

## Physician Assistant Licence: Requirements and Conditions

<b>Section:</b>	Registration		
<b>Applicable Legislation:</b>	Sections 39, 63A-63E of the Medical Act Regulations		
<b>Approved by:</b> Registration Policy Committee Executive Committee	<b>Approval Date:</b> February 18, 2025 February 20, 2025	<b>Reviewer:</b> Registrar	<b>Review Date:</b> February 2028

### PREAMBLE

Physician assistants (or PAs) function as physician extenders. The physician/physician assistant relationship is central to the physician assistant’s scope of practice.

Amendments to the Medical Acts Regulations<sup>1</sup> (the Regulations) have given the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia (the College) the authority to regulate physician assistants in Nova Scotia, effective April 1, 2024.

A Physician Assistant Licence can only be registered on the Conditional Register maintained by the College. Section 39 of the Regulations describes the criteria for registration on the Conditional Register.

### PURPOSE

This policy sets out the minimum requirements and conditions to obtain a Physician Assistant Licence.

### SCOPE

All physician assistants practising in Nova Scotia must hold a Physician Assistant Licence. Only persons holding a Physician Assistant Licence may use the designation ‘physician assistant’ or ‘PA’ or any derivation or abbreviation of those designations.

### POLICY

A Physician Assistant Licence will only be issued to candidates who meet the requirements of this policy and who are employed, or who have a confirmed offer of employment, to practise as a physician assistant within a College-approved physician extender program.<sup>2</sup>

## 1. Eligibility Criteria for a Physician Assistant Licence

<u>Qualification</u>	<u>Description</u>
<b>Graduate of an Accredited Physician Assistant Program</b>	<p>Applicants must be a graduate of one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a Canadian physician assistant program recognized by the Physician Assistant Certification Council of Canada (PACCC), <b>or</b></li> <li>• an American physician assistant program accredited by the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA), <b>or</b></li> <li>• a physician assistant program accredited by the General Medical Council (GMC) in the United Kingdom (UK) <b>or</b> accepted for registration by the GMC.</li> </ul>
<b>Certification by Examination</b>	<p>Applicants must hold certification by examination as administered by one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Physician Assistant Certification Council of Canada (PACCC)<sup>3</sup> <b>or</b></li> <li>• The National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA)<sup>4</sup> <b>or</b></li> <li>• The Royal College of Physicians<sup>5*</sup></li> </ul>

*\*In the UK, the Royal College of Physicians<sup>5</sup> administers the physician associate national examination (PANE) which will become the physician associate registration assessment (PARA) in September 2025.*

## 2. Requirements for a Physician Assistant Licence outlined in the Regulations:

- Demonstrate English language proficiency<sup>6</sup>
- Canadian citizenship or legally entitled to live and work in Canada
- Provide a criminal record screening report<sup>7</sup>
- Participate satisfactorily in a continuing professional development program<sup>8</sup>
- Demonstrate capacity, competence and character<sup>9</sup>
- Must have professional liability insurance.<sup>10</sup>

### 3. **Additional Conditions and Requirements**

- a) Physician assistants must demonstrate their currency of practice experience<sup>11</sup>. To be considered current for practice, a physician assistant must have engaged in practice for at least 450 hours within the last five years to the proposed practice start date as a physician assistant in Nova Scotia. Candidates must not have been out of practice for more than five years.
- b) Physician assistants are always under the supervision of a physician approved by the Program Director.
- c) Physician assistants must practise within their individual scope of practice within their role description and within the parameters of a physician assistant program approved by the College.
- d) The College endorses the national standard of practice for physician assistants developed by the Canadian Association of Physician Assistants (CAPA).<sup>12</sup>
- e) Applicants for a Physician Assistant Licence who completed their training in a Canadian or American program within the last 5 years but have not yet achieved certification with the PACCC or NCCPA will be required to obtain certification within two years of their licence being issued.

Applicants or registrants who have more than one unsuccessful attempt at the Canadian or American certification exams will be reviewed by the Registrar to determine eligibility for licensure or ongoing licensure.

Physician assistants who are no longer eligible for the Canadian or American certification exam, or who do not obtain certification within the required timeframe, will be reviewed by the Registrar. If recommended by their program director, the Registrar may refer their file to the Registration Committee for adjudication of ongoing licensure.

- f) The Registrar, Registration Committee or Registration Appeal Committee shall impose such other conditions, restrictions or requirements as determined necessary to support safe, competent, and effective practice. Any such conditions, restrictions or requirements will be set out in the Licensing Agreement.

#### **RESOURCES:**

1. [Medical Act Regulations](#)
2. [Physician Extender Programs](#)
3. [Physician Assistant Certification Council of Canada](#)
4. [National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants](#)
5. [The Royal College of Physicians](#)
6. [English Language Proficiency](#)
7. [Criminal Record Screening](#)
8. [Continuing Professional Development: Requirements](#)
9. [Capacity, Competence and Character for Safe and Ethical Practice](#)
10. [Liability Protection Requirements](#)
11. [Currency of Practice Experience](#)
12. [Canadian Association of Physician Assistants Competency Framework](#)