Physician Associate Studies – Postgraduate Diploma

Frequently asked questions

What degrees are suitable for entry?

We want our students to start the course with a good knowledge of biological processes, cell functions and cell interactions. The degrees we regard as generally suitable are:

- Anatomy
- Biology
- Biochemistry/Medical Biochemistry
- Biomedical Science
- Dentistry
- Human Biology/Physiology/Pharmacology
- Medical Science
- Pharmacy
- Physiotherapy
- Podiatry
- Psychology (NB with a biological orientation)
- Radiography
- Zoology

Will you accept a 2:2?

A 2:2 in a Life Sciences Degree may be considered with considerable clinical experience. If you have a Health Sciences diploma (e.g. Nursing) with extensive clinical experience, we may also consider you.

Can I apply now, even if I haven’t finished my undergraduate degree yet?

Yes, you can apply with predicted results.

You will not be able to start the programme until you have finished your undergraduate degree, and any offer will be conditional on the basis of you achieve a certain class of degree (normally 2:1).

What’s the timetable like?

This is a very intensive programme, as you can expect to be studying 50+ hours per week, which includes evenings and weekends, especially when on placement. Students are expected to be
available for both placement and University-based teaching 8-6pm Monday to Friday, 48 weeks a year.

Clinical placements involve supervised practice in hospitals and GP surgeries to encourage learning by observation, practice and reflection and are an integral part of the course.

Each week will be different, but a typical Term 1 week may include the following scheduled sessions:

- Monday – GP Placement day
- Tuesday – Clinical Sciences session / self-directed or group work on weekly problem
- Wednesday – Anatomy and Applied Theory / more work on weekly problem
- Thursday – History Taking / Examination Theory session / more work on weekly problem
- Friday – Understanding Problem Conclusion and following Problem launch (morning) / Skills session with simulated patients (afternoon)

The week will also normally include significant time for self-directed or group work on the weekly problem along with a schedule of facilitated sessions. The above schedule is indicative, with students given occasional non-recalled dates and other sessions as required. Timetables will vary week-to-week and term-to-term depending on learning requirements and forthcoming placements.

Why choose Birmingham?

- Integrated programme – placements start after only a few weeks of theory.
- Broad range of placements – students are placed in a broad range of GP Practices and Hospitals Trust throughout the West Midlands and beyond
- Not just lectures – the programme includes regular practical skills sessions with simulated patients and role players, understanding problems and other innovative learning methods.
- Centuries of clinical expertise – the academic team possess over 250 years of clinical experience combined, with a mixture of experienced doctors and leading Physician Associates.
- The City - One of Europe's most exciting destinations, Birmingham is brimming with life and cultures, making it a wonderful place to live, study and work. Our students fall in love with the city - around 40% of our graduates choose to make Birmingham their home.

Where will I go on placements?

Birmingham is in a unique position being within easy travelling distance of many different hospitals and practices which provide a wide range of speciality services. During the programme students can expect to be placed at multiple Hospital Trusts and GP practices throughout the Midlands and beyond. By having a broad range of placements, students are better placed to thrive in the professional environment post qualification, with alumni finding the experience invaluable when moving into the world of work.
Special provision is made for students who have exceptional circumstances and may have difficulty traveling to all the hospitals used for clinical placements. The mechanism for letting the programme know is explained during the first week of term.

Please note: although the programme will try and accommodate those with exceptional circumstances, the programme is unable to guarantee any specific placement request.

What are previous graduates doing now?

• Birmingham-trained Physician Associates have been very successful in the NHS jobs market.
• Our graduates are working all across the UK (although about half have stayed in the West Midlands) and in a wide range of specialties including: general medicine, acute medicine, cardiology, paediatrics, breast surgery, trauma and orthopaedics, mental health, emergency medicine and General Practice. Many have also chosen to go into teaching and research (part-time while maintaining clinical duties), with five of our graduates currently teaching here at Birmingham.
• Most of our graduates are on NHS Agenda for Change Band 7 (starting at £31,383 p.a.) or higher.
• The number of NHS Trusts and Practices seeking Physician Associates (and the average number working for each Trust/Practice) has increased rapidly throughout the last few years, and we would expect that number to continue to increase at a similar pace over the next few years.

Is funding available?

Students should expect to self-fund. Some funding may be made available from Health Education England West Midlands to all students considered as home status for fees, students will not need to apply for this separately. Further details will be published on the website once available.

Can I work in the USA?

The British Physician Associate programme does not qualify you to work in the USA.

How can I find out more?

Come to one of our Open Evenings - for the Open Evening dates and details of how to register please visit the course web pages at www.birmingham.ac.uk/pa

We also run a Virtual Open Days which include staff and students videos as well as the chance to take part in a live question and answer session. Re-visit the most recent Virtual Open Day at www.pg.bham.ac.uk/event/physician-associate-studies-05-2016/

Contact the programme team at physicianassociate@contacts.bham.ac.uk