

Programme Specification

MSc Physician Associate Studies (full-time)

PFTZPHYASSHM

For students entering in 2027/28

This document sets out key information about your Programme and forms part of your Terms and Conditions with the University of Reading.

Awarding Institution	University of Reading
Teaching Institution	University of Reading
Length of Programme	MSc Physician Associate Studies (full-time) - 2 years
Accreditation	General Medical Council (GMC)
Programme Start Dates	September
QAA Subject Benchmarking Group	N/A

Programme information and content

This Masters programme in Physician Associate Studies aims to produce graduates that have the knowledge, skills and professional behaviours and attributes ready for a lifelong career as a physician associate. The programme will provide graduates with a nationally and internationally recognised qualification that prepares them for their national examinations and the demands of a career as a medical professional.

The aim of both years of the course is to build on a student's undergraduate science or healthcare foundation to develop clinical knowledge and skills via medical training that incorporates classroom teaching with extensive clinical placement experience. Each year has 45 weeks of training to ensure all students can complete the placement and competency requirements of the programme. As students develop these clinical skills, they will learn to integrate theoretical and clinical learning, reflect on experiences, and share examples of good practice. Through this process they will develop lifelong learning skills to become motivated lifelong learners continually engaged in active professional development. In Part 1, students will begin to develop a portfolio of practice to record their clinical development and engage in developing research skills. They will engage in placements in primary and secondary care. In Part 2, the majority of student learning is on placement with 8-9 days in every 10 on placement. Up to 42% of the programme duration will be spent on placement.

Programme Learning Outcomes

-MSc Physician Associate Studies (full-time)

During the course of the Programme, you will have the opportunity to develop a range of skills, knowledge and attributes (known as learning outcomes) For this programme, these are:

Learning outcomes	
1	To demonstrate integration of theoretical and clinical learning when evaluating clinical scenarios, with the ability to explain scientific concepts linked to medicine and use this knowledge to analyse and evaluate scientific data in such scenarios.

2	To be safe and competent practitioners under medical supervision in a wide variety of clinical settings, possessing the skills to communicate patient needs within a multidisciplinary team, and an awareness of information management and governance.
3	To critically evaluate evidence using research and enquiry skills and to apply this to clinical practice.
4	To communicate empathetically to patients and public, using a patient-centred and ethical approach that maintains confidentiality.
5	To critically reflect on your own personal development, showing the ability to evaluate your strengths and limitations, working towards becoming a capable and motivated lifelong learner.
6	To explain the concept of, and be able to minimise the impact of, health inequalities with awareness of the intricacies of working with patients from diverse social and ethnic backgrounds, as well as those with other protected characteristics.
7	To be able to articulate methods used to maintain and promote health and wellbeing, as well as to prevent disease, and to be aware of your obligations to the wider community as well as to individuals.
8	To be able to work effectively within a team and to be able to confidently and empathically support and train others.

You will be expected to engage in learning activities to achieve these Programme learning outcomes. Assessment of your modules will reflect these learning outcomes and test how far you have met the requirements for your degree.

To pass the Programme, you will be required to meet the progression or accreditation and award criteria set out below.

Module information

The programme comprises 240 credits, allocated across a range of compulsory modules as shown below.

Compulsory modules

Module	Name	Credits	Level
PMM1CKC	Clinical Knowledge Core Systems (PG)	60	M
PMM1CS1	Clinical Skills 1 (PG)	40	M
PMM1MRE	Medical Research and Enquiry (PG)	20	M

Year 2 modules

Module	Name	Credits	Level
PMM2CS2	Clinical Skills 2 (PG)	120	M

Part-time or flexible modular arrangements

There are no part-time or flexible modular arrangements available in this programme.

Placement opportunities

You have significant mandatory placement time built into your programme to enable you to graduate. These fall within both years of the programme. Up to 42% of the programme duration will be spent on placement.

Study abroad opportunities

There are no study abroad opportunities within this programme.

Optional modules

There are no optional modules in this programme.

Teaching and learning delivery

Teaching and learning is delivered in a variety of ways, including interactive lecture-based style, practical skills workshops, case-based learning and small group work, simulated clinical skills training sessions, and seminars.

During the clinical training, in Parts 3 and 4, you will be required to maintain a portfolio of learning which includes a record of patient encounters and acquisition of core clinical skills. You will be required to include reflective accounts of critical learning encounters as well as formal case reports. The portfolio will also contain evidence provided by other healthcare practitioners regarding your performance.

Elements of your programme will be delivered via digital technology.

The scheduled teaching and learning activity hours and amount of technology enhanced learning activity for your programme will depend upon your module combination. In addition, you will undertake some self-scheduled teaching and learning activities, designed by and/or involving staff, which give some flexibility for you to choose when to complete them. You will also be expected to undertake guided independent study. Information about module study hours including contact hours and the amount of independent study which a student is normally expected to undertake for a module is indicated in the relevant module description.

Accreditation details

The PA profession is regulated by the General Medical Council (GMC), who also oversee and accredit PA training programmes in the UK. Graduates who pass a programme must then pass the Physician Associate Registration Assessment (PARA) in order to join the GMC register and practise as a PA.

Students are required to inform the School of Pharmacy of any change in circumstances that may affect their ability, or suitability, to continue their studies; this includes circumstances relating to health and conduct. Students must maintain behaviours expected of a trainee healthcare professional and must abide by University regulations, the School of Pharmacy Fitness to Practise policy and the General Medical Council's Good Medical Practice and associated guidance. Deviation from these standards may lead to the instigation of University Academic Misconduct and/or Fitness to Practise processes.

Assessment

Assessment methods used will be according to those stated in the module descriptors to align to the learning outcomes. This means the programme is assessed through a combination of written examinations, coursework, oral examinations, and practical examinations.

Progression

Year 1

In order to progress from Part 1 to Part 2, a student must achieve:

- (i) a mark of at least 50% in PMM1CKC and PMM1CS1
- (ii) a mark of at least 40% in PMM1MRE; and
- (iii) successful completion of specified coursework and examinations of PMM1CKC and PMM1CS1, as described in the module descriptions.

Students who do not meet the above Year 1 progression requirements for the MSc Physician Associate Studies degree, but who have reached the appropriate University threshold performance will be eligible for the following awards (please note that these exit awards do not provide eligibility to register with the GMC or practise as a Physician Associate):

Successful completion of 60 credits – PGCert in Healthcare Studies

Successful completion of 120 credits – PGDip in Healthcare Studies

Classification

The University's taught postgraduate marks classification is as follows:

Mark Interpretation

70 - 100% Distinction

60 - 69% Merit

50 - 59% Good standard (Pass)

Failing categories:

40 - 49% Work below threshold standard

0 - 39% Unsatisfactory Work

For Master's Degree

The following conditions must be satisfied for the award of a Master's degree:

Award of a Master's degree

- (i) an overall weighted average of 50% or more over 240 credits
- (ii) a mark of 50% or more in at least 120 credits
- (iii) no credits with a mark below 40%

Additional programme-specific requirements:

To obtain the MSc Physician Associate Studies degree, a student shall also normally be required to have satisfied the following:

(iv) no significant weakness, i.e. no mark below 50% in PMM1CKC, PMM1CS1 or PMM2CS2

(v) successful completion of all specified coursework (including experiential learning activities) and examinations of PMM1CKC, PMM1CS1 and PMM2CS2, as described in the module descriptions.

Students who do not meet the above requirements for obtaining the MSc Physician Associate Studies degree but who have reached the appropriate University threshold will be eligible for the following awards (please note that these exit awards do not provide eligibility to register with the GMC or practise as a Physician Associate):

Successful completion of 120 credits – PGDip in Healthcare Studies

Successful completion of 240 credits – MSc in Healthcare Studies.

In addition to the threshold conditions for the award of a Master's degree, the following **further** conditions must be satisfied for a classification of Distinction or Merit:

Distinction

An overall weighted average of 70% or more over 240 credits

OR

an overall weighted average of 68% or more over 240 credits and marks of 70% in at least 120 credits

AND

No marks below 40%.

Merit

An overall weighted average of 60% or more over 240 credits

OR

an overall average of 58% or more over 240 credits and marks of 60% in at least 120 credits

AND

No marks below 40%.

For Postgraduate Diploma

The following conditions must be satisfied for the award of a Postgraduate Diploma in Healthcare Studies (please note that this exit award does not provide eligibility to register with the GMC or practise as a Physician Associate):

Award of a Postgraduate Diploma

- (i) an overall weighted average of 50% or more over 120 credits
- (ii) a mark of 50% or more in at least 80 credits
- (iii) no credits with a mark below 40%

In addition to the threshold conditions for the award of a Postgraduate Diploma, the following further conditions must be satisfied for a classification of Distinction or Merit:

Distinction

An overall weighted average of 70% or more over 120 credits

OR

an overall weighted average of 68% or more over 120 credits and marks of 70% in at least 60 credits

AND

No marks below 40%.

Merit

An overall weighted average of 60% or more over 120 credits

OR

an overall average of 58% or more over 120 credits and marks of 60% in at least 60 credits

AND

No marks below 40%.

For Postgraduate Certificate

The following conditions must be satisfied for the award of a Postgraduate Certificate in Healthcare Studies (please note that this exit award does not provide eligibility to register with the GMC or practise as a Physician Associate):

Award of a Postgraduate Certificate

- (i) an overall weighted average of 50% or more over 60 credits
- (ii) No credits with a mark below 40%.

Details of the classification method is given in detail in the [Assessment Handbook](#) under:

- Section 19: Awards: Postgraduate Master's, Postgraduate Diploma, Postgraduate Certificate

Please note that there may be a specific version for your year of entry.

Additional costs of the programme

1. Required textbooks: A wide variety of text books is available from the library. Students are advised to purchase own copies of some core texts at varying costs.
2. Specialist equipment or materials: Professional standard stethoscope at approximately £90-£160. A lab coat will cost approximately £10.
3. Printing facilities are available on campus at approximately £0.05 per page.

4. Travel, accommodation and subsistence: You will need to travel to placements in the community and this will incur additional travel costs when you are required to visit venues geographically further away.
5. As part of ensuring the safety of students, patients and the public, you will be required to undergo police (Disclosure & Barring Service) and health checks. The initial DBS check costs approximately £55. The health check is currently carried out free of charge, but you will be required to pay for any vaccinations that you may need. Required vaccinations (or evidence of immunity) are:
 - **Measles, Mumps and Rubella** - Proof of two vaccinations against Measles, Mumps and Rubella (combined MMR preferable or single vaccines) or positive blood test results for Measles and Rubella antibodies.
 - **Chicken pox (Varicella)** - A confirmed history of having chicken pox (varicella) OR if no confirmed history then we require evidence of 2 vaccinations against varicella or a positive blood test result for Varicella antibodies.
 - **Tuberculosis** - Confirmation of no signs or symptoms of Tuberculosis (TB). If coming from a country of high incidence of TB and/or in the UK less than 5 years from such a country, then as per WHO guidelines then the individual must provide evidence of their current TB status e.g. chest x-ray report, mantoux test results, IGRA (quantiferon / t-spot) blood result undertaken.
 - **Hepatitis B** – Evidence of your Hepatitis B vaccination status and if you have completed this previously a copy of your Hepatitis B surface antibody status.
 - If you have not had any Hepatitis B vaccine, you must commence a course of Hepatitis B vaccination before you can be cleared for placement.

Costs are indicative and may vary according to optional modules chosen and are subject to inflation and other price fluctuations. Estimates were calculated in 2026.

Students may consider purchasing a laptop to help support their learning. Information on recommended device specifications can be found on the [DTS Student Hub](#).

For further information about your Programme please refer to the Programme Handbook and the relevant module descriptions, which are available at <http://www.reading.ac.uk/module/>. The Programme Handbook and the relevant module descriptions do not form part of your Terms and Conditions with the University of Reading.

MSc Physician Associate Studies (full-time) for students entering in session 2027/28
28 July 2026

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