

Master of Physician Associate Studies Programme Specification

<https://www.bradford.ac.uk/courses/pg/physicians-associate-studies/>

Academic Year:	2024/25
Degree Awarding Body:	The University of Bradford
Target degree award:	Master of Physician Associate Studies [Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) Level 7]
Interim awards:	Degree of Master of Science in Medical Sciences, Postgraduate Diploma in Medical Sciences, Postgraduate Certificate in Medical Sciences [FHEQ Level 7]
Programme Admissions:	September
Programme Duration:	90 weeks (2 years full-time)
Subject Benchmark:	The UK Physician Associate Curriculum and Programme Standards; Physician Associate registration assessment (PARA) content map (FPA 2023)
Approved by Faculty Board:	April 2024

Please note: This programme specification has been published in advance of the academic year to which it applies. Every effort has been made to ensure that the information is accurate at the time of publication, but changes may occur given the interval between publishing and commencement of teaching. Any change which impacts the terms and conditions of an applicant's offer will be communicated to them. Upon commencement of the programme, students will receive further detail about their course and any minor changes will be discussed and/or communicated at this point.

Minor Modifications Schedule

1. February 2020: Wording around 'Key features' and 'admissions requirements' altered.
2. October 2020: Specification reformatted and made accessible. Complex curriculum table reformatted.
3. June 2021: Annual changes for 2021 academic year. Standardised formatting and restored original curriculum tables. Updated Admissions text.
4. February 2022: Annual changes for 2022 academic year.
5. April 2024: Annual changes for 2024 academic year.

Introduction

This programme is suitable for graduates from life sciences or health courses and is designed to prepare students to enter the professional role of a Physician Associate (PA). The PA role is an emerging role within the NHS and is defined by the Faculty of Physician Associates (FPA) in the UK Physician Associate Curriculum and Programme Standards (FPA 2018) as someone who is:

"A collaborative healthcare professional with a generalist medical education, who works alongside doctors, providing medical care as an integral part of the multidisciplinary team. Physician Associates are dependent practitioners working under medical supervision, but who are able to work autonomously with appropriate support".

Physician Associates are trained to recognise, diagnose and manage common conditions under the supervision of a doctor. Physician Associates can work in a wide range of

general and specialised areas of clinical practice within both primary and secondary care settings, and across integrated care pathways.

The programme is intensive; it is delivered over 2 years and leads to the award of a professional master's degree. Students are expected to attend full time for 45 weeks of each year with approximately 50% of this time spent on clinical placement in local hospitals and GP practices. Students graduating with the MPAS award are eligible to sit the National Examinations, which must be passed in order to practise as a Physician Associate in the UK.

The requirements of a competent Physician Associate are not just based on theoretical knowledge and practical skills. Newly qualified Physician Associates need to be reflective practitioners with appropriate professional attitudes and attributes, able to critically reflect on their practice at a personal and organisational level and have the confidence and ability to instigate change. The Masters academic component of this course is focused on achieving the competences required of a graduate PA and provides the challenges of enhanced knowledge synthesis, audit and service improvement to produce academic Physician Associates with the ability to lead and develop the profession.

Programme Key Features

- Fully integrated two-year professional Masters course
- Early exposure to clinical practice with a longitudinal GP placement running through the first year.
- A range of primary and secondary care placements across the Bradford district with a diverse population.
- Opportunity to choose preferred speciality and location within the Yorkshire area for elective placement in the final weeks of the course.
- A focus on patient safety and improving quality of care.
- Opportunity to be actively involved in development, innovation and research of service provision through completion of a Quality Improvement Project.
- Part of a university that has a long-established and successful history in Health Professions education and that supports new and innovative ways of improving health and health care delivery.

Programme Aims

The programme is intended to:

- Develop graduates who have the medical knowledge, skills and professional attitudes to deliver safe and effective patient-centred care in partnership with the multi-disciplinary team in line with the professional standards required by the Faculty of Physician Associates (FPA) within the Royal College of Physicians (RCP).
- Allow graduates to acquire the skills and attitudes for lifelong learning and reflective practice, enabling them to meet the challenge of providing high quality healthcare, responsive to the changing needs of the population and the NHS.

Programme Learning Outcomes

To be eligible for the FHEQ Level 7 award of **Postgraduate Certificate in Medical Sciences** students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate in-depth clinical and therapeutic knowledge and an understanding of evidence-based healthcare.
2. Demonstrate a patient-centred approach, recognising the relevant psychological and social factors that may impact upon a patient's presentation and involve patients and carers in decision making and management plans.
3. Effectively educate and facilitate the learning of patients, their families and carers to promote and maintain health and wellbeing.
4. Provide immediate care of medical emergencies, including First Aid and Immediate Life Support (ILS) and demonstrate competence in a range of diagnostic and therapeutic procedures.

Additionally, to be eligible for the FHEQ Level 7 award of Postgraduate Diploma in Medical Sciences, students will be able to:

5. Demonstrate competence in consultation skills, which are tailored to the needs of the patient and the clinical situation and formulate appropriate differential diagnoses and management plans based on clinical information.
6. Make decisions and professional judgements based on available clinical information and ethical and legal principles.
7. Recognise potential threats to patient safety and demonstrate understanding of root cause analysis and risk management processes to facilitate learning at an individual and organisational level.
8. Work under supervision to prescribe or propose appropriate therapeutic interventions from the full range of available treatments for differentiated clinical conditions.
9. Critically analyse research evidence in medicine and healthcare, propose own ideas and justify appropriate courses of action.

Additionally, to be eligible for the FHEQ Level 7 Degree award of Master of Science in Medical Sciences, students will be able to:

10. Critically reflect on own practice to identify learning and development needs and utilise learning opportunities, research evidence, guidelines and audit to improve professional practice.
11. Make recommendations for improving a service process in an area relevant to their practice through critical review of literature, identification of an area of practice requiring improvement and the collection and the critical analysis of empirical research data.

The FPA requires a combination of academic achievement and a statement from the University of Bradford of a student's fitness to practice, in terms of professional behaviour and clinical competence, before a candidate is eligible to sit the Physician Associate National Examinations. Therefore, **to be eligible for the FHEQ Level 7 Degree award of Master of Physician Associate Studies, students will additionally be able to:**

12. Communicate effectively with both patients and colleagues and function effectively as a member of the multi-disciplinary team.
13. Behave as an ambassador for the Physician Associate profession and demonstrate professional behaviour consistent with the core values of the NHS.
14. Work safely and effectively within the professional scope of practice of a Physician Associate, seeking help and advice from the supervising physician when necessary and within published policies, procedures and guidelines.

Curriculum

Students on the MPAS programme will study 180 credits in core modules over 2 years.

The curriculum may change, subject to the University's programme approval, monitoring and review processes.

Year 1 Modules

Study Period	Module Title	Module Code	Credit	FHEQ Level
Academic Year	Communication and Clinical Skills for Physician Associates	PHA7081-C	30	7
Academic Year	Integrated Medical Sciences 1	PHA7060-C	30	7
Full Year	Professional Competence 1	PHA7064-Z	0	7
Full Year	Research, Innovation and Professional Practice	PHA7062-C	30	7

At the end of Year 1, students will be eligible to exit with the award of **Postgraduate Certificate in Medical Sciences** if they have successfully completed 60 credits including PHA7081-C and PHA7060-C and achieved the award learning outcomes. **The Postgraduate Certificate award does not confer eligibility** to enter the National Examinations managed by the FPA or to work as a Physician Associate.

Year 2 Modules

Study Period	Module Title	Module Code	Credit	FHEQ Level
Academic Year	Applied Clinical Knowledge and Professional Practice	PHA7063-C	30	7
Academic Year	Integrated Medical Sciences 2	PHA7061-C	30	7
Academic Year	Quality and Service Improvement Project for Physician Associates	PHA7080-C	30	7
Full Year	Professional Competence 2	PHA7065-Z	0	7

At the end of Year 2, students will be eligible to exit with the award of **Postgraduate Diploma in Medical Sciences** if they have successfully completed 120 credits including PHA7081-C, PHA7060-C, PHA7061-C and PHA7062-C, and achieved the award learning outcomes. **The Postgraduate Diploma award does not confer eligibility** to enter the National Examinations managed by the FPA or to work as a Physician Associate.

At the end of Year 2, students will be eligible to exit with the degree award of **Master of Science in Medical Sciences** if they have successfully completed 180 credits and achieved the award learning outcomes. **The Master of Science degree award does not confer eligibility** to enter the National Examinations managed by the FPA or to work as a Physician Associate.

Degree of Master of Physician Associate Studies

To be eligible to sit the National Examinations to qualify as a Physician Associate, the FPA requires a combination of both academic achievement and a statement from the HEI of the candidate's fitness to practise, in terms of professional behaviour and clinical competence.

Therefore, students will be eligible for the Degree award of **Master of Physician Associate Studies** if they have successfully completed all modules and achieved the award learning outcomes.

Students achieving the award of MPAS **will be eligible** to sit the Faculty of Physician Associates National Examinations to qualify and work as a Physician Associate.

Learning and Teaching Strategy

Students will develop the knowledge, understanding and skills necessary to meet the learning outcomes of the programme through a blended approach. Students will learn through keynote lectures, practical and simulation classes, seminars and group tutorials, collaborative learning using enquiry-based learning, case-based discussion, team-based learning (TBL), problem-based learning (PBL), placement learning and reflection on learning experiences collected via an e-portfolio. Parts of the course will be delivered via online methods using Canvas as well as use of other technology enhanced learning tools and other online learning packages, including the NHS's eLearning for Healthcare package, Fair Health.org.uk portal and SCRIPT modules.

Practical history taking, practical clinical examination skills and practical simulation classes will be used to help develop consultation skills, procedural clinical skills and diagnosis and management of a range of conditions in a safe environment in preparation for clinical placement. Students will develop skills in Immediate Life Support (ILS) through compulsory attendance at a certificated practical course validated by the Resuscitation Council. Seminars and group tutorials will be used to reinforce and discuss the application of knowledge and reflect upon and share experiences.

Approximately half of the learning time will be dedicated to placement learning where students will have the opportunity to practise and develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours in a clinical context setting and receiving regular formative feedback from

clinical supervisors. Students will be required to evidence their learning and progress through the ongoing development of a programme level e-portfolio.

Professional skills, including critical reflection, communication skills, team-working skills including multidisciplinary working, decision-making, facilitating the learning of others, professionalism and working within own competence, will be developed via taught sessions, clinical placements and support with ongoing development of the e-portfolio.

Prior to attending any clinical placement, students will also need to complete mandatory pre-placement training which will involve face-to-face sessions on basic life support and manual handling as well as the appropriate packages on NHSE's eLearning for Healthcare portal.

Assessment Strategy

The assessment strategy has been fully aligned with the programme learning outcomes to support learning and allow students to develop and demonstrate the knowledge and skills expected of a newly qualified Physician Associate.

Summative Assessment

There are several different modes of assessment within the programme including Observed Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCEs), Single Best Answer (SBA) multiple choice question (MCQs) examinations, written assignments and clinically-based assessment. The timetabling of modules has been driven from a learner perspective, carefully planning sessions across modules which align with relevant material taught in other modules. This includes the design and the timing of assessments.

Students are required to submit a summative portfolio at the end of the programme as part of the 'Professional Competence' modules. This portfolio is built over the two years of the course and is a synoptic assessment, bringing together elements from across the whole programme to evidence learning, progression and competence to practise as a newly qualified Physician Associate.

Summative Assessments include:

- e-portfolio consisting of a variety of work-based assessments including mini-clinical exercises (mini-CEX), Direct observation procedural skills (DOPS and Case based discussions (CBD)
- Professional development reviews (PDR)
- OSCEs
- Multiple Mini SBAs MCQ paper
- Final SBA MCQ Papers
- Critical literature reviews
- Written assessments such as reflective pieces and reflective case essays and continued professional development entries,
- Quality and Service Improvement Project
- Presentations (individually and in a team)

Formative Assessment

Students have the opportunity to receive formative feedback in order to support their learning before all summative assessments. This is presented in different ways depending on the assessment method. Clinical placement also provides many opportunities for informal feedback from staff and peers when participating in clinical care prior to summative end of placement assessment.

Formative Assessments include:

- Feedback on selected reflections of learning experiences
- Feedback on draft written assignments
- Mock Observed Structured Clinical Examinations
- Mock Single Best Answer papers with feedback
- Team-based Learning ongoing Individual Readiness Assurance Tests (iRATs) and Team Readiness Assurance Tests (tRATs)
- Team-based Learning activities including application exercises and immediate feedback on Readiness Assurance Tests (RATs)
- Whilst on practice, placement students will receive regular feedback on the development of knowledge and skills through completion of the work-based assessments required for their eportfolio, including:
 - Feedback on formative PDRS
 - Running small teaching sessions

Assessment Regulations

This programme conforms to the standard University Postgraduate Assessment Regulations which are available at the link: <http://www.bradford.ac.uk/regulations/>

However, there are two exceptions to these regulations as listed below:

1. For reasons of Patient Safety, and to more closely reflect the standard required for the Faculty of Physician Associate National Examinations, pass marks will be set higher than the University standard of 40% for the following:
 - Integrated Medical Sciences 1- End of year Single Best Answer (SBA) Examination, Drug Calculations SBA paper
 - Integrated Medical Sciences 2 - End of year SBA Examination, SBA – Safe Medicines Use
 - Communication and Clinical Skills for Physician Associates – Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE)
 - Applied Clinical Knowledge and Professional Practice - OSCE
2. There will be no compensation between assessment components for the assessments listed above, which must be passed at the pass mark stipulated. Full details of how these regulations affect assessments can be found in the module handbooks.

3. Certain module components are listed as 'MUST PASS' components. Further details can be found in the individual module handbooks.

Admission Requirements

We take into consideration a number of factors when assessing your application. It's not just about your grades; we take the time to understand your personal circumstances and make decisions based on your potential to thrive at university and beyond. Shortlisted candidates will be interviewed prior to making offers.

Applicant Profile

Standard

- 2:2 (or above) in a Life Science, Biomedical Science, or Healthcare undergraduate Honours degree from a UK University or overseas equivalent.
- Significant healthcare experience **or** substantial biology content covered within your first degree. We will consider academic qualifications and work experience on a case-by-case basis. Please email the admissions team with details of your degree course if necessary.
- GCSE grade 5 (national grade B) in English, **or** any A-Level equivalent in English, **or** having obtained a UK undergraduate degree within the last 2 years.
- Where English is not the first language of an applicant we will require an overall score of 7.5 in IELTS with no sub-test score less than 7.0.
 - You can improve your English proficiency by taking a pre-sessional English course with the University. For more information visit: www.brad.ac.uk/courses/other/pre-sessional-english-language-programme/

Desirable

Recent experience of volunteering or employment in a healthcare environment.

Personal statement of up to 500 words

Your personal statement is an important part of our selection process. This is your opportunity to demonstrate your enthusiasm and commitment to becoming a Physician Associate and describe how your work experience has helped to prepare you for the role. We are also looking for students to demonstrate that they have the skills required to successfully complete this demanding full-time course, balancing academic study with clinical placements, a willingness to travel and flexible working patterns.

Health screening

Successful applicants will be required to comply with any health screening as requested by the Department of Health in line with current guidelines for healthcare workers.

Police screening

This course will include work with children and vulnerable adults, so you are required to have an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check. More information about this process will be sent to you as part of the admissions process.

Professional registration

If you are a current healthcare professional or a member of a registered professional body, we ask that you provide details of your registration. If you have had your professional registration suspended or revoked, or undergone a disciplinary/fitness to practise investigation, you will be required to provide further information if selected for an interview. You may also be asked to provide full copies of related documentation.

Previous enrolment on a clinical course

If you have previously enrolled on a Physician Associate Studies or other clinical course which you did not complete, you must declare this on your application and provide information about these circumstances.

Please note: These entry requirements are correct for the contemporary recruitment cycle. The current requirements are published on the course webpage: www.brad.ac.uk/courses/pg/physicians-associate-studies/

For more details for international student entry requirements such as equivalent qualifications from your country or other recognised English language tests please visit the entry requirements webpage: <https://www.bradford.ac.uk/international/entry-requirements/>
