

Academic Preparation for PathA Graduate Programs

Mercer University undergraduate students who plan to pursue a career as a pathologists' assistant are considered to be on a pre-PathA track. **Pre-PathA is NOT an academic major**; every pre-PathA student must choose an academic major and minor offered by one of Mercer's colleges or schools and work to fulfill their degree requirements. Students on a pre-PathA track should investigate the different graduate programs available and make themselves aware of the specific requirements for the programs in which they are interested, as students must complete the admission prerequisites for their target programs as well as their degree requirements.

Majors and Minors for Pre-PathA Students. Most of the accredited pathologists' assistant programs in the U.S. require applicants to complete a bachelor's degree **in one of the biological or chemical fields**. Some will accept bachelor's degrees in a non-science field if a substantial amount of biology and related coursework is also completed in addition to that degree. The minimum science coursework required for most PathA programs includes a year of general biology, a year of general chemistry, a year of organic chemistry, microbiology, and biochemistry. Some schools also require human anatomy. Pre-pathologists' assistant students must investigate their graduate school choices early in their undergraduate careers to learn the requirements of their preferred graduate programs.

As the admission prerequisites for most PathA programs include general biology, general chemistry, organic chemistry, microbiology, and biochemistry, students who do not major in Biology or Chemistry but complete the courses listed here may claim the Biology and Chemistry minors:

Online Science Coursework. Most professional schools do not accept online coursework for the core science requirements. Many professional schools relaxed the requirement for "in-person" science courses for students at institutions that did not offer students a choice due to the pandemic, but most schools have returned to requiring "in person" lab coursework.

Pass/Fail, AP, CLEP, and Audit Credit. Students should consult the websites and admissions personnel of the individual PathA programs they are interested for their policies regarding AP credit, CLEP credit, audited courses, and courses graded on a pass/fail basis.

Developing a Back-Up Plan. Because the pre-pathologists' assistant track is challenging and graduate schools are so selective, all pre-pathologists' assistant students should **develop an alternative plan to implement in the event that adequate progress is not made on their track (i.e., GPA's below 3.5) or acceptance to PathA school is not achieved**.

An effective back-up plan is one that addresses any perceived "weak spots" in an applicant's portfolio. For example, it would be appropriate for a student with GPA's below 3.0 to take more classes and earn high grades before applying again to PathA graduate school, while a student with high grades and very little health care experience should spend more time working or volunteering in a clinical setting before applying again.

Students who lose interest in this career path should investigate their options using the website, <https://explorehealthcareers.org/> and consult the advisors in the Center for Career & Professional Development (Mercer-Macon).