



# **Master of Physician Assistant-California Hybrid Program Student Handbook**

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## INTRODUCTION

### ***Message from the Dean/Program Director***

From start to finish, this journey will feel both like the shortest and longest of your professional life. And yet, while the trials can be grueling, the doors of opportunity and service to your patients and community are enduring rewards.

PAs have unique positions and responsibilities within the medical arena requiring the ability to understand complex interpersonal dynamics, the ability to humbly give and receive feedback, and considering aspects of care outside of medicine that impact health and wellbeing.

The PA program team have made it our mission to guide students through the educational journey focused on patient care outcomes, while also focusing on student wellbeing. Patient care outcomes embody the mission and vision of the PA profession, and our program strives to guide the way.

The MPA curriculum was developed with respect for the ARC-PA standards, the NCCPA Blueprint, and a focus on caring for patients and communities. Holistic medicine accounts for the aspects of patient care that go beyond medicine, but still impact our health and wellbeing. The program delivers the curriculum in an innovative and immersive modality to offer students opportunities to learn problem-solving and clinical decision-making skills.

This handbook is a guide to assist students throughout our program over the next 24 months, from admission to graduation.

### ***Student Handbook Purpose***

The West Coast University's Master of Physician Assistant Program – California (MPA-CA) informs students of its rules, policies, and guidelines through this student handbook, the MPA-CA Program website, course syllabi, and other sources. This handbook serves as a program-specific supplement to other university rules, policies, and guidelines found in the WCU University Catalog, WCU Student Handbook, and other documents. Please be advised that the University Catalog contains policies and procedures that apply to all students and is the primary source of reference. If there are any discrepancies or differences in the policies or procedures contained in the University Catalog with those contained in the MPA-CA Program Student Handbook, the more applicable policy, which is most likely the more stringent policy, will be followed.

This handbook has been published for your benefit. *Please read it in its entirety.* Clarification and explanation should be sought from the MPA Dean/Program Director if needed.

In the entirety of this handbook, the terms "University" or "WCU" shall mean the West Coast University. The term "Program" will refer specifically to the MPA-CA Hybrid Program, and "PA" refers to Physician Assistant.

## ***Program Handbook Disclosure and Curriculum Design***

The contents of this handbook are subject to change throughout the program. It is your responsibility to maintain and access the most current version of this handbook at all times. The current handbook will be posted in the program-specific Canvas learning management system resources for students.

The MPA-CA program is designed to assist you in becoming a competent and successful entry level PA, including but not limited to successfully passing your National Commission on Certification of PAs (NCCPA) board examination and subsequently becoming eligible to apply for state licensure. Importantly, each state has different licensure requirements and practice acts that each student is responsible for researching specific to the particular state in which they are seeking to be licensed in the future. WCU helps prepare students to take and pass the NCCPA certification examination that is commonly required to meet baseline eligibility requirements for state licensure. WCU has not conducted a review of individual state licensure requirements and/or eligibility to practice. Therefore, it is the responsibility of each student to conduct their own research and analysis as to the requirements of their desired state for licensure.

The MPA-CA Hybrid program curriculum follows a specific sequence. All students progress through the program as single cohorts in lock-step fashion, completing all coursework and program requirements in sequence. The program encourages and requires an atmosphere of professionalism, collaboration, and non-competitiveness for students to meet program goals and course and program expectations.

West Coast University reserves the right, at its discretion, to make reasonable changes in program content, class schedules, policies, procedures, materials and equipment, as it deems necessary in the interest of improving students' educational experiences. When the class size or curriculum warrants, classes may be combined. When federal, state, accreditation, or professional changes occur that affect students currently in attendance, the University will make the appropriate changes and notify the students accordingly.

## ***Curriculum Description***

The MPA-CA curriculum is a systems-based curriculum with content driven by the NCCPA Blueprint, ARC-PA standards, and evidence-based medical guidelines. Key characteristics of the curricular structure are detailed below:

- *Competency-based*: provides systems of instruction, assessment, grading, and academic reporting based on students demonstrating that they have learned the knowledge and skills that they are expected to learn as they progress through their education.
- *Student-centricity*: provides opportunities for each individual to develop clinical skills, collaborate with others, collect evidence of learning, and become successful lifelong learners.
- *Outcomes-based*: provides competencies aligned with learning assets to track performance and attain student learning outcomes.
- *Case studies*: robust case presentations to improve critical reasoning and problem-solving.
- *Holistic education/holistic medicine*: provides an emphasis on holistic education, developing students' knowledge, skills, and values in collaboration with their professional development of

personal wellness, emotional wellbeing, and interpersonal relationships, the program focuses on holistic medicine and patient care.

- *Immersive opportunities*: provide engaging and interactive environment for students to utilize an artificial environment that induces thinking capacity.

### ***Physician Assistant Program Titles & Roles***

The program's Dean/Program Director is a licensed, NCCPA certified PA and experienced academic faculty member employed by the university to lead the MPA-CA Program and supervise all program personnel. The Dean/Program Director oversees all aspects of the program and is responsible for:

- a) program organization
- b) program administration
- c) fiscal management of the program
- d) continuous programmatic review and analysis
- e) program planning
- f) program development
- g) completion of ARC-PA required documents
- h) adherence to the Standards and ARC-PA policies

The medical director is: a) currently or previously licensed PA or osteopathic or allopathic physician b) currently or previously board-certified

Principal Faculty are full-time program faculty who are responsible for and actively participate in program processes of:

- a) developing, reviewing and revising as necessary the mission statement, goals and competencies of the program,
- b) selecting applicants for admission to the PA program,
- c) providing student instruction,
- d) evaluating student performance,
- e) academic counseling of students,
- f) ensuring the availability of remedial instruction,
- g) designing, implementing, coordinating, and evaluating the curriculum, and
- h) evaluating the program.

All principal faculty in the MPA-CA Hybrid program also serve as Faculty Advisors, providing support and advice to enrolled students. Expectations of the advisory role include but are not limited to:

- Develop an advising relationship to help students feel a sense of connection, support, and guidance to navigate the program.
- Possess a complete understanding of the entire curriculum, program design, University policies and procedures, and University and program handbooks.
- Guide students in developing a program success plan for didactic courses, clinical experiences, research projects, PANCE preparation, and employment readiness.
- Provide guidance and support to students specific to time management which includes those who work while attending the program.
- Provide referrals, as needed, to University co-curricular student support services.
- Maintains professional integrity, confidentiality, sensitivity, and respect for individual needs and diversity in student advising.
- Documentation of each student's progress towards degree completion.

## ***Student Advisement for Program Progress and Professional Development***

Student advisement is conducted in timely and continuous basis and is an integral part of the educational process in the MPA-CA Program. Each student is assigned a faculty advisor upon matriculation to the PA Program.

- *General program advisement* pertains to academic and/or clinical performance progress that is conducted and documented by the faculty advisor.
- *Specific course advisement* pertains to academic and/or clinical performance and progress that is conducted and documented by the course director.

Students will meet with their faculty advisor within the first four weeks of the program to make introductions and discuss professional and academic goals. Faculty advising meetings will occur at least once a trimester throughout the program, or more if necessary. Course director advising occurs on an ad hoc basis to ensure successful progress within the course. Faculty Advisors and course directors will designate their preferred method of appointment scheduling.

Students and faculty advisors will meet regularly to discuss academic and professional development. In the clinical year, professional development assessments are discussed with clinical preceptors during the Student Mid-Rotation Self-Evaluation and the Preceptor Evaluation of SCPE Student. If professional development is noted as a concern by the preceptor during either of these reports, an advisory meeting is scheduled with the faculty advisor, Manager, Clinical Education, and potentially the Dean/ Program Director after consulting the clinical preceptor.

Instructional Faculty participate in the MPA-CA program as instructors in the role of adjunct faculty and clinical preceptors providing student instruction, evaluating student performance, and academic counseling to students. They must be qualified through academic preparation and/or experience to teach assigned subjects and knowledgeable in course content and effective in teaching assigned subjects.

The program has four administrative support staff positions, including the Program Manager and the Manager of Clinical Education who support the administrative demands of program function and maintenance. Both positions focus on tasks that supplement student success through scheduling, coordinating, and managing operational components of the program.

The Manager of Clinical Education develops and maintains relationships with clinical partners. They establish and schedule, with the assistance of the program faculty, all supervised clinical practice experiences (SCPEs). The Manager of Clinical Education is supported by a Clinical coordinator who focuses on supplementing student success with the operational needs of the clinical year.

## ***Campus Security***

As is the case with each WCU campus, the Center for Graduate Studies (CGS) facility will have security personnel on duty during operational hours and remote surveillance 24 hours a day, seven days a week. There is constant video monitoring of the perimeter and common areas within the building to ensure safety for students and faculty members.

## ARC-PA Accreditation Statement

The ARC-PA has granted **Accreditation-Provisional** status to the **West Coast University Physician Assistant Program** sponsored by **West Coast University**.

Accreditation-Provisional is an accreditation status granted when the plans and resource allocation, if fully implemented as planned, of a proposed program that has not yet enrolled students appear to demonstrate the program's ability to meet the ARC-PA Standards or when a program holding Accreditation-Provisional status appears to demonstrate continued progress in complying with the Standards as it prepares for the graduation of the first class (cohort) of students.

Accreditation-Provisional does not ensure any subsequent accreditation status. It is limited to no more than five years from the matriculation of the first class. The program's accreditation history can be viewed on the ARC-PA website at <https://www.arc-pa.org/accreditation-history-west-coast-university-california/>.

## Information Regarding the PA Profession

### ***Notice Regarding Physician Assistant Title***

On May 24, 2021, the American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA; now known as the American Academy of Physician Associates) passed a formal resolution changing the professional name from 'physician assistant to 'physician associate.' For more detailed information, please refer to the AAPA website: <https://www.aapa.org/title-change/>. However, as this title change has not yet been formally adopted by jurisdictions governing state PA licensure, the title of 'physician assistant' or 'PA' will continue to serve as the official profession title. Given this, and to prevent confusion raised by the title change, the name "PA" will be used throughout the remainder of this handbook.

### ***PA Professional Role***

PAs are skilled and rigorously trained medical professionals, practicing in all medical specialties and settings, having completed an average of 4,000 hours of didactic and clinical training at the graduate level. Didactic training includes advanced biomedical sciences, clinical medicine, pharmacology and pharmacotherapy, professionalism and ethics, and clinical practice. Clinical training includes supervised clinical practice experiences in behavioral medicine, emergency medicine, family medicine, internal medicine, pediatric medicine, surgical medicine, women's healthcare, and additional training in elective specialties. The PA profession is dedicated to improving access to care for all persons and the application of culturally sensitive, person-centered care and team-based practice.

For detailed information on the PA professional role, see [AAPA's What is a PA? website](#) and the [AAPA's Guidelines for Ethical Conduct for the PA Profession](#).

### ***Certification and Licensure***

The Physician Assistant National Certifying Exam (PANCE) is administered by the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA). Only graduates of ARC-PA approved programs are eligible to sit for the PANCE. Successful completion requires that the candidate achieve the passing score

established by the NCCPA for that examination. After successfully passing the PANCE, graduates are eligible to apply for state licensure. Importantly, many states vary in their licensure requirements and application procedures. It is imperative that students review the specific requirements for states in which they are planning to pursue licensure.

### ***Statement of Values of the PA Profession***

- PAs hold as their primary responsibility the health, safety, welfare, and dignity of all human beings.
- PAs uphold the tenets of patient autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence, and justice.
- PAs recognize and promote the value of diversity.
- PAs treat equally all persons who seek their care.
- PAs hold in confidence the information shared in the course of practicing medicine.
- PAs assess their personal capabilities and limitations, striving always to improve their medical practice.
- PAs actively seek to expand their knowledge and skills, keeping abreast of advances in medicine.
- PAs work with other members of the health care team to provide compassionate and effective care of patients.
- PAs use their knowledge and experience to contribute to an improved community.
- PAs respect their professional relationship with physicians.
- PAs share and expand knowledge within the profession.

AAPA. Guidelines for Ethical Conduct for the PA Profession 7/1/21.

<https://www.aapa.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/16-EthicalConduct.pdf>

### ***The PA Oath***

*I pledge to perform the following duties with honesty, integrity, and dedication, remembering always that my primary responsibility is to the health, safety, welfare, and dignity of all human beings:*

- *I recognize and promote the value of diversity and I will treat equally all persons who seek my care.*
- *I will uphold the tenets of patient autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, justice, and the principle of informed consent.*
- *I will hold in confidence the information shared with me in the course of practicing medicine, except where I am authorized to impart such knowledge.*
- *I will be diligent in understanding both my personal capabilities and my limitations, striving always to improve my practice of medicine.*
- *I will actively seek to expand my intellectual knowledge and skills, keeping abreast of advances in medical art and science.*
- *I will work with other members of the health care team to assure compassionate and effective care of patients.*

- *I will uphold and enhance community values and use the knowledge and experience acquired as a PA to contribute to an improved community.*
- *I will respect my professional relationship with the physician and act always with guidance and supervision provided by that physician, except where to do so would cause harm.*
- *I recognize my duty to perpetuate knowledge within the profession.*

*These duties are pledged with sincerity and honor.*

*[Adapted from [AAPA's Guidelines for Ethical Conduct for the PA Profession](#)]*

## MPA-CA Hybrid Program Mission and Vision Statements, Learning Outcomes, & Goals

### Program Mission Statement

The West Coast University Physician Assistant Program of California provides an intentionally immersive learning environment focused on clinical and cultural competence, personal wellness and insight, and ethical responsibility. Through our unique approach to transformational education and student support, we prepare medical professionals to demonstrate competent, compassionate, person-centric care with respect and equity to all communities served.

### **Program Vision Statement**

The West Coast University Physician Assistant Program of California strives to equip clinically and culturally competent medical providers to serve the medical needs of patients, families, and communities.

### **MPA-CA Program Learning Outcomes (Competencies)**

#### **1. Medical Knowledge (MK)**

Apply comprehensive, evidence-based medical knowledge across the lifespan to deliver holistic, person-centered, and equitable care.

- MK1: Integrate foundational and clinical sciences into the care of diverse patient populations.
- MK2: Identify etiologies for medical conditions influencing health and disease.
- MK3: Select appropriate diagnostic studies to support clinical reasoning.
- MK4: Apply pharmacologic and non-pharmacologic management strategies in patient care.

#### **2. Interpersonal and Communication Skills (IS)**

Demonstrate compassionate, culturally responsive, and effective communication with patients and interpersonal healthcare teams.

- IS1: Communicate patient information effectively and accurately in an oral presentation.
- IS2: Document patient information from a clinical encounter effectively and professionally.
- IS3: Provide respectful collaboration with members of the healthcare team to promote patient-centered care.

#### **3. Clinical and Technical Skills (CTS)**

Perform the clinical and technical skills required for safe and effective patient care.

- CTS1: Elicit an accurate, age-appropriate medical history-taking and physical examinations.
- CTS2: Document and present patient encounters accurately.
- CTS3: Perform technical skills and clinical skills safely and with appropriate technique.
- CTS4: Provide patient education and counseling to patients.

#### 4. Clinical Reasoning and Problem-Solving (CR)

Synthesize clinical, cultural, and contextual information to formulate differential diagnoses and management plans.

- CR1: Interpret laboratory and diagnostic studies accurately.
- CR2: Formulate a logical and prioritized differential diagnosis.
- CR3: Apply an evidence-based medicine approach that also considers the social determinants of health in patient care decisions.

#### 5. Professionalism (P)

Demonstrate integrity, accountability, and commitment to ethical practice and interprofessional collaboration in healthcare systems.

- P1: Demonstrate professional behaviors required by a Physician Assistant.
- P2: Demonstrate professional practice standards consistent with the physician assistant profession.

### **MPA-CA Program Goals**

Key elements and guidelines that explain the overall and long-term focus of the Master of Physician Assistant program.

Goal 1. Select competent, qualified applicants who successfully complete the program.

*Benchmark 1:* 90% of accepted applicants will receive biology/chemistry/physics with a 3.2 GPA or above.

*Benchmark 2:* The program will maintain an attrition rate of <10%.

Goal 2. Prepare graduates to apply foundational scientific knowledge in clinical decision-making and patient care.

*Benchmark 1:* Each graduating cohort of students will receive an average End of Curriculum™ (EOC) task outcome in Scientific Concepts at or above the national average.

*Benchmark 2:* Each graduating cohort of students will receive an average Physician Assistant National Certifying Examination (PANCE) task outcome in Applying Foundational Scientific Concepts at or above the national average.

Goal 3. Prepare graduates to deliver evidence-based preventive care and patient education, demonstrating competency in health maintenance, disease prevention, and patient counseling.

*Benchmark 1:* Each graduating cohort of students will receive an End of Curriculum™ (EOC) Exam task outcome for the Entrustable Professional Activity (Provide preventative health care services and education) at or above the national average.

*Benchmark 2:* Each graduating cohort of students will receive a PANCE task outcome (healthcare maintenance, patient education, preventative measures) above the national average.

Goal 4. The WCU Program of California strives to meet or exceed the national average for the first-time pass rate on the PANCE.

### ***Statement of Non-discrimination***

The MPA-CA Program adheres to all policies related to non-discrimination outlined by West Coast University in the University Catalog. Additionally, we adhere to the program Mission, Vision, and Goals for the equitable treatment of students, associates (faculty and staff), and patients.

### ***Policy for Grievance/Mistreatment Policy (A3.14g)***

The MPA program strictly prohibits the mistreatment of students. This includes discrimination, harassment of any kind, unprofessional relationships, misuse of power or authority, and abusive or intimidating behavior. The MPA Program and the University take students' concerns seriously and encourage them to speak up about problems, complaints, and grievances using the applicable policies and procedures. In this section, students can find specific policies and procedures to support them in situations where they feel mistreated. The following section is provided as a resource and overview of applicable policies related to concerns of student mistreatment ("Student Mistreatment" is a term used exclusively by the program's accreditor ARC-PA and is used only within this program and in this section specifically to highlight the applicable policies in compliance with ARC-PA standards). The applicable policy is determined based on the situation the student has a concern about. Students are advised that at any time they have a concern about student mistreatment, or if students need additional guidance on any of the policies and procedures listed below, they should contact their Campus Director of Student Affairs ([WCUCGSStudentAffairs@westcoastuniversity.edu](mailto:WCUCGSStudentAffairs@westcoastuniversity.edu))

- **University Non-Discrimination Statement:** This policy reaffirms the University's commitment to equal opportunity and prohibits discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or other protected characteristics and applies to all academic, clinical, and extracurricular settings. Students who wish to understand their rights or report discriminatory conduct should review this policy in its entirety on page 9 of the [Student Handbook](#).
- **Title IX Nondiscrimination Policy and Notice of Nondiscrimination:** In accordance with Title IX, this policy outlines the University's obligations to prevent and respond to sex-based discrimination, including sexual harassment and assault. This policy statement provides specific guidance on how to file formal complaints and on receiving supportive measures. The full [policy statement](#) and [grievance resolution procedures](#) are located on the University website.
- **Student/Employee Fraternization** (*Student Handbook, Page 27*): This policy explicitly prohibits the engagement in any improper fraternization between students and employees/faculty to maintain professionalism and avoid conflicts of interest. Students with any concerns that fall under the scope of this policy should directly contact the Student Affairs Department. The full policy is available in its entirety on page 27 of the [Student Handbook](#).
- **Student Complaint/Grievances Procedure:** This procedure outlines the formal process by which students can submit grievances related to academic matters, student services, or university

personnel. The policy includes specific procedures and contact information, also available in the [University Catalog](#).

A grievance is a complaint by a student involving the interpretation, application, or alleged violation of University policies and procedures. A grievance procedure is used for issues other than student conduct code or Title IX policy violations. Please refer to the Conduct Code and Title IX Policy for those concerns. If a student believes a University official, faculty member, administrator, or student has acted improperly or inconsistently with WCU policies and/or procedures, the student may file a grievance. This may include, but is not limited to, misapplication or misinterpretation of policy, procedures, practices, unfair treatment or conduct, etc. All grievances must be filed within 30 days of the incident.

The Complaint/Grievances Procedure is designed to support and foster a fair, objective, respectful and ethical set of policies and procedures for resolution of disputes. The policies and procedures are designed to provide students with a process in which to protect the University and its students. Students, faculty or administrators who submit or support a filed grievance may not be subjected to retaliation. Incidents of retaliation should be immediately reported to the Campus Director of Student Affairs or Executive Director.

Matters that have been or are in litigation will not be reviewed/considered.

### ***Grievance/Mistreatment Procedure***

Prior to submitting a formal grievance/mistreatment, the student/grievant is encouraged to attempt a good-faith resolution with the individual(s) at whom the grievance is directed. The University believes that most grievances can and will be resolved through this informal process.

**Step 1:** Discuss the issue with the individual(s). Every attempt should be made by both the student and individual(s) to resolve the matter at this level.

**Step 2:** If not resolved through Step 1, unresolved issues should be informally discussed/submitted in writing to the appropriate Dean or Department Head.

If dissatisfied with the response or solution, a student may submit a written grievance, along with all grievance documents, to the Director of Student Affairs:

- a. The student submits a [Grievance Form](#), available on the West Coast University website. If the reason for grievance is not one of the options provided, the student may choose "Other" and provide a description of the alleged mistreatment in the comment section.
- b. If necessary, a representative from the Office of Student Affairs will meet with the student to gather additional information regarding the concern.
- c. Following a review, the Office of Student Affairs will notify the student of the outcome in writing via email and, if necessary, next steps and actions.

This policy and procedure is internal to WCU. If, after using the WCU procedure, a student does not feel that the University has adequately addressed a complaint or concern, the student may consider contacting [external agencies](#) listed in the West Coast University Catalog.

## ***Student Affairs Addressing Issues Impacting Program Progress***

### ***University Policies: Exception to Academic Policy***

In limited circumstances, where compelling reasons exist that are beyond a student's control, students may request an exception to a university or program policy through a formal petition process. Students must obtain the form from the Student Affairs Office and include supporting documentation with their request.

#### ***University Catalog Policy Statement:***

All exceptions must be submitted on the Exception Policy Form accompanied by pertinent documentation evidencing the circumstance. It is expected that before a petition for exception is requested, that all other appropriate appeals and administrative options have been exhausted. By submission of the petition, the requester authorizes the University to examine any and all pertinent records or contact any party from whom information is needed in order to make an informed decision. The Exception to Policy can be found in the [University Catalog](#).

**To submit a petition for an exception to policy, obtain the form from the Student Affairs Office ([WCUCGSStudentAffairs@westcoastuniversity.edu](mailto:WCUCGSStudentAffairs@westcoastuniversity.edu)) and include documentation to support the request.**

## ***Student Affairs Addressing Personal Issues Impacting Program Progress***

Students may experience personal problems that can adversely affect personal fulfillment and their education. To assist PA students who may need extra support, WCU offers a no-cost, confidential support service. Should students find themselves in a crisis situation, WCU offers a Student Assistance Program (SAP) accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. SAP services are provided by Aetna, a private, national consulting and service firm that specializes in student assistance consultations. Additional information for timely access is provided in the [University Student Handbook](#) under Counseling Services.

### **Timely access and/or referral of students to resources addressing personal issues impacting their progress. (A3.07)**

The program is committed to the personal and academic success and well-being of all students, including timely access to services addressing personal issues which may impact progress in the PA program. Importantly, students do not need faculty/program referral for any University student support services. In the case of urgent or emergency need, students should pursue services regardless of program activities to ensure timely access to services addressing personal issues. Although, other than in the case of a true emergency, faculty are not permitted to provide healthcare to students, they may assist students in securing referral for appropriate care if needed. A student who is reasonably believed to pose a danger to him/herself or others, for any reason including but not limited to physical or psychological difficulties, may be required by the Dean/Program Director to obtain professional evaluation and treatment. WCU has built-in counseling resources for students. Please refer to the Counseling Resources and materials in the WCU Student Handbook. The Executive Director of Safety and Security spearheads a Risk Mitigation Program, with a special focus on reducing risks, mental health issues as well as other campus safety issues.

## **Reasonable Accommodations**

Any student requesting reasonable accommodations is required to meet each term with the Campus Disability Services Coordinator through the Student Affairs Office. The Campus Disability Services Coordinator will assist the student with the necessary steps. The Campus Disability Coordinator certifies approved accommodations and provides the student with a “Letter of Accommodation(s).” The student is responsible for providing the letter to the course directors each term. See the [University Student Handbook](#) for additional details.

## **MPA-CA Hybrid Program Policies**

Students must complete their program and all their clinical hours in the state where they resided when signing the Enrollment Agreement or as approved by the University.

### **Scope of Policies (A3.01)**

Program policies apply to all students, faculty, and staff of the program regardless of location. However, clinical facility policies, if different than program policies, will prevail when students and faculty are at those clinical facilities.

This handbook is available online to students and the public on the program’s website. Additionally, the handbook is available to all students via Canvas, the program’s learning management system. It is the responsibility of the student to obtain, read, and comprehend the purpose, policies, and procedures of the University and program.

WCU and the program reserve the right, at any time, to create additional policies, or modify existing ones, as needs may arise. It is expected that information contained in this document will be altered from time to time as is necessary and further information may be added periodically.

### **Admissions Information and Policies**

For the most updated admissions information, please refer to the [University Catalog](#) and the [MPA-CA website](#).

### **Required Documents (for both didactic and clinical phases of training):**

*All documents are uploaded to the Program’s Exxat Prism portal.*

1. Background clearance for participation in the program: Must be submitted prior to matriculation.
2. Negative comprehensive drug screening(s): Must be submitted prior to matriculations. Additional comprehensive drug screenings may be required by clinical rotation sites.
3. Meeting all immunization/vaccination and TB clearance requirements: Must be submitted prior to matriculation. Additional documentation may be required by clinical rotation sites.
4. Current Healthcare Provider Basic Life Support (BLS) and Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS) certification: Must be submitted prior to matriculation and maintained throughout enrollment in the program.
5. Strict adherence to Standard Precautions and Student Incident, Injury and Exposure Reporting Plan.

## ***Requirements for Participation in Clinical Rotations***

Students must successfully complete all first-year coursework, including but not limited to training on universal precautions, bloodborne pathogens, and patient confidentiality/HIPAA regulations, and other pertinent topics. Students who do not complete the prerequisite coursework and training (i.e., first-year coursework) are not eligible to attend the clinical phase of their training and put their satisfactory progress through the program in jeopardy.

### ***Immunizations and Health Screening (A3.09a)***

The West Coast University MPA-CA Hybrid program policy on immunization and health screenings requires students to have their immunization and health screening up to date with formal documentation from their healthcare provider. Our process is based on current CDC guidelines for healthcare professionals. Students must provide proof of screening, vaccination, and/or immunity for the following:

- Completed and signed health clearance form from the student's primary physician.
- Tuberculosis (TB)- TB screening procedures vary based on a student's immunization/disease history.
  - Students who do not have a history of TB infection/disease or have not had positive TB test results in the past (regardless of BCG vaccination status) are required to have an initial TB skin test (TST) or QuantiFERON TB Gold or T-Spot blood test within three months of matriculation (completed by student). Students who have a skin test only will be required to complete a second skin test within the first month of the program (provided by the school). (The second TST must be placed at least seven days after the first.) Annual testing is required thereafter.
  - Students who have a positive history of TB disease must provide documentation of positive TB skin test (TST) results and TB treatment and must complete the program TB symptoms form upon matriculation. Students must complete the symptoms form annually. Based on the results of the symptoms form additional action may be required.
  - Students who have tested positive for TB infection must provide documentation of positive TB skin test (TST) results and TB treatment, a negative two-view chest x-ray, and must complete the program TB symptoms form upon matriculation. Students must complete the symptoms form annually. Based on the results of the symptoms form additional action may be required. An additional negative two-view chest x-ray may be required by some clinical affiliates and will be the financial responsibility of the student.
- Tetanus-Diphtheria-Pertussis (Tdap/Td): Evidence of one dose of Tdap within 10 years of all program activities. If a student has received Td only, then a one-time dose of Tdap must be received, then boost with Td every 10 years.
- Measles, Mumps, & Rubella (MMR): Students born after 1957 must show immunity through documentation of a series of two doses of MMR vaccine (must be administered at least one month apart) OR laboratory evidence of immunity via positive antibody titer results. Students with negative or indeterminate antibody titer results will be required to complete the vaccination series.
- Varicella (chickenpox): Evidence of immunity is documentation of two doses of the varicella vaccine (administered at least 28 days apart with the last dose completed at least two weeks prior to clinical start date) OR laboratory evidence of immunity via positive antibody

titers. Students with negative or indeterminate antibody titer results will be required to complete the vaccination series.

- Hepatitis B: Evidence of immunity is documentation of three Hepatitis B vaccines (2nd injection administered at least 28 days after 1st injection, and the 3rd injection must be administered 6 months after the 1st injection or 5 months after the 2nd injection) OR laboratory evidence of immunity via positive antibody titer (titer must be obtained at least 30 days after the 3rd injection). Students with negative or indeterminate antibody titer results will be required to complete the vaccination series and an antibody titer 1-2 months after the third dose of the second series.
- Meningitis: Evidence of vaccination or signed waiver.
- Annual Influenza vaccination: While WCU does not require annual influenza vaccination, students are expected to fulfill the immunization requirements of clinical sites.
- COVID-19 vaccination: While WCU does not currently require COVID-19 vaccination, students are expected to fulfill the immunization requirements of specific clinical sites that require this vaccination.
- **References**
  - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Adult Immunization Schedule: [Adult Immunization Schedule by Age | Vaccines & Immunizations | CDC](#)
  - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Recommended Vaccines for Healthcare Workers: [What Vaccines are Recommended for You | Adult Vaccines | CDC](#)

Specified immunizations and health screenings are required for all students unless medically contraindicated (health care provider documentation must be provided and based on CDC contraindication guidelines). By submitting immunization records, the student authorizes WCU to release the information in the WCU records to affiliated SCPE sites and preceptors.

Additional immunization and/or health screening requirements beyond those mandated by the program may be required by a clinical affiliate. If so, students will be made aware of additional requirements and will need to ensure compliance at their own cost, as necessary.

Immunization and health screening requirements will be reviewed annually by the program to ensure they minimally meet the most recent CDC recommendations, state-specific mandates, and affiliate policies. Students will be notified of changes to the immunization policy and given directions on how to complete any additional requirements, as necessary. Failure to comply with clinical site requirements for immunization and/or health screening resulting in incomplete supervised clinical practice experiences may prevent students from completing the clinical year resulting in dismissal from the program.

International Rotation Immunization Requirements: The MPA-CA Hybrid program does not currently have plans for PA students to be engaged in international travel for clinical learning experiences. Should this become available in the future, the MPA-CA Program will require students to have supplemental immunizations and health requirements for those international rotations. This will include any routine and recommended immunizations and health recommendations for the country as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Travel Medicine through the following website:

<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list>

New Student Onboarding Mandatory Attendance Policy: The Office of Student Affairs, MPA faculty, and staff, have developed programming for the foundation of every student's MPA journey to ensure that each student is off to the best start when classes begin in January. All matriculating students are expected to review the cohort-specific New Student Orientation Information on Canvas Resource page and Schedule before New Student Onboarding session.

NOTE: New Student Onboarding session is MANDATORY, and the MPA CA Program expects all students to attend and participate in person without exception. New Student Onboarding session is held on campus at the Center for Graduate Studies at 590 N. Vermont Avenue, Los Angeles, CA. 90004.

### ***Technical Standards for the MPA-CA Hybrid Program and PA Profession***

Basic skills are required for the practice of medicine, regardless of specialty. Should a student's ability to perform technical standards change for any reason, medical or otherwise, notification to the Program Director is required as soon as possible.

Meet the Technical Standards for admissions as follows:

- a. Candidates must be able to observe and participate in demonstrations and experiments in the basic sciences.
- b. Candidates must have sufficient use of the sensory, vision, hearing, motor, and somatic sensation necessary to perform a physical examination including point-of-care techniques.
- c. Candidates must be able to perform examination activities such as palpation, auscultation, percussion, the administration of intravenous medication, the application of pressure to stop bleeding, the opening of obstructed airways, and the movements, equilibrium, and functional use of the sense of touch and vision.
- d. Candidates must be able to learn to respond with precise, quick, and appropriate action in emergency situations.
- e. Candidates must have the interpersonal skills necessary to communicate with accuracy, clarity, efficiency, and sensitivity.
- f. Candidates must have the skills to be able to analyze and synthesize information, solve problems, and reach diagnostic and therapeutic judgments.
- g. Candidates must be able to acknowledge evaluation and respond appropriately.
- h. Candidates must possess the interpersonal skills to develop rapport and positive relationships with patients.
- i. Candidates must possess basic technology and digital literacy.
- j. Candidates are expected to possess the perseverance, diligence, and consistency to complete the PA Program curriculum. Candidates, therefore, must be able to tolerate physically taxing workloads, to function effectively under stress, to adapt to changing environments, to display flexibility, and to function in the face of uncertainties inherent in the clinical problems of many patients.

### ***Program Director, Medical Director, and Faculty as Student Health Care Providers Policy (A3.06)***

Any individual who is in any capacity as faculty or serving an administrative role in the Program (clinical, principal, lecturing, or otherwise on paid or unpaid status) must not act as a health care provider for program students except as a basic responder in an emergency. Students are to be directed to their primary care provider, emergency department, or other health care provider.

### ***Employment while Participating in the Program (A3.14i)***

Given that enrollment in the program is a full-time commitment, with an average time commitment of 60 hours or more each week, employment during the program is strongly discouraged. Students should

be aware that the program will require evening or weekend classes, clinical experiences with various shift schedules, and program-related activities that may fall out of the normal weekday schedule. If a student chooses to be employed while enrolled in the program, academic attendance, performance, deadlines, and participation schedules and standards will not be altered in any way to accommodate employment.

## ***Policies Regarding Student Conduct & Professionalism***

### **Introduction**

Student Conduct includes all WCU and program-specific student conduct and honor code policies. In accepting admission to the program, each student agrees to review and to abide by all policies of WCU, the program, and the individual clinical sites for which they may be assigned.

University and program policies are included to provide students with broad notice of expected and prohibited conduct; they are not designed to exhaustively define misconduct. All enrolled students are required to review and, when applicable to the PA student, continuously abide by the [Guidelines for Ethical Conduct for the PA Profession](#) in addition to all WCU and program policies.

Here in the program, one of our goals in educating students is to graduate healthcare providers who are not only clinically sound, providing the highest quality of care within their scope of practice, but also well-respected professionals within the medical community. Each student must demonstrate the ability to work effectively within a professional environment among various types of healthcare settings. The PA student must demonstrate sound judgment, intellectual honesty, and privacy and confidentiality standards in accordance with FERPA and HIPAA protocols. Breaching professionalism, particularly when exhibiting any behavior that might pose a threat to the student or to others, may lead to dismissal from the program. PA students must be aware that even as students they are viewed as part of the medical community. As such, PA students are expected to display the highest standards of professionalism. It is critical, therefore, that the development of professional behavior be assessed just as academic and clinical skills are measured.

Failure to adhere to professionalism and code of conduct guidelines, standards and policies will result in consequences up to and including dismissal.

Importantly, and regardless of Program and University consequences, many state license boards, credentialing agencies, and facilities require the program to report professionalism issues demonstrated by students while enrolled in the Program. The required reporting of such issues may delay licensure and credentialing and potentially cause issues securing licensure and employment. It is vital that all students understand this issue to help ensure they maintain professionalism throughout their time in the program.

### **Student Conduct**

Student [Code of Conduct](#) and the [Academic Honor Code](#) are discussed in the [University Student Handbook](#). All alleged violations of the student Code of Conduct and/or Academic Honor Code are referred to Student Affairs for evaluation.

### **Minimum Standards of Professional Conduct**

The below standards of professional conduct are in addition to the WCU and program student conduct policies, including but not limited to the Honor Code.

As future PAs, MPA-CA Hybrid students are required to conform to the highest standards of ethical and professional conduct. These include, but are not limited to:

- Respect for others, including but not limited to program faculty and staff, classmates, clinical site preceptors and staff, and patients
- Consistent professionalism in all communications, including but not limited to synchronous class discussions, asynchronous class discussions, and email communication
- Flexibility
- Academic integrity
- Honesty and trustworthiness
- Accountability
- Cultural awareness and sensitivity
- Professional dress (see dress code below)

### **Professionalism Exhibited through Appropriate Use of Digital Devices**

Smart phones, tablets, and laptops are more and more common in medical educational and clinical settings as more applications are, and become, available to assist with the clinical experiences. The use of mobile, or cellular phones, during clinical experiences ought to be used for such purposes and NOT for personal use.

Under no circumstance are photographs, texts, audio recordings, or other media recordings of patient information, clinical sites, clinical staff, visitors, patients, patient families, etc., to be taken or used. Doing so represents a clear HIPAA violation, is in violation of program policies, and could result in formal disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from the program.

### **Professionalism Exhibited through Appropriate Behavior When In Virtual Meetings (e.g., Zoom, Canvas Technologies)**

When in a virtual meeting, and unless receiving prior permission from the course director/presenter, students must have their video cameras on and be visible for the entirety of the meeting just as if they were attending an on-campus class session. Students are expected to be in a place in which they can appropriately participate, actively engage, be fully seen throughout the class, and have the necessary internet connection. Students logged into class should not be attending or participating in any other activities. Failure to participate and be visually seen on camera will result in an absence for the class period. All other professionalism expectations, including but not limited to attendance and professional attire and appearance, apply to all virtual class meetings.

### **Professionalism Exhibited through Attendance**

#### ***Attendance Policies - Academic Courses***

West Coast University emphasizes the need for all students to attend classes on a regular and consistent basis. Regular attendance and punctuality will help students develop good habits and attitudes necessary to compete in a highly competitive job market. See the WCU Attendance Policy specific to the MPA-CA Hybrid program contained in the [University Catalog](#). In addition to the University attendance policy, the following program-specific policies also apply:

- Not all absences will be approved to permit students to make-up work.
- Approved absences that allow for make-up work will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the program and will include illness or medical circumstances and emergent or urgent circumstances.

- Due to the accelerated nature of the MPA-CA program, absences to attend celebratory events (e.g., weddings, graduations), and absences from any portion of on-campus immersion activities cannot be approved. Such absences may result in dismissal from the program.
- Approved program absences do not remove absences recorded by the university for which university policies apply, but they do allow for work to be made-up.
- If a student is unable to attend a class and/or lab, other than in the case of a true emergency, it is the responsibility of the student to notify the course director prior to the start of class. Failure to alert faculty of an absence may result in an unapproved absence subject to consequences outlined in this handbook.
- Students are responsible for all missed information.
- In classes with collaborative activities, no credit for missed collaborative activities will be awarded.
- Missed assignments, quizzes, exams, and activities may be made up at the discretion of the program and in alignment with course syllabi. If permitted to make up a missed assignment, quiz, exam, or activity, students may receive a reduced percentage point score of up to 20%. In the case of unapproved absences, missed assignments, quizzes, exams, and/or activities may not be permitted to be made up.
- At any time during enrollment, missing 14 consecutive days will automatically result in dismissal from the program and university.

### ***General Program Policy:***

In the MPA-CA Hybrid program, attendance is determined in three different ways:

1. For asynchronous course-specific activities, even if the course includes synchronous activities that same week, attendance is determined by completion of weekly assignments. Failure to submit an assignment will result in a student marked absent for that week. This subsequently will result in both non-attendance for that week and, if the absence was unapproved, a zero grade for the assignment.
2. For synchronous course-specific activities, even if the course includes asynchronous activities that same week, attendance is determined by attending class and completing the MobileAttendance app. Failure to attend class and submit attendance via the MobileAttendance app will result in being marked as absent for that class period.
3. For on-campus immersion activities, even if the course includes some asynchronous and/or synchronous online activities, attendance is determined by attending class and completing the MobileAttendance app at the start and conclusion of each class session/section.
4. For on-campus immersion activities, attendance is mandatory for all activities without exception. Specifically, students must be physically present for all scheduled activities which may include evening and weekend hours. Requests to miss on-campus immersion activities will be denied. Inability to attend all on-campus immersion activities may result in needing a leave-of-absence or dismissal from the program.
5. Students should not log into the MobileAttendance app if they are not present in class with their cameras turned on. Sharing an attendance code with another student not in class or signing into the MobileAttendance app if not present in class is considered a professional conduct violation and will result in a PDAT reduction.
6. The MobileAttendance app recording is the responsibility of the student. Students should inform faculty immediately if the app is not recording attendance properly.

For didactic coursework, excluding on-campus immersion activities, students can miss a maximum of 20% of the expected attendance, including both approved and unapproved absences, in each course. Students who miss more than 20% are subject to leave of absence, withdrawal, or dismissal depending on the circumstances and as determined by the MPA-CA Hybrid program.

For supervised clinical practice experience (SCPE) activities, students are not permitted to miss any amount of the required attendance.

### ***Approved vs. Unapproved Absence for Make-up Work In the Didactic Year***

An approved absence occurs when the absence is approved by the course director, director of academic education, or program director. Approving an absence is done on a case-by-case basis. Decisions regarding approved absences are final and cannot be appealed.

To request an approval for absence, students in the first year of study should place a request for absence in writing to the Director of Didactic Education and the Course Director(s) in affected courses. Requests for planned absences should be sent a minimum of 14 days in advance. For unplanned absences, such as an urgent medical issue, students should contact the course director and director of academic education as soon as possible and feasible. Importantly, notifying the program of a planned or unplanned absence in no way guarantees the absence will be approved.

### ***Absences for Religious Reasons***

West Coast University respects the rights of students to observe major religious Holy Days and will review absence requests for such observances. Students who anticipate absence(s) due to religious observances are required to submit a complete Religious Holy Day Request for Assistance and Support form to their campus Director of Student Affairs for review by University administration. To assist the program in best accommodating such absences for didactic courses, we request that students submit the appropriate form a minimum of 4 weeks ahead of the requested absence. For supervised clinical practice experiences (SCPEs), we request that students submit the appropriate form prior to the start of the clinical phase of training to accommodate any needed makeup activities. Specific to SCPEs, some absences may require a postponement of the clinical rotation, resulting in a delay of graduation.

The format of any make-up work and/or assessments is left to the discretion of the course director. Students who do not receive an approved Religious Allowance and Support request by the deadline are not entitled to such allowance. Please note, however, that absences for religious reasons are recorded to calculate the maximum absences (20%) allowed in any course.

### ***Program Policies for Attendance on Supervised Clinical Practice Experiences (SCPEs)***

In addition to the above policies, the following policies also apply to the SCPEs. Regular attendance and punctuality, in addition to enthusiasm for participation in clinical activities, are considered integral to PA student and practice professionalism. The attendance policies for SCPEs is different than that for didactic coursework.

- Program expectations for students on SCPEs require students to spend a minimum of 52 hours per week on clinical rotations. Clinical hours include activities directly related to the rotation. Examples include: direct patient care, documentation of encounters, review of patient charts, researching conditions/disorders/treatments, meeting with preceptor, Aquifer cases,

completion of Practice Question (UWorld, RoshReview) assignments, and studying for EOR exams.

- If a student is unable to attend their SCPE rotation for any portion of their assigned time, it is the responsibility of the student to email the Course Director and clinical preceptor with carbon copy to the Manager of Clinical Education. Failure to alert the course director and clinical preceptor of an absence may result in a referral to SPC for a professionalism violation.
- Students that miss any clinical hours due to illness must provide a medical provider's note to the student is absent from a single rotation for any time due to illness, the student must submit to the Course Director a note from a licensed healthcare provider defining the number of days absent, and the expected date of return.
- Students are required to make-up any missed clinical hours, regardless of the reason, to ensure they are completing the minimum requirement of 52-hours per week on clinical rotations. If students are unable to make-up any missed clinical hours during the specific SPCE rotation, they will be required to make-up these hours at the end of the program resulting in a delay of graduation.
- No planned absences outside of religious allowances are permitted in the clinical year.

### ***Tardiness***

Given the collaborative nature of the program, tardiness to activities, particularly when occurring on multiple occasions, is considered unprofessional and may adversely affect course grades and progression in the program. Unless previously approved by the course instructor, tardiness of more than 15 minutes to any class activity or clinical experience may be counted as an unapproved absence at the discretion of the course instructor. Repetitive tardiness will be considered unprofessional and subject to all applicable program policies and consequences, including, but not limited to, an unsatisfactory PDAT ranking, resulting in referral to the Student Progress Committee (SPC), potential course failure, and potential dismissal from the program.

### **Professionalism Exhibited through Professional Attire and Appearance**

- Attire: Students are expected to maintain a professional appearance at all times during program activities, including videoconferencing (e.g., synchronous lectures), on-campus experiences, and clinical experiences.
  - Covering the 4-B's: At a minimum, chosen attire should cover the breasts, belly, back, and buttocks.
  - **Physical exam and procedure classes and laboratories:** Students are expected to dress in program approved scrubs and, depending on the physical examinations being taught, gym shorts and tank tops so that physical examinations can be appropriately practiced and evaluated, Appropriate attire for physical examination labs is mandatory unless an accommodation has been previously approved.
  - **Exam Dress Code:** Hooded sweatshirts (commonly referred to as "hoodies"), beanies, hats/caps, and scarves are prohibited from being worn during exams. Students wearing any of these items will be asked, by the proctor(s) or instructor(s) or both, to remove them. Students who are not wearing shirts under their hoodies – and who, therefore, cannot remove their hoodies – will be subject to an irregularity report that will be submitted to their instructor(s) and/or appropriate Dean. For OSCEs, students are

required to wear their WCU navy scrubs and white coat. Accommodations can be requested by students with specific medical conditions and/or religious beliefs that require special clothing. Please contact your campus Student Affairs department for more information.

- **Other on-campus activities (e.g., OSCEs, classroom lectures):** Unless otherwise specified for special events, students are expected to dress in program-approved scrubs or business casual attire.
- **Videoconferencing:** Students should follow the published Professional Attire and Appearance guidelines for all remote meetings just as they would for in-person class meetings. As such, students are expected to dress in business casual attire for all remote meetings unless otherwise directed by the program. Additionally, students are expected to have their videos on throughout each videoconferencing session unless otherwise approved by the course director.
- **Clinical Experiences:** Students are expected to dress appropriately for all SCPEs. For most SCPEs, this will be business casual attire or scrubs, depending on the rotation specialty, with proper identification as detailed in the Program Specific Policies for Clinical Experiences section of this handbook. Importantly, students are required to dress as is expected by the clinical site and preceptor.
- In addition to the dress code as outlined in the University Student Handbook, students in the program may not wear the following:
  - No flip flops - sandals are allowed if there is a heel strap (if involved in lab activities)
  - No shorts
  - No midriff tops
  - No tank tops or sleeveless shirts
  - No hats/caps worn indoors
- Additional inappropriate attire includes:
  - Clothing inappropriate for the activity/setting
  - Clothing or lack of clothing that is, as determined by faculty, staff, and clinical preceptors to be too-revealing, too-tight, too-transparent
  - Open-toed shoes when in a clinical, lab, or research environment
  - Other attire that is deemed inappropriate by principal faculty and/or instructional faculty (e.g., preceptors).
- Accommodations can be requested by students with specific medical conditions and/or religious beliefs that require special clothing, shoes and/or jewelry. Students who believe they need accommodation should contact their campus Director of Student Affairs.
- **Fragrances:** Heavy fragrances (including tobacco or vaping) can cause irritation to others who may be allergic to perfume and/or cologne; therefore, fragrances are not permitted during on-campus or clinical experiences.
- **Hair Length and Appearances:** Hair must be neat, clean, and not styled in such a manner that it could interfere with patient care or safety while involved in lab or objective structures clinical examinations (OSCEs)/patient activities. Specifically, the hair should not fall forward to touch a patient or contaminate a sterile field when examination or treating patients. From a clinical

perspective, in some settings long hair poses a safety risk and at a minimum should be off the face and, if long, in a ponytail or similar effective configuration. Facial hair, if present, should be neat, clean, and well-groomed. Due to personal infectious disease risk (e.g., when needing to wear an N95 mask), some clinical facilities may not permit mustaches or beards.

- Nails, Nail Length, and Nail Coloring: Nails should be short so as not to cause marks on or discomfort to classmates and patients during physical examinations and procedures. For physical examination labs, colored nail polish that prevents the performance of capillary refill examination is inappropriate. Acrylic and gel fingernails may be prohibited by some clinical settings.
- Tattoos: Tattoos considered offensive, as determined by the program patients, or clinical preceptors and clinical staff, must be covered. Some clinical sites may require that all tattoos be covered regardless of the images.

### **Professionalism Exhibited through Maintaining Patient Confidentiality and Privacy**

The PA student is expected and required to always adhere to health information privacy for all clinical encounters, including but not limited to, clinical skills courses, simulation lab activities, and all clerkship activities, in accordance with HIPAA guidelines. Maintaining confidentiality toward classmates, standardized patients, simulated patients, and 'real-world' patients is equally important and required at all times. Failure to adhere to this policy will result in consequences up to and including dismissal from the Program. For more information on HIPAA. See the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Health Information Privacy website: <https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/for-professionals/index.html>.

### **Professionalism Exhibited through All Communications**

As noted in the WCU student handbook, students should adhere to professionalism for all communication, including but not limited to communication when using social media, course discussion posts, and all electronic and written communications.

- Think Before You Speak, Post, Email, or Submit Written Work
  - Please remember to use good judgment and common sense in any communication.
- Know Your Legal Obligations
  - When communicating, including but not limited to posting anything online, abide by Copyright laws and the HIPAA/FERPA Privacy Rules.
- Accountability
  - You are responsible for anything you say, post or submit.
  - Remember that commentary deemed to be offensive, discriminatory, hateful, racist, sexist, or in violation of WCU and Program policies may have negative ramifications to oneself and/or others (including but not limited to removal of posts or referral to the WCU Conduct Committee for disciplinary action).
  - Also keep in mind the potential for legal liability if commentary is deemed obscene, defamatory, threatening, harassing, bullying, infringing of copyright, in violation of a court order, or is otherwise unlawful as defined by the courts.

- Protect the privacy of others and always adhere to FERPA and HIPAA guidelines.
  - Disclosing sensitive information about other students (e.g, standing, grades, progression in the program) may represent FERPA violations.
  - Disclosing protected health information about patients without written permission, including but not limited to audio recordings, photographs, or potentially identifiable information, is strictly prohibited and represent HIPAA violations. These rules also apply to deceased patients. For more information on HIPAA see: [Summary of the HIPAA Privacy Rule | HHS.gov](#).
  - Importantly, even including such information in posts or emails that are accessible only by individuals for whom you have given access (e.g., private emails).
- Utilize Thoughtful Confidentiality
  - Refrain from disclosing confidential information about yourself or others.
- Practice Respect of Others
  - West Coast University and the MPA-CA program foster a community of mutual respect, tolerance, and acceptance. We encourage diversity of thought, ethnicity, culture, and experience, and we recognize that differing perspectives often create new ideas.
  - Even when disagreeing with a concept or situation, the best way to have your opinions understood is to be constructive and respectful to the opinions and situations of others.
  - Students are not to violate the University's anti-discrimination policies, to harass or bully other students, faculty or WCU associates, nor should any communication be used to violate the personal privacy rights of others.
- Be Aware of the Impression You Create
  - Keep in mind that your communications, particular via social media, has a global reach. Be thoughtful about what you verbalize and post. Anything revealed on social media outlets (personal accounts included) remains available years after posts are created and/or deleted. What you put online is a representation of yourself, your family, and friends, WCU, and current and future employers. Select your profile settings and avatars with the understanding that they have a broad reach and will impact how you are perceived by others. Future employers may research your social media history. Photos and comments have a lasting effect.
- Code of conduct, technical standards, and professionalism policies apply to student use of any resources included in the program, such as (but not limited to) email, learning management system. Violations of these codes, standards, and policies may result in consequences up to and including dismissal from the program.

## **Communication with Faculty and Staff**

- *Timing*
  - Allow faculty one business day to respond to student emails. For communication with the clinical team, allow extended response time as staff work to triage and address most urgent emails first. Communication will not be responded to during evenings, weekends, holidays, or university closures.
  - Students should check their university emails daily as well and respond to program communications with one business day. Failure to respond to faculty/staff email communications may result in missed meetings, changes in schedule, deadlines, etc.,

and cause professionalism issues, grade reductions, or difficulty with progression within the program.

- Follow the appropriate communication chain of command. All course concerns are to be addressed with the course director first. The course director has at least one business day to reply and offer a solution before escalating concerns to the Director of Academic Education or ultimately the Dean/Program Director. Faculty Advisors are a source for students to raise concerns outside of course specific concerns
- *Addressing the MPA CA Team*
  - When addressing your faculty, make sure to use their academic title.
    - Generally, if faculty or preceptors have a doctoral degree, it is best to refer to them as *doctor*.
    - Generally, if faculty or preceptors do not have a doctoral degree, it is best to refer to them as *professor*.
  - When addressing WCU, program, and SCPE staff persons, make sure to use their preferred title.
    - Generally, if staff persons do not have a faculty role or doctoral degree, it is best to refer to them as Mr., Ms., or their preferred pre-surname title.
- *Professional Email Signature*
  - In University and program emails, always use a professional signature. Students should identify themselves with their academic level (e.g., First Last Name, PA-S1 for first year students and PA-S2 for second year students. An example of an appropriate student email signature is as follows:
    - [First Name] [Last Name], PA-S1
    - MPA-CA Hybrid Program
    - West Coast University
- *General Tips for Etiquette*
  - Avoid written communication styles that may be interpreted as yelling (e.g., all caps, exclamation points).
  - Avoid the use of slang in your communications.
  - Avoid incomplete and poorly worded messages as they can be confusing and convey the wrong information.
  - Overuse of bold, underline, and italics in written communication often voids emphasis.
  - Be aware of the tone of your communication.
  - Be careful that including humor in your written communications can be easily misinterpreted.
  - When speaking or writing, salutations and closing should be respectful and professional. Avoid greeting others with casual or unprofessional language such as “hey” or using the first name of faculty, staff, and clinical preceptors.

### ***Professionalism and the Professional Development Assessment Tool (PDAT)***

Students are expected to achieve and maintain the highest level of professionalism.

At the end of the trimester within each trimester faculty advisors will complete and review professionalism behaviors of each student rubric. Meeting all expectations for professionalism results in satisfactory performance. Failing to meet will result in a meeting with their faculty advisor.

A student’s progression through the program. Failing to meet one or more professionalism components during the professionalism course series, beyond any other University or program-specific code of conduct policies, results in a faculty advisor meeting. If a student is marked less than satisfactory a second time, this will result in a referral to the SPC, may warrant a student conduct referral to the University.

Professionalism and student conduct codes, guidelines, and policies, in addition to being covered in this handbook and/or the WCU Student Handbook or University Catalog, are reviewed in detail during the program’s onboarding sessions and the first week of the program’s professionalism course series. Given this, students are fully expected to abide by all professionalism and student conduct policies and expectations throughout the program beginning on the first day of class and continuing until graduation.

<b>MPA-CA Program’s Professional Development Assessment Tool (PDAT)</b>		
<b>Professionalism Ideal</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>
1. Adheres to institutional policies and procedures, including upholding the honor code as published in the University Student Handbook and Catalog*		
2. Attends and arrives on time for all scheduled activities; is active and participatory unless approved in advance for absence		
3. Maintains professional behavior throughout duration of all scheduled activities		
4. Maintains the confidentiality of test materials*		
5. Communicates respectfully and professionally in all forms of verbal and nonverbal communication (e.g., live interactions, postings, email, body language)*		
6. Submits all required documents on time and by posted deadlines		
7. Adheres to the program dress code requirements for all activities		
8. Admits to errors, assumes responsibility for mistakes, and conveys information honestly and tactfully		
9. Modifies behavior based on feedback		
10. Maintains composure during difficult interactions		
11. Maintains thoroughness and attention to detail		
12. Requests help when needed		
13. Acknowledges limits of one’s own knowledge		
14. Responds receptively to diverse opinions and values		
15. Demonstrates humility		

### **At Risk Committee**

The goal of this committee is to promote student success and retention while maintaining the integrity and standards of the PA program. The primary role of this committee is to identify, intervene, support, and make recommendations regarding students who are at risk, identified by course directors or faculty advisors, of not meeting academic, clinical, or professional standards necessary for successful progression and graduation from the PA program.

## **Student Progress Committee**

The WCU MPA Student Progress Committee will evaluate issues of student compliance with the school's requirements, policies, and professionalism. The committee will review any matters of concern and the circumstances surrounding them. These may require the student to appear before the Committee to answer questions or address specific academic/professional concerns.

The role of the SPC is to provide support, guidance, and clarification of factors that contribute to a student's academic and professional performance.

The primary charges of the SPC are to:

1. Assist students in progressing through and completing the program;
2. Review student progress at regular intervals throughout the program identifying those in need of intervention based on program policies and procedures;
3. Review end-of-semester summative assessments of each student's didactic, clinical, and professional progress;
4. Review issues that may impact the student's ability to continue in the program. This includes, but is not limited to, continuing to meet the program Technical Standards;
5. Make recommendations to the Dean/ Program Director regarding disciplinary actions;
6. Make recommendations to the Dean/ Program Director to advance students in good standing.

If a student is requested to appear before the committee, a student may have an advisor in attendance. This does not have to be the school-appointed advisor but must be a WCU employee. The advisor may not address the SPC but may be consulted by the student. The student will be offered the opportunity to present an opening and a closing statement and take notes during the meeting. The SPC will inform students of SPC action in writing within 48 hours of the meeting. The SPC will decide on the appropriate action, including dismissal, from the WCU MPA program.

### **Progression, Graduation, and Academic Standing**

Progression from the academic to the clinical year and graduation from the WCU MPA program is based on the student's mastery of essential competencies, academic performance, and readiness to assume a professional role. While grades are important, the decisions for progression and graduation are based on the composite picture of academic performance and professional growth and development. A student may be dismissed from WCU MPA program if they have failed to demonstrate an attitude of professionalism or if the SPC does not believe the student is prepared to assume patient care responsibilities.

The following criteria will be used by the SPC to progress from academic year PA students to the clinical year and recommend clinical PA students for graduation from the WCU MPA program. Students who fail to meet all progression criteria may be either dismissed from the WCU MPA program or required to remediate any deficiencies deemed necessary by the Committee.

- Maintain a grade of 76% or higher.
- Demonstrate acceptable levels of maturity, integrity, and other attitudes and behaviors normally expected of health care professionals as determined by professionalism evaluations and observations by faculty.

As one of the core competencies of PAs, professionalism is considered equally important as medical knowledge, interpersonal skills, communication skills, patient care, practice-based learning/improvement, and systems-based practice. *Therefore, a student who has failed to demonstrate an attitude of professionalism or is not prepared to assume patient care responsibilities based on faculty and/or SCP evaluations may be dismissed from the WCU MPA at any time prior to promotion or graduation.*

### **Academic Standards and Professionalism Issues (A3.14a)**

A student may be placed on probation at any point if the SPC determines it is necessary. A student may be placed on probation before final grades being assigned in any class.

The SPC will investigate any incidents of professionalism concerns reported from faculty, staff, or preceptors, or other students. If additional action is warranted, the student in question may be called for a meeting which may include no less than 2 members of the SPC or may require a full committee meeting. If a full committee meeting is called, the student may bring representation as described above. If a student has received more than one PDAT violation in one trimester or more than two columns marked unsatisfactory in the categories, the student will be referred to the SPC for evaluation. Additionally, a student receiving more than one PDAT academic action plan over the course of their studies at WCU MPA will be referred for evaluation on the second academic action plan received. PDAT violations may lead to professionalism probation, Teachable Moments, conduct committee referrals, or dismissal from the program. Egregious professional concerns or violations may not follow the stepwise process and can be referred directly to the conduct committee.

Students requiring academic intervention will be handled as follows:

- One (1) exam failure: addressed by the course director and advisor
- Two (2) exam failures (in different courses): addressed by the At-Risk Committee
- Two (2) failures in the same course: addressed by the SPC
- Three (3) failures (in different courses): addressed by the SPC

The student may be placed on probation and will be required to complete any remedial work prescribed by the faculty. The prescribed remediation may include repeating any or all coursework as deemed appropriate by the SPC to address the student's weaknesses, including coursework which were previously passed. Students will remain on probation for the entirety of the trimester, until review by the SPC determines probationary status is no longer needed based on adequate student performance.

Students during the clinical year on academic probation will be assigned a clinical site elective rotation which may include a combination of patient care hours, academic assignments, and faculty one-on-one tutoring. Students that have not met the MPA Program benchmarks for the following exams will be assigned a clinical site elective rotation: End of Didactic Summative exam, Packrat 1, End of Rotation Exams, End of Curriculum exams. A second elective rotation may also be program-assigned, depending on the student's academic progress and demonstrated academic readiness.

Special Circumstances for Students during the Clinical Year on Professionalism Probation:

A student who begins the clinical year on professionalism probation for academic integrity purposes must take the End of Rotation exams proctored.

If remediation does not improve performance or a student fails to meet remedial work competencies and deadlines, the student may be dismissed from the program.

## **Grievance/Appeals Policy regarding decisions of the SPC (A3.14h)**

After a decision of the SPC has been established, a student has the right to appeal.

1. After the SPC makes a decision, the student has the right to appeal. Appeals are made in writing – a personal appearance is made upon request of the person or persons hearing the appeal and is not automatic. Typically, grounds for an appeal include:
  - a. The policies and procedures of the WCU MPA program were not correctly applied.
  - b. The facts were incorrect.
  - c. The action exceeded the authority of the SPC.
  - d. The SPC demonstrated bias in its action.
  - e. The SPC considered evidence that should not have been evaluated or failed to consider the evidence they should have considered.
  - f. The student requested an accommodation for a disability, in writing, with appropriate documentation in advance of the exam through the office of Student Affairs and was not provided with appropriate accommodations.
2. Students may appeal a decision of the SPC to the Director of the WCU MPA program in writing within three business days of the decision. Actions by the SPC and the Program Director will be final except in cases of dismissal and suspension.
3. In cases of dismissal and suspension actions, the student may further appeal the decision to the Student Affairs.
4. The decisions of this committee will be final.

## ***Communication and Technology***

Students are expected to have a working knowledge of and capability with computer hardware, and a variety of software applications. Please see Technology Requirements in the [University Student Handbook](#).

Students are required to submit all work via the Canvas learning management system and/or our Exxat Prism platform. Complete details are included in each course syllabus. Professional communication is required at all times with WCU faculty, staff, student colleagues, and clinical partners using university approved platforms including, but not limited to WCU email, Canvas, Remind app (2-way communication), and Exxat Prism (clinical management system).

Student Identify Verification in distance learning is required via:

1. a secure login and passcode;
2. proctored examinations;
3. program-approved technologies or practices utilized to verify identity.

The verification of a student's identity begins at the time of admission and the first course registration. After a student has been through the admission process and is accepted to attend, the WCU Information Technology Services department is responsible for creating a secure, unique login and password for the enrolled student.

WCU maintains student biographic, demographic, admission, and enrollment records within its secure Student Information System (SIS). This authoritative data is replicated into the Microsoft Identity Manager (MIM), which creates the proper account within the hosted Canvas Learning Management System (LMS). Access to the LMS requires unique valid credentials in addition to an official class registration.

Students are responsible for maintaining the security of their login information and password. This information may not be shared or given to anyone other than the person to whom it was assigned. Users are responsible for any use and activity of their account.

All students taking online courses are using Canvas, the WCU Learning Management System (LMS). The Canvas system integrates with the WCU authentication services to ensure appropriate and secure student access to courses, classes, and materials. All LMS users are responsible for maintaining the security of usernames and passwords, or any other access credentials as required. Attempting to gain unauthorized access to another person's account or email—or students sharing access to their own WCU accounts with someone other than themselves—is prohibited.

WCU has a multifactor authentication (MFA) for students, faculty, and associates utilizing Cisco DUO. Two-factor identification occurs via Microsoft MFA. Students receive an acknowledgement prompt to their registered mobile device each time they log into the learning management system. This enables stronger authentication by requiring a unique username, password, and device authorization from the student upon every log in.

Without exception, the following process occurs for each student. All students who apply for admission into the program are required to submit an online application and follow a series of steps that includes the submission of *a signed, unexpired, government-issued photo identification*.

Students are unable to progress unless their identity can be verified through documentation. Once completed, the students are admitted into the program. These steps are overseen by the Admissions and Financial Aid departments and that process includes student identification prior to the issuance of a student identification login and entering the Canvas LMS system. The process is consistent for all students admitted into the University and has been implemented across all programs.

There are no fees associated with identity verification.

WCU distance learning classrooms use video-conferencing technologies to deliver instruction. This technology provides secure passwords for access as well as a medium for visual identification. All methods of verifying student identity in distance learning protect the privacy of student information under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). All documents are uploaded via a secure student portal to ensure privacy of students enrolled in distance education.

### **Late Policies for Assignments**

Students are expected to submit all assignments by deadline as noted in their course syllabi. Generally, and unless noted differently in course syllabi, all assignments are to be submitted by 11:59pm Pacific daylight/standard time (PDT/PST) by the noted due date for that assignment. Additionally, excluding final evaluations and projects in the last week of courses, and again unless noted differently in course syllabi, assignments can be submitted up to a maximum of three days late with a 10% penalty per day, including weekends, holidays, and semester breaks. After three days, a zero grade will be given for the assignment. Requests for late work must be submitted in advance of the due date. No exceptions will be made after the date and three days have passed.

### ***Examination Policies***

Throughout the curriculum, the program utilizes multiple student evaluation methods, including

formative (i.e., low-stake, low grade, or no grade) evaluations such as quizzes, and summative (i.e., high-stake, graded) evaluations such as examinations.

- Didactic course quizzes and examinations are delivered via our Exemplify/Examssoft or Canvas systems utilizing exam security measures (e.g., exam ID, exam monitoring, Respondus lockdown browser).
- The Exemplify/Examssoft system requires minimum computer system specifications. These specifications can be found on the [Examssoft website](#), but these requirements may be less than what is required by the University system and browser requirements which can be found in the Information Technology section of the [University Student Handbook](#).
- A summative didactic assessment is given at the completion of the Fall Trimester in the didactic year via Exemplify/Examssoft system.
- For purposes of test security, the formative Physician Assistant Clinical Knowledge Rating and Assessment Tool (PACKRAT), given at the end of the didactic phase and once during the clinical phase, is delivered using a lockdown browser.

Supervised Clinical Practice Experience (SCPE) courses (i.e., clinical rotations/clerkships) are partially evaluated by using PAEA end-of-rotation examinations via their Surpass System. As with the PACKRAT examinations, these are also delivered using a lockdown browser. Students may take these exams in the stepwise fashion described under professionalism probation above. Students who are not under probation may take EORs under a lockdown browser. Students entering the clinical year on probation for professionalism or who are placed on probation during the clinical year will be required to take their exams with a live, remote proctor. If they are found at any time to be in violation of test integrity policies, they will move to step 3 testing and be required to take the EORs as a live, in-person proctored event either on the WCU campus or at a testing center, potentially incurring further cost at the expense of the student.

- The Program's End-of-Curriculum Examination, delivered in the last semester of the program, is also a PAEA exam but is delivered on campus and held during the program's regularly scheduled on-campus immersion activities.

Coursework feedback is provided in the Canvas learning management system (LMS) or as strengths and opportunities reports through Exemplify/Examssoft. Students meeting limited success on their examinations (e.g., scoring <80 on an examination), are encouraged to review these reports in full and meet with their course instructors or the Director of Academic Education to aid in identifying any exam taking issues.

### ***Examination Process and Specific Examination Policies***

#### **Introduction**

With a goal of establishing and maintaining examination security and best preparing students for the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA) Physician Assistant National Certification Examination (PANCE), the Program incorporates similar test-taking policies and procedures as the NCCPA. These policies include test-taking procedures, absence and tardiness policies, assessment of exam and exam item validity, and remediation.

### General Policies and Procedures

- The program carefully schedules all examinations (e.g., quizzes, exams, practical evaluations, OSCEs) with consideration of other factors (e.g., class schedules, timing of other examinations, student workloads). As such, once an examination is scheduled, students may not request changes in examination dates or times.
- Students must download all examinations a minimum of 24 hours in advance of the exam's date. Faculty will make exams available in this timeframe. In the case of PAEA exams such as the Packrat, End of Rotation Exams, or the End of Curriculum Exam, an access code for downloading the exam ("keycode") is required and will come from PAEA via the student's email. It is the responsibility of the student to look for this email and inform the faculty if they have not received this email a minimum of 24 hours ahead of the examination. Failure to download exams within this timeframe may result in a professionalism deduction and multiple deductions may result in SPC referral.
- Writing or reproducing a test or evaluation or any components of a test or evaluation (including, but not limited to, the verbal sharing of covered topics, questions, answers, etc.) represents a student conduct/academic integrity policy violation and full and appropriate consequences will be applied in all occurrences, including being subject to dismissal.
- At the time of administration of an examination, PA students must follow all the instructions of the examination proctor and adhere to all program examination policies.
  - o A student who fails to follow the proctor's instructions and/or fails to follow all program examination policies, may result in the student being dismissed from the examination. If dismissed, the student will automatically receive a grade of zero on the examination and will not be permitted to retake the examination for a grade change.
  - o Any violation of examination and/or student conduct policies, including but not limited to cheating, during an examination may result in an automatic grade of zero for that examination and the student may not be permitted to retake the examination for a grade change.
- Students are required to video a 360° view of their workstation before beginning their exam. When taking an examination, students are only permitted to have at their exam taking table/station the following items:
  - o Computer/Laptop on which the student will be taking the examination
  - o Source of lighting
- When taking an examination, and unless permitted by the exam proctor, students are not permitted to have the following items or follow different procedures unless having University approved accommodation:
  - o Audio-visual recording devices, hats, paper (other than the one piece of blank paper provided), headphones, hair must not be over ears, smart watches, cell phones – even if turned off, backpacks, wallets, purses, or similar items, notebooks, notepads, tissues, handkerchiefs, or similar items.
  - o For online exams, students' faces must be shown entirely on the screen for exam integrity with appropriate lighting for video quality. Eyes must not be obstructed from view (artificial eyelashes that obstruct view of eyes, hands over eyes, etc). If student exam proctoring set-up is not adequate for online proctoring, student is subject to receiving a zero on the examination.
  - o If students have double monitors, the second monitor may need to be detached to ensure proper remote proctoring.
  - o The exam proctor will provide students with tissues if requested.
  - o Any other items determined by the exam proctor(s) to potentially risk exam security.
  - o All prohibited items must be placed in a location determined by the exam proctor.

- For on-campus exams and evaluations, student bags and backpacks and non-permitted items will be placed away from the test-taking area (e.g., against the wall at the front or side of the room and away from student access, or in student lockers).
- Unless approved prior to the start of the exam, students will not be permitted to leave the room once the exam has started, including, but not limited to, for use of the bathroom.
- All academic integrity and honor code policies apply to all tests including exit quizzes, course quizzes, and course examinations.
- Students should make sure to fully read all pre-test notices before starting tests.
- Students should not expect faculty to respond to test-related questions unless being contacted 24 hours prior to the test. Faculty are not required to respond on holidays, after hours, or on weekends. Ideally, if students have questions, they would ask these during course director open office hours.
- Students requesting a review their strengths and opportunities reports are required to contact the faculty within 24 hours of the exam release

#### Exam Dress Code

Hooded sweatshirts (commonly referred to as “hoodies”), beanies, hats/caps, and scarves are prohibited from being worn during exams. Students wearing any of these items will be asked, by the proctor(s) or instructor(s) or both, to remove them. Students who are not wearing shirts under their hoodies – and who, therefore, cannot remove their hoodies – will be subject to an irregularity report that will be submitted to their instructor(s) and/or appropriate Dean. Accommodation can be requested by students with specific medical conditions and/or religious beliefs that require special clothing. Please contact your campus Student Affairs department for more information. For OSCEs, students are required to wear their WCU navy scrubs and white coat.

#### Time Allotted for Examinations

The NCCPA has a 1-minute per question time allotment for the PANCE (e.g., a 60-question exam is allotted a total duration of 60 minutes). Recognizing that our students are entry-level PA students gaining greater proficiency as they progress through their studies, the program transitions students to the 1-minute duration rule as follows:

- In the first trimester, students will be allotted 90 seconds per written examination question (e.g., a 60-question examination will be allotted a total duration of 90 minutes).
- In the second trimester, students will be allotted 75 seconds per written question (e.g., a 60-question examination will be allotted a total duration of 75 minutes).
- In the third trimester and beyond, students will be allotted 60 seconds per question (e.g., a 60-question examination will be allotted a total duration of 60 minutes).
- Examination/Quiz time may be extended with University approved accommodations via the CGS Student Affairs Office.
  - o Importantly, if students do have approved accommodations for extended time, they may need to start the test prior to other students (e.g., early morning, over the ‘lunch break’) so all students finish the exam at roughly the same time.

#### Absence at Time of Examination

- If a student is absent from a scheduled exam, a legitimate excuse must be offered prior to administration of the exam or, in the case of a true emergency, as soon as possible. See the section on this handbook on absences.

- Examinations will be rescheduled only if the absence is formally approved and with the specific permission of the Course Director(s).
- Notifying the Director of Academic Education and Course Director in no way guarantees that the absence will be approved, and that postponement of an examination will be permitted. If not formally approved, the student will receive a grade of zero on the missed examination.
- In some cases, reporting of final exam grades to the class may be delayed until all students have taken the exam.
- The date, time, and content of make-up examinations will be determined by the Course Director.
  - Unless otherwise determined by the Course Director, make-up examinations must be taken within seven days of the original scheduled date.
  - Although make-up examinations will test the same knowledge content as the original examination, the style (e.g., written, oral, skills testing) and type of questions may differ from the original examination as determined by and at the discretion of the Course Director.
- Unless otherwise approved by the Director of Academic Education, in consideration of recommendations from Course Directors, students are not permitted to receive an approved absence for more than one exam in each course in any semester and more than one final exam in any semester.
  - Specific to the clinical phase of the program, unless otherwise approved by the Director of Academic Education, Course Director, or Program Director, students will not be permitted to receive an approved absence for more than one end-of-rotation examination for any supervised clinical practice experience (SCPE) course throughout the entire clinical phase of the program.
- Repeated requests for or absences from examinations (i.e., greater than three episodes in the didactic phase of the program and greater than one episode in the clinical phase of the program) is considered to represent an issue with student conduct, professionalism, and or the meeting of technical standards and, as such, may result in consequences as specified other sections of this handbook.

#### Tardiness at Time of Examination

- Time allocated for examinations will not be extended if a student(s) arrives late.
  - For example, if a student arrives 30 minutes late for a 60-minute exam, the student will only have 30 minutes to complete the exam.
- If a student believes the tardiness resulted from a legitimate and unforeseen event, that student has two choices on how to proceed:
  - The student may go to the testing site and take the examination in whatever time remains for that examination – extended time will not be given, even if the tardiness is later approved.
  - The student may inform the Course Director as soon as possible with the appropriate absence notification, and preferably prior to the exam, for a determination as to whether the tardiness is, indeed, representative of an absence where material can be made up.
- In such cases, the student will not be permitted to sit for the exam as planned.

- Notifying the Director of Academic Education, Program Director and Course Director and/or submitting the absence form in no way guarantees that the tardiness/absence will be approved, and that postponement of an examination will be permitted. If not formally approved, the student will receive a grade of zero on the missed examination.
- If the Director of Academic Education, Program Director, or Course Director does not recognize the tardiness as representative of an approved absence, the student will not be allowed to make-up the exam, resulting in a grade score of zero for that examination. Please see “Professionalism Exhibited Through Attendance” for more information.
- At the discretion of the Director of Academic Education, Program Director, or Course Director, tardiness due to legitimate and unforeseen reasons may be considered an approved absence, permitting a student to take a make-up examination. Please see the policies above regarding Absence at Time of Examination.
  - o Repeated episodes of tardiness (i.e., >3 episodes in either the didactic phase of the program or clinical phase of the program) is considered to represent an issue with student conduct, professionalism, and or the meeting of technical standards and, as such, may result in consequences as specified other sections of this handbook.

Test Time for Students Without Extended Time Accommodations:

- All tests must be started at the announced start time, regardless of if they are being completed in an asynchronous or synchronous class session. If students start a test after the announced start time, they will not receive credit for any test items completed after the associated end time.
- For example: If a course test is allotted 20 minutes of test taking time and is scheduled to begin via ExamSoft on Monday at 8:00am PDT.
  - o If Student A starts the test late at 8:15am PDT. Upon reviewing the ExamSoft details, the course director sees that the student answered questions 1-20 before 8:31am PDT that same day but answered questions 21-30 at or after 8:31am PDT that same day. This student would be marked as answering incorrectly on questions 21-30, regardless of the answer they selected, as those questions were answered after the associated end time of the test. If this were a summative evaluation, and the resulting test grade was a failure, the student would be required to remediate the test.
  - o Student B starts the test on or after 8:31am PDT that same day. This student would receive a '0' on the test as all questions were answered after the associated end time of the test. If this were a summative evaluation, the student would be required to remediate the entire test without any subsequent change in the test grade.
  - o Student C starts a test on a different day than the announce testing day and time. This student would receive a '0' on the test as all questions were answered after the associated start and end times of the test. As this would represent test failure, if the test were a summative evaluation, the student be required to remediate the entire test without any subsequent change in the test grade.

Test Time for Students with Extended Time Accommodations:

- All tests must be started at the extended time allotment associated with the announced start time, regardless of if the test is being completed in an asynchronous or synchronous class

session. If students start a test after this time, they will not receive credit for any test items completed after the associated end time, those test items will be marked as '0'.

- For example:
  - o If a course test is allotted 20 minutes of test taking time and is scheduled to begin via ExamSoft on Monday at 8:00am PDT.
    - If Student A has been formally approved for time-and-a-half for all written examinations. The student would start the test at 7:50am PDT on the same day, having until 8:20am PDT to complete the test (i.e., time-and-a-half for a 20-minute test = 30 minutes).
    - If Student B has been formally approved for time-and-a-half for all written examinations. The student starts the test at 8:00am PDT on the same day. This student would be marked as answering incorrectly any test items answered after 8:31am PDT. If this were a summative evaluation, and the final test grade represents a failure, the student would be required to remediate the exam.

### **Use of Exemplify/ExamSoft Platforms:**

Most graded tests in the didactic phase of the program are delivered via the Exemplify (for students)/ExamSoft (for faculty) platform that includes built in security including locking-down the students' computer disabling any other programs other than the testing program, identification of each student, and constant video and audio monitoring throughout the entire test via the student's computer/laptop/tablet camera and microphone. As this platform allows for text underlying, highlighting, and note taking, students are not permitted to have anything else (e.g., paper, writing utensils, informational resources, and material such as notes or texts) at their test taking station. The ExamSoft platform allows the faculty to complete comprehensive test item analyses and provide all students with strengths and opportunities reports to guide further student and, if needed, remediation with course director. Importantly, students must download all Exemplify/ExamSoft tests at least 12 hours before the test is scheduled to occur. If students do not do so and run into difficulties downloading the test at the time it is scheduled, they will not be given extra time for the test and must end the test at the posted end-time.

### **IRAT/GRAT Format for Tests:**

Some courses in the MPA-CA Hybrid Program may incorporate Individual Readiness Assessment Test (IRAT) and Group Readiness Assessment Test (GRAT) formatted tests. The pedagogical strategy behind these tests is to (a) assess understanding and competency on presented material and assignments, (b) increase student understanding and critical thinking regarding tested material, and (c) facilitate team-based learning among students. The format involves students taking a quiz or exam independently and at a time determined by the course director following that test, retaking the test in a small group setting where students can critically analyze the test question and discuss critically appraise answer choices, applying knowledge acquired throughout a course.

Specific to timing, regardless of trimester, GRATs generally will be given less time than an IRAT of approximately 30-60 seconds per question. As the GRAT is taken in a group setting, there is not extended time given for these tests regardless of ADA accommodations.

The overall test grade is then a combined percentage of the two tests, generally the IRAT will count for a higher percentage than the GRAT (e.g., 75:25). Students are never allowed to change previously marked answers on the IRAT test but can independently decide to apply the same answer choice as their IRAT or chose another answer on the GRAT based on the small group interaction. At the course director's discretion, IRAT/GRAT testing format may be applied to all or select formative tests in each course. To ensure assessment of student competency of material, summative tests which will be given in traditional format (i.e., non-IRAT/GRAT format).

### **Challenging of Exam/Quiz Grades**

For all written quizzes and examinations, faculty perform a comprehensive exam item analysis. The exam item analysis is a statistical analysis of individual question items focusing on assessment and question validity based on multiple factors. A similar analysis is performed on all practical examinations. Given this, students are not permitted to challenge quiz or examination items for grade changes. Additionally, the program does not provide in-class review of examinations as all quizzes and examinations are associated with strengths and opportunities reports, including exam item mapping to course learning outcomes and objectives. The program encourages students to perform individual examination autopsies for formative learning and test-taking skills.

### ***Examination Analysis, Grading, Grade Posting, Review***

The Program utilizes an assessment program software called ExamSoft that helps faculty build and deliver written quizzes and examinations, better ensure exam security prior to, during, and after examination delivery, better analyze examinations for effectiveness and integrity, and deliver reports to students on individual strengths and weakness for completed written examinations. Given this, the program has the following policies that apply to both examinations and other evaluations:

- It is the policy of the Program that no up or down grade rounding occurs other than the final course grade. The grade earned by the student will therefore be the combined final numeric grade of all graded evaluations subsequently rounded up if the total is .5 or above and rounded down if the total is less than .5.
  - Once final examination grades are posted, the course director will post grades in Canvas and release exam results to students, including a Strengths and Improvement Opportunities Report.

### ***Returning Projects/Assignments/Quizzes/Tests/Review Policy***

Students often request immediate feedback to assignments, projects, quizzes, exams, and tests. Faculty provide students with project, assignment, quiz, exam and/or test grade(s) within one week of submission with the exception of extenuating circumstances. All coursework feedback is provided in Canvas (Learning Management System), or as a strengths and opportunities report through Exemplify/Examsoft. Materials are not returned to the student and become the property of the Master of Physician Assistant program kept in a secure digital platform.

Specific to quizzes and examinations, students are not permitted to review the evaluations in full, but

besides receiving a strengths and opportunities report (see below), do have the opportunity to review missed questions to identify test-taking or content knowledge related issues. Generally, such reviews are limited to students who receive lower grades on their evaluations (e.g., low 'B' or lower). For test-taking issues, students are encouraged to meet with the Director of Academic Education. For content knowledge-related issues, students are encouraged to meet with their course instructor.

### ***Satisfactory Academic Progress***

A minimum course grade of 76%, completion of all trimester courses, and a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or better at the end of each trimester are required to progress in the MPA-CA program. Refer to the [University Catalog](#) for further policy details.

### ***Progression in the Program (A3.15a)***

Students are expected to complete the MPA-CA Program curriculum in the sequence specified in the University Catalog. Each trimester is a pre-requisite to the next trimester. As such,

- Students may not enter the program with advanced standing;
- Students are required to successfully complete, in trimester sequence, all didactic course work (lecture and lab courses in years one and two) as full-time students;
- Clinical coursework is full time in the sequence designated in the Student Portal;
- There is no opportunity to change the order of didactic course work (lecture and lab courses in years one and two).

### ***Remediation Process and Requirements Overview (A3.14c)***

In support of student achievement of the expected program competencies, the West Coast University MPA-CA program will monitor and document the progress of each student in a manner that promptly identifies deficiencies in knowledge or skills and establishes a means for remediation. Remediation is defined as the process by which faculty reinstruct content that a student previously did not learn or did not demonstrate the minimum competency level and provide learning skills. It is imperative that the remediation process occurs as soon as a deficiency is detected, and that the subsequent assessment retake occurs within a defined period.

Remediation support consists of several resources that include but are not limited to:

1. *Course Directors*: Each course has a course director(s) who oversees in-class instruction and outside of class tutoring (content review) and remediation (learning how to learn).
2. *Faculty Advisors*: Each student is provided with an MPA faculty advisor who will remain with the student throughout the program. Faculty advisors:
  - provide support and guidance to navigate the program;
  - provide advice in developing a program success plan for didactic courses, clinical experiences, PANCE preparation, and employment readiness;

- provide direction specific to time management;
  - provide referrals to WCU co-curricular support services.
3. *Co-curricular Support Services*: Student support services, such as working with a Student Advisor, complement the program remediation process and are an extension of the learning experiences.

## **Remediation for Didactic and/or Lab Courses**

### Didactic and/or Lab Courses

Course directors evaluate course grades throughout the trimester. Although there are no opportunities for remediation of a failed course, a student with a week 5 or week 10 course grade or summative competency testing below 76% is required to meet with the course director to complete and execute an Academic Action Plan.

### In-Trimester Didactic and/or Lab Remediation

Each student is limited to a total of 2 summative assessment failures in each course each trimester. At the second summative assessment failure in the course, the student will be sent to SPC to be placed on academic probation. On the third summative assessment failure, the student fails the course and is subject to dismissal. A student who earns less than 76% on a summative assessment (e.g., section exam, final exam, OSCE) or “fail” on competency skill testing is required to meet with the course director to complete and execute an Academic Action Plan. This requires the course director to meet with the student for specific content and/or skill(s) tutoring and remediation. The remediation strategy includes a retake of the summative assessment(s) within two weeks (or within the immersive week if during an immersive) for the student to demonstrate the required minimum competency level of 76% or “pass” for competency skill testing in order to progress. Grade replacement for the remediated content is no more than 76%.

Any student scoring between 76% and 82% at weeks 5 or 10 in the trimester is referred to At-Risk Committee by the Course Director to improve academic performance and identify study skill opportunities. At-Risk Committee will notify the student of their academic standing and offer opportunities for support in areas of concern such as tutoring.

### Didactic Summative Exam (PA 570)

Students must pass this exam in order to progress to the clinical year with a minimum of 76%. Remediation policy remains consistent for all other exams for the course.

## **Remediation for Clinical Experience (SCPE) Courses**

### ***SCPE Course Progress***

- *Mid-Rotation Evaluation*: A student who earns “Not Competent” on the mid-rotation evaluation will be required to meet with the course director to complete and execute an Academic Action Plan. Deficiencies in areas of clinical competence will be re-assessed for success in competency as determined by the course learning outcomes detailed in the mid-rotation preceptor evaluation before the completion of the clinical experience course.

- Any “not observed” clinical skills, technical skills, and/or a score of 1/3 on any part of the SCPE course preceptor evaluations, will require the student to meet with the Course Director to create a remediation plan. This entails the student remediating the skill deficit at a subsequent SCPE course or as assigned by Course Director in a timely manner. Successful completion of the remediation will be documented on the same form and uploaded to the student’s file. Failure to complete remediation may result in a delay of graduation.
- A professionalism subscore of “Not Competent” on the mid-rotation evaluation will be required to meet with the course director and execute an Academic Action Plan.

### ***End-of-Trimester SCPE Remediation***

- *Preceptor Evaluation:* A student who earns “Not Competent” or an equated grade of less than 76% on the final preceptor evaluation (and has earned a passing grade in the course) will be required to meet with the Course Director to complete and execute an Academic Action Plan. This requires the course director to meet with the student for clinically related skill remediation.
- A professionalism subscore of “Not Competent” on the final preceptor evaluation may result in referral to SPC and dismissal from the program.

### ***End of Rotation (EOR) Examinations***

A student who earns less than 76% on an EOR examination will be required to meet with the course director to complete and execute an Academic Action Plan. This requires the course director to meet with the student for clinically related content remediation. The remediation strategy includes a retake of the EOR examination for the student to demonstrate the required minimum competency of  $\geq 76\%$ . Students are limited to 2 EOR failures on the first attempt. On the third EOR failure on the first attempt, the student fails the course and may be subject to dismissal. Grade replacement for the remediated content is no more than 76%.

### ***SCPE Course Grades***

Late work will be treated as a failed assignment. A student who earns a course grade of  $< 76\%$  on any of the summative evaluations (documentation note, preceptor evaluation or EOR exam) will be required to meet with the Course Director to complete and execute an Academic Action Plan. This requires the Course Director to meet with the student for clinical related skill and content remediation. The Academic Action Plan directly focuses on areas of deficiency in knowledge, skills, and values documented in preceptor evaluations, End-of-Rotation Exam itemized feedback, and skills assessments. The remediation strategy may include a retake of the summative assessment(s) and or completion of assignments for the student to demonstrate the required minimum competency level of 76%. Students failing to complete the Academic Action Plan and/or demonstration of the required minimum competency level of 76% may result in dismissal.

### **Remediation for Program Summative Evaluation**

In the final four months of the MPA-CA program, the student must take a program summative evaluation to

verify the student meets the program competencies required to enter clinical practice and meets accreditation standard B.4.03: The program conducts and documents a summative evaluation of each student within the **final four months** of the program to verify that each student **meets all program-defined competencies** required to enter clinical practice, including:

- a) clinical and technical skills
- b) clinical reasoning and problem-solving abilities
- c) interpersonal skills
- d) medical knowledge
- e) professional behaviors

The program summative evaluation focuses on the PLOs and consists of the following in-person, on-campus assessments:

- 1) PAEA End of Curriculum (EOC) examination (summative written focused curriculum content);
- 2) summative OSCE;
- 3) summative skill evaluation.

#### Summative

A student who does not meet the MPA CA benchmark for the EOC evaluation earns less than 76% on the summative practical will be required to meet with the PA 680 Advanced Clinical Seminar III with Clinical Immersive course director to complete and execute an Academic Action Plan. This requires the course director to meet with the student for assignment of specific content and/or skill(s) tutoring. The remediation strategy includes a retake of the failed summative evaluation for the student to demonstrate the required minimum competency level of 76% or MPA CA EOC benchmark. There is a maximum of 2 failures allowed on the *in-person* summative OSCE and summative technical skills portion; and a maximum of 1 failure on the End of Curriculum examination. **Upon failure of any of the remediated components is subject to referral to the SPC and may be subject to dismissal.**

See Section 2 of the Student Clinical Experience Handbook for clinical remediation details.

### ***Final Grade Appeal***

The Final Grade Appeal policy is found in the University Catalog. Please reference the catalog for full details.

### ***Incomplete Work***

The University Catalog contains the policy regarding incomplete course grades. Please reference the catalog for details. Additionally, an incomplete (I) in any course that is not rectified prior to the next semester may result in dismissal from the program.

### ***Dismissal from the Program Policy and Procedures (A3.14f)***

**A Physician Assistant student will be dismissed from the program if:**

- A grade of “C” or lower is received in any course.

- The minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 for each trimester is not met.
- An incomplete grade is unresolved or results in a grade of “C” or lower.
- They withdraw from one or more classes.
- The maximum timeframe of semester/trimester credit units to complete the program is exceeded.

Additionally, any violation of program policy, particularly where dismissal is identified as a consequence, may result in dismissal from the program.

**Procedure for Dismissal from the Physician Assistant Program:**

- The course director, faculty, or staff will refer the student to the Student Progress Committee (SPC).
- The SPC will review all relevant information, which may include the students’ overall progress, instructor evaluations of the student in the courses involved, and any other pertinent information.
- The SPC will make recommendations to the Program Director (PD).
- If dismissal is recommended, the PD will make the final decision. Subsequently, the decision will be sent to the student within two business days of the decision via email.

**Appeal Process:**

- Students may appeal a dismissal decision in writing via email to the PD.
- The PD’s decision will be rendered in writing via email to the student.
- If the PD’s decision remains unchanged, then appeal to Student Affairs ([WCUCGSStudentAffairs@westcoastuniversity.edu](mailto:WCUCGSStudentAffairs@westcoastuniversity.edu)) in writing on the appropriate appeal form.

Student Affairs will render their decision to the student in writing via email.

***Withdrawal (A3.14e)***

The Withdrawal Policy is set forth in the University Catalog. Please contact the Dean/Program Director and consult the University Catalog for further information.

***Policies and procedures for reapplication and deceleration (A3.14d)***

Outside of formally approved leave of absences, the program does not offer deceleration. Students that withdraw from the program may reapply to the program.

***Graduation Requirements (A3.14b)***

- Achieve a grade of 76% or better for all courses in the program.
- Achieve a minimum overall GPA of 3.0 or better at program completion.
- Achieve a “Pass” or grade of 76% or better for all summative technical skill competency testing.
- Successful completion and passing of all components of the summative evaluation.

***Time Frame for Program Completion (A3.14b)***

Students are expected to progress through the curriculum in the sequence and time frame outlined by the program. The maximum time permitted to complete all degree requirements for the Master of Physician Assistant program is defined in the WCU Catalog.

## ***Program-Specific Policies for Clinical Experiences***

All policies noted in this handbook apply to both didactic and clinical phases of the program. Additional specific policies for supervised clinical practice experiences (SCPEs) are noted below.

### ***Students as Administrative Staff, Clinical Staff, or Faculty during Didactic and SCPEs (A3.02, A3.03a-b)***

Students are neither required nor permitted to work for the program. The program will not utilize students in place of administrative staff, clinical staff, or as instructional faculty during the pre-clinical or clinical phases of student training. Clinical experience, and overall instruction are the responsibility of the faculty and not students.

### ***Students Providing or Soliciting Clinical Sites and/or Preceptors (A3.08)***

Students are not required to provide or solicit any clinical sites or preceptors. The Program will coordinate all clinical sites and preceptors for program-required rotations. Coordinating clinical practice experiences involves identifying, contacting, and evaluating sites and preceptors for suitability as a required or elective rotation experience. Students may make suggestions for sites and preceptors but are not required to do so. Any student-suggested sites and preceptors will be reviewed, evaluated, and approved for educational suitability by the program.

Student-suggested sites must still meet all program requirements for SCPE preceptor and site development. All clinical sites must be:

1. Appropriate sites that meet the program required clerkship specialties including core and elective medical rotations
2. Located in the United States and U.S. territories.
3. Regardless of location, students must still be able to return to the campus for immersion activities. Special accommodations will not be provided to students on the basis of travel issues.
4. All preceptors must either be:
  - a. A PA who is certified by the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA), holds an unrestricted state license to practice as a PA-C, and has a collaborating physician who meets the below requirements.
  - b. An MD or DO physician who is ABMS or AOA board certified in the specialty area of practice and has an unrestricted license to practice in the state/location of the clinical facility.
5. Suggesting a preceptor or site in no way guarantees that the preceptor or site will be included as a SCPE.
6. Student suggested sites often do not reach fruition as a SCPE for a multitude of reasons including but not limited to:
  - a. failure to meet minimum requirements of the program;

- b. failure to finalize the required affiliation agreement;
  - c. demands for site/preceptor stipend payments that are unable to be met by the program.
7. For a site to be considered, students must make suggestions for prospective sites 3 months prior to the start of the clinical phase of training.
8. The process for students to suggest sites to the program is as follows:
  - a. Students first must receive approval from the Clinical Coordinator to reach out to a potential site and/or preceptor. If approved, students must have the potential preceptor complete the Clinical Interest Form (CIF), which is returned to the Clinical Coordinator.
  - b. Once completed, the forms are to be returned to the Clinical coordinator to begin the process of review by the program's clinical team.
  - c. The program's clinical team will then reach out to the site to set up virtual or in-person meetings to discuss the potential for becoming a SCPE and to have the Affiliation Agreement completed.
  - d. The Affiliation Agreement is subsequently submitted to WCU for review.
  - e. Once the affiliation agreement has been approved, and all site-development forms and activities have been completed and approved, the clinical team will then work on integrating the site into the program's clinical phase.
  - f. If approved and appropriate, preceptors and sites will be worked into the student's normal SCPE rotation schedule.

### ***SCPE Schedule Assigned by Program***

The program assigns all clinical rotations to all students. It is the goal of the program to inform students of each trimester's clinical rotations in the preceding trimester. Once a clinical rotation is assigned by the program, the student is not permitted to request a change in the clinical site or clinical preceptor. In specific circumstances, the program may need to change a student's schedule during any given trimester. If done, students are also not permitted to request a change in the newly assigned schedule. As such, due to potential issues (e.g., preceptor illness, site closure, changes requested by the site/preceptor) SCPE schedules should be considered tentative until each SCPE is completed. Importantly, if a rotation change is unavoidable, students may need to complete that scheduled rotation in the Southern California region in the assigned order.

### ***Student Representation Outside Designated SCPEs***

The Dean/Program Director must approve any clinical contact outside of the assigned SCPEs. Unapproved SCPEs or clinical contact where the student represents themselves as enrolled in the PA Program without permission could result in disciplinary action.

### **Supervised Clinical Practicum Experience (SCPE) Location**

The program has secured and will maintain all SCPE sites and preceptors, the vast majority of which are in the Los Angeles and Southern California regions. The clinical team will work diligently to develop and secure SCPEs within each student's home state region, which must be in a University-approved state. Please see the Manager, Clinical Education for information of currently approved sites and states. In the

event that all nine clinical rotations are not found in the student's home state region, the student will be required to come to the Los Angeles region, or another area with a confirmed, approved (by the University and program) clinical location, for a confirmed five-week rotation.

### **Student Financial Responsibility for Clinical Site Travel (A3.14j)**

Students are responsible for any costs related to attending clinical experiences. Additionally, students may be required to travel to clinical sites that are outside of their region and, if this occurs, students are responsible for their own housing, transportation, and living expenses (e.g., food, gas, internet, utilities, clothing).

### **Inclement Weather During Clinical Experiences**

If inclement weather occurs when a student is to report to a clinical practice site and the site is closed, the student is excused from on-site clinical activities for that day only; the student is expected to continue completing all other course-specific activities (e.g., patient logging, UWORLD, SCPE assignments). The student must immediately inform the Manager of Clinical Education and the Course Director via email, however, about the closure and their planned activities for that day. The student will be expected to make up missed direct patient care activities during the SCPE rotation. If that is not possible, arrangements for patient care activity make-up will need to be coordinated with the Manager of Clinical Education and the Course Director to complete the clinical experience.

### **Supervised Clinical Practice Experience (SCPE) Attire (A3.04)**

During the clinical phase, students are present in hospitals, emergency departments, medical offices, clinics, and the operating room. All clothing must adhere to MPA-CA Hybrid program policies and, when applicable, the Centers for Disease Control Guidelines to prevent exposure to pathogens. WCU expects students to give the very best impression to clinical affiliates. The following provides the guide for an exemplar representation of the University during clinical rotations/experiences:

- Students must be clearly identified in the clinical setting with a name badge that clearly identifies them as an MPA-CA PA Student. Additional identification will also be present on the student's lab coat.
- Appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as lab coats, gloves, eye goggles or face shield, and mask may also be required. Except for surgery, scrubs may only be worn in the clinics when directed to do so by the preceptor. For surgical rotations, the site will direct the scrub usage according to protocol. The clinical dress may be altered by a clinical department, attending preceptor as deemed appropriate.
- Closed-toed and closed-heeled shoes with grip soles are expected in all laboratory and clinical settings. Open-toed shoes or sandals that may expose skin to spills or sharp instruments are not allowed at any time during SCPE activities. Avoid wearing shoes that may slip easily on wet surfaces.
- Personal hygiene: Students should have good daily hygiene that includes clean teeth, hair, clothes, and body. Clothing should be clean, pressed, and in good condition.
- Body piercing sites may also serve as a source for infection. If the piercing is requested to be removed by the clinical site or preceptor, the student must comply.
- If the clinical site or preceptor requests for the tattoo to be covered, the student must comply. Tattoos must abide by the University requirements in the [University Student Handbook](#).
- Head coverings such as hats, caps, and other items are not permitted except for approved medical or religious purposes or as a part of PPE.

Students are expected to adhere to the same ethical and professional standards required of certified PAs. The professional conduct of PA students is evaluated on an ongoing basis throughout the program. Students not meeting standards of dress and appearance may be denied access to patients during SCPEs, which will jeopardize the completion of the SCPE. Violations of dress code policies will result in the disciplinary process outlined in the University Student Handbook, section Student Conduct, and Disciplinary Statement.

If preceptors observe any concerns about a student's professionalism, please contact the Manager, Clinical Education, or the Dean/Program Director immediately. Such situations will be referred to the University Conduct Committee for adjudication. WCU reserves the right to provide sanctions up to and including University dismissal of any student who is found to be in violation of WCU's Student Code of Conduct.

### **Student-Preceptor Polices**

#### ***Housing/Transportation/Parking***

While many clinical education rotations are in or around the Los Angeles area, the program and university will work with the student to develop regional sites when possible and as they are available. Travel and housing expenses are the student's responsibility. Some sites, especially larger teaching hospitals, have limited parking available for students. Students should inquire with their preceptor on parking availability and policies. Keep in mind some sites may require that students pay for parking. Transportation costs, including parking, are the student's responsibility. Students should comply with all parking rules at their assigned rotation sites.

#### ***Anti- Nepotism Policy***

Students may complete a rotation in the same clinic/hospital system as a family member ONLY if the family member is not the preceptor and the preceptor is not considered a subordinate of the family member. Requests for such arrangements will be reviewed by the clinical team.

Similarly, rotations with a current personal health care provider are prohibited. If a student is scheduled for a rotation with a previous health care provider, it must be > 1 year prior to the start of the rotation since the student was a patient with that preceptor. The student may not seek medical advice/care from the preceptor or other providers at that clinical site during their rotation. It is highly discouraged for students to initiate a provider-patient relationship with any previous preceptor prior to graduation.

Students who do not comply with these policies will be withdrawn from the rotation and may be required to use their Elective block to repeat the rotation. Questions or concerns should be addressed by the Clinical Team.

#### **Preceptor-Student Relationship (Non-fraternization Policy)**

The student should maintain a professional relationship with the preceptor, staff, and patients and at all times adhere to the appropriate professional boundaries. Social activities and personal relationships outside of the professional learning environment should be appropriate and kept to a minimum, so as not to put the student or preceptor in a compromising position. Contact through web-based social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter) will not be allowed until a student fully completes the program. Career networking through professional sites like LinkedIn is acceptable for students within a couple of months of graduation.

If the preceptor and student have an existing personal relationship prior to the start of the rotation, this

must be disclosed to the Clinical Team prior to the start of the rotation and a professional relationship must be maintained at all times in the clinical setting.

While on rotations, students are not to engage in any activities with preceptors that are non-academic in nature.

### **Orientation and Communicating Student Expectations**

The student must complete Prism data information and immunization updates prior to matriculation and update information just prior to the SCPE year. All onboarding activities in Prism must be completed prior to the rotation including any administrative needs, including obtaining a name badge, computer password, completing any necessary paperwork, EMR training, and additional site-specific HIPAA training, if needed. In the first week of the rotation, the preceptor and student should formulate mutual goals in regard to what they hope to achieve during the rotation. The preceptor should communicate his or her expectations of the student during the rotation also.

Expectations can include:

- Hours
- Interactions with office and professional staff
- General attendance
- Call Schedules
- Overnight/weekend schedules
- Participation during rounds and conferences
- Expectations for clinical care, patient interaction, and procedures
- Oral Presentations
- Written documentation- EMR and handwritten notes
- Assignments & write-ups
- Any additional duties that the preceptor feels are necessary for learning purposes.

### **Supervision of the PA Student**

During the student's time at the clinic or hospital, the preceptor must be available for supervision, consultation, and teaching, or designate an alternate preceptor. Although the supervising preceptor may not be with a student during every shift, it is important to clearly assign students to another clinician who will serve as a student preceptor for any given time interval. Having more than one clinical preceptor has the potential to disrupt continuity for the student but also offers the advantage of learning from multiple perspectives.

Occasionally, students may be given an opportunity or assignment to spend time with ancillary staff (Xray, lab, physical therapy, etc.), as these experiences may be very valuable. The preceptor should be aware of the students always assigned activities. Students are not employees of the hospitals or clinics and therefore, work entirely under their preceptor supervision. Students are not to substitute for paid clinicians, clerical staff, or other workers at the clinical sites. On each rotation, it is the student's responsibility to ensure that the supervising physician or preceptor also sees all of the student's patients. The preceptor can provide direct supervision of technical skills with gradually increasing autonomy in accordance with the students demonstrated level of expertise. **However, every patient must be seen by the preceptor and every procedure evaluated by the preceptor prior to patient discharge. The PA student will not be allowed to see, treat, or discharge a patient without evaluation by the preceptor.**

Students completing a formal elective rotation with a preceptor or site that may end up becoming a

employer must maintain a “student” role in the clinic and should not assume responsibilities of an employee until after graduation from the program. This includes appropriate, routine supervision with the preceptor of record within the scope of the agreed upon clinical experience. This is vital in preserving the professional liability coverage provided by the university; it is important to protect both the student and preceptor in the case that legal action is sought by a patient.

The occasional opportunity, or suggestion, from a potential employer to participate in patient care activities outside of a formal rotation assignment prior to graduation must be avoided. In addition, if a PA student is working in a paid position in a different health-care related capacity anytime during their PA education, that individual is not permitted to assume their role of a PA student while on duty as a paid employee. Liability insurance will not cover any student assuming the PA student role outside of an assigned clinical rotation.

### **Informed Patient Consent Regarding Student Involvement in Patient Care**

Patients are essential partners in the education endeavor. Efforts must be made to observe strict confidentiality, respect for patient privacy and dignity, and to honor their preference regarding treatment. Patients must be informed that Physician Assistant student will participate in their care, and the patient's consent must be obtained. This may be done through standardized forms at admission or on a person-by-person basis. The student must be clearly identified as PA student, wear their name badges, and verbally identify themselves as such. If the patient requests a physician and refuses the PA student's services, the request must be honored. Patients must know that they will see their regular provider, and they should have an explicit opportunity to decline student involvement.

If a student is on a clinical rotation, and a patient identifies themselves as West Coast University faculty or staff member, the student must excuse themselves from that patient encounter and allow their preceptor to assume care.

**Any HIPAA violations will be taken very seriously and may be grounds for an immediate professionalism dismissal from the MPA program.**

### **Medical Care and Medication Samples**

Students are not allowed seek medical care from a preceptor, his/her/their colleagues, or staff for any reason. The only exception is emergency situations where their preceptor is the only qualified licensed provider to give care. Students may not take any medication or supplies from a clinical rotation site for personal use or any other reason. Any student violating these guidelines on drug samples will automatically fail the rotation, and the incident will be reviewed by the Progress and Promotion Committee for professionalism program dismissal.

### **Student Responsibilities**

In addition to adhering to the standards of professional conduct outlined in the handbook, students are expected to perform the following during their clinical rotations:

- Obtain detailed histories and conduct physical exams, develop a differential diagnosis, formulate an assessment and plan through discussion with the preceptor.
- Proficient in oral presentations and documentation clinical findings- EMR, handwritten notes/prescriptions.
- Proficient in coding (ICD-11 and/or CPT) after patient encounters.
- Perform focused history and physicals as applicable.

- Perform and/or interpret common laboratory results and diagnostic studies.
- Educate and counsel patients across the lifespan regarding disease prevention and disease management.
- Attend clinical rotations as scheduled in addition to grand rounds, lectures, and conferences, if available.
- Demonstrate emotional resilience and stability, adaptability, and flexibility during the clinical year.
- Follow directions of the Clinical Team as well as clinical site preceptors and staff.
- Other time and activities at the discretion of the preceptor as long as it is academic in nature.

## **Clinical Year Communication Policies**

### ***Email Policy***

The West Coast University California Hybrid PA program will use email as an official form of communication with students during clinical rotations. The program requires all students to check email daily including weekends/holidays on all rotations and to respond to email requests by the PA program within 24 hours or sooner if indicated on the email. Students are asked to acknowledge any email from the clinical team with a simple reply to ensure that the email was received. If a student is located at a site with no/limited Internet access, they must let the clinical team know ASAP so that the clinical team knows who to call if we need to contact the student. Failure to reply to clinical team emails within 24 hours may result in deduction or loss of Professionalism grade.

### ***Communication of Schedule***

Students are required to upload their work schedule in Exxat by Wednesday at midnight of the first week of each rotation so that site visits may be planned by faculty/staff. If the student rotation schedule is not available at that time, they should inform the clinical coordinator of this prior to the deadline. Calendars MUST INCLUDE:

- Student name/cell number
- Rotation#
- Site name & address(es)
- Site contact person &email
- Primary preceptor name &email
- For each shift: scheduled hours (standard time), location, clinician
- TOTAL HOURS schedule for this rotation

Calendars that are submitted with incomplete information (aside from a pending schedule), will be returned to the student and professional points may be deducted.

### ***Contacting Sites/Hospitals***

Students are required to send an email to the **clinical site contact, preceptor** (if an email address is listed), and **hospital systems contact** (if credentials are needed) for each rotation **TWO WEEKS in advance** of starting the rotation. If a student has not received a return email within a week of the initial contact, they should call the site and ask to speak with the site contact person listed. If a student is still having difficulty reaching the site contact person, they should contact the Clinical Team a full week prior the start of the rotation.

## ***Hospital Credentialing***

The majority of hospital credentialing paperwork will be completed in the months leading up to the start of the clinical year; however, students may be asked to complete additional hospital paperwork during the clinical year. It is imperative that students complete this paperwork within one week after the date requested, unless an extension is granted by the clinical team. Failure to do so may result in delayed rotation and/or delayed graduation.

## **Clinical Documentation Policies**

### ***Charting***

Charting and documentation are allowed by the preceptor and/or facility at many clinical sites and PA students may enter information into the medical record where appropriate. Preceptor should clearly understand how different payers consider the role of each students' notes as related to documentation of services provided for reimbursement purposes. Any questions regarding this issue should be directed to the clinical team. Students are reminded that the medical record is a legal document. All medical entries must be identified as "student" and must include the PA student signature with the designation "PA-S." The preceptor cannot bill for the services of a student. Preceptors are required to document the services they provide as well as review and edit all student documentation. Policies and procedures regarding student notes vary depending on insurance type (see Medicare policy below). Students' notes are legal and are contributory to the medical record. Moreover, writing a succinct note that communicates effectively is a critical skill that PA students should develop. The preceptor must document the involvement of the PA student in the care of the patient in all aspects of the visit. The preceptor must specifically document that the student was supervised during the entirety of the patient visit. The introduction of EMR's (electronic medical records) presents obstacles for students if they lack a password or not fully trained in the use of one particular institutions EMR system. In these cases, students are strongly encouraged to hand-write several notes per day, which should be reviewed by the preceptors whenever possible for feedback.

### ***Medicare Policy***

On November 1, 2019, the Centers for Medicare Medicaid Services (CMS) finalized new regulations regarding the use of PA student medical record documentation for billing purposes. CMS no longer requires a clinician serving as preceptors to reperform student provided documentation. Preceptors may verify (sign and date) student documentation beginning on January 1st, 2020. This makes the role of preceptor significantly easier, and they will be able to spend more time teaching versus redocumenting. Students also benefit from increased experience with electronic medical records, which will better prepare them for practice. All physician, PA, and APRN preceptors will be allowed to verify medical record documentation provided by PA students. It is important to note that there are no restrictions on the verification of student- provided documentation on the basis of profession (i.e., a preceptor does not have to be a PA in order to verify the documentation of a PA student).

### ***Prescription Writing***

Based on insurance and Medicare rules, students may write or input electronic prescribing information for the preceptor, but the preceptor must sign/send all prescriptions. The students' name is not to appear on the prescription. For clinical rotation sites that use electronic prescriptions the preceptor MUST log into the system under his/her own password and personally signed and send the Electronic Prescription. Students should practice handwriting prescriptions on clinical rotations when the opportunity to input electronic prescriptions is not available.

In addition, students MUST notify the PA clinical team immediately if he/she/they are being asked by a preceptor or a member of his/her/their staff to write, sign, or distribute medications without supervision.

### ***Clinical Attendance Policies***

Expect the trimester schedule to be final and non-negotiable. If a student refuses a clinical assignment including specific location (sites) and/or preceptor, the student will be dismissed from the program.

### ***Work Hours***

The goal is for clinical rotations to mimic the “real world.” As such, program students are expected to complete learning experiences related to the Supervised-Clinical Practice experience of 52 hours per week with a minimum direct patient care hours of 34 hours per week and a maximum of 80 direct patient care hours a week. Direct patient care hours include hours that you spend on your clinical site. Indirect patient care hours include prep for cases/patient care, review of material prescribed by your preceptor, etc. If students are scheduled for less than 34 hours a week, they can request additional shifts be added if possible. If you are unable to attain 34 direct patient care hours a week at your site, contact the Manager of Clinical Education immediately. If a student is not able to obtain projected hours for each rotation, they may be required to supplement the learning experience by completing a project assigned by the preceptor or assignments given by the Course Director during the rotation to ensure additional self-directed learning supports student attainment of expected course competencies. Students may be assigned day, evening, or holiday shifts. They may work eight-, ten-, or twelve-hour shifts, providing there is sufficient time off between shifts. Preceptors may ask students to rotate shifts to gain the most amount of clinical experience during peak patient flow. During certain clinical rotations, (i.e., inpatient medicine, surgery, emergency medicine), weekend hours may be required and will provide excellent access to clinical experiences.

Students may not work additional hours during the first part of the rotation to complete their rotation early. Students also may not alter their rotation start/stop date without direct approval from the Dean/Program Director.

### ***Attendance***

#### Clinical Experience Attendance

- Regular and punctual SCPE attendance is expected and is one component used to determine readiness for entry into clinical practice. Students are expected to attend in their entirety all special and regularly scheduled clinical assignments.
- Attendance at all scheduled shifts is mandatory. Students are expected to attend in their entirety all special and regularly scheduled clinical assignments.
- Students are expected to arrive at least 15 minutes early to each of their scheduled shifts.
- Any length of absence (an hour, half-day day, full day) during clinical rotations due to extenuating circumstances, must be approved by the Manager, Clinical Education, AND the clinical preceptor as soon as possible before the start of clinical time. The Manager, Clinical Education and Course Director may be notified through email, text, and/or voicemail on the office phone.
- If 4 hours of clinic time is missed, a half-day day will be documented. More than 4 hours of missed clinic time = a full day.
- The Manager, Clinical Education and/or Dean/Program Director will determine if an absence is excused or unexcused (based on WCU definition of an excused absence – see online catalog)
- Part-time jobs, extracurricular activities, vacations, or lack of childcare are NOT acceptable excuses for absences.

- Unauthorized tardiness, early departures, or absences in clinical rotations will result in the disciplinary process outlined in the University Student Handbook, section Student Conduct and Disciplinary Statement up to and potentially including dismissal from the program.
- Asking another student to notify the preceptor is not acceptable. Notification of the preceptor does not excuse an absence or tardy. Preceptors are not the approving authority to determine excused or unexcused absences.
- For any absence missed in each rotation for any reason, the Course Director will determine how the missed time will be made on an individual basis and determine by the total number of hours scheduled for that rotation.
- If the student is absent from a single rotation for any time due to illness, the student must submit to the Course Director a note from a licensed healthcare provider defining the number of days absent, and the expected date of return.
- If extraordinary circumstances require a student's prolonged absence (i.e., 3 days or more in one rotation), the student may be encouraged to consider a Medical Leave of Absence which can be requested through the Campus Director of Student Affairs, Manager of Clinical Education, or Program Director. A Medical Leave of Absence may delay the student's graduation. Due to the variability of requirements for each rotation, each case will be evaluated and decided upon, on a case-by-case basis by the Student Progress Committee.
- Family emergencies/death in family: Due to the variability of circumstances, time off needed for family emergencies or death in the family will be reviewed by the Manager, Clinical Education and Dean/Program Director on a case-by-case basis.
- Military obligations: Students required to miss rotation days due to military obligations must provide the Manager of Clinical Education, Course Director, and Program Director with a statement from their unit commander. Depending on the length of absence, they may be required to make up time later. Due to the variability of requirements for each rotation, each case will be evaluated and decided on a case-by-case basis.
- Absences can result in additional clinical experience/assignments and/or the requirement to make up the missed time subject to a remediation plan that will include assignments provided by the Manager, Clinical Education, which ensure competency around the clinical experience. Any delays, repeat course work, may delay the timing and ability for a student to graduate.

### ***Holidays***

While on clinical rotations, students must only observe holidays that are observed by their respective clinical site. West Coast University holidays do not supersede clinic schedules for clinical year students. If a student is assigned to work on a holiday, the student must work the assigned shift.

### ***Schedule***

The clinical year schedule is highly variable; changes may be made to accommodate preceptor and clinical site availability to ensure students have experiences and encounters that prepare them for clinical practice. Therefore, student rotations may differ from the academic calendar, and we ask that students remain flexible. Also, the Manager, Clinical Education, in consultation with the Student Progress Committee, may recommend that a student either stay longer at a clinical site or repeat specific components of a clinical rotation and course as deemed necessary to ensure patient safety and the student's expected level of professional development and mastery of learning outcomes. This recommendation will be made to the Dean/Program Director for review and intervention.

### ***Disaster Policy***

Should a student's clinical site or student housing administration close or evacuate a student due to a disaster, the student should notify the Manager, Clinical Education and leave the premises immediately.

Likewise, if the PA Program notifies a student to evacuate an area, the student must notify the preceptor and leave the area immediately. If a student feels that it is not safe for them to travel to or from their clinical site due to a disaster, they should notify the Manager, Clinical Education and the preceptor immediately. Open and timely communication between the student, preceptor, and the clinical team is required to ensure safety and accountability for all students.

Note: In the event of a disaster, students may need to be temporarily or permanently relocated for a rotation(s).

### ***Medical Leave of Absence***

Students who require a medical leave of absence must request a meeting with the Dean/Program Director and/or the Campus Director of Student Affairs. The circumstances of the leave will be reviewed with Student Affairs. Each case will be considered on an individual basis. A plan for reentry, remediation, or dismissal will be developed in discussion with the Dean/Program Director.

Given the limited availability of re-entry points and the sequential nature of the curriculum, opportunities for returning to the program after an approved leave of absence are limited and may require waiting an extended period until the next required courses to progress in the program are offered again.

As a condition of re-entry, any students having completed Trimester 1 or more, may be required to successfully complete, with a minimum score of 76%, a comprehensive assessment. Assessments may include both written examination and/or practical/skills-based examination, to demonstrate readiness to resume the curriculum. Students would be scheduled to take the re-entry assessments prior to re-entry.

Failure to successfully complete the required re-entry assessment(s) may result in the student being required to reapply to restart the program from the beginning in accordance with program and university policies.

Student dismissal will follow the "Dismissal" protocol in the University Student Handbook. Students returning after a medical leave of absence must obtain a medical clearance letter prior to returning to the program.

### ***Dismissal from rotation site***

In the event the student is asked to leave the rotation and/or rotation site by the preceptor or clinical site staff, the student must IMMEDIATELY notify the Manager, Clinical Education in person or by phone.

### ***Social Media***

The following are guidelines for the West Coast University MPA-CA Program clinical year students use of social media. Social media includes but is not limited to the following: personal blogs and cell phones, Facebook, Twitter, My Space, You Tube, multimedia sites, and others. These guidelines apply whether a

student is posting on their own sites or commenting on other sites. Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action or dismissal from the program, pending review of the incident by the program.

- Students must not share confidential information about West Coast University, the PA program, faculty or staff, clinical sites preceptors or clinical staff.
- Students should refrain from posting personal opinions about West Coast University faculty, staff, classmates, clinical year preceptors, and their staff.
- Students must always maintain patient privacy. They must never share confidential patient information including health information, patient images, financial information, or other identifying patient information.
- Students should not “friend” patients, families, preceptors, or staff on social media websites, nor should they accept friend requests from patients, families, preceptors, or staff. “Friending” preceptors or university faculty and staff should not occur until the student fully completes the PA program.
- Your social name, handle, or URL should not include West Coast University’s name or logo. If you identify your affiliation to West Coast University or to the PA program, your social media activities should be consistent with the university standards of professional conduct. It should be clear that any commentary reflects the students’ personal views and not the views of West Coast University or the PA program.
- Students are prohibited from dispensing medical advice or making medical referrals on social media.
- Students are encouraged to use common sense and good judgment in social media. They should avoid unprofessional language, images, and behavior that would reflect poorly on them in the university.
- Career networking through **professional** sites like LinkedIn is acceptable.

For the full West Coast University Social Media policy, please see “Social Media” in the University Student handbook available online, any violation of this social media policy will result in all students involved coming before the Conduct Committee and may be subject to disciplinary action.

### ***Cell Phones/Text Messages***

It is inappropriate, unprofessional, and disrespectful to text message, check social media sites or email, or use cell phones/iPad mini or any other devices for purposes other than educational in nature while on clinical rotations.

If the preceptor approves, electronic devices with internet capabilities may be used as a clinical resource only (i.e., medical applications). Students that text message and/or use their cell phone with internet access for non-educational purposes will be disciplined for unprofessional conduct and/or lose the professionalism grade for that rotation. If texting is necessary to contact the clinical team on the day of a scheduled site visit, students should ask their preceptor if they may communicate with faculty via text.

### ***Drugs & Alcohol Policy***

Any student who appears to be under the influence or impaired (i.e., a risk to patient safety) while on clinical rotations, will be dismissed from his/her clinical site immediately. The preceptor will notify the PA clinical team as soon as possible. Students impaired due to the use of illicit substances will receive a failing grade for the rotation. If the impairment is due to a prescribed, authorized substance, the

rotational responsibilities may be reevaluated or rescheduled at the discretion of the Manager of Clinical Education and Dean/Program Director.

### **Professional Conduct in the Clinical Year**

All professional standards apply to the clinical year and to clinical practice as a Physician Assistant. In addition to these standards, students are to maintain professional relationships during SCPEs. Student-preceptor relationships are expected to remain professional, and fraternization is not allowed.

### **Mandated Reporting**

Mandated Reporting Medical Professionals play a significant role in the identification of suspected abuse and neglect and have an obligation to report it to the authorities. Mandatory reporting requires that medical professionals be cognizant of the reporting regulations in the state(s) in which they practice and the mechanisms available for reporting suspected abuse in those states. Areas abuse for mandatory reporting include: physical, sexual, emotional, or neglect, substance use in professional practice. The populations impacted by abuse and neglect are Children, Domestic Partners, Geriatrics, and Medical Professionals. Medical Professionals, as Mandated Reporters, are required to:

- recognize signs and symptoms of abuse/neglect;
- ask direct, non-judgmental questions with compassion;
- document all finds;
- assess patient safety;
- review, refer, and report to appropriate authorities.

All students are required to report any suspicion of abuse and/or neglect to their clinical faculty. Faculty will take the appropriate steps to refer or report to the appropriate authorities.

### **Clinical Assessment**

Assessment during the clinical year is focused on formative assessment and monitoring to assure that students are prepared for summative evaluations and competency testing. At the culmination of the clinical year, competency testing in the form of the Summative Evaluation confirms student preparation for graduation and clinical practice. Formative assessment measures give students the opportunity to direct study efforts, refocus and prepare for end of rotation and end of curriculum examinations. Formative assignments are due each week throughout the SCPE in preparation for each EOR examination and all summative assessments.

### **End of Rotation Exams:**

Following each core clinical SCPE, students will be required to complete an End of Rotation (EOR) Examination. EOR exams are written and administered by the Physician Assistant Education Association (PAEA) through "exam driver." Students should prepare for EOR exam questions with self-directed readings in the text(s) used during the didactic year or postings to the Canvas courses, covering topics laid out in the PAEA designated blueprint for their exams. PAEA provides statistics and exam maintenance for all exams, then provides students with a list of topics for review. These exams are challenging and should be well prepared for by students.

## ***Standard Precautions, Exposure and Incident Reporting, and Financial Responsibility (A3.05a-c)***

### Standard Precautions (A3.05a)

Program students, particularly during SCPEs, are exposed to bloodborne pathogens, infectious diseases, and environmental hazards. These include but are not limited to pathogenic microorganisms present in human blood and can cause diseases such as Hepatitis (HBV), Herpes, Tuberculosis, and HIV. Students are required to treat all patients assigned; as a result, there is potential for transmission of bloodborne and other infectious diseases during patient care services. West Coast University is committed to protecting the rights of individuals who may have a bloodborne infectious disease.

### Sharps Handling

- Sharps include items such as needles, scalpels, sharp-edged instruments, broken glassware, and scissors.
- All sharps must be handled with care.
- Do not re-sheath needles.
- Never pass sharps from person to person by hand. Use a receptacle or “clear field” to place them.
- Never walk around with sharps in hand.
- Never leave exposed sharps lying around.
- Dispose of sharps in the designated sharps containers at the point of use (student should take a sharps container with them).
- Dispose of syringes and needles as a single unit; do not remove the needle first.
- Never overfill the sharps containers. All containers will be removed and replaced when filled to the designated line.

### Exposure and Incident Reporting (A3.05b)

- Students are trained in Bloodborne Pathogens and Personal Protective Equipment prior to clinical experiences.
- In order to minimize the risk of contracting a disease, students should follow universal precautions and immunization requirements and implement procedures when accidental exposure occurs.
  - Follow protocol established by the site where the incident occurred.
  - As soon as possible, same day:
    - notify the Clinical Preceptor and the Manager, Clinical Education or the Program Director;
    - complete Student Incident, Injury, and Exposure Report provided by the program.
  - The student will be responsible for all costs associated with initial and follow-up work-up and treatment.

### Financial Responsibility (A3.05c)

WCU MPA-CA students must have health insurance throughout the entirety of the program. Students are responsible for any costs associated with the evaluation or exposure experienced while on clinical activities.

## ***Safety Policy and Emergencies During Clinical Experiences***

### Off-Campus Learning and Clinical Experience Safety Policy

- Security and personal safety measures for MPA-CA students in the clinical setting are a priority for the program. Clinical sites are evaluated for safety and security by the Manager, Clinical Education, and program faculty.

Also, students will receive an orientation to each clinical facility in which hazards, exposures, and emergency responses will be reviewed. Students are required to complete (on the first day of the clinical rotation) and submit the Student and Preceptor SCPE Safety Checklist and Verification form to the Course Director to ensure that students have been oriented and understand the following security and safety-related items and policies:

- security measures on and off (to and from) the clinical site;
- safety procedures and policies for students entering and exiting the practice to their vehicles;
- facility security protocols;
- locations of emergency exits, places of safety, and escape routes;
- fire safety and location of fire extinguishers

## Receipt & Acknowledgment Form

### ***Physician Assistant Program Handbook Receipt and Policy Acknowledgment Form***

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have received information, including but not limited to, the Student Handbook, regarding WCU and MPA-CA Program policies and applicable ARC-PA Standards. I understand that I am required to read the MPA Student Handbook and other policies that may be furnished to me from time to time during my enrollment in the program. I understand that I may request a written copy of each manual or policy from the MPA-CA Program Director.

My signature further reflects my commitment to continuously comply with all policies and procedures of the University.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
WCU Student ID #

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Original: Student's education record in the PA Program  
Copy: Student

# CLINICAL YEAR ACADEMIC STANDING

## First EOR failure

- Receives letter of concern
- Meet with course director to develop academic action plan
- Remediation of content

## EOR retake

### Second failure of same EOR exam

- Referral to SPC for decision on whether student repeats course after graduation or is recommended for dismissal

### EOR retakepass

Continue to next rotation, next EOR

## Second failure of any EOR

- Receives letter of concern
- Meets with course director for academic action plan
- Automatic academic probation

### EOR retake failure

Referral to SPC for decision on whether student repeats course after graduation or is recommended for dismissal

### EOR retakepass

- Continue to next rotation, next EOR
- Remains on academic probation