



MACON & JOAN BROCK VIRGINIA HEALTH SCIENCES

EVMS School of Health Professions

AT OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

Doctor of Medical Science (D.M.Sc.)

Student Handbook

2026-2027

NOTE: This handbook reflects current institutional and program information. Information is subject to change.

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PROGRAM INFORMATION

The Doctor of Medical Science (D.M.Sc.) is an advanced professional degree designed to facilitate career advancement for Physician Assistants in clinical practice, administration, and education. The curriculum consists of 30 credit hours, taught in 10 credit hour increments over one year. Coursework culminates in a scholarly article suitable for publishing in top-tier medical journals, as well as a full grant proposal. All courses are taught online asynchronously and are typically offered in either a 16-week or 12-week format, depending on the semester.

Mission

To prepare scholarly Physician Assistants to serve as leaders and change agents in their place of employment and in their communities.

Values

1. Academic integrity is the foundation of higher education.
2. The student-teacher relationship is based on mutual respect, trust, and a desire for shared learning experiences.
3. Diversity in many forms will strengthen the learning environment.

Goals

1. Prepare Physician Assistants to effectively serve organizations and communities based on a curriculum of diverse yet interrelated topics (PG-1).
2. Encourage scholarly learning that is dynamic, reflective, and applied (PG-2).
3. Provide individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to function as leaders and innovators in clinical practice or higher education (PG-3).

Student Learning Outcomes

Graduates will be able to:

1. Demonstrate the ability to communicate professionally and effectively using a variety of tools (PG-2).
2. Apply key principles of financial management (PG-1).
3. Create components of grant proposals (PG-1).
4. Demonstrate an understanding of healthcare systems and quality improvement (PG-1).
5. Analyze organizational and professional needs. (PG-1; PG-2, PG-3).
6. Demonstrate leadership skills and professionalism (PG-2; PG-3).

Key Program Contacts

<i>Name</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Phone</i>	<i>E-mail</i>
Lauren. K. Paluch, D.M.Sc., M.P.A, PA-C Program Director Associate Professor D.M.Sc. Program	651 Colley Avenue Lester Hall, Office #337 Norfolk, VA 23507	757.446.7158	Paluchlk@odu.edu



Program Faculty

Program faculty are certified in accordance with institutional policies and procedures.

Lauren K. Paluch, D.M.Sc., M.P.A., PA-C	Program Director, Associate Professor, Doctor of Medical Science Program
Daniel Thibodeau, D.H.Sc., PA-C	Professor
Kimberly K Dempsey, EdD, PA-C	Associate Professor
Amanda Quillin, D.H.Sc.	Assistant Professor

Technical Standards

The essential abilities and skills that candidates and students must possess to complete the education and training associated with the D.M.Sc. program.

Observation Skills

Demonstrate sufficient attention and accuracy in observation skills (visual, auditory, and tactile) in the lecture hall, in clinical and education settings, and online. Indicators include, but are not limited to, accurate visualization and discrimination of text, numbers, patterns, graphic illustrations, and other imaging texts.

Communication Skills

Demonstrate effective communication skills with professionals and with people of varying cultures, ethnicities, and personalities.

Indicators include, but are not limited to, the following examples:

- Clear, efficient, and intelligible articulation of the spoken English language.
- Legible, efficient, and intelligible written English language.
- Accurate and efficient English language reading skills.
- Accurate and efficient, expressive and receptive communication skills.
- Ability to accurately follow directions (oral and written).



Critical Reasoning Skills

Demonstrate critical reasoning skills, including, but not limited to, intellectual, conceptual, integrative, and quantitative abilities.

Indicators include, but are not limited to, these examples:

- Demonstrate ability to measure, calculate, reason, analyze, integrate, and synthesize information.
- Demonstrate ability to acquire, retain, and apply new and learned information.

Motor and Sensory Function

Demonstrate sufficient motor and sensory function to perform typical clinical laboratory duties.

Indicators include, but are not limited to, the following examples:

- Execute motor movements that demonstrate safety and efficiency in the various learning settings (i.e., classroom, online).
- Physical stamina sufficient to complete the online didactic study, which will include prolonged periods of sitting.

Behavioral and Social Attributes

Demonstrate the behavioral and social attributes vital to participation in a graduate-level academic program.

Indicators include, but are not limited to, the following examples:

- Possess the emotional health required for full utilization of mental faculties (judgment, orientation, affect, and cognition).
- Ability to develop mature and effective professional relationships with faculty and other members of the educational and healthcare team.
- Possess personal qualities that facilitate effective therapeutic interactions (compassion, empathy, integrity, honesty, benevolence, confidentiality).
- Demonstrate impartial motives, attitudes, and values in roles, functions, and relationships.
- Ability to monitor and react appropriately to one's own emotional needs and responses.
- Display appropriate flexibility and adaptability in the face of stress or uncertainty in teaching and learning environments.
- Compliance with standards, policies, and practices outlined in the Program Handbook.



Student Identification Policy

Since the D.M.Sc. program is offered entirely online, there is no need for distance learners to obtain a photo identification badge. However, students enrolled in the program who live near the Macon & Joan Brock Virginia Health Science at Old Dominion University, EVMS School of Health Professions campus have the option to obtain a photo identification badge in case they wish to visit the program office, library, etc. To obtain a student ID badge, please contact the Human Resources Department. This badge must be worn prominently at all times on campus for access to the facilities.

Transfer of Credits

External Transfer Credits

Requests to transfer graduate credits from another accredited U.S. institution are considered on an individual basis after students are admitted to the D.M.Sc. program.

Transfer credits are considered for up to 12-degree credits. Only courses in which the student has earned the equivalent of a Pass or B or higher will be considered for transfer credit. Additionally, courses being considered for transfer must have been taken at the doctoral level or as part of a PA Fellowship or other equivalent post-graduate training. Professional experience may also be considered for course credit. A professional portfolio documenting the relevant experience and satisfactory achievement of the course goals must be presented in lieu of the course.

Approved transfer grades are included on a D.M.Sc. student's transcript; however, transfer grades are not included in semester or cumulative GPA calculations.

Internal Transfer Credits

Non-degree-seeking students taking courses in the D.M.Sc. Program may transfer up to 15 internal credit hours. A grade of 'B' or better is required for each transferred course.

Non-degree-seeking students who apply to matriculate into the D.M.Sc. Program may be granted admission for the fall, spring, or summer terms. In those cases, non-degree-seeking students must meet all admission requirements for matriculating students.

Approved internal grades will be included on a D.M.Sc. students' transcripts and will be included in cumulative GPA calculations.

Student Finances

Financial Services will mail an invoice one month before the start of each semester. The first invoice will include tuition and student fees, less your acceptance deposit.



Payments

Tuition payments for the D.M.Sc. Program must be paid by the first day of each semester, based on the total number of credit hours for which a student has enrolled. Tuition is subject to change. Please contact Financial Services if you do not receive a tuition invoice or if you have questions about your bill.

Tuition Statements

You can access your financial statements at any time online using the [myODU Portal](#). If you have any questions or do not receive an invoice, please contact Financial Services at tuition@odu.edu

Financial Aid

To qualify and maintain eligibility for Federal Student Aid programs, an applicant must be accepted for admission to Eastern Virginia Medical School, be enrolled in good standing at least half time, be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident, be registered with the Selective Service if a male, at least 18 years old, under 26 years old, and not currently a member of the Armed Forces, not be in default on a previous student loan or owe a refund on any Title IV funds received at another educational institution, maintain satisfactory academic progress and be creditworthy (for credit based loans). To be considered enrolled at least half time, students must be registered and attend at least three (3) credit hours per semester. Failure to maintain enrollment in at least three (3) credits per term could result in loans being returned to the Title IV granting agency and could result in a balance due to the Macon & Joan Brock Virginia Health Science at Old Dominion University, EVMS School of Health Professions. Sources of financial aid can be confirmed by the Office of Financial Aid at 757-446-5804 or email at vhs-finaid@odu.edu or online at [Office of Financial Aid](#). Financial aid staff can provide detailed information and counseling.

Financial Aid and Academic Probation

To continue to receive federal, state, and institutional financial aid, you must maintain satisfactory academic progress according to your program's guidelines, but you must also meet the pace and completion requirements of the federal regulations. More information on the Satisfactory Academic Progress requirements is located online at [Financial Aid's Satisfactory Academic Progress](#).

Attendance

Once the semester begins, students are notified of new course openings. Students must log into their new course(s) on the first day of the term. Information about the course schedule, such as start and stop dates, is available on Canvas. Failure to log into a course and missing important deadlines may lead to withdrawal from a course.



Online Course Procedures

Examinations

Some courses may administer examinations and quizzes online. Due to the differing time zones, specific time slots are allocated for each online assessment based on Eastern Time (ET). Each instructor may vary the exam format (i.e., multiple choice questions, short answer, essay). Follow the instructions provided by the course instructor. For questions or concerns with Canvas, please refer to the [ODU Canvas help page](#).

Assignments

Deadlines and instructions for submitting assignments are included in each course syllabus.

Discussion Board & Other Course Engagement Tools

The Discussion Board, VoiceThread, FlipGrid, Wikis, Blogs, and Journal postings in Canvas are types of interactions where students and faculty who have access to the class may communicate with one another. Everyone in the class engages in discussion board forums and/or VoiceThread presentations, and views FlipGrid videos. Wiki assignments are typically group projects that all class members can access. Blogs are like discussion board forums that all class members can access. Journal postings are only available to you and your instructor. You are responding to questions posted by the instructor, members of your group, or each member of the class. All these types of assignments will typically have a grade associated with them. Forums like discussion boards and VoiceThread may require multiple inputs and responses throughout the module. Please check to make sure you understand the timing of posts, how many posts, and the type and depth of the post requested so that you may get full credit for the assignment.

Typically, each course has a general ungraded discussion board forum where you may ask for clarification of the course requirements. If you have a question related to something you read, chances are someone else in the class does also. If you post something and are not getting a reply, most likely no one is aware that you have posted a question. Please report this to the course director, who will take appropriate action to notify others.

Please be aware of netiquette when making a post. Be respectful of each other and your faculty, avoid texting shorthand or in all caps, and please behave professionally.

Grades

Grades for assignments and exams are typically posted on the Canvas course site within approximately one week after the assessment or deadline. At the end of each course and after the survey or evaluation by all students, the course grades will be posted. Please contact the instructor if you have not received a grade within the allotted time. If you do not receive a clear or prompt response, contact the Program Director, Dr. Lauren K. Paluch, at Paluchlk@odu.edu.

We ask all students to fill out an evaluation or survey for each course. These are anonymous questions that evaluate the course and instructors.

Instructor Response Time

Faculty are expected to respond to email within 48 hours (about 2 days). Feedback on assignments is usually provided within one week of receipt. If there are any concerns about faculty response, please contact the Program Director.

Class Demeanor

Students are expected to interact professionally with classmates, faculty, and staff. Inappropriate language, dissension, or disruption will be removed from any web posting, and disciplinary action may be taken.

Email

Your ODU email account is your official means of communication with the D.M.Sc. Program and will be used for the duration of the program. Email may be sent from within Canvas, but it will use your ODU mail account as the sending account.

Troubleshooting

For IT issues, please refer to the [IT help page](#) for further information.

Grading Policies

Students receive course letter grades using the scale below. Final course grades are calculated according to the course syllabus, and mathematical rules for rounding to the nearest whole number based on two decimal places are applied. For example, a final grade of 93.45 would round to a 94 (A), while a final grade of 93.44 would round to a 93 (A-).

A grade less than 70 (below C-) in any course is not considered as successfully passing, which means that the course must be repeated. When the course is repeated, and a grade of C- or higher is achieved, the GPA will be calculated using the higher grade. The original course and grade will appear on the transcript.

Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Grade Point Average	Grade Scale	Grades Not Affecting GPA
A	100 – 94	4.00	Audit – AU
A-	93 – 90	3.67	Incomplete – I
B+	89 – 87	3.33	Pass – P
B	86 – 84	3.00	Official Withdrawal – W
B-	83 – 80	2.67	Unofficial Withdrawal – WF



C+	79 – 77	2.33	
C	76 – 74	2.00	
C-	73 – 70	1.67	
F	59 or less	0.0	

Late Assignments

Assignments must be submitted on or before their due date. Assignments submitted after a deadline are subject to penalties as specified in the course syllabus. If you cannot meet an assignment time frame, please communicate with the course faculty member as early as possible.

Student Progress

Student progress is monitored during all courses and at the end of each semester. Students who do not meet certain academic standards are subject to formal warnings, probation, and/or dismissal.

Academic Standing, Warning, and Probation

Failing Grades

1. Students must complete all coursework with a “B-” or better and an overall GPA of 3.0 or above.
2. Students who fail a course by earning a C+ or below will be placed on academic probation (see below) and may be required to re-enroll in that same course at the discretion of the Program Director. If allowed to retake a course, due to the course sequence, students who failed a course must wait until the next time the course is offered.
 - a. Students may repeat a course only once.
 - b. Students are responsible for all tuition and fees for a course that is repeated. The tuition and fees will be based on the current per-credit-hour rate.
3. The grade earned for the repeated course will appear on the transcript with the previously failed course grade.
4. Students unable to improve a failing grade after re-taking a course may be dismissed from the program.
5. Students who fail (earn a C+ or below) more than one course per semester may be dismissed from the program.
6. Students who fail (earn a C+ or below) more than one course during the program may be dismissed.

Academic Probation

1. Students may be placed on academic probation if their term or cumulative



- grade point average drops below 3.0.
2. Students who earn a C+ or below for a course will be placed on academic probation.
 3. Students may be placed on academic probation for non-academic concerns for student conduct, professional performance, or not meeting technical standards for the profession.
 4. Students may be placed on academic probation for failure to comply with the attendance policy for required orientation, program events/meetings, and/or class attendance.
 5. When there are extenuating circumstances leading to the failure, the student may be invited to repeat the course in the following academic year, at the discretion of the faculty and Program Director.
 6. The student progress committee can review and recommend several options, including the following, to the Program Director:
 - a. Dismissal from the program
 - b. Opportunity to return to restart the program
 - c. Opportunity to repeat coursework
 7. Students on probation or at risk for probation must meet frequently with their faculty advisor to discuss academic progress, study habits, test-taking skills, and professional progress.
 8. All students in the EVMS School of Health Professions must meet high expectations for academic integrity. In addition to being required to maintain the guidelines outlined for Monarch Citizenship through the Honor Code, Honor Pledge, and Monarch Creed, students enrolled in the School of Health Professions must adhere to the Expectations for Health Professions Student Behavior Policy.
 9. Students on academic warning or probation will meet with the Program Director to develop a written action plan.
 10. Students who do not complete academic action plans (warning, probation) may be dismissed from the program.
 11. Students are responsible for all tuition and fees to retake courses and to fulfill requirements of academic action plans to satisfy degree requirements.
 12. The student may be notified by the Program Director in writing at the end of the academic semester that they have one semester to increase the grade point average to 3.0 or above.
 13. Students unable to increase their grade point average to 3.0 or above during the semester of academic probation may be dismissed from the program.
 14. Students on Academic Probation for non-academic concerns may be dismissed from the program if they do not fulfill the requirements of the academic action plan.

Progress Review

The Program Director and course instructors will regularly review the academic achievement of each student. This review identifies any student whose academic



progress is marginal or unsatisfactory so that the faculty and student can develop an appropriate action plan to address academic difficulties. A Student Progress Review Committee may be convened to review and document student progress or standing in the program.

Student Responsibilities

Each student is responsible for:

1. Complying with the evaluation requirements of each course.
2. Ascertaining their own evaluation results.
3. Seeking faculty assistance in correcting unsatisfactory or marginal performance.
4. Complete an evaluation of each course and course instructor.
5. Attending all scheduled synchronous class sessions as noted on the course syllabus.
6. Actively engaging in course discussions via discussion boards, VoiceThread, etc. Active engagement includes contributing to the discussion, responding to prompts, and returning to discussions throughout the discussion period.
7. Attending mandatory program meetings as announced by the program.

NOTE: Eligibility to receive financial aid may be affected if a student is placed on academic probation.

Student Disability Services Statement

Macon & Joan Brock, Virginia Health Science at Old Dominion University, EVMS School of Health Professions, provides reasonable accommodation to qualified students with a documented disability. The student must self-identify with the Office of Student Disability Services as having a disability to begin the accommodation process. It is in the best interests of the student to begin the accommodation process as soon as they are aware that they may need it, as accommodation is not retroactive. All students must be able to fulfill the academic and technical standards of their academic program with or without reasonable accommodation; however, accommodations are made available to aid in fulfilling those standards, not to waive them. If you have, or believe you have, a disability for which you wish to request accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, you must contact the Disability Officer at VHS-StudentDisability@odu.edu. For more information about the disability accommodation process, please visit the [Student Disability Guide for Students](#) provided online.

Professionalism & Scholarly Requirements

All students in the EVMS School of Health Professions must meet high expectations for academic integrity. In addition to being required to maintain the guidelines outlined for Monarch Citizenship through the Honor Code, Honor Pledge, and Monarch Creed, students



enrolled in the School of Health Professions must adhere to the Expectations for Health Professions Student Behavior Policy.

Any action indicating a lack of integrity or dishonesty in academic matters is considered a violation of academic ethics. Such offenses include, but are not limited to, lying, stealing, engaging in or attempting to engage in cheating, plagiarism, sabotage, falsifying or manipulating data, or knowingly passing off work of another as one's own. Any student who fails to abide by the guidelines of Monarch Citizenship or live up to its principles is subject to disciplinary action. All students are obligated to support the principles of Monarch Citizenship and report any violation thereof. Each student subscribes to the principles of Monarch Citizenship by signing in writing his/her support at the time of matriculation.

D.M.Sc. Writing Style

The D.M.Sc. Program uses the 7th edition of the American Psychological Association (APA) Manual of style formatting and citation for all assignments. If you have a question about formatting that you need help with that is not covered elsewhere, please consult the [APA Style Guide, 7th Edition](#). We strongly recommend purchase of the: American Psychological Association. (2020). Publication manual of the American Psychological Association (7th ed.). Washington, DC. Work that is not submitted in APA 7th format will not be accepted.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism can best be defined as stealing and passing off the ideas and/or exact words of another as your own. Examples of plagiarism are as follows: (1) submitting work that belongs to another person or has been written by someone other than you; (2) copying from a source without proper acknowledgment, quotation marks, or both; and (3) paraphrasing from a source without proper acknowledgment. The simplest way to prevent plagiarism is to maintain proper attribution and citation techniques. As you write academic papers, you must remember to conscientiously attribute ideas and quotes when referring to the writings of others.

Students in this program are trained to:

- Understand proper ways to cite and use material from others' work.
- Know the differences between citation, quotation, and plagiarism.

Student Publishing Policy

All scholarly work done as part of the requirements of completing the D.M.Sc. Program must be attributed to the Macon & Joan Brock Virginia Health Science at Old Dominion University, EVMS School of Health Professions, Doctor of Medical Science Program, your advisor, the Program Director, and your local institution. The Program Director serves as a de facto member of each project and should be given attribution in the presentation or publication.



MACON & JOAN BROCK VIRGINIA HEALTH SCIENCES

EVMS School of Health Professions

AT OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

Graduation Requirements

Length of Time to Complete the Degree

Students are expected to complete the D.M.Sc. program in one year but must complete the program in 3.5 years. Any student who is unable to complete the program in the allotted time must submit a written plan to the Program Director that specifies a projected time frame for finishing the program. Financial aid could be impacted by failure to complete the degree on time. Students must pass all courses and achieve a cumulative grade point average of 3.00 or higher to graduate.