

Pathologists' Assistant

What is a pathologists' assistant? The principal activities of a pathologists' assistant include preparing bodies for examination, assisting a medical examiner with autopsy, either in the hospital (for medical review) or in the morgue (for forensic review), and conducting gross (macroscopic) examination of specimens.

Can UWW help me prepare for this field? UWW has helped students prepare for pathologists' assistant training. As of 2014, there are only 9 accredited schools in the U.S. and Canada, making entry into these schools competitive. You will need to work hard and effectively, and you will need to plan your work with an academic advisor.

What do I need to apply for admission to an accredited school?

There are nine programs in the US and Canada, one of which (at Wayne State University in Detroit) is an undergraduate program. The others all require that applicants have a bachelor's degree in a science. The individual schools may require certain courses, previous experience of the field, and the GRE or MCAT exam.

- 1. Major and minor:** Schools do not limit what major or minor they accept. However, based on the course requirements (see table below), most successful applicants with have a degree in biology or chemistry or some combination of those two.
- 2. Required science coursework:** Due to the technical nature of the examinations being performed, applicants must already be well versed in a wide range of biology and chemistry information. The following courses are typical of the pre-requisite course expectations:

Requirement	Length/Credits (minimum)	UWW courses which meet the requirements
General biology with lab	Min 1 year	BIO 141 AND BIO 142
General chemistry with lab	Min 2 semesters	CHEM 104 AND 104
Organic chem	1 to 2 semesters, +/- lab	CHEM 251, 252, 261, 262
Anatomy and physiology	1 course in each, or a two semester sequence	BIO 361 AND BIO 362
Statistics	1 course / 3 credits	BIO 303 OR PSYCH 215
Highly recommended electives: Human anatomy (BIO 361), human physiology (BIO 362), microbiology (BIO 311); college math (MATH 152); general physics (PHYSICS 140 AND PHYSICS 141)		
Other valuable electives: biochemistry (BIO/CHEM 456), immunology (BIO 412), genetics (BIO 251)		

- 3. Elective non-science courses:** Students are expected to be able to communicate clearly both verbally and in writing, so they need practice in both speech (COMM 110) and composition (ENGL 102, 104).
- 4. Exposure to the field:** Pathologists' assistants work with dead bodies. It is crucial that an applicant to such a program be well aware of this before entering. Students are therefore expected to job shadow a pathologist, observe an autopsy, or otherwise gain direct experience.
- 5. Entrance exam:** Students may be required to take either the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) or the Medical College Aptitude Test (MCAT) for some schools.
- 6. Essential Functions/Technical Standards:** Several professions have begun listing a series of five characteristics they evaluate in applicants. These areas are: Observation; Communication; Sensory & Motor Coordination and Function; Intellectual/Conceptual, Integrative, and Quantitative Abilities; Behavioral and Social Attributes. Most of these characteristics correspond

to “Essential Learning Outcomes”, skills and experiences (beyond just the facts) that are built into courses. UWW has adopted these outcomes as part of the LEAP program (<http://www.uww.edu/acadaff/assessment/leap>)

What happens then? After your professional education, you would receive a masters (MS) degree. You would also need to take the appropriate certification exam (American Society for Clinical Pathology, ASCP). The school you attend will help you prepare.

Professional organization: Most pathologist assistants belong to the American Association of Pathologists’ Assistants <http://www.pathologistsassistants.org/>; this organization is an excellent source of information for everyone with questions about the work, the training required, and the job prospects.

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Training in this area:

Quinnipiac University (Hamden, CT)

MS program <http://www.quinnipiac.edu/school-of-health-sciences/graduate-programs/master-of-health-science-pathologists-assistant>

Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science (North Chicago, IL)

MS program <http://www.rosalindfranklin.edu/chp/pathologistsassistant.aspx>

Indiana University School of Medicine (Indianapolis, IN)

MS program <http://pathology.iupui.edu/education/graduate/graduate-tracks/pathologists-assistant>

University of Maryland (Baltimore, MD)

MS program <http://medschool.umaryland.edu/pathology/pa>

Wayne State University (Detroit, MI)

BS program <http://cphs.wayne.edu/program/apa-bs.php>

Duke University (Durham, NC)

MS program <http://pathology.duke.edu/academic-programs/pathologists-assistant-program>

University of Western Ontario (London, Ontario, ON)

MS program http://www.uwo.ca/pathol/graduate/masters_pa.html

Drexel University (Philadelphia, PA)

MS program <http://catalog.drexel.edu/graduate/schoolofbiomedicalsciences/pathologistsassistant>

West Virginia University (Morgantown, WV)

MS program <http://medicine.hsc.wvu.edu/pa>

(There are only 9 accredited schools in North America with pathologists’ assistant programs. One school, Drexel University, is establishing a new program at its satellite campus in Sacramento, CA. Although not fully accredited as of February 2014, this graduate school is designated a *Serious Applicant* by the accrediting board.)