

Pre-AA Quick Facts



Pre-Health Advising
Pre-Professional Advising Office
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

Average Matriculant Numbers

Overall GPA: 3.5

Science & Pre-Req GPA: 3.5

GRE: ~310 Combined; 4 Writing

MCAT: ~500 (50th Percentile)

Programs in Georgia:

- South University
- Emory University

Professional Association: American Academy of Anesthesiologist Assistants (AAAA)

<https://www.anesthetist.org/>

You should prepare for a career as an Anesthesiologist Assistant (AA) by building credentials in scholarship, leadership, humanitarian & community service, and by shadowing in the various settings of the profession. There is **no “best” major** for pre-AA students. Instead, you are encouraged to pursue a major you are genuinely interested in as that will help you excel. Remember to consult a pre-health advisor about your individual plan.

What is the difference between an AA and a Certified Registered Nurse Assistant (CRNA)?

AAs must work directly under an anesthesiologist while CRNAs can work under the operating surgeon, dentist, other non-anesthesiologist physicians, and can sometimes work independently. To pursue a career as an AA, you must complete an undergraduate degree with the appropriate science pre-requisites and then apply to an AA graduate program. To become a CRNA, you must first pursue a BSN, gain clinical experience as an RN, and then enter a CRNA program.

Entrance Exam

Advised Pre-MCAT

Biology BIOL 1107/L & 1108/L

General Chemistry CHEM 1211/L & 1212/L

Organic Chemistry CHEM 2211/L

Physics PHYS 1111 & 1112 or 1211 & 1212

Biochemistry BCMB 3100 or BCMB 4010 & 4020

Statistics STAT 2000 or BIOS 2010

Recommended Pre-MCAT

Physiology VPHY 3100, PMCY 3000, CBIO 3710 or CBIO 2200 & 2210

Genetics GENE 3200

Psychology PSYC 1101

Sociology SOCI 1101

Most AA programs will accept *either* GRE or MCAT scores. As of 2020, University of Colorado is the only program that requires the MCAT. Unless you are applying to Colorado, the GRE is a better option as it is less expensive (\$205) than the MCAT (\$320) and often easier to prepare for. However, it is entirely your choice which exam which you take so select the one on which you know you can perform best.

The GRE includes 3 sections: Verbal, Quantitative, and Analytical Writing. There are no recommended pre-GRE courses. The MCAT has 4 sections: Biological and Biochemical Foundations; Chemical and Physical Foundations; Psychological, Social, and Biological Foundations of Behavior; and Critical Analysis and Reasoning Skills. Because the MCAT is a content specific exam there are many advised pre-MCAT courses as well as numerous recommended courses.

Required Courses and GPA Expectations

DISCLAIMER: This is not a definitive list of the classes you will need for every school. Always check with the individual schools to see their specific requirements regarding coursework and AP/IB credit. Requirements vary from school to school and can change from year to year, so you must check each program individually.

If you wish to enter an AA program, you will need to have both a strong science/pre-req and overall GPA. Admissions committees also look for trends on transcripts—so all is not lost if you stumble in your first semester or two, but then show substantial improvement each subsequent year. However, they will also notice negative trends such as if you consistently withdraw from or perform poorly in hard science courses or if you take many courses away from UGA. While an instance or two is not a deal-breaker, a pattern of behavior should be avoided. Admission is very competitive, and you must demonstrate the ability to handle difficult scientific content. Additionally, some AA programs require at least a B- in all pre-requisite courses while others only require a C. If you do not meet a program minimum, then you will need to retake the course. AA programs do not do grade replacement when calculating GPA, so make sure you are doing well in your classes!

Typical AA Pre-Requisites

Biology BIOL 1107/L & 1108/L

General Chemistry CHEM 1211/L & 1212/L

Organic Chemistry CHEM 2211/L & 2212/L

Physics PHYS 1111 & 1112 or 1211 & 1212

Biochemistry BCMB 3100 or BCMB 4010 & 4020

Calculus MATH 2250

Statistics STAT 2000

Anatomy & Physiology CBIO 2200/L and 2210/L

**CBIO 3010 and one of the 3000+ level

Physiology courses might be an option depending on the programs to which you are applying.

CASAA (Centralized Application Service for Anesthesiologist Assistants)

Currently, all AA programs use CASAA which is the centralized application for AA programs. Opening dates and deadlines for applications vary so make sure you check with each program to which you plan on applying.

Some programs do offer Early Decision with deadlines in September or October, but all applicants are encouraged to apply early. Keep in mind that there is an application verification process that may take a few weeks, so applying early helps to ensure that programs are receiving your applications as soon as possible. Additionally, AA programs often use rolling admissions which means they are evaluating and accepting candidates on a rolling basis. Please note that applying Early Decision and applying early are not the same. The former is a specific application process often with additional criteria while the latter simply means submitting your application as soon as you can.

Volunteering & Research

Volunteering is an important part of the application that you should not neglect. AA programs want to see depth of commitment and substantial involvement and leadership in the community. They are looking for students who not only demonstrate that they can perform well in rigorous courses, but also those who are compassionate, enjoy working with people and are dedicated to serving the community. Volunteering can be done in a clinical setting such as a hospital or hospice, but it can also be done with organizations such as Habitat for Humanity, the Humane Society, or anything else that you are passionate about.

There are many benefits to getting involved in undergraduate **research**, but it is not required for admission into AA programs. If you are interested in research, you should plan to start early and dedicate at least a year to a specific project or lab. If you are not interested in research, you would be better served dedicating your time to other activities which you are passionate about such as volunteering or shadowing.

Letters of Evaluation

Most AA programs require at least three letters of evaluation, but specific requirements do vary between schools. These letters are meant to provide insight into your academic ability, character, and potential for success as it relates to your pursuit of the Anesthesiologist Assistant profession. Letters cannot come from family members or friends of the family. They need to be provided by those who know you in a professional capacity – e.g., professors, supervisors, volunteer coordinators, etc.

Remember that these letters need to come from people who know you well, so begin building relationships early, especially with faculty. You should plan on obtaining at least one reference from a hard science faculty member such as someone who has taught you in a pre-requisite course. A letter from a healthcare provider is not required but can be useful provided that they have gotten to know you well and can speak to your ability to succeed in their field.

Shadowing

You are expected to have 8-10 hours **minimum** of documented anesthesia exposure by observation in the operating room but are highly encouraged to complete additional hours of shadowing. Shadowing can typically be with an anesthesiologist, AA, or CRNA; you are not required to shadow an AA specifically since programs understand that your access to these professionals may be limited. However, if you can shadow with an AA, it would be very beneficial. Shadowing experience demonstrates that you understand the profession, and it is recommended that you try to experience as much provider/patient interaction as possible so that you can make an informed decision about which career track is right for you.

To prove that you have completed the required shadowing hours, you will need to complete a Shadowing Experience Verification Form which can be found on many of the individual program websites in their "Requirements" sections. Please note that shadowing means *hands-off observation only* and that some programs do stipulate that the shadowing cannot be completed as part of a class or internship.