

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – FAQs**

### **MSc PA STUDIES PROGRAMME**

These are meant to supplement the programme's website page. Please consult it for more specific information.

#### **Eligibility Criteria**

##### **What are the general admission requirements for the RCSI PA programme?**

Level 8 Science degree with minimum of 2.1 award.

##### **I will be applying as an overseas candidate, and have a degree in XXXX from XXXXX university – am I eligible to apply for the RCSI PA programme?**

If you hold a primary science degree from an overseas university, we would have to review your degree and final transcript(s) from your university at the time of application, to ascertain if you are eligible for the programme.

##### **What pre-requisite modules are typically required?**

We do not have any absolute pre-requisite modules, but the following are considered core foundational human science content that facilitates success in the programme:

- Human Anatomy & Physiology
- General Biology
- General Chemistry
- Organic Chemistry or Biochemistry
- Microbiology
- Psychology
- Statistics

##### **Is healthcare experience required for admission?**

No, we do not have healthcare experience as a requirement. However, students often have the following backgrounds which can promote confidence and greater comfort in the clinical environment since they are familiar with common patient care tasks. These include roles as healthcare assistant, EMT, paramedic, nurse, physiotherapy assistant, speech and/or language pathology, or laboratory technician.

##### **If I am an international (EU or UK) student, can I apply to the programme and what fees are charged?**

This MSc programme trains for the Irish health care system. Students must have a valid (in-date) EU passport at the time of application and for the entirety of the programme (2 years), should they be successful in getting appointed to the MSc PA programme following the interview process. There is no guarantee of employment as a PA after graduation and not all EU or UK countries recognise or have provisions for PAs to work in these countries. EU or UK students should consult the website for current EU fees.

**If I have temporary protected status or other residency status provided by Irish Immigration, am I eligible to apply to the programme, and if accepted, what are my fees?**

If at the time of application, a candidate for admission has residency status provided by Irish Immigration, they must meet the following requirements:

- Applicants over 23 are considered independent, mature applicants. The applicant/student must have been resident as a taxpayer (principal residence for the purpose of taxation) in the EU/EEA/UK/Switzerland for at least three of the last five years prior to commencing a programme at RCSI.

If the applicant meets these requirements, he/she is eligible for EU fees.

**If I have already trained as a doctor in another country, do I have to complete the entire programme?**

Yes, this is a different programme. Eligible students must first apply to the programme before a review of transcripts from prior educational institutions can take place.

## Application process and documentation

**When should I apply for the PA programme?**

Applicants are encouraged to apply as early as possible during the admission/intake cycle. We run an Open Day in the spring each year (generally around February/March time) before the online application process starts in April/May, and we advise all prospective candidates to attend the Open Day as it gives everyone in attendance an overview of the programme, curriculum, modules, assessments, clinical placements and so on. The event is hybrid and takes place in RCSI and on Ms Teams. Delegates need to register online through our website and will receive the video link by e-mail on the morning of the event. This event is advertised through our social media accounts (LinkedIn and Instagram) as soon as the event date/time are confirmed and the registration link is live.

**Are letters of recommendation required?**

Yes, one letter from a professor or employer is required. All letters must be on the institution's letterhead paper, and sent directly by the referee to [pastudies@rcsi.ie](mailto:pastudies@rcsi.ie)

Letters of recommendation submitted by candidates will not be accepted.

**What should be included in the personal statement?**

Your personal statement should highlight your motivation for becoming a PA, relevant experiences, and qualities that make you a strong candidate.

**I don't have all the documents required for an application at the time the applications go live on the portal. Can I still apply?**

Please ensure you submit all documents required for the application and the application fee at the same time. We do not review incomplete applications. The only document to come under confidential cover is the letter of recommendation that needs to be sent directly by the referee to the PA office by e-mail (as mentioned above).

**Do I need final transcripts for my application to be reviewed?**

If you have not finished your degree, a provisional transcript is acceptable to include as part of your application. If an applicant is deemed admissible to the programme after the interview process, a "conditional acceptance" is offered until final transcripts are received. Please note that a delay in the applicant receiving his/her final transcript from his/her university within a certain time-frame as agreed with the PA office could affect the applicant's place on programme. Appointments to the programme need to be finalised in early autumn each year for the following January programme start date.

### **Are in-person interviews required for admission?**

Yes, and the dates are posted on the website at the start of the year (before the online application portal opens). Candidates need to ensure they are available to attend for interviews on any of the interview dates listed on the website before submitting a formal application for the programme on the online portal. Only candidates with complete applications may be considered for interview. Short-listed candidates are contacted by the office by e-mail with an interview date and time (generally 2 to 3 weeks prior to the interview date; the e-mail notification is sent to the applicant's e-mail address provided as part of his/her application/CV). No other interview dates will be provided to short-listed applicants than the ones listed on the website for each intake.

### **How competitive is admission onto the MSc PA Studies programme?**

Admission is highly competitive. Based on previous admission cycles, acceptance rates vary from 30%-40%.

## **Programme & timetable**

### **How long is the RCSI PA programme?**

The programme runs for 24 consecutive months, beginning in January. All students receive a 3-week break in December, along with semester breaks for Year 1 and Year 2 students during the summer.

Current timetables for Year 1 and Year 2 are available on the website through the following link, for information:

<https://www.rcsi.com/dublin/student-life/course-semester-dates>

### **What is the format of the hybrid/remote programme? If I were to be successful in getting a place on the programme and choosing the hybrid option, how many times would I have to be on campus each month?**

We expect all hybrid students to attend in person twice a month with the "on campus" students, generally on Wednesdays for Anatomy lectures and hands-on practical teaching sessions. Hybrid students are also expected to attend on campus for their main exams/assessments at the end of each semester with the rest of the class. Hybrid students are expected to be present online each day, as if they were "on campus" students and be engaged learners.

### **Can I work part-time while attending the programme?**

The programme is extremely accelerated, intense, and rigorous. Working is highly discouraged.

## **Fees/Funding/Finances**

### **Are there financial aid options available?**

Yes, students can apply for scholarships, many of which require an employment obligation after programme completion. Information is provided to successful candidates once they have confirmed their place on the programme, following the issuing of offer letters post-interviews. Scholarship opportunities vary from year to year, based on funding available from our partners. There are no guarantees that scholarships will be available or granted to students who apply for same. Therefore, we ask all candidates to ensure that they have necessary funding in place for the programme before making an application for same.

### **Are the clinical placements as part of the programme "paid placements" or not?**

The clinical placements are unpaid, and are a mandatory component of the programme in the second half of Year 1, and the entirety of Year 2.

## **Post-graduation/Career**

### **What happens after graduation from the PA programme?**

Graduates must pass the Irish Physician Associate National Examination (IPANE) that is administered by the Irish Society of Physician Associates (ISPA).

### **Can I work in the United States after graduating from the RCSI PA Programme?**

Currently, this is not an option.

### **Can I specialize in a particular field as a PA?**

Yes, PAs can work in various specialties and sub-specialties within surgery and medicine.

**Last reviewed – LA/PJ/SB – 07/03/2025**