

Central Application Service for  
Physician Assistants (CASPA)

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Policies and Procedures  
Manual

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2009-2010



## 2009- 2010 CASPA Policies and Procedures Manual

The purpose of this Policies and Procedures Manual is to provide a step-by-step description of the Central Application Service for Physician Assistants (CASPA). This CASPA Manual was provided to Liaison International by the Physician Assistant Education Association (PAEA). CASPA policies and procedures contained in this manual are the official policies and procedures of the service as developed by the CASPA Advisory Committee, PAEA staff, and Liaison International. They are fully effective until changed with PAEA and Liaison International approval.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### DESCRIPTIONS OF CASPA, PAEA, AND LIAISON INTERNATIONAL

#### **About CASPA**

The Central Application Service for Physician Assistants (CASPA) provides a simplified process of applying to physician assistant (PA) programs. Applicants complete one application and submit it with corresponding materials to the centralized service, which is provided by Liaison International. CASPA verifies the application components for accuracy, calculates the applicant's grade point averages (GPA), and sends the materials to the PA programs that the applicant designates. The list of participating PA programs can be found in the Participating Programs section of the CASPA Web site (<http://www.caspaonline.org>) and in the Participating Programs section of this manual.

#### **About PAEA**

Based in Alexandria, Virginia, the Physician Assistant Education Association (PAEA) is the only national organization in the United States representing physician assistant (PA) educational programs. PAEA's mission is to pursue excellence, foster faculty development, advance the body of knowledge that defines quality education and patient-centered care, and promote diversity in all aspects of physician assistant education. Additional information on the Association is available at the PAEA Web site (<http://PAEAonline.org>).

The policies of the Physician Assistant Education Association (PAEA), which govern CASPA, are recommended by the CASPA Advisory Committee, an official committee of the Association, and approved by the PAEA Board of Directors. CASPA makes every effort to process and transmit application materials to the programs designated by the applicant. The Association, CASPA, and participating programs, however, assume no responsibility for delays in processing application materials caused by the applicant's failure to follow instructions or circumstances beyond PAEA's, CASPA's, or the participating programs' control. It is the applicant's responsibility to review his/her Applicant Portal and report any discrepancies to CASPA.

Information requested on the application is for the purpose of gathering and reporting applicant flow data, or to confirm information used to process the application. PAEA and CASPA affirm the principle of equal opportunity for individuals who are qualified for education, training, and practice in the health professions without regard to race, color, age, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, sex, marital status, disability, or status as a U.S. veteran. In pursuit of this principle, PAEA and CASPA request member programs continue to monitor their admission policies and practices for accordance with their educational and training institutions fair practice policies.

#### **About Liaison International**

The mission of Liaison International is to provide state-of-the-art information technology products and services to educational associations, accrediting agencies, and institutions of higher education; to create an environment for sharing common technologies and best practices; and to contribute to the advancement of health professions education through comprehensive, innovative and collaborative Information Technology (IT) projects. Additional information is available on the Liaison Web site at [www.liaison-intl.com](http://www.liaison-intl.com).

Liaison International offers unmatched insight into emerging technologies, as well as a keen understanding of how the latest innovations can be used to help clients better fulfill their core mission. To support the services provided by CASPA, Liaison International employs customer relations representatives, data entry professionals, and verification experts, and provides the management expertise to find, train, and motivate this pool of employees. Liaison International offers a comprehensive service to several CAS applications and provides an array of services including application tracking, document retention, verification services, applicant data warehousing, and customer service.

## CASPA CONTACT INFORMATION

CASPA customer support is available by phone Monday through Friday from 9:00 am-5:00 pm Eastern Time. In addition to the customer support staff, participating programs may access real-time applicant information via the CASPA Admissions Portal.

### For Applicants

**CASPA**  
**P.O. Box 9108**  
**Watertown, MA 02471**

**Helpdesk - CASPA Applicants: (617) 612-2080**

**Fax: (617) 612-2081**

**Web: [www.caspaonline.org](http://www.caspaonline.org)**

**Email – CASPA Applicants: [caspainfo@caspaonline.org](mailto:caspainfo@caspaonline.org)**

### For Express/Overnight shipments only\*

**CASPA**  
 C/o Liaison International  
 311 Arsenal Street, Suite 15  
 Watertown MA 02472

*\* Applicants must include "Suite 15" in the CASPA address if shipping express/overnight packages. CASPA will not receive the package if the suite number is missing. If the package arrives on a weekend or Federal holiday, CASPA will receive the delivery on the next business day. Express delivery does not guarantee delivery or expedite the processing of an application file. All other materials sent via regular mail must be shipped to the CASPA P.O. Box address.*

### For CASPA Participating Programs Only

**Helpdesk: CASPA Programs: (617) 612-2082**

**Web: <https://portal.caspaonline.org/admissions10/index.cgi>**

**Email: CASPA Programs: [caspamgr@caspaonline.org](mailto:caspamgr@caspaonline.org)**

**Ann Donnelly**  
 CASPA Team Leader  
 (617) 612-2064  
[adonnelly@liaison-intl.com](mailto:adonnelly@liaison-intl.com)

**Deborah Erdner**  
 Director of Application Services  
 (617) 612-2052  
[derdner@liaison-intl.com](mailto:derdner@liaison-intl.com)

## CASPA ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The CASPA Advisory Committee provides oversight for the maintenance and enhancement of the CASPA service. The committee conducts its business via monthly telephone conference calls and in-person meetings at least twice annually.

The Advisory Committee is composed of individual PAEA members who submit an application to PAEA when vacancies on the committee become available. Applications for new members are reviewed by the committee, which makes a recommendation to the PAEA Board of Directors. The board appoints the committee members for one two-year term, and has the ability to renew the member for a second two-year term.

### List of Members

The following is a complete list of the current members of the CASPA Advisory Committee (through December 31, 2009):

**Chair: Janie McDaniel, BS, MT(ASCP)SC, CLS(NCA)**

Instructor and Director of Admissions  
Wake Forest University School of Medicine  
Department of Physician Assistant Studies  
Medical Center Blvd  
Winston Salem, NC 27157-0001  
W: (336) 716-2031  
F: (336) 716-4432  
[jmcdanie@wfubmc.edu](mailto:jmcdanie@wfubmc.edu)

**Members:**

**John J. Burns, III, MMSc, PA-C**

Associate Director  
South University PA Program  
709 Mall Boulevard  
Savannah, GA 31406-4805  
W: (912) 201-8024  
F: (912) 790-4199  
[jburns@southuniversity.edu](mailto:jburns@southuniversity.edu)

**Pam Harrison Chambers, MPH, PA-C**

Associate Professor  
Des Moines University  
3200 Grand Avenue  
Des Moines, IA 50312  
W: (515) 271-1454  
F: (515) 271-7008  
[pam.chambers@dmu.edu](mailto:pam.chambers@dmu.edu)

**Doris Dalton, MPA**

Director of Admissions  
University of Utah PA Program  
375 Chipeta Way, Suite A  
Salt Lake City, UT 84108-1261  
W: (801) 581-7969  
F: (801) 581-5807  
[ddalton@upap.utah.edu](mailto:ddalton@upap.utah.edu)

**Cristina M. González, MA**

Assistant Professor  
UT Southwestern Medical Center  
Department of Physician Assistant Studies  
5323 Harry Hines Boulevard  
Dallas, TX 75390-9090  
W: (214) 648-1023  
F: (214) 648-1003  
[cristina.gonzalez@utsouthwestern.edu](mailto:cristina.gonzalez@utsouthwestern.edu)

**Colleen Schierholtz**

Director of Admissions  
Oregon Health and Science University  
PA Program  
3181 SW Sam Jackson Park Road  
Mail Code GH219  
Portland, OR 97239  
W: (503) 494-1408  
F: (503) 494-1409  
[schierhc@ohsu.edu](mailto:schierhc@ohsu.edu)

**Liaison for the National Association of Advisors for the Health Professions (NAAHP):****Chere Pereira**

Chief Premedical Advisor  
 Oregon State University  
 Kidder 128  
 Corvallis, OR 97331  
 W: (541) 737-3881  
 F: (541)737-1009  
[chere.pereira@oregonstate.edu](mailto:chere.pereira@oregonstate.edu)

**PAEA Staff Liaisons to CASPA Advisory Committee:****Timi Agar Barwick**

Executive Director  
 PAEA  
 300 N. Washington St., Suite 505  
 Alexandria, VA 22314  
 W: (703) 548-5538, ext. 305  
 F: (703) 548-5539  
[tbarwick@paeonline.org](mailto:tbarwick@paeonline.org)

**Ayeshia Ellington Pompey**

Coordinator, Applicant and Student Services  
 PAEA  
 300 N. Washington St., Suite 505  
 Alexandria, VA 22314  
 W: (703) 548-5538, ext. 312  
 F: (703) 548-5539  
[apompey@paeonline.org](mailto:apompey@paeonline.org)

**Communications – Support for Programs****Conference calls with CASPA participating programs**

In September/October and April of each application cycle, the CASPA Advisory Committee invites all CASPA participating programs to join in conference calls to provide updates, discuss pertinent issues, and answer questions from programs. Additional participating program conferences calls may be scheduled as deemed necessary by the Advisory Committee.

Two calls in the same week will be scheduled during each of these months. The agenda will be the same for each call, giving programs a choice of two times in which to participate in the conference call. Each call will be scheduled to last no longer than one hour. Ideally, at least one representative each from the CASPA and PAEA staffs will join at least two members of the Advisory Committee for each call.

A reminder (with the dial-in information) and the final agenda for the conference call will be provided to programs prior to each set of calls. Program representatives should bring questions or comments to the calls, but they should be relevant to other CASPA participating programs, rather than individual issues specific to one program. Individual issues should be directly e-mailed to the PAEA staff liaison, who will forward them to the committee.

## CASPA Listserve

PAEA sends communication to the representatives of CASPA participating programs via the CASPA listserv at [caspa@list.healthcare.uiowa.edu](mailto:caspa@list.healthcare.uiowa.edu). The listserv provides a forum for representatives of CASPA participating programs to voice their concerns or questions as part of an online community. The list of listserv members is maintained by PAEA, which processes requests to be added to or removed from the listserv. Requests to be added to or removed from the CASPA listserv should be e-mailed to PAEA at [info@paeaonline.org](mailto:info@paeaonline.org). E-mail messages that listserv members subsequently create and send will be posted to all members, without the requirement of any specific approval.

## BENEFITS OF CASPA PARTICIPATION

### Benefits to CASPA Applicants

- CASPA provides a convenient and efficient process to apply to multiple physician assistant (PA) programs using a single Web-based application.
- CASPA participating programs represent the majority of today's accredited PA programs.
- CASPA supplies applicants with a comprehensive online checklist and instructions to help them more easily navigate through the application process.
- CASPA reduces or eliminates the need for duplicate application data, letters of reference, test scores (except for GRE or MCAT scores, which must be sent directly to the designated programs by the applicant), and transcripts for those applying to more than one program.
- CASPA provides a real-time applicant portal so that applicants may check the status of their CASPA application, transcripts, and letters of reference online at any time.
- CASPA gives applicants an electronic tool to request letters of reference from selected evaluators and the ability to check on the status of electronic and paper letters via the applicant portal.
- CASPA decreases unintended applicant errors and omissions by incorporating validation rules into the Web application.
- CASPA allows applicants to access the application from *any* computer with Internet access and standard browser. Applicants can close and reopen their application as often as desired prior to submission.
- CASPA gives applicants the ability to view their individual CASPA-calculated GPAs and verified course data after their application is verified. By reviewing the GPAs, applicants assist CASPA in the verification quality control process.
- CASPA provides one point of contact for customer support needs.
- CASPA facilitates the application fee payment process by allowing applicants to make online credit card payments (MasterCard or Visa) over a secure Web site using a real-time payment system (VeriSign). Money orders are also accepted by CASPA via the mail.

### Benefits to CASPA Participating Programs

- CASPA provides a rich database of applicant information to participating programs.
- CASPA participation is free of charge to Physician Assistant Education Association (PAEA) member programs.
- CASPA programs receive an automatic set of monthly and year-end reports with national and program-specific data.

- CASPA significantly reduces clerical work for participating programs. CASPA can reduce the burden of tracking application materials and filing, and can significantly reduce most application data entry.
- CASPA provides real-time on-line access to application data once data is submitted. Programs can log in to the program-specific admissions portal at any time to track the progress of individual applicants and view application details.
- CASPA generates and mails paper copies of application files to programs. Alternatively, given that applications are available via the portal, programs may opt for the “paperless” option by contacting Liaison to request that paper mailings no longer be generated.
- CASPA participation encourages a national and more diverse applicant pool.
- CASPA makes it easier to identify and recruit qualified applicants.
- CASPA provides a “File status” for each application (e.g., “complete/mailed”) so programs can contact applicants and send supplemental materials as desired.
- The CASPA application contains the complete academic record for all applicants. Multiple GPA calculations are provided from coursework that is verified line-by-line against the official transcripts by CASPA staff. GPAs are provided in a semester-based 4.0 grading system, which eliminates the need for programs to engage in a time-consuming grade conversion processes.
- CASPA sends mailing and file folder labels with each complete/mailed applicant for use by the admissions office at PA programs.
- The CASPA Web application provides quality assurance by reducing application entry errors as a result of internal checks and help systems to prompt the correction of errors and request omitted information from the applicant *before* the application is sent to designated CASPA programs.
- CASPA provides weekly transmission of ALL data fields for verified/processed applications, which are sent to all programs designated by the applicant.
- CASPA investigates applicants suspected of submitting fraudulent transcripts or purposely inaccurate information. Official reports are shared with all programs to which the applicant has applied.
- CASPA promotes the PA profession to pre-health profession advisors. Advisors are accustomed to centralized services and appreciate the simplified process for advising applicants who wish to apply to multiple programs.
- CASPA provides the ability to export CASPA data from client software into a local computer database (e.g., PeopleSoft). Export to a separate database requires local programming to create a “bridge” from either PAAdMIT software (subscriptions available to PA programs for purchase) into the local database, or directly from CASPA raw (DBF) data into the local database.
- CASPA provides dedicated support, via the Web site, webinars, and direct telephone contact, to admissions staff and applicants. In addition, training sessions for new CASPA programs and annual updated training for continuing CASPA programs is offered.

### **Benefits to PAEA and the Physician Assistant Profession**

- CASPA provides a richer understanding of the applicant pool of individuals seeking education as a physician assistant.
- CASPA enhances the ability to analyze under-represented minority applicants. Better data on the size of this pool, standardized identification of ethnic categories, and comparative data on grade point averages, test scores, and acceptances may be used to improve diversity in PA programs.
- CASPA data provides the ability to compare PA program applicant trends to those of other health profession institutions that utilize a centralized application process.

- CASPA collects a wealth of demographic data for each individual applicant. Nationally, these data can be arranged by final admission action, state, gender, age, race, academic criteria, or by many other selected fields, to focus national student recruitment efforts.
- CASPA disseminates information about careers in the PA profession and PA programs via the CASPA Web site's link to the PAEA Web site.
- CASPA data can be used to support arguments for increased federal funding in such areas as:
  - HRSA Titles IV and VIII of the Public Health Service Act
  - Health Career Opportunity Programs (HCOP)
  - Centers of Excellence (COE)
  - Financial aid loans and grants
  - Research grants

### **Benefits to Pre-Health Profession Advisors**

- CASPA provides access to a Web-based query system that provides status information on individual applicants from their institutions, if the individual chooses to release this information.
- CASPA helps advisors to better guide PA program applicants through the admissions process through the use of a single application for multiple PA programs.
- CASPA links to the PAEA Web site, which assists advisors in promoting the PA profession to prospective students.

## **BECOMING A CASPA PARTICIPATING PROGRAM**

### **Regulations and Standards**

Only PAEA member programs may join CASPA and participate in the service. A physician assistant program must complete and submit the Program Participation Agreement provided by PAEA to become a member of CASPA. The program agrees to participate in CASPA for a three-year period.

For CASPA participating programs:

1. All applicants for admission to the PA program will be required to submit their applications through CASPA.
2. The PA program agrees to inform all applicants about CASPA through its informational materials.
3. The PA program is aware that applicants will request appropriate testing agencies to send copies of relevant score reports to the CASPA offices (or directly to the designated program in the case of the Graduate Record Examination) for inclusion in the application materials sent to the colleges.

The PA program understands that all information submitted by candidates for admission is confidential. Information submitted to CASPA by an applicant will be sent only to those programs that the applicant has designated to receive material.

Furthermore, the PA program understands that aggregate applicant data is the only data that may be reported out externally by CASPA. No information about the characteristics of the applicant pool at the PA program level will be released by CASPA to any persons, offices, or agencies without the written permission of the PA program director.

Member programs are expected to continue to monitor their admission policies and practices for accordance with their educational and training institutions' fair practice policies.

## Orientation of New CASPA Participating Programs

Prior to the start of or immediately after the start of each application cycle, new CASPA programs are invited to participate in a welcome orientation via a Webcast. CASPA staff will answer any questions and demonstrate the features of the Applicant Portal and Admissions Portal.

## CASPA APPLICANT WEB SITE

[www.caspaonline.org](http://www.caspaonline.org)

CASPA provides a dedicated Web site for the CASPA Web-based application and instructions. The CASPA Web site includes the following items for applicants:

- CASPA Application
- CASPA Instructions
- CASPA Participating Programs list
- Contact Information
- Frequently Asked Questions
- CASPA Admissions Code of Cooperation

## CASPA Participating Programs List

A link is provided to the Web page of every participating PA program from the CASPA Participating Programs list. These links allow applicants easy access to program-specific admission requirements. It is the program's responsibility to ensure that its Web site accurately reflects its admission requirements and policies.

## CASPA PARTICIPATING PROGRAMS 2009-2010

The complete list of CASPA participating programs for the 2009-2010 application cycle is also available at <https://portal.caspaonline.org>.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| • Albany Medical College                                  | • DeSales University                    |
| • Alderson-Broaddus College                               | • Drexel University Hahnemann           |
| • Anne Arundel Community College                          | • Duke University                       |
| • Arcadia University                                      | • East Carolina University              |
| • AT Still University – Arizona School of Health Sciences | • Eastern Virginia Medical School       |
| • Augsburg College  | • Emory University                      |
| • Barry University  | • George Washington University          |
| • Baylor College of Medicine                              | • Harding University                    |
| • Bethel University                                       | • Hofstra University                    |
| • Butler University/Clarian Health                        | • Howard University                     |
| • Central Michigan University                             | • Idaho State University                |
| • Chatham University                                      | • James Madison University              |
| • Charles Drew University of Medicine & Science           | • Jefferson College of Health Sciences  |
| • Cornell University – Weill Medical College              | • Kettering College of Medical Arts     |
| • Cuyahoga Community College                              | • King's College                        |
| • Daemen College  | • Le Moyne College                      |
| • Des Moines University                                   | • Lincoln Memorial University           |
|   | • Lock Haven University of Pennsylvania |
|   | • Loma Linda University                 |
|   | • Long Island University                |

- Marietta College
- Marquette University
- Marywood University
- Massachusetts College of Pharmacy & Health Sciences – Manchester
- Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences – Boston
- Mercer University
- Mercy College
- Methodist University
- Midwestern University – Downers Grove
- Midwestern University – Glendale
- Missouri State University
- Mount Union
- New York Institute of Technology
- Northeastern University
- Nova Southeastern University – Ft. Lauderdale
- Nova Southeastern University – Southwest Florida
- Nova Southeastern University – Orlando
- Oregon Health & Science University
- PACE University – Lenox Hill Hospital
- Pacific University
- Pennsylvania College of Optometry
- Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine
- Philadelphia University
- Quinnipiac University
- Red Rocks Community College
- Rocky Mountain College
- Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science
- Saint Francis University
- Saint Louis University
- Samuel Merritt College
- Seton Hill University
- Shenandoah University
- South College
- South University
- Southern Illinois University Carbondale
- St. John’s University
- Stony Brook University
- SUNY Upstate Medical University
- Texas Tech University Health Science Center
- The University of Findlay
- Touro College, School of Health Science – New York (Bay Shore)
- Touro University – California
- Touro University – Nevada
- Towson University – CCBC Essex
- Trevecca Nazarene University
- Union College
- University of Alabama at Birmingham
- University of California - Davis
- University of Colorado Denver
- University of Detroit Mercy
- University of Florida
- University of Iowa
- University of Kentucky
- University of Medicine & Dentistry of New Jersey
- University of Nebraska
- University of New England
- University of New Mexico
- University of North Dakota
- University of North Texas Health Science Center
- University of Saint Francis
- University of South Alabama
- University of South Dakota
- University of Southern California – Keck School of Medicine
- University of St. Francis
- University of Texas Medical Branch – Galveston
- University of Texas – Pan American
- University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio
- University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center
- University of Toledo – Health Science Campus
- University of Utah
- University of Washington – MEDEX Northwest
- University of Wisconsin La Crosse–Gundersen–Mayo
- University of Wisconsin – Madison
- Wake Forest University
- Wayne State University
- Western Michigan University
- Western University of Health Science
- Wichita State University
- Wingate University
- Yale University

## 2. CASPA POLICIES

### CASPA ADMISSIONS CODE OF COOPERATION

#### **I. Responsibilities of the Applicant**

In accordance with the ideals and principles of the PA profession, applicants to PA programs are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner that demonstrates responsibility, integrity, veracity, respect, and good judgment.

#### **Applicants are responsible for:**

1. Adhering to the admissions requirements and deadlines for each program to which they apply.
2. Completing their application, signing the CASPA Release to Programs statement, and submitting all supporting documentation to CASPA in a timely manner. To allow for timely processing, it is recommended that the CASPA application and all supporting materials (transcripts and letters of reference) be submitted to CASPA at least six weeks prior to the earliest deadline of the programs to which applicants are applying.
3. Providing honest, accurate, and complete application information.
4. Reporting to CASPA any changes in contact information (i.e., address, email, phone number) throughout the admissions cycle. It is recommended that applicants provide similar updates directly to the programs to which they have applied.
5. Monitoring the submission and receipt of all application materials to CASPA including all transcripts and letters of recommendation. The status of the application can be checked and monitored throughout the application process within the applicant portal.
6. Using the Transcript Request Form (TRF) and Reference Request Form available on the CASPA applicant portal ([www.caspaonline.org](http://www.caspaonline.org)) after they log in. To allow for timely processing, it is recommended that transcripts be requested to be sent to CASPA at least six weeks prior to the deadline of the earliest program to which applicants are applying.
7. Following up on any missing materials (transcripts and letters of recommendation) and facilitating their submission to CASPA. If letters of recommendation are missing, the applicant should contact the individual to make sure the request was received and encourage timely submission. Please note: Electronic reference requests may not reach some institutions due to e-mail filters.
8. Accepting or declining all interview invitations and offers of acceptance in a timely and considerate manner.
9. Communicating in a professional manner when interacting with CASPA staff and admissions staff of designated programs.

## **II. Responsibilities of CASPA**

CASPA will facilitate through each of its participating programs a professional and equitable application process. Established protocols will provide applicants with a fair and complete initial review process of all application materials and support each program's autonomy in further evaluating, selecting and matriculating qualified students.

### **CASPA is responsible for:**

1. Providing a fair and equitable treatment throughout the application process.
2. Collecting and collating all application materials submitted by applicants. CASPA is further responsible for verifying all academic transcripts and degrees, reviewing references for completeness and authenticity, and disseminating completed application files to all programs designated by applicants in a timely and efficient manner. A completed application includes an application e-submitted by a program's deadline, all fees paid, receipt of official transcripts for all schools reported as attended, and receipt of two of the three required references.
3. Providing quality customer service. CASPA's professional staff will maintain ongoing and responsive communications with programs and applicants, including training sessions and Webcasts for new participating programs each year.
4. Ensuring customer confidentiality and data integrity by maintaining a reliable and secure Internet service and program of quality assurance.
5. Reporting year-end data to each participating program and providing an annual report of aggregate applicant data to the Physician Assistant Education Association.
6. Supporting the Applicant Portal (Web application), Admission Portal for participating programs and Advisor Portal for health professions advisors via the Web.

## **III. Responsibilities of CASPA Programs**

In educating caring, compassionate, and knowledgeable health care providers, PA programs should conduct themselves and their admissions processes in a professional manner that promotes the ideals of the profession and the mission of each program. Programs will partner with CASPA in maintaining an admissions process that is fair, inclusive, and equitable.

### **CASPA Programs are responsible for:**

1. Establishing and publishing accurate admission requirements and deadlines. Each program will make such information easily accessible to potential applicants by maintaining a program Web site linked to CASPA. Programs will adhere to their own established and published policies and procedures of admissions.
2. Adopting one of the following application deadlines: June 15, August 1, September 1, October 1, November 1, December 1, January 15, or March 1. The last mailing from CASPA in each application cycle will be sent in late March. The new cycle will begin in mid-April. Participating programs will be informed of the specific opening and closing dates each year during the fall participating program conference call.
3. Optimizing efficiencies and maintaining good communication. Each PA program should designate an individual to serve as the primary point of contact to CASPA and applicants.

4. Maintaining ongoing communications with applicants. Programs should encourage applicants to monitor their application status and complete their applications promptly.
5. Maintaining the confidentiality of applicant information, including letters of reference, during all aspects of the application process, including the interview.
6. Conducting a fair, reasonable, and timely admissions process. Procedures should be established to regularly update applicants as to their status.
7. Making all admissions decisions based on complete and verified application information provided through CASPA.
8. Notifying applicants of acceptance in a timely manner. Allow applicants at least two weeks to reply for acceptance.
9. If requiring a deposit from selected applicants to hold a seat, programs should consider setting that deposit at a reasonable amount so as not to financially burden the applicant.
10. Notifying CASPA of all matriculated students.
11. Abiding by Program Withdrawal and Loss of Accreditation policies outlined below.

### PROGRAM WITHDRAWAL POLICY

If a CASPA member chooses to withdraw from CASPA during their first 3 years of participation, the program must submit an appeal to PAEA stating why they want to withdraw. The appeal will be reviewed by the CASPA Advisory Committee who will contact the program director to discuss further action steps. During this time all applications e-submitted by students must be honored by the program.

After a program's first 3 years in CASPA a program may withdraw at anytime by having the program director submit a notice of withdrawal in writing to PAEA. The program's deadline will be expired on the date of withdrawal from CASPA. The program will be responsible for honoring all applications e-submitted through CASPA up until the date of withdrawal.

While we hope that no program will choose to withdraw from CASPA. We do understand that certain circumstances may cause a program's withdrawal. We ask all programs that choose to withdraw to please consider the number of un-submitted applications they will lose due to their withdrawal. CASPA will forward all inquiries as to why the program chose to withdraw from CASPA to the program contact listed with CASPA.

### PROGRAM LOSS OF ACCREDITATION POLICY

In the event a CASPA member loses its accreditation they must inform PAEA immediately. Programs that lose their accreditation will have their deadlines expired immediately and all applicants will be notified of the program's status. It is the program's responsibility to refund the applicant's application fee should they choose to not continue with the application process.

Programs will not be allowed to regain CASPA membership until their accreditation has been restored by ARC-PA and they re-sign the CASPA participating agreement.

## DATA INTEGRITY POLICY

CASPA may investigate any suspected error, falsification, misrepresentation, or omission with respect to applicant data, including transcripts, references, and application data. However, CASPA is not responsible for verifying the accuracy of an application as part of the regular review process. If a PA program suspects error, falsification, misrepresentation, or omission with respect to requested applicant data, including transcripts, references, and application data, it is that program's responsibility to investigate. CASPA reserves the right to share any such errors, falsifications, misrepresentations, or omissions in the application process with any programs to which the applicant has applied. In addition, on a case-by-case basis, CASPA reserves the right to notify any PA program about application errors, falsifications, misrepresentations, or omissions (regardless of whether the applicant has applied to such program).

## REFERENCE INTEGRITY POLICY

CASPA may investigate any discrepancy found in the processing of references. If a discrepancy is found during the application process, CASPA may contact the applicant and/or evaluator and investigate the discrepancy. However, CASPA is not responsible for verifying an evaluator's identity as part of the regular review process. If a PA program suspects any discrepancy in an evaluation or reference, it is that program's responsibility to contact the applicant or evaluator to investigate. CASPA reserves the right to share discrepancies in the processing of references with any programs to which the applicant has applied. In addition, on a case-by-case basis, CASPA reserves the right to notify any PA program about application discrepancies (regardless of whether the applicant has applied to such program).

## RELEASE POLICY

CASPA will only discuss an application with the applicant and the applicant's designated PA programs. Staff will not discuss an application with a parent, spouse, relative, friend, or employer.

### ***Release to Programs***

To complete the CASPA application process, applicants are requested to electronically sign and certify the following statement:

*“By signing below, I certify, as required in the application, that I have read and understand all application instructions, including the provisions that place responsibility for monitoring and ensuring the progress of my application process with the applicant. I certify that all the information and statements I have provided as part of this application process, including those statements contained in the application and as part of the reference verification process are current, accurate, and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand that withholding information requested as part of the application process, or submitting false or misleading information, may be grounds for denial of admission by any participating CASPA program or expulsion from said program after admission.*

*In addition, I understand and agree that I am giving permission for the Physician Assistant Education Association (PAEA), which operates CASPA, or its designee to release any information related to my application to any programs or educational institutions to which I apply. I also understand and agree that in connection with my application, PAEA or its designee may disclose to any educational institution (regardless of whether I have applied to such*

*institution) any information concerning any discrepancy, error, falsification, misrepresentation, or omission that PAEA believes exists with respect to my application.*

*In consideration for my participation in the CASPA application process, I indemnify PAEA, its affiliates, and educational institutions participating in CASPA, and their respective employees, officers, committee members, and agents (the 'Indemnified Parties'), and hold all of them harmless from and against any third-party or other claims, damages, or costs (including reasonable attorney's fees) arising out of or connected with this application or my participation in the CASPA application process. I agree not to sue or assist in any lawsuit against any of the Indemnified Parties.*

*I understand that, by signing below, I am agreeing to a legal contract."*

---

*[Applicant Name]*

### **Release to Pre-Health Professions Advisors**

CASPA asks its applicants to consider and authorize the following release of information to the appropriate pre-health professions advisors.

*"AUTHORIZATION: Check to authorize CASPA to release information (including admissions status) to pre-health professions advisors to assist those advisors in counseling future applicants."*

## **PRIVACY POLICY**

All data gathered by CASPA in the process of providing its central application service become, at the close of each processing year, the property of the Physician Assistant Education Association (PAEA). Data gathered by CASPA are classified as "Restricted." Restricted data are reported/released only in aggregate form so as not to divulge student-specific demographic information. Student data are reported in aggregate only by school and region. To maintain confidentiality, it is the policy of the PAEA to not report any average unless more than four values are used to calculate that average.

### **Data Collection, Processing, and Dissemination – Principles and Policies**

CASPA has developed policies to prevent the exposure of truly confidential personal data without the permission of the individual involved, to limit the distribution of sensitive data to those situations that require it, and to permit distribution of nonsensitive directory information wherever a useful purpose can be served.

Except for directory information and communications with the programs as a part of the application and record-keeping process, information about individual students is not shared with anyone in a way that would permit individual identification. Any personally identifiable data submitted by an applicant will be made available to that applicant upon written request.

Information about applicants and students is, of course, disclosed to the colleges and programs to which a student applies and/or matriculates. With the exception of monitoring reports related to matriculants, information submitted to CASPA by a PA program or school is available only to that institution.

### 3. CASPA PROCEDURES

#### HIGHLIGHTS OF CASPA PROCESS

##### **Web Application**

Applicants who apply through CASPA will submit a complete Web-based application. The Web application will be available on the CASPA Web site ([www.caspaonline.org](http://www.caspaonline.org)) beginning in mid-April of each year. The service will not accept a preprinted paper application.

##### **CASPA ID Number**

Each individual applicant creates a login account to access the CASPA Web application. The CASPA Web application will generate a unique CASPA ID number for each applicant who establishes a Web login account. **The CASPA Web application prominently displays the applicant CASPA ID number on the top of each screen of the Web application.** Applicants are instructed to use this CASPA ID number on all correspondence with CASPA, as well as on the CASPA Payment Form (if paying by money order), and CASPA Transcript Request Form. CASPA will use the ID number to properly match the electronic record to all paper materials received.

##### **Deadlines**

Each participating CASPA program selects one application deadline date from the CASPA list of eight available deadlines. The deadline indicates the date applications must be e-submitted to CASPA. CASPA will not allow applicants to submit applications online after the institutional deadline has passed. However, CASPA will continue to process e-submitted applications and forward complete applications to designated programs, even if program designated deadlines have passed. **Exception:** Physician assistant programs may request a deadline extension for an individual applicant or the full pool. Please refer to the section “What a Deadline Means for CASPA Programs” under PROGRAM DEADLINES for deadline change instructions.

##### **CASPA Application Cycle**

The CASPA application cycle begins in mid-April. Applicants may start the CASPA application as soon as it is available. Once the application is submitted and the required fee received, CASPA will begin processing the application.

##### **Complete Application**

CASPA will initiate processing applications as soon as they are complete. Three elements are required to meet CASPA’s definition of a “complete application”:

- An application e-submitted by a program’s deadline and fees paid
- Receipt of official transcripts for all schools reported as attended
- Receipt of two of the three required references

Once these requirements have been met, the application is considered complete. The date the application is complete will be printed on the CASPA application and also is available on the Admissions Portal so that programs can decide for themselves which files meet their definition of the deadline.

## Verification Process

When an application is completed and submitted to CASPA with the payment and all the transcripts have arrived, the application is moved to “Verification.” The verification phase will begin only when all these steps are complete.

During verification, CASPA conducts a course by course evaluation of the Academic Record and calculates numerous GPAs. Due to the variety of grade scales across the country, CASPA utilizes a universal grade value (i.e., B+ = 3.3). Please note that this may cause a discrepancy between GPAs found on institution transcripts and those reported by CASPA.

CASPA does not verify professional coursework. Professional coursework is defined as any coursework completed at a professional or military program where a certificate is earned, and any coursework higher than a master’s degree. Professional coursework is not calculated into the GPA. However, programs may use the professional coursework information in their evaluation process.

The target to complete verification is four weeks, though off-peak times may be faster. Once the academic record is verified and at least two of the three references have been received, the application is mailed to each program the applicant designated. Programs can also view these applications through the Admissions Portal and download the applications electronically through this secured site on the Internet. For specific information and to obtain access to the Admissions Portal, please contact [caspamgr@caspaonline.org](mailto:caspamgr@caspaonline.org).

Each CASPA participating program is ultimately responsible for the final evaluation of the application.

## Shipments to Programs

CASPA will begin to forward complete and verified applications to participating programs in May. The last mailing from CASPA in each application cycle will be sent in late March of each year.

## Application Changes

CASPA will only accept contact information changes from applicants through late March (the close of the CASPA cycle). After the close of the CASPA cycle, applicants are instructed to forward any changes directly to their designated programs.

## Admission Decisions

Participating programs will report admission decisions to applicants throughout the application cycle. Participating programs will report matriculant data to CASPA once the class is in place and the school year has begun. Aggregate matriculant data will be available through the CASPA portal shortly after the latest start date of participating programs.

## IMPORTANT DATES

### April (start of application cycle)

- **Early to mid-April:** PAEA sends a reminder via the CASPA listserv regarding the opening of the next cycle.
- **Mid-April (4/15/09 for 2009-10 cycle):** New CASPA cycle launches.

- **Mid-April:** Liaison distributes the electronic end-of-cycle reports to programs (without matriculant data).
- **Late April:** PAEA collects the results from the previous cycle's program survey for analysis.
- **Late April to early May:** Following the launch of the application cycle, PAEA sends a listserv e-mail welcoming all participating programs to the new cycle, includes any updates made from the last cycle, and shares the annual calendar items/deadlines that pertain to the programs.

### **March (close of application cycle)**

- Participating programs will be informed of the specific closing and opening dates each year during the fall participating conference call.
- **Late March to mid-April:** CASPA's official shutdown period. During this shutdown period:
  - In **early April**, PAEA distributes the online survey to programs from the previous cycle (with a deadline of late April).
  - CASPA implements/posts any approved changes to the application, Web site, applicant portal, and the CASPA Admissions Code of Cooperation, as determined by the Advisory Committee, with input from CASPA participating programs.
  - CASPA updates the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) section of the CASPA Web site in preparation for the next application cycle.
  - CASPA updates the list of participating CASPA programs, required tests, and deadlines on the CASPA Web site and the applicant portal for the next application cycle.
  - PAEA distributes the updated Policies and Procedures Manual to CASPA programs prior to the start of the next application cycle via the PAEA Web site ([www.paeaonline.org](http://www.paeaonline.org)).

## **CASPA APPLICATION**

CASPA offers a secure online application that allows applicants to log on and log off at their convenience. Applicants may access the application from any computer with a Web connection. Applications, along with original transcripts directly from the colleges' registrars and references directly from evaluators, are submitted to CASPA. Processing is anticipated to take four weeks.

### **Supplemental Application**

Some CASPA participating programs find that there is program-relevant information that is not captured by the CASPA application and therefore choose to require a supplemental application. Programs requiring a supplemental application are noted in the Participating Programs list found on the CASPA Web site ([www.caspaonline.org](http://www.caspaonline.org)).

## **FEES**

### **Fee Schedule for Applicants**

The fee schedule for the current CASPA application cycle can be viewed on the applicant portal at: <https://portal.caspaonline.org>.

## Payment Methods

The two payment options are credit card and money order. CASPA does not accept personal checks. Applicants may submit payment with a credit card once they have e-submitted their completed application. MasterCard and Visa are accepted for credit card payment. Applicants may submit payment for their application fees by sending a money order payable in U.S. funds to CASPA. Applicants should include their name, CASPA ID number, and the CASPA payment form. Money order payments should be mailed to:

**CASPA**  
**P.O. Box 9108**  
**Watertown, MA 02471**

## Refunds

Once the processing of a payment begins, refunds will not be made. Should a program close after the application cycle has begun, applicants who selected the closed program as a designation will be allowed to substitute another program designation in the place of the closed program.

## Fee Waivers

A limited number of application fee waivers are available through CASPA. Applicants should e-mail the CASPA office ([caspainfo@caspaonline.org](mailto:caspainfo@caspaonline.org)) to inquire whether fee waivers are available. The fee waiver will cover the fee to apply to one participating CASPA program. The applicant is responsible for application fees beyond that amount for additional programs. Because limited funds are available annually, meeting CASPA's eligibility criteria for a fee waiver does not guarantee that a waiver will be granted. Programs may or may not award a fee waiver for any fees associated with a program's supplemental application.

To be considered for a CASPA fee waiver, the applicant must:

- 1) Start a CASPA application in order to obtain a CASPA ID#.
- 2) Submit a letter of request and a copy of his/her most recent federal income tax return to the address below. An informal guide to eligibility is an annual income that falls within the U.S. Bureau of the Census's low-income range for the size of the family. The low-income level, which is based on the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services poverty guidelines](#), is used to determine what constitutes a low-income family. If the applicant is still claimed as a dependent, CASPA requires his/her legal guardian's most recent federal income tax return.

**CASPA**  
**Fee Waiver Division**  
**P.O. Box 9108**  
**Watertown, MA 02471**

- 3) The applicant **should not** e-submit his/her CASPA application until he/she has been notified as to whether or not he/she has been approved to receive a CASPA fee waiver. The applicant is usually notified within 72 hours after applying for a fee waiver. If the applicant e-submits the application prior to notification, the fee waiver application will be denied.
- 4) If granted a fee waiver, the applicant should choose the money order option as the form of payment.
- 5) Once the applicant has been approved for a CASPA fee waiver, he/she will have 45 business

days to submit his/her application. If the applicant does not submit his/her application within that timeframe, the fee waiver will be voided.

## PROGRAM DEADLINES

CASPA requires programs to designate one e-submit application deadline from the following eight choices:

- June 15
- August 1
- September 1
- October 1
- November 1
- December 1
- January 15
- March 1

The deadline is **11:59 PM Pacific Time** on each of the above dates. A program should clearly state its selected deadline in its printed materials and on its Web site.

**What a deadline means for CASPA processing:** Applicants must e-submit their applications to CASPA no later than the program deadline posted on CASPA's Web site. If the applicant is applying to more than one program, the application must be e-submitted by the earliest deadline date of the programs they have chosen. CASPA will not accept an application from an applicant if the posted deadline for the program is past.

**What a deadline means for CASPA programs:** CASPA only accepts applications for programs up to the program's designated deadline. If programs wish to extend their deadlines, the program should contact CASPA, providing as much notice as possible before their original deadline.

**What a deadline means for supporting materials:** Some programs may choose to require that all supporting materials (transcripts and references), along with the submitted application, be received by their CASPA deadline. Other programs may choose to be more flexible about when supporting materials must arrive. In both cases, programs can use the "complete" date on the application to determine compliance. If the "complete" date equals the program's CASPA deadline date or earlier, then both the required supporting materials and the application were received by their deadline. If the "complete" date is later than the program's CASPA deadline date, this will identify when the last of the supporting materials arrived, and programs can use this to determine whether the application falls within their limits for receipt of supporting materials.

It is the program's responsibility to communicate to its applicants any flexibility in determining when supporting materials must arrive at CASPA. CASPA publishes only one deadline per program and that is the cutoff for e-submitting the application itself.

**Considerations for CASPA programs when setting a deadline:** CASPA suggests that several factors should be considered when selecting an admissions deadline. These include:

- For programs that choose to accept application supporting materials (transcripts and letters of recommendation) later than their CASPA deadline, a longer period may be needed for verification.

- Time required for applicants to complete any secondary application materials, such as a supplemental application or program-specific narrative.
- Time required at the program to process completed application and related materials.
- Time required for the application review process to be completed once the application is processed by the program.
- The period of time the program needs to complete interviews.
- The length of time applicants need from receipt of their admission decision to the start date of the program.
- Time required for receipt of any additional verification materials the program may require once an applicant has been accepted and may need prior to matriculation. (Official transcripts, degree verification, or related materials.)

### **Deadline Extensions**

Participating programs have the right to request a deadline extension for the entire applicant pool or for individual applicants. If a CASPA program decides to grant a deadline extension, it must indicate one of the remaining CASPA deadline dates. Programs may not extend their deadline past March 1. Programs that request a deadline extension for an individual applicant rather than the full applicant pool must indicate the name of the applicant, CASPA ID number, and revised deadline date (not past March 1). **CASPA will not accept deadline extension requests from applicants.**

## **REQUIRED APPLICATION MATERIALS**

This manual describes each of these application materials in more detail in the sections that follow.

### **CASPA Required Materials**

CASPA considers an application to be complete and begins to process it once the following materials are received:

1. E-submitted CASPA application
2. CASPA application fee
3. Official transcripts from every U.S./Canadian postsecondary institution reported as attended
4. Two of three letters of reference

### **Other Materials Collected by CASPA**

CASPA also collects the following materials, when applicable.

1. Foreign Transcript Evaluation Report
2. TOEFL scores

CASPA does not “hold” the application for these materials, if missing, and does not verify that the applicant has submitted the correct document for a particular school requirement.

### **Other Materials Collected by Participating Programs**

The following application materials may be required and collected directly by the participating programs:

1. Supplemental applications
2. Supplemental fees
3. GRE scores
4. Original foreign transcripts (NOT foreign transcript evaluation reports)

5. Writing samples, resumes, etc.
6. Letters of reference (if more than three references are needed)

### **GRE Scores**

CASPA does not have an institution code that allows applicants to have GRE scores sent directly to CASPA. Applicants should send official GRE scores directly to their designated programs. Applicants will also have the opportunity to self-report GRE scores on their CASPA application. Please keep in mind that these scores are not official and will not be verified.

### **Extraneous Application Materials**

Applicants are instructed to submit only required documents to CASPA. Any other documents received are considered extraneous materials. CASPA does *not*, generally, return extraneous materials to the applicant, nor forward the documents to the participating programs. Examples of extraneous documents include original or copies of foreign transcripts (only foreign transcript evaluation reports are accepted by CASPA), resumes, photographs, writing samples, certificates, and other miscellaneous documents. CASPA places all extraneous materials received for a particular applicant in an archived file.

Only important original documents such as birth certificates, naturalization papers, and foreign documents (which are generally harder to obtain) are returned to the applicant. CASPA makes a photocopy of the document to be returned and places a copy in the applicant's archived file before mailing the original.

### **Extraneous Letters of Reference**

CASPA accepts three letters of reference per applicant. Any additional references are placed in the applicant's archived file and are not forwarded.

### **Foreign Transcripts**

International transcripts (except English-speaking Canadian) are *not* accepted by CASPA. CASPA photocopies foreign transcript evaluation reports and sends them to the applicant's designated programs. CASPA does not verify foreign transcripts or evaluations.

## **TRANSCRIPTS**

Applicants must utilize the Transcript Request Form to request official transcripts be sent directly to CASPA from the registrar's office at each college or university they attended. If transcripts are received before the CASPA application has been e-submitted to CASPA, and the Colleges Attended section is complete, the date the transcript arrived at CASPA is available online to the applicant. In order to view the transcript status, the applicant can log in to his/her Applicant Portal and look under Status, Transcripts. CASPA will post the date the transcript was received in the CASPA office within three days of receipt of transcript.

### **CASPA Deadline for Transcripts**

CASPA strongly encourages applicants to arrange for their U.S. and Canadian transcripts to arrive by the earliest deadline date established by their designated PA programs. Some PA programs, as per their "Program Pages" linked to the CASPA Web site, will not consider applicants who submit transcripts after their institutional deadline date. **CASPA does not enforce program-specific policies for transcript deadlines.** CASPA will accept transcripts received after the institutional deadline and process the application if the application was e-submitted by

the published deadline and if all transcripts, two of three references, and the correct CASPA fee are received by the close of the application cycle in late March. Electronic and paper reports to the programs indicate the date each transcript was received in the CASPA office so programs can determine whether the applicant has met the program-specific transcript deadline date and is eligible for admission.

### **U.S. and Canadian Transcripts**

PA program applicants must arrange for CASPA to receive a sealed official transcript directly from every U.S. and English-speaking Canadian postsecondary institution attended. CASPA will consider all application files “Incomplete” until all expected U.S. and Canadian transcripts are received. The service will verify the authenticity of transcripts received. Applicants are strongly encouraged to use the CASPA Transcript Request Form to request official copies of U.S. and Canadian transcripts to be sent to CASPA. CASPA will accept transcripts regardless of whether the form is attached. The Transcript Request Form may be printed from the CASPA Web application or as a pdf from the CASPA Web site.

### **Fall and Revised U.S./Canadian Transcripts**

CASPA may receive transcripts for an applicant after all expected transcripts are received and the file is considered complete. This may be a second (updated) transcript from a particular institution or a transcript from a completely new institution attended after the application was submitted. After a complete application is mailed, CASPA does not mail revised applications. We recommend applicants send any updated transcripts directly to the programs to which they have applied.

### **Transcripts for Professional Coursework**

CASPA defines professional coursework as any coursework completed at a professional or military program where a certificate is earned, and *any* coursework higher than a master’s degree. Professional coursework is *not* verified by CASPA and is *not* included in GPA calculations. However, this information may be used by the programs in the evaluation process.

### **Transcripts for Applicants Offered Admission**

If an applicant is offered and accepts an offer of admission to a PA program, the applicant may be required to submit a second set of official transcripts directly to the program prior to matriculation. CASPA must maintain a copy of all application materials for one year after the close of the application cycle for legal reasons and therefore does not forward transcripts to PA programs to fulfill their institutional requirement.

### **Foreign Transcript Evaluation Reports**

If a PA program requires it, applicants will arrange for a course-by-course transcript evaluation report to be sent to CASPA to document any foreign coursework completed outside the United States and Canada. French-speaking Canadian institutions are considered foreign. Some PA programs require foreign transcripts to be sent directly to the program, while others do not accept any documentation for foreign coursework.

Due to differences in PA program policies, CASPA will *not* hold an application for a missing Foreign Transcript Evaluation Report. CASPA does *not* accept original or copies of foreign transcripts.

### **Commonly Used Foreign Transcript Evaluation Services**

American Association of Collegiate  
Registrars and Admissions Officers  
(AACRAO)  
Foreign Education Credential Services  
One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 520  
Washington, DC 20036-1135  
Phone: (202) 296-3359  
Fax: (202) 822-3940  
[www.aacrao.org/credential](http://www.aacrao.org/credential)

Education Evaluators International, Inc.  
11 South Angell Street. #348  
Providence, RI 02906  
Phone: (401) 521-5340  
Fax: (401) 437-6474  
[www.educei.com](http://www.educei.com)

Educational Credential Evaluators, Inc.  
P.O. Box 514070  
Milwaukee, WI 53203-3470  
Phone: (414) 289-3400  
Fax: (414) 289-3400  
[www.ece.org](http://www.ece.org)

International Education Research  
Foundation, Inc.  
P.O. Box 3665  
Culver City, CA 90231-3665  
Phone: (310) 258-9451  
Fax: (310) 342-7086  
[www.ierf.org](http://www.ierf.org)

Josef Silny & Associates, Inc  
7101 SW 102 Ave  
Miami, FL 33173  
Phone: (305) 273-1616  
Fax: (305) 273-1338  
[www.jsilny.com](http://www.jsilny.com)

Spantran Educational Services, Inc.  
7211 Regency Square Blvd., Suite 205  
Houston, TX 77036-3197  
Phone: (713) 266-8805  
Fax: (713) 789-6022  
[www.spantran-edu.org](http://www.spantran-edu.org)

World Education Services, Inc  
P.O. Box 5087  
New York, NY 10274-5087  
Phone: (212) 966-6311  
Fax: (212) 739-6100  
[www.wes.org](http://www.wes.org)

## TRANSCRIPT VERIFICATION PROCEDURES

CASPA performs course-by-course verification once it receives all official U.S. transcripts and the application is considered complete with fees paid. ***Applicants are sorted based on the date the file becomes complete***, rather than the date the application was e-submitted. Verification refers to the matching of courses on the official transcripts with completed courses listed on the "Coursework" section of the Web application. The CASPA verification staff ensures that applicant-reported coursework matches the course history on the corresponding U.S. transcript. CASPA does not verify foreign courses or transcripts.

### No Transcript Available

CASPA does not waive transcript requirements due to an applicant's financial obligations to a college or university. Applicants who are unable to obtain an official transcript from a college or university due to extenuating circumstances must submit a signed letter of explanation on official letterhead from the appropriate institution or state department of education. CASPA will evaluate transcript waiver requests on a case-by-case basis.

## Course by Course Transcript Verification

The verification staff person checks that the applicant properly entered all course work that appears on every transcript, including:

- INSTITUTION CODE
- COURSE TITLE, COURSE PREFIX AND NUMBER: (e.g., CHEM 101).
- TERM
- YEAR
- COURSE SUBJECT
- SPECIAL CLASSIFICATION
- CREDITS: CASPA will not edit this field. If the applicant made an error on number of credits, CASPA will make the correction in the “Credits – CASPA verified” field.
- CREDITS – CASPA VERIFIED: This field does *not* appear on the CASPA application and is used for verification purposes only. If the applicant-reported credits are correct, the CASPA Verified Credits field is blank. If the applicant-reported credits are wrong, CASPA will enter the correct transcript credits in this field.
  - **NOTE:** If the applicant *failed or repeated* a course, CASPA will enter the credits **ATTEMPTED** in the credits field, regardless of whether the course credits on the transcript or the application are shown as blank, zero “0”, or if were later repeated for a higher grade.
- TERM TYPE

## Reporting to Applicants and Programs

- **CASPA Verified Grade** – Indicates any changes to the applicant-reported grade. If staff makes no changes to the applicant’s original grade, this field is blank.
- **CASPA Verified Credits** – Indicates any changes to the applicant-reported credits. If staff makes no changes to the applicant’s original credits, this field is blank.
- **CASPA (Converted) Grade** – Reflects applicant’s attempt to convert transcript grade to CASPA grade. If the applicant makes an error, staff will overwrite applicant’s entry. Liaison will attempt to create automatic conversion for as many standardized grading schemes as possible.

## Discrepancies

If CASPA cannot match course work from a transcript to the application, CASPA may have received the wrong transcript or the applicant failed to enter coursework on the application. CASPA will allow the applicant to edit and resubmit his or her Web application in order to correct his or her errors.

If a discrepancy is suspected on any application materials, including transcripts and references, the application will be put on “Hold” status while CASPA contacts the applicant for clarification. CASPA will input comments and track the “Hold” status on each applicant. Programs can view the “Hold” status comments on individual applications through the Admissions Portal.

## Converting Quarters to Semesters

If “Quarter” hours are reported on the transcript, the CASPA system will automatically convert quarter hours to semester hours (Quarter Hour x .667). CASPA verifiers do not manually convert hours. Please note that conversion of quarter hours to semester hours only occurs in the GPA section of the application. Conversion is not done on the Coursework section of the application.

## Automatic Grade Conversion

The CASPA central processing software automatically converts the following “Applicant-Reported Grades” to the “CASPA (converted) Grade.”

CASPA Grade	A	A-	AB	B+	B	B-	BC	C+	C	C-	CD	D+	D	D-	DE	F
Transcript Grade.	A+, A	A-	AB	B+	B	B-	BC	C+	C	C-	CD	D+	D	D-	DE	F

## Converting Numeric Grades

For institutions using a numeric grading system, CASPA uses the following scale to convert numeric grades on a transcript to equivalent CASPA grades:

CASPA Weight	4	3.7	3.5	3.3	3	2.7	2.5	2.3	2	1.7	1.5	1.3	1	0.7	0
CASPA Grade	A	A-	AB	B+	B	B-	BC	C+	C	C-	CD	D+	D	D-	F

Grade on Transcript	CASPA Letter Grade
90-100	A
80-89	B
70-79	C
60-69	D
<60	F

## Narrative (Non-Graded) Transcripts

### Transcript Verification

Most U.S. colleges and universities evaluate students’ work with a numeric (e.g., 4.0) or alpha grade (e.g., B+). The general grading system is obvious from a glance by reviewing the transcript. Some programs evaluate students with a “narrative” – sentences or paragraphs discussing the student’s work. The following schools use narrative evaluations completely or partially, or have used them during some period of time. Narratives from these schools are copied and forwarded to designated programs.

- Antioch College
- Bennington College
- Evergreen College
- Goddard College
- Goshen College
- Hampshire College
- Hartwick College
- Lindenwood College
- Nova Scotia College of Art and Design
- New College of the University of South Florida
- Pacific Oaks College

- Prescott College
- Sarah Lawrence College
- SUNY at Purchase
- University of California – Santa Cruz
- University of Massachusetts – Boston
- University of Minnesota – Twin Cities
- World College West

### **Degree Verification**

CASPA verifies that all U.S. degrees reported as earned in the Colleges section of the application also appear on the applicant's official transcripts. CASPA does not verify foreign degrees, degrees granted from professional schools, courses, or transcripts. CASPA reserves the right to make edits to the application degree fields in order to correct minor typographical errors; however, it is ultimately the applicant's responsibility to properly enter all degrees on the CASPA application. Failure to properly enter degrees may delay an application in processing.

CASPA participating programs should not automatically interpret a lack of degree verification in the CASPA-reported degree field to mean that the applicant entered falsified information. Registrars may not report a degree as earned on a transcript until several weeks after the degree is earned or until the end of the academic year. Programs should contact the applicant or registrar directly if they have questions about the status of a degree. CASPA does not conduct investigations on degree status.

### **GRADE POINT AVERAGES (GPAs)**

CASPA will calculate numerous grade point averages (GPAs). The GPAs and hours will be summarized by academic year within undergraduate (freshman through senior year), postbaccalaureate and graduate work. There will be a running total GPA for each academic year that will add all coursework together for an overall total GPA. In addition, courses will be divided into a Science and Non-Science category for each year and will have a running total through the postbaccalaureate and graduate work. Professional and foreign coursework is excluded from the GPA calculation.

#### **Overall GPA**

CASPA will calculate an overall GPA which includes all undergraduate, postbaccalaureate, and graduate courses taken, both science and non-science. This does not include foreign or professional coursework.

#### **Non-Science GPA**

The non-science GPA includes all courses with subject codes of Math, English, Behavioral Science, and Other Non-Science.

#### **Science GPA**

The Science GPA includes all courses with subject codes of Biology/Zoology, Chemistry (Inorganic, Organic and Biochemistry), Physics and Other Science.

#### **BCP GPA**

The BCP GPA includes all courses taken in the categories of Biology, Chemistry, and Physics. This will exclude Other Science to reflect a more accurate GPA for prerequisite courses at a glance.

## GPA Calculations

CASPA calculates a standardized GPA to help participating PA programs evaluate applicants using uniform and consistent criteria. The CASPA GPAs are automatically generated by the system and are likely to be different from those calculated by the colleges and universities attended due to the CASPA grade standardization process. In this process, the CASPA Grade is assigned a numeric value to calculate the CASPA GPA. The CASPA grading scale is as follows:

<b>CASPA Weight</b>	4.0	3.7	3.5	3.3	3.0	2.7	2.5	2.3	2.0	1.7	1.5	1.3	1.0	0.7	0
<b>CASPA Grade</b>	A	A-	AB	B+	B	B-	BC	C+	C	C-	CD	D+	D	D-	F

Participating PA programs may choose to use the CASPA GPAs or calculate new GPAs for their own use.

## GPA System Rules

The CASPA central database automatically performs the following steps when calculating CASPA GPAs. CASPA verifiers do not manually perform these steps.

- Multiply the grade value of the course by the semester hours for that course. The product of this multiplication will be the quality points.
- Divide the cumulative quality points by the cumulative attempted hours.

### Example:

Course	Transcript Grade	Transcript Credits Attempted	CASPA (Converted) Letter Grade	Calculation	Quality Points
MATH 1100	4.0	3	A	= 4 X 3	12
ENGL 1310	3.0	3	B	= 3 X 3	9
GEOL 1610	2.0	4	C	= 2 X 4	8
PHED 1000	1.0	3	D	= 1 X 3	3
PSCI 1040	0.0	3	F	= 0 X 3	0
<b>TOTAL</b>		16			32

**GPA Calculation** -> **32** (quality points) ÷ by **16** (credit hours attempted) = **2.00** (GPA)

## Repeated Coursework

Applicants are instructed to enter all course grades and hours for courses taken even if they repeated the course for grade improvement. Applicants will be instructed to indicate repeated coursework by identifying these courses as “repeated” under course type. Applicants must enter coursework as shown on transcripts. CASPA will calculate GPAs based on credits reported on official transcripts. CASPA does not recognize “freshmen forgiveness” and as long as a course grade and credit is listed on a transcript, it must be reported on the application.

## REFERENCES

CASPA requires three references but will send the application to designated programs once two references have been received. When the third reference arrives, it will be forwarded to the program. The program can determine if the application is complete with two or three references. A complete paper reference consists of a two-page CASPA Reference Form plus a letter

submitted on the stationery of the individual writing the reference. Electronic references will consist of a Reference Form that includes the narrative.

Applicants must have their references submitted as electronic references or paper references:

### **Electronic References**

Electronic references can be completed electronically by the applicant's evaluators. If the applicant prefers the references to be completed electronically, an electronic request from CASPA Messenger will be sent to the evaluator directing him or her to a secured Web site for completion. After the evaluator completes the reference, he or she will submit it electronically to CASPA. It is recommended that the applicant contact the individuals writing the references for their approval and for an accurate e-mail address.

### **Paper References**

Paper references can be completed by using a Reference Form available within the CASPA application. If the applicant uses a Reference Form, the individual completing the form will return it directly to CASPA at the address provided on the form.

In order for a paper letter of reference to be considered complete, the following items must be received:

- A cover sheet signed by the applicant
- An evaluation sheet filled out and signed by the evaluator
- A letter of recommendation signed by the evaluator

**\*\* Please note that if ANY signatures are missing, the reference will be considered incomplete. CASPA will not accept a fax and all signatures must be original. An incomplete reference will not be further processed.**

### **Committee References**

A Committee Letter of Reference needs to be completed using a paper reference rather than an electronic one. A complete paper reference consists of the two-page CASPA Reference Request Form plus a letter submitted on the stationery of the individual writing the reference.

If the Committee Letter of Reference is a compilation of several individual letters, it must be submitted with only one Reference Form and will be considered as one reference. The individual writing the reference will need to fill out the evaluation grid on the Reference Request Form. The applicant will need to obtain additional references.

### **Reference Authentication**

Once a reference is received at CASPA, the reference is checked for completeness (paper forms must have both the two-page CASPA Reference Form and the letter). CASPA reserves the right to screen references for authenticity.

### **Discrepancies**

If a discrepancy is suspected on any application materials, including transcripts and references, the application will be put on "Hold" status while CASPA contacts the applicant for clarification. CASPA will input comments and track the "Hold" status on each applicant. Programs can view the "Hold" status comments on individual applications through the Admissions Portal.

## MAILINGS TO PROGRAMS

Each week, CASPA will generate a paper and electronic shipment for participating PA programs. CASPA generates at least one printed report for all newly completed files that are shipped to the programs. The applicant records shipped to the programs will be placed in boxes in alphabetical order by last name. The weekly Admission Summary Report and Program Roster should be placed on top of the applications. Each mailing is sorted automatically or manually as follows:

- Admission Summary Report
- Program Roster
- Labels (CASPA generates and affixes label for each applicant file folder)
- Application Files
  1. Applicant Profile
  2. Printed Application
  3. Photocopies (if any) of foreign transcript evaluation reports, nongraded transcripts, and any selected correspondence with applicant.

### Printed Application

The computer-printed application will include all CASPA application fields, *except* the following:

- Physician Assistant Program Designations
- CASPA Application Fee Payment related-fields
- Applicant's CASPA Web login and password

In addition, the printed copy also includes the following CASPA generated fields:

- CASPA Verified Grades
- CASPA (Converted) Grades
- CASPA Verified Credits
- CASPA Verified Degrees

Other selected CASPA-generated fields will appear on the CASPA Profile Sheet.

### Electronic 'Paperless' Application

Programs have the option of receiving electronic-only versions of applications. Programs will receive a weekly notification from the CASPA Admissions Portal when applications are complete. Programs are able to review applications immediately via the portal. Screening applications online can save a program time, money, space, and paper. Currently 15 CASPA member programs are paperless. Please contact Ann Donnelly, CASPA Team Leader, at [caspamgr@caspaonline.org](mailto:caspamgr@caspaonline.org) if your program would like more information about electronic-only applications.

### Revised Applications

If the applicant has made a revision to his or her application after the application has been verified and sent to the participating programs, a revised page will be added to the electronic application. This revision page can be viewed through the Admissions Portal under View/Print Application. A paper copy of the revised application will not be sent to participating programs.

However, the revised application can be printed from the Admissions Portal by the program if necessary. The revised application will be included in the electronic Download File.

## ADMISSIONS PORTAL

The CASPA Admissions Portal (<https://portal.caspaonline.org/admissions10/index.cgi>) provides online services for participating PA programs. Admissions officers at PA programs as well as others designated at the programs have a secure site through which to help manage the applicants who have designated their PA program. Through this portal, programs can get detailed applicant status information and view applicant information prior to and after mailings.

CASPA will provide participating programs with at least the following information for applicants who designate their institution.

- Aggregate Number of Applications for Program (at least application received)
- Search Tools: Ability to search for an applicant by Last Name, Date Application Submitted, Social Security Number, or CASPA ID Number

### Application Status Definitions

The Admissions Portal will sort the applications into different categories of applicant status. Below is a list of the categories and a brief explanation of each:

**Applications Initiated:** These are applicants who have selected your program, but who have not yet finished and e-submitted their applications. The applicant information is not available for viewing by programs while applicants are in this category. However, a number appears that indicates how many applicants are currently in this category. Using this number, programs can project how many applications they might receive in the future.

**Applications Submitted:** These are applicants who have e-submitted their applications but are either missing transcripts and/or references. Once applications are in the submitted category, their contact information is available for viewing individually and as a group with the provided MS Excel spreadsheet. The spreadsheet will give the name, address, phone number, and e-mail address of each applicant in this category. This electronic data can then be used to create mailings or e-mail messages to allow designated programs to communicate with the applicants at an early stage of the admissions process.

**Applications Completed:** These are applicants who have all of their transcripts and at least two references but have not had their transcripts verified. Once the transcripts are verified, the applications will be put into the next category.

**Applications Mailed:** These are applicants with complete applications who have been verified and have had applications sent to your program. You may refer to the *Mailings* section for the date the last mailing was sent and for the electronic version of each mailing. Please note that it may take up to one week for the physical paper mailing to reach your office.

**Applications on Hold:** Applicants who have been put on hold due to discrepancies found within the application. These discrepancies could include coursework errors, transcript problems or errors, bad payments, etc.

The Admissions Portal also allows programs to assign specific Admissions Decisions to each applicant. This year, the programs can choose from the following list of Admissions Decisions:

- Declined Offer
- Deferred
- Denied
- Hold
- Interview
- Matriculated
- Offer Accepted
- Offer Made
- Received/Under Review
- Regular
- Rescinded
- Wait List
- Withdrew

This mechanism allows programs to better organize their applicants through the Admissions Portal and to report their matriculated students to CASPA at the end of the admissions process.

### **Application Status Categories**

- **Applicants Not Submitted to CASPA**
  - No access to details or profile
- **Applicants Submitted**
  - Access to profile only
- **Applicants Complete**
  - Access to profile and details
- **Applicants Mailed**
  - Access to profile and details

### **Details Available for Complete Mailed Applicants**

CASPA programs have the ability to view the full Web application record for every verified applicant to their program. This information includes:

- All questions on Web application, *except* data on designated PA programs and passwords.
- Date application was submitted to (received by) CASPA
- List of colleges attended and date each transcript was received by CASPA
- CASPA GPAs
- Date application was complete
- Date electronic report posted to FTP download area
- Date paper file shipped to program

### **Weekly E-Reports to Programs**

Each week, CASPA will generate a paper and electronic shipment for participating PA programs. **The electronic transmission should be available on the same day each week at approximately the same time.** If the e-report will not be ready at the usual time, CASPA will notify the participating programs of the delay and anticipated time and date the e-reports will be ready.

**Application Fields Excluded in Data File**

The weekly electronic file to the applicant's designated program should contain all of the fields from the Web application, *except* the following:

- Physician Assistant Program Designations
- Fields related to CASPA Application Fee Payment
- Applicant's CASPA Web login and password
- Advisor Release Statement

**CASPA-Generated Fields Included in Data File**

The weekly electronic file should also contain selected CASPA-generated fields. When reporting course information, the system refers to the information collected on the transcript verification process. Fields included in the data file are:

- All CASPA GPAs, including quality points and credit totals for each.
- All CASPA "College Courses Completed" and "College Courses Planned" fields, including the CASPA-REPORTED GRADE and CASPA-Reported Credits.
- SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES FLAG for Transcript Verification limitations ("Failed Grade – Credits Attempted Unknown")
- TRANSCRIPTS RECEIVED dates
- Complete date

**Updated/Revised E-Reports**

The electronic data to the programs will indicate that a field was revised and the section where the revision appears. If there are multiple revisions, all are listed.

**Description of Data Download and Upload Process for Programs**

Programs will visit the CASPA FTP site each week to download an electronic output (E-OUTPUT) file that contains all newly completed applications and application revisions for the week. Programs will access the E-OUTPUT file through a password-protected and secure server site. Programs will only receive data on applicants who have designated their particular Institution.

CASPA will provide the weekly data file in Access format. On average, the Access file is expected to be between 700KB and 3MB, depending on the volume of applications for the week, and should take no more than a few minutes to download for T1 connections. It is the responsibility of the program to make sure it has downloaded its program data file for the week into a secure local server or computer. At all times, programs will have the ability to access and download *all* past data files since the beginning of the cycle, in case the program misses or loses one or more downloads. It is recommended that programs download the data file into the same local directory each week.

**APPLICANT PORTAL**

The Applicant Portal will provide applicants with the following information online. The portal is available at [www.caspaonline.org](http://www.caspaonline.org)

- Read-only access to all Application Screens for printing and review purposes.
- Date application was submitted to (received at) CASPA
- List of colleges attended and date each transcript was received at CASPA

- Date each reference was received at CASPA
- Fee received: Yes or No
- Verified course data, including credits and CASPA-reported GPA
- Date application was sent to PA programs

## ADVISORS PORTAL

The Advisors Portal is available to Health Professions Advisors at accredited colleges and universities. Access to this site is subject to verification by PAEA and CASPA staff. The individual must either be a member of the National Association of Advisors for the Health Professions (NAAHP) or a staff member designated by the dean of his or her college or university to access this site. The CASPA Health Professions Advisor (HPA) Portal with information about registering for an account is available at <https://portal.caspaonline.org/advisors10/index.cgi>.

The HPA Portal is a password-protected Web site that provides application status information to approved health professions advisors. Health professions advisors may review the status of each of their students — when applicant permission is granted — enabling them to better counsel students and maintain reliable tracking information.

This site is an extension of CASPA services to applicants and advisors. All PA programs are encouraged to post information to the site; however, some programs may choose not to provide updates.

## PROGRAM SURVEY

Following the closing of each cycle, PAEA submits a request to programs to complete the program survey to obtain information on the experiences and feedback of CASPA participating programs.

Questions from the annual survey include:

1. Rate CASPA's responsiveness to applicant concerns during the previous admissions cycle.
2. Rate CASPA's responsiveness to program concerns during the previous admissions cycle.
3. How satisfied was your program with CASPA's communications and efficiency?
4. How beneficial was the Web-based Admissions Portal to your admissions process?
5. Additional comments (optional):

## PROGRAM END-OF-CYCLE REPORTS AND MATRICULANT DATA

Programs will have access to two end-of-cycle reports on the Admissions Portal. The first report will be available in mid-April following the close of the admissions cycle in March. This report will provide each program with data on all applicants to CASPA participating programs as well as all applicants to their individual program.

Programs must submit their matriculant data for each school year using the Admissions Portal for the respective application cycle. This data is required by CASPA following the close of each application cycle and should be submitted by the program once the school year has been initiated by the program. Annually, the deadline for programs to confirm and submit the matriculant data

from the previous application cycle is approximately September 15. The second set of end-of-cycle reports will include this matriculant data.

Both end-of-cycle reports will be available annually posted on each program's Admissions Portal and will summarize information on the overall applicant pool for each program's admissions cycle.

## CHANGING PROGRAM SELECTIONS AND REAPPLICATION

### **Applicant Withdrawals – Specific Program or All Programs**

If the applicant wishes to withdraw his/her application from one or more programs of Physician Assistant, CASPA will instruct the applicant to contact the institution directly to remove his/her application from consideration. CASPA will not provide a refund for a withdrawn application to a particular PA program.

### **Substituting or Deleting Physician Assistant Program Choices**

CASPA will not accept requests to substitute or delete program choices or refund application fees. If after delivering the CASPA application, an applicant wishes to rescind his/her application to a particular PA program, CASPA will instruct the applicant to contact the institution directly to remove his/her application from consideration.

### **Adding a Physician Assistant Program after Application Submission**

Applicants may apply to additional Physician Assistant programs after submission of their CASPA application. To apply to additional programs, applicants may log onto their CASPA application and designate additional programs. CASPA must receive the appropriate fee for each additional Physician Assistant program selected, before the additional programs will receive the application records. Applicants cannot apply to a particular program after the institutional deadline date has passed, unless the program grants the applicant (or all applicants to the program) an extension.

### **Reapplication**

CASPA is not able to reuse the materials from a previous application cycle. Application materials submitted in previous application cycle cannot be carried forward to the current cycle. Each year, an applicant needs to complete the current year's application, submit the appropriate processing fee, have transcripts sent from each institution he/she has attended, and request three references.