

Programme Specification

MPAS Physician Associate Studies

For students entering Part 1 in September 2026

UCAS Code: BB96

UFMPAS

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	4 years
Accreditation	To be GMC accredited once PA profession is fully regulated
QAA Subject Benchmarking Group	N/A

Programme information and content

This four-year masters' programme in physician associate studies aims to produce graduates that have the knowledge, skills and professional behaviours and attributes ready for a life-long career as a physician associate. The programme will provide graduates with a nationally and internationally recognised qualifications that prepares them for their national examinations and the demands of a career as a medical professional.

The aim of Part 3 and 4 of the MPAS course is to build on a student's science 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 3 students will 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 4 the majority of student learning is on placement with 8-9 days in every 10 on placement.

Part 1:	The aim of Part 1 of the MPAS course is to provide you with a foundation in medical science knowledge and begin your professional skills development to prepare you for the later clinical training years of the programme. Modules cover a diverse curriculum including biochemistry, physiology, anatomy, pharmacology, microbiology and cell biology, nutrition and public health. You will be provided with diverse opportunities to develop skills that integrate your science knowledge with professional practice, as you begin to develop professional skills that focus on self-awareness, reflection, and effective communication.
Part 2:	Part 2 of the MPAS course allows you to build on your medical science knowledge and further develop your professional skills as you continue to prepare for your clinical training years. Modules further develop your knowledge in

	physiology and anatomy. You also study medicine design and administration and use your skills in areas of pathology integrating science and clinical knowledge as you learn about the different healthcare environments. You are provided with a variety of experiential learning experiences that form the focus of your reflective practice. You will also learn with and from other students undertaking different healthcare degree programmes.
Part 3:	The aim of Part 3 of the MPAS course is to build on the underpinning science covered in Part 1 and 2, to develop your clinical knowledge and skills via medical training that incorporates classroom teaching with clinical placement experience. This year has 45 weeks of training to ensure you can fully engage in the placement and competency requirements of the programme. As you develop your clinical skills, you will learn to integrate theoretical and clinical learning, reflect on experiences, and share examples of good practice. You will develop a portfolio of practice to record your clinical development and engage in developing research skills.
Part 4:	Part 4 provides you with 45 weeks of training as you complete the placement and competency requirements of the programme. You will further develop your skills through engaging in compulsory placements situated within primary and secondary care (approximately 8 days in every 10 working days will be spent on placement). During your campus days you will continue to develop your clinical knowledge and skills and reflect on your clinical experiences through sharing experiences and examples of good practice.

Programme Learning Outcomes - MPAS Physician Associate Studies

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 integrate theoretical and clinical learning when evaluating clinical scenarios.
2	To be safe and competent practitioners under medical supervision in a wide variety of clinical settings.
3	To critically evaluate evidence using research and enquiry skills and to apply this to clinical practice.
4	To communicate empathetically to patients and the 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 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 effectively communicate patient needs within a multidisciplinary team with an awareness of information management and governance.
8	To explain methods used to maintain and promote health and wellbeing, and prevent disease, and to be aware of your obligations to the wider community as well as to individuals.
9	To be able to explain scientific concepts linked to medicine and use this knowledge to analyse and evaluate scientific data with reference to clinical and medical science scenarios.
10	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.

In addition to the learning outcomes stated above if you are on a placement or study abroad programme you will have the opportunity to develop the following learning outcome:

Additional Learning outcomes	
N/A	

Module information

Each part comprises 120 credits, allocated across a range of compulsory and optional modules as shown below. Compulsory modules are listed.

Part 1 Modules:

Module	Name	Credits	Level
BI1AP3	Anatomy and Physiology	20	4
BI1FM1	Fundamentals of Microbiology	20	4
PM1NPH	Nutrition and Public Health	20	4
PM1PDA	Principles of Drug Action	20	4
PM1PS1	Professional Skills for Healthcare 1	20	4
PM1PY2	Fundamentals of Cell Biology	20	4

All Part 1 modules are compulsory.

Part 2 Modules:

Module	Name	Credits	Level
BI2HI1	Haematology and Immunology	20	5
PM2IAP	Integrated Anatomy and Physiology	20	5
PM2MHC	Medicines in Healthcare	20	5
PM2PS2	Professional Skills 2	40	5

PM2SPA	Selected Pathologies	20	5
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All Part 2 modules are compulsory.

If you take a year-long placement or study abroad, Part 3 as described below may be subject to variation.

Part 3 Modules:

Module	Name	Credits	Level
PM3CKC	Clinical Knowledge Core Systems (UG)	60	6
PM3CS1	Clinical Skills 1 (UG)	40	6
PM3MRE	Medical Research and Enquiry (UG)	20	6

All Part 3 modules are compulsory and PM3CS1 is taught across a 45-week teaching year to enable students to undertake all required NHS based placements.

Part 4 modules:

Module	Name	Credits	Level
PM4CS2	Clinical Skills 2 (UG)	120	7

This Part 4 module is compulsory and taught across a 45-week teaching year to enable students to undertake all required NHS based placements.

Placement opportunities

Placements:

You will have significant mandatory placement time (over 1400 hours) built into your programme to enable you to meet the requirements and clinical competencies for the Faculty of Physician Associates. These placements mainly fall within Parts 3 and 4 of the programme.

Allocation of Clinical Placements:

In order to optimise the availability and equitable distribution of placements, all placements are allocated by the School: students cannot choose their own placements. Students can request to swap once allocations are made, and these requests will be considered by the Placement Co-ordinator and Programme Director but cannot be guaranteed. Whilst we seek to incorporate the needs of students where possible, placement capacity is limited, and we need to align placements to availability within the NHS Trusts and Primary Care services taking our students who also support students from other institutions.

Special circumstances:

Placements may be located within Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire (and, on occasion, outside of these areas) and you will be expected to travel to such placements.

During allocation, the team attempt to balance the travel burden across the student body. Where possible, allowances are considered for students with these circumstances:

- a. If you are a parent or legal guardian of a child or children under the age of 18 who reside primarily with you and for whom you have significant caring responsibilities.
- b. If you are a Primary Carer for someone who is disabled (as defined by the Equality Act 2010).
- c. You have a disability, and restrictions on travel are considered by the University to be a reasonable adjustment

Disclosure and Barring Service checks and health checks:

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 vaccinations required to be able to undertake patient-facing/placement activity 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 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

Study Abroad:

There are no study abroad opportunities within this programme.

Optional modules:

The optional modules available can vary from year to year. An indicative list of the range of optional modules for your programme can be found online in the Course Catalogue. Details of optional modules for each part, including any additional costs associated with the optional modules, will be made available to you prior to the beginning of the Part in which they are to be taken and you will be given an opportunity to express interest in the optional modules that you would like to take. Entry to optional modules will be at the discretion of the University and subject to availability and may be subject to pre-requisites, such as completion of another module. Although the University tries to ensure you are able to take the optional modules in which you have expressed interest this cannot be guaranteed.

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, digitally-enabled learning activities, 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 expected to soon become fully regulated and from the point of regulation this programme will be accredited by the General Medical Council (GMC).

Currently, the oversight of education and training of Physician Associates is shared by the Department of Health, the Physician Associate Schools Council (PASC) and the Faculty of Physician Associates (FPA), Royal College of Physicians. PASC peer reviews programmes prior to their commencement. Graduates who pass a programme must then pass the Physician Associate National Certification Examination and then will be able to register with the FPA who maintain the Managed Voluntary Register (PAMVR).

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

Part 1

To achieve a threshold performance at Part 1, a student will normally be required to:

- (i) Obtain an overall weighted average of 40% over 120 credits taken in Part 1;
- (ii) Obtain a mark of at least 40% in individual modules amounting to not less than 80

credits taken in Part 1; and

(iii) Obtain marks of at least 30% in modules amounting to 120 credits. (A Fail in a Pass/Fail module will be treated as not meeting the minimum threshold requirement for progression or classification. Pass/fail modules are excluded from weighted average calculations but must be passed to avoid failure of the Part or degree.)

In order to progress from Part 1 to Part 2, a student must achieve a threshold performance; and

(iv) a mark of at least 40% in all individual modules; and

(v) a mark of at least 70% in the PM1PS1 calculations test.

The achievement of a threshold performance at Part 1 qualifies a student for a Certificate of Higher Education if they leave the University before completing the subsequent Part.

Students are able to transfer from a Joint or Major/Minor Honours programme to a Single Honours programme in one of their joint subject areas at the end of Part 1, subject to:

- Meeting the University Threshold Standard at the end of Part 1; and
- Achieving marks of at least 40% in at least 40 credits of modules (e.g., 2 x 20 credit modules) in the subject to which they wish to transfer; and
- Meeting any programme-specific progression rules for the Part 1 Single Honours Programme to which they wish to transfer.

NB Students taking a Major/Minor programme may only transfer to a Single Honours programme in the Major subject and must meet the above requirements.

Students should seek advice about the titles of programmes they may be eligible to transfer to.

Students who transfer from a Joint or Major/Minor Honours programme to a Single Honours programme may not have taken all of the Part 1 modules listed in the Single Honours Programme Specification. The modules which they have taken will be shown on their Diploma Supplement.

Part 2

To achieve a threshold performance at Part 2, a student shall normally be required to:

(i) Obtain a weighted average of 40% over 120 credits taken in Part 2; and

(ii) Obtain marks of at least 40% in individual modules amounting to at least 80 credits taken in Part 2; and

(iii) Obtain marks of at least 30% in individual modules amounting to at least 120 credits. (A Fail in a Pass/Fail module will be treated as not meeting the minimum threshold requirement for progression or classification. Pass/fail modules are excluded from weighted average calculations but must be passed to avoid failure of the Part or degree.)

In order to progress from Part 2 to Part 3, a student must achieve a threshold performance; and

- (iv) achieve an overall average of 50% over 120 credits taken in Part 2; and
- (v) a mark of at least 40% in individual modules; and
- (vi) a pass (obtain at least 50% and demonstrate competence) in the practical assessment (MCPSA) of PM2PS2, as described in the module description; and
- (vii) pass the portfolio in PM2PS2.

The achievement of a threshold performance at Part 2 qualifies a student for a Diploma of Higher Education if they leave the University before completing the subsequent Part.

Part 3

To achieve a threshold performance at Part 3, a student shall normally be required to:

- (i) achieve a weighted average of 40% over 120 credits taken in Part 3, with 80 credits with a mark of at least 40%, and with no marks below 30%.

In order to progress from Part 3 to Part 4, a student must achieve a threshold performance; and

- (ii) a mark of at least 50% in PM3CKC and PM3CS1; and
- (iii) a mark of at least 40% in PM3MRE; and
- (iv) a mark of at least 50% for each assessment in PM3CKC; and
- (v) a pass in the portfolio and a mark of at least 50% (and demonstration of competence) in the OSCE (practical assessment) in PM3CS1.

Students who do not meet the above requirements for progression to Part 4 but gain a threshold performance will be eligible for the award of BSc Clinical Science.

The classification for this exit award will be based upon an overall weighted average ratio of 1:2 (Part 2: Part 3). The classification method for this exit award is given in detail in the Assessment Handbook (see, in particular, section 17.5): Bachelor's (for cohorts entering in 2022/23 and onwards)

Part 4

To obtain the MPAS Degree, a student shall normally be required to have satisfied all of the above progression requirements and to achieve the following in Part 4:

- i. a mark of at least 50% in the written examination of PM4CS2; and
- ii. a pass in the portfolio assessment of PM4CS2; and

- iii. a pass (a mark of at least 50% and demonstration of competence) in the practical skills assessment (OSCE) of PM4CS2.

Students who do not meet the above Part 4 requirements for obtaining the MPAS degree but achieved all previous progression requirements will be eligible for the award of BSc Clinical Science. The classification for this exit award will be based upon an overall weighted average ratio of 1:2 (Part 2: Part 3). The classification method for this exit award is given in detail in the Assessment Handbook (see, in particular, section 17.5): Bachelor's (for cohorts entering in 2022/23 and onwards)

Classification

Bachelors' degrees

The University's honours classification scheme is based on the following:

Mark Interpretation

70% - 100% First class

60% - 69% Upper Second class

50% - 59% Lower Second class

40% - 49% Third class

35% - 39% Below Honours Standard

0% - 34% Fail

The weighting of the Parts/Years in the calculation of the degree classification is:

Three year Clinical science exit degree:

Part 2: one-third

Part 3: two-thirds

Integrated Masters MPAS degree:

Part 2: 20%

Part 3: 40%

Part 4: 40%

Details of the classification method is given in detail in the Assessment Handbook under:

- Section 17: Awards (Bachelor's), or
- Section 18: Awards (Integrated Master's programmes). Students who do not progress to Part 4 of the Integrated Master's will normally be subject to the method detailed under Section 17: Awards (Bachelor's)

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

Additional costs of the programme

1. Required text books: 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 if 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 (see list of requirements described above).

Costs are indicative and may vary according to optional modules chosen and are subject to inflation and other price fluctuations. Estimates were calculated in 2025.

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.

MPAS Physician Associate Studies for students entering Part 1 in session 2026/27

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