **&** upper-level biology (with lab)
	Anatomy & Physiology	BIOL 20300-20400 (BIOL 30100-30200)
	Microbiology with lab	BIOL 22100 **or** BIOL 43800 & 43900 (lab)
Chemistry	General Chemistry with lab	CHM 11510-11610 (with lab) **or** CHM 12901 (CHM 11500 earned credit through course sequence) **or** CHM 12500-12600 **or** CHM 13600 (with earned 11500 credit)
	Organic Chem (2 sem)	CHM 25500-25600 **or** CHM 26100-26200 **or** CHM 26505-26605 **or** PHSC 20400-20500
	Biochemistry	BCHM 30700 **or** BCHM 56100 **or** CHM 33900 **or** CHM 43300 **or** PHSC 20800
English	Writing	ENGL 10600 **or** ENGL 10800 **or** SCLA 10100* (may need individual school approval)
Other Possible Requirements	Additional Biology, English, Math, Physics, Ethics	Histology, Cell Biology, Genetics, Statistics, Physics, Biomedical Ethics, Technical Writing
Pre-Med Planning Seminar (optional)		BIOL 39600 is a 0 credit 10 week class covering how to apply to professional school.
*Ask individual schools if they will accept these courses toward their requirements. Courses no longer offered.		

Student Organization: Caduceus Club (pre-med/pre-health club), Purdue Forensic Science Club

Program Information:

- [Accredited Training Programs for PAs](https://www.pathassist.org/page/AboutUs_NAACLS) https://www.pathassist.org/page/AboutUs_NAACLS

Applying

- Application is directly through the schools you would like to attend.
- Competitive applicants will have:
  - Strong academic performance
  - Above average scores on the aptitude test (GRE or MCAT)
  - Leadership, teamwork, and communication skills
  - Volunteer and shadowing/observation experiences
  - Strong positive letters of recommendation
- Early application is recommended as many programs take only a handful of students.

Fee Assistance

- Visit specific school websites to learn if fee assistance is offered.
- [GRE Fee Reduction Program](https://www.ets.org/gre/score-users/reducing-barriers/fee-reductions.html) https://www.ets.org/gre/score-users/reducing-barriers/fee-reductions.html
- [MCAT Fee Assistance through the AAMC](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/applying-medical-school-process/fee-assistance-program/) https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/applying-medical-school-process/fee-assistance-program/

Employment Outlook

- The demand for PAs (ASCP) is growing.
- Many laboratories nationwide are facing manpower shortages.
- PAs work in hospitals, academic centers, private pathology laboratories, medical research centers, and medical examiner offices.
- Salaries average about $90,000+ and most students are employed before leaving their graduate program.

Programs in the Region

- [Rosalind Franklin University Pathologists' Assistant M.S. Program](https://rosalindfranklin.edu/academics/college-of-health-professions/degree-programs/pathologists-assistant-ms/) North Chicago, IL | https://rosalindfranklin.edu/academics/college-of-health-professions/degree-programs/pathologists-assistant-ms/
- [Wayne State University Pathologists' Assistant Program](https://www.pathassist.org/page/AboutUs_WayneState) Detroit, MI | https://www.pathassist.org/page/AboutUs_WayneState
- [University of Toledo](https://www.utoledo.edu/med/depts/path/PA%20Program.html) Toledo, OH | https://www.utoledo.edu/med/depts/path/PA%20Program.html

More Information

- [American Association of Pathologists' Assistants](https://www.pathassist.org/default.aspx) https://www.pathassist.org/default.aspx
- [What is a Pathologists' Assistant?](https://www.pathassist.org/page/What_is_a_PA) https://www.pathassist.org/page/What_is_a_PA
- [Who's Who in the Lab](https://labtestsonline.org/articles/medical-laboratory-professionals) https://labtestsonline.org/articles/medical-laboratory-professionals
- [American Society for Clinical Pathology](https://www.ascp.org/content) https://www.ascp.org/content
- [National Accrediting Association for Clinical Laboratory Sciences](https://www.naacls.org/) https://www.naacls.org/

Other Careers to Consider

Physician (to become a pathologist) · Medical Laboratory Scientist · Forensic Scientist

Preparing for your Giant Leap
purdue.edu/preprofessional