

## PHYSICIAN ASSOCIATE

### WHAT DOES A PHYSICIAN ASSOCIATE DO?

Physician Associates were formally introduced into the UK workforce in 2003. They work under the direct supervision of doctors, and support them in the diagnosis and management of patients including taking medical histories; performing examinations; diagnosing illnesses; analysing test results; developing management plans.

### SKILLS REQUIRED

Applicants for Physician Associate courses and jobs will need to demonstrate that they have:

- an interest in health or social care
- excellent communication skills
- a concern for people
- an enquiring and open mind
- rational approach
- an ability to handle pressure
- patience, determination and decisiveness
- humility
- experience of working with the public

### QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED

- Entry is with a postgraduate qualification – there are no undergraduate degrees specifically created for this role. Applicants will usually need a science-orientated undergraduate degree to gain entry to a postgraduate training programme. In addition, healthcare staff with an undergraduate degree in a relevant field – e.g. nursing, physiotherapy or working as a paramedic – will also be considered.
- All practising and graduated Physician Associates are recommended to register on the PA Managed Voluntary Register (PAMVR). The UK Physician Assistant Association (UKAPA) and the UK and Ireland Universities Board for PA Education (UKIUBPAE) recommend employers make this a compulsory criterion for employment.
- Applicants will need to pass a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.
- UK trained PAs are required to complete a one-year postgraduate paid internship.
- Check entry requirements and course content with individual course providers.

### POSTGRADUATE COURSES

Three of the higher education institutions offering a Physician Associate postgraduate qualification (<http://www.fparcp.co.uk/pa-students/pa-student-programmes>) are located in the West Midlands: the University of Worcester, the University of Birmingham and the University of Wolverhampton. Two of the courses are outlined below.

**MSc Physician Associate:** University of Worcester (<http://www.worcester.ac.uk/>)

**Length of study:** 2 years full-time or 3-4 years part-time

**Entry requirements – qualifications:** GCSE grade 4/C or above in Maths and English (or their equivalent) plus a BSc in a Life or Health Science at 2:2 or above; or a BSc/BEng/BA in a Physical Science, Engineering, or Social Work at 2:2 or above plus two Open University modules (see university website for details); or a Diploma of Higher Education in a healthcare profession (Operating Department Practitioner; Adult Nursing; Paramedic) at 50% overall plus a minimum two years of work experience in a professional role.

**Entry requirements – work experience:** Applicants must have demonstrated that they have relevant work experience in healthcare or in an allied healthcare profession. The relevance of the work experience will be assessed during the admissions process.

**Physician Associate Studies Diploma:** University of Birmingham (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/>)

**Length of study:** 25 months full-time

**Entry requirements – qualifications:** a 2:1 in a life sciences degree (e.g. Biology, Biochemistry, Biomedical Science, Medical Science, Nursing, Physiotherapy) or equivalent qualification. Candidates with a 2:2 in a Life Sciences degree may be considered if they have considerable clinical experience. Candidates with a Health Sciences diploma (e.g. Nursing) and with extensive clinical experience may also be considered.

**Entry requirements – work experience:** Extensive experience in the health service may strengthen an application.

**NB** Please check with individual course providers as entry requirements can change.

### **EMPLOYMENT SECTORS**

Physician Associates work in GP surgeries and in hospitals i.e. in Trauma and Orthopaedics, ENT, Paediatric Intensive Care (PICU), and A&E.

### **WORKING CONDITIONS**

Physician Associates working in GP surgeries may hold morning, afternoon and/or evening surgeries between 8am and around 6.30pm. Many surgeries also offer extended opening hours and weekend appointments. This may mean the surgery is open until 8pm on certain evenings or on Saturday mornings. The working conditions of Physician Associates in a hospital are likely to vary depending upon the department they work within.

### **SALARY**

The average annual salary for a Physician Associate is approximately £35,000. Typical starting salaries for physician associates are £30,000-£31,383 but can be less for an internship. Experienced Physician Associates can earn £31,383-£48,034.

**NB** These figures are only a guideline: see NHS pay scales, and job advertisements, for up-to-date information

### **LABOUR MARKET DATA**

This is a fairly new profession in the UK – it is more established in the US, where there are more than 86,000 Physician Associates. In the UK, in Spring 2017, there were thought to be approximately 450 Physician Associates and 1,200 students in training.

### **INFORMATION SOURCES**

- Faculty of Physician Associates: <http://www.fparcp.co.uk/>
- National Careers Service: <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/>
- NHS Careers: <http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/>
- Prospects: <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/>
- UCAS: <https://www.ucas.com/>

In addition, here is a Malvern Gazette article (November 2015) on Physician Associates:

[http://www.malverngazette.co.uk/news/14105878.First\\_physician\\_associates\\_at\\_Worcestershire\\_Royal\\_Hospital/](http://www.malverngazette.co.uk/news/14105878.First_physician_associates_at_Worcestershire_Royal_Hospital/)

### **VIDEO CLIPS**

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KnMyYRjrdCE>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZInVzLqEoY>

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