

Master of Health Science in Anesthesia Program
Bluefield University – Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine

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MHSA Admissions Policy for the Master of Health Science in Anesthesia Program

1. PREAMBLE 1
2. PURPOSE 2
3. NOTICE OF NONDISCRIMINATION AND DIVERSITY 2
4. RECRUITMENT PRIORITIES 3
5. MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR INTERVIEW AND ADMISSION 4
 5.1. CASAA APPLICATION 6
 5.1.1 Official Transcripts 7
 5.2. MHSA Program Supplemental Application 8
 5.2.1 Requirement to Report Charges or Arrests 8
 5.3. Interview Selection and Admissions Process 9
 5.4. Rescinding Admission Offer 9
6. EARLY DECISION ADMISSIONS TRACK 10
7. DURATION OF POLICY 10

1. PREAMBLE

The Master of Health Science in Anesthesia Program stands as a beacon of excellence, commitment, and innovation in the realm of anesthesia education. Rooted in the pursuit of producing anesthesia practitioners who are not only clinically proficient but also deeply knowledgeable, empathetic, and ethically grounded, our program upholds rigorous standards to ensure the highest caliber of training.

This admissions policy serves as a foundational document that outlines the criteria, processes, and values that guide our selection of candidates. Recognizing the multifaceted nature of anesthesia practice, which demands a blend of scientific acumen, technical skill, interpersonal competence, and ethical integrity, our admissions approach is holistic, comprehensive, and reflective of the diverse qualities that contribute to success in this specialized field.

In crafting this policy, we remain steadfast in our commitment to fostering a diverse, inclusive, and equitable learning environment. We believe that excellence is enriched by a multiplicity of perspectives, backgrounds, experiences, and insights. As such, our admissions criteria seek to identify candidates who not only demonstrate academic prowess but also exhibit the attributes, values, and potential to contribute meaningfully to our community, profession, and the broader healthcare landscape.

Moreover, this admissions policy is designed to align with the evolving landscape of healthcare, anesthesia practice, and educational best practices. As we navigate an era marked by rapid technological advancements, shifting patient demographics, and emerging paradigms in healthcare delivery, our program remains agile, forward-thinking, and responsive to the changing needs and complexities of the anesthesia profession.

In essence, this preamble underscores our unwavering dedication to excellence, inclusivity, innovation, and integrity. As we embark on the journey of selecting future leaders, innovators, and advocates in anesthesia, we do so with a profound sense of purpose, vision, and responsibility. Through a transparent, equitable, and rigorous admissions process, we aim to cultivate a diverse cadre of anesthesia professionals poised to make enduring contributions to patient care, research, education, and advocacy.

With this preamble as our guiding framework, we invite all stakeholders—faculty, staff, students, alumni, healthcare partners, and community members—to join us in upholding the highest standards of excellence, integrity, and innovation in anesthesia education and practice.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Admissions Policy for the Master of Health Science in Anesthesia Program is to detail admissions requirements and procedures for students applying to the Anesthesiologist Assistant program.

3. NOTICE OF NONDISCRIMINATION AND DIVERSITY

The Master of Health Science in Anesthesia Program recognizes, values, and affirms that diversity contributes richness to the Program and enhances the quality of education. Students are valued for their diversity. The Program's mission is to recruit and graduate students who will address health care disparities including those related to rural locations, minority populations, poverty status, and anesthesia care. As such, the Program recruits students from the socioeconomically depressed regions of the southern states including southern Appalachia, the former tobacco and cotton regions, and the Delta. These include first-generation college students, students from medically underserved locations, and minorities.

The MHSA Program is committed to providing an academic environment in which students are treated with courtesy, respect, and dignity. It is the policy of the Program that no student shall, on the basis of sex, be discriminated in, or be denied the benefits of, any education program or activity that it operates. This requirement not to discriminate is required by Title IX and Part 106 of Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulations and extends to admission and employment.

The Program's commitment to the principles of nondiscrimination includes and extends far beyond the federally protected classes and includes, but is not limited to, age, gender, sex, race, color, creed, national origin, religion, ancestry, marital status, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, status as a protected veteran, or any other category protected by federal, state, or local law. VCOM, Bluefield University and the MHSA Program have a commitment to nondiscrimination against any individual or group of individuals and hold no tolerance to inappropriate behavior exhibited as an act of discrimination.

4. RECRUITMENT PRIORITIES

The Master of Health Science in Anesthesia Program has focused recruitment efforts in four major areas:

- **Appalachian and Delta Regions**

The MHSa Program recruits students from the socioeconomically depressed states within the southern Appalachian and Delta regions. These include the states of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Alabama, Louisiana, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Kentucky, Georgia, Arkansas, Mississippi, SE Missouri, and the bordering states of Maryland, Florida, and Texas. Students from Alabama and Georgia are a priority for recruitment to enable the Program to meet its mission to improve quality anesthesia care to rural and medically underserved populations. Students from these states and region, who meet the MHSa's minimum standards or greater, are a priority for interview.

- **Rural**

The MHSa has a commitment to recruiting additional students from all rural areas. It is the Program's commitment to meet the anesthesia provider shortage in rural areas throughout the Eastern and Mid-United States, especially within Appalachia and the Delta regions as a priority recruitment area.

- **Minority**

The Program recognizes the lack of medical care to minority populations; therefore, the Program actively recruits minority students from minority populations that are currently underrepresented in the Anesthesiologist Assistant profession. The population of the United States is becoming increasingly diverse; thus, the Program seeks a student body that will ultimately meet the needs of a diverse society.

- **Mission-Minded**

The Program is committed to producing anesthesia providers to meet society's health care needs and seeks students who are compassionate, knowledgeable, and committed to quality health care for all. The Appalachian outreach and international outreach programs, in which all students have the opportunity to participate, were developed to assist students in developing the skills needed to provide compassionate and altruistic care whether for a rural area, a medically underserved population in an urban area, or in a developing country. The Program seeks students who share this personal mission and commitment to those who are medically underserved and who have demonstrated a commitment to underserved populations in the past.

The MHSa does accept students from outside this region who have demonstrated a commitment to a common mission of caring for medically underserved populations whether rural, minority, or international.

Admission to the VCOM-Bluefield University Master of Health Science in Anesthesia Program requires that the following criteria delineated herein are met. Prospective students are selected by the Admissions Committee which considers the overall qualities of all applicants and gives highest consideration to applicants whom...

- Are residents or natives of the Southeastern United States
- Demonstrate alignment with program mission and values
- Have an excellent academic record
- Have prior healthcare experience
- Provide qualified and compelling personal references

- Have served in the United States Military
- Hail originally from rural or underserved areas
- Have experience with volunteerism and/or mission work

5. MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR INTERVIEW AND ADMISSION

The college uses a mission driven admissions process; therefore, the applicant's ability to demonstrate a history of compassion, empathy, dedication and interest in patient care, an orientation to a rural or primary care medicine, and/or to research is considered in the admissions process. Other qualities that reflect the student's ability to adapt to a rigorous academic curriculum and to demonstrate professional and ethical characteristics for a future professional provide an advantage in the application process.

Applicants for admission must meet the following requirements to be considered for an interview:

- a. Must be able to earn a baccalaureate degree (or its equivalent) prior to matriculation.
 - Courses must have been taken at a regionally accredited institution that is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.
 - In some circumstances, a degree from a college or university that is nationally, rather than regionally accredited, is accepted as long as the accreditor is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education (i.e., a religiously based institution).
 - Applicants who have taken coursework and/or earned a degree from a foreign institution must submit an evaluation of their transcripts to CASAA. The transcript evaluation company chosen must be approved by CASAA.
 - Documentation of each of the prerequisites listed below have been completed at an accredited U.S. or Canadian institution of higher learning. Applicants may apply while still compiling prerequisite work, but all academic requirements must be completed satisfactorily before matriculation. *(Substitutions are NOT permitted and survey courses for non-science majors are NOT acceptable.) (For those courses that have been repeated, the highest grade will be recognized.)*
- b. Must have completed 90 hours or three-fourths of the required credits for a baccalaureate degree and have completed the required courses listed below from a college or university accredited by a regional accrediting body. The courses for consideration must have been completed within the last five years prior to application to the MHSa Program. The following are required:
 - a) Biochemistry – one (1) semester
One semester of biochemistry is required. An advanced course in this subject is preferred and would meet the requirement but is not mandatory. *(Bioengineering courses will not satisfy this requirement)*
 - b) Human Anatomy - one (1) semester
One semester of human anatomy is required. An advanced course in this subject is preferred and would meet the requirement but is not mandatory. *(Courses in vertebrate embryology and developmental anatomy will not satisfy this requirement)*
 - c) Human Physiology - one (1) semester
One semester of human physiology is required. An advanced course in this subject is preferred and would meet the requirement but is not mandatory. *(Courses in mammalian physiology and embryology will not satisfy this requirement. Courses combining anatomy and physiology will satisfy this requirement, but must be science-major based and at the 200-level or above)*

- d) Statistics - one (1) semester
One semester of an advanced course in statistics or analytics or the life sciences; usually this is an applied statistics course and/or a statistics course with a calculus prerequisite. (*Elementary statistics, and 100 level courses will not satisfy this requirement. Introductory statistics course will be considered if the applicant also completes a Calculus course at the 200 level or above.*)
- e) English with Expository or Creative Writing - one (1) semester
One semester of an introductory English course with a writing component, creative or technical writing.
- f) Biology - one (1) year
One full year of biology course sequence with lab that stresses general concepts. (*Bioengineering, micro- or molecular biology, cellular biology, genetics, and/or histology will not satisfy this requirement*)
- g) Chemistry - one (1) year
One-year course sequence in general chemistry with lab.
- h) Organic Chemistry with Lab – one (1) semester
One-semester course sequence in organic chemistry with lab. (*Organic Chemistry II is highly recommended, but not required*)
- i) Physics – one (1) year
One-year course sequence in general physics with lab.

Students should be aware that they must be able to use a keyboard at a reasonable speed for timed testing situations and data entry into the electronic medical record. If applicants are not proficient in typing, they should take a typing or keyboarding course prior to entry.

Courses with equivalent content will be considered. When reviewing courses for course equivalency in the application, at the Program's discretion special consideration regarding required courses for interview may be considered for the following: practicing Advanced Nurse Practitioners, Respiratory Therapists, Registered Nurses, Physician Assistants, Pharmacists, and Doctors of Physical Therapy. For special considerations, course review is conducted by the Director of Admissions and the Dean.

The MHSA Program follows the AACOMAS definition of science courses to determine science GPA and science hours. See the [AACOMAS website](#) for more information.

When required courses have been taken prior to the last five years, and the applicant has completed a recent biomedical or pre-medical graduate degree, the Dean and Director of Admissions will review the course equivalency for special consideration.

- c. Must achieve a minimum of a 3.2 science GPA and cumulative GPA on a 4.0 scale in the last 60 hours of their baccalaureate/master's degree. The MHSA Program places emphasis on the last 60 credit hours, as well as on the science courses and required courses when choosing between competitive applicants, as we recognize that some applicants have improved grades in the later years of their degree coursework. For students who have new academic history (i.e. those who have completed a pre-medical science program to improve their science GPA) that shows an improved science GPA, the Program reviews the last 60 hours of that new coursework. Higher GPAs are generally required to be competitive.

Applicants who complete the Bluefield University-VCOM collaborative Master's in Biomedical Sciences (MABS) program receive an interview with the MHTSA Admissions Committee at the if they receive a 3.2 GPA in the Master's program, regardless of prior GPA.

- d. Each applicant to the MHTSA Program will complete an online cognitive agility examination prior to being invited for an interview. This form of psychometric assessment will specifically measure an applicant's fit for the Certified Anesthesiologist Assistant profession and provide validated and highly reliable information that can help the Program make better selection decisions and student development plans. This tool will help the MHTSA select the right candidates, develop their professional skills, and will maximize the likelihood of success for every student by quantifying several different aspects of a candidate's fit for the program.

The MHTSA Program currently utilizes the Wonderlic[®] exam, which must be completed within three (3) months of the application submission and submitted with student's application packet.

- e. Must be a U.S. citizen or permanent U.S. resident. Once matriculated, students must maintain the requirements for their permanent U.S. resident visa status as set forth by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services.
- f. Must meet the *Technical Standards for Admission and Successful Completion of the MHTSA Program*. All students must read carefully and affirm that they meet the standards. Any falsification or misinformation is a reason for dismissal.

4.1. CASAA Application

The MHTSA Program participates with other Anesthesiologist Assistant programs in a centralized application processing service called the Centralized Application Service for Anesthesiologist Assistants (CASAA). In certain cases, an applicant who was deferred may be able to use a CASAA application from a prior CASAA cycle. To initiate the application process, prospective students must apply directly to CASAA or the Program website. The program also allows direct application through the Program website with no associated application fees.

To process the application, CASAA will require official copies of transcripts from all colleges/universities attended. High school information is documented by the applicant on the CASAA application (high school name, city, state, and year of graduation). The MHTSA Program's Admissions staff may request further documentation in the form of the applicant's high school diploma, which will be verified by the Program. Applicants may also submit their official MCAT or GRE scores from AAMC to CASAA. Applicants who have taken course work and/or have earned a degree from a foreign institution must also submit to CASAA an evaluation of their transcripts by an approved transcript evaluation service.

The deadline for applications generally falls on October 1st, but is subject to change annually; therefore, applicants should consult the website. The last day for applicants to submit their completed and verified applications with all supporting materials is typically around November 15th but should be done much earlier to be competitive. The MHTSA Program begins reviewing applications as early as July of the year preceding admission.

4.1.1 Official Transcripts

Official transcripts sent to CASAA are provided to the MHSa Program when an applicant applies. These transcripts are accepted by the Program if all coursework the applicant has taken at that institution is completed as of June 1st of the application year. The Program will verify that a transcript has been received for every institution listed on the CASAA application, that at least one baccalaureate degree has been awarded, and that all other degrees reported on the CASAA application are documented. If there is a question about the authenticity of a transcript, an official transcript, sent directly to the MHSa Program from the institution in question, will be required.

Any school the applicant is attending (or will attend) after June of the application year will require an official transcript be sent directly from that institution to the Program. In this case, the transcript sent to CASAA will not be accepted. All student not utilizing CASAA and applying directly to the MHSa Program should have the transcripts sent directly to the Program campus' Director of Admissions.

If the Program does require a transcript directly from an institution, transcripts must be sent directly from the Registrar's Office of the school(s) attended directly to the Bluefield University Registrar's Office. Unofficial transcripts or transcripts hand carried by the applicant (even if in a sealed envelope) are not acceptable. Failure to submit official transcripts by the due date (or to obtain authorized approval of an extension) may result in the offer of admission to the MHSa being rescinded and forfeiture of the tuition deposit.

4.1.2 Foreign Graduate Admission

Prerequisite coursework, degrees or certifications obtained outside the United States or Canada are not considered necessarily equivalent in design or content. As such, academic credit conferred from a foreign institution will be evaluated on an individual applicant basis and acceptance of such will remain at the discretion of the Admissions Committee.

Applicants with foreign undergraduate, graduate or advanced degrees who would like to apply to the Master of Health Science in Anesthesia Program must meet the academic requirements listed above. Graduates of foreign institutions where English is not the primary language of instruction must present transcripts showing at least 18 semester hours of study from a regionally accredited college or university in the United States. Of these 18 semester hours: 3 hours must be in English Composition, English Literature, and Public Speaking (courses do not include ESOL). The remaining nine semester hours can be any course of the applicant's choosing (excluding physical education). In addition, international students must submit:

- a. Standardized Exam of English language ability
 - i. [Test of English as a Foreign Language \(TOEFL\)](#) Internet (iBT): 85 / Computer (CBT): 223 / Paper (PBT): 565
 - ii. [International English Language Testing System \(IELTS\)](#) - minimum score of 6.5

4.1.3 Credit Conversion Policy

Bluefield University uses a semester system; however, the institution does accept quarter credit hours. Quarter credit hours are worth 2/3 of 1 semester hour. Quarter credit hours may be rounded to the nearest whole number at the discretion of the Admissions Committee with consideration given to the course work and grade earned.

4.1.4 Shadowing Experience

A clinical shadowing experience is highly recommended, but not required for admission to the MHSa program. During such, the applicant would be assigned to one anesthesia provider for the day to observe their work in the operating room setting. Shadowing provides the student an excellent opportunity to learn what an anesthesia provider does on a daily basis and to gain clinical experience.

(The MHSa program does not coordinate or guarantee availability of shadowing experiences, and applicants must make accommodations themselves if they wish to participate)

4.2. MHSa Program Supplemental Application

Applicants who meet all admissions requirements will also complete a set of secondary inquiries and submit supporting documents. For those applying through the Bluefield University website, the invitation to submit a formal direct application is sent via email with instructions for filling it out electronically. Applicants applying through the CASAA platform will be directed to the supplemental applications questions after successful completion of all other application materials.

Three evaluation forms or letters of recommendation are required to complete the application for admission (these must be in addition to letters from a blood relative or through marriage). At least one evaluation must be from a healthcare provider (DO, MD, CAA, CRNA, PA, NP, etc.), preferably in the field of anesthesiology. A second required evaluation must be from an academic advisor or science faculty member who is familiar with the academic work of the applicant. The MHSa welcomes the additional third (and any additional) letters of support or recommendation from those who are acquainted with the student's academic, professional, and personal ability. The program highly recommends that all applicants submit recommendations of both a personal and professional nature speak to your aptitude, drive and personality fit for the CAA profession. The more competitive applicants will have shadowing or clinical experience and exposure to anesthesia and demonstrate an understanding of and commitment to the Anesthesiologist Assistant profession.

All letters of recommendation must be originals on professional or college/university letterhead, signed by the evaluator and whether submitted electronically (preferred) or mailed directly to the Office of Admissions. Students utilizing the CASAA system to apply may submit evaluation/recommendations through that system, provided the applicant voluntarily waive the right to view the evaluations.

4.2.1 Requirement to Report Charges or Arrests

After submission of the application materials, applicants must report and explain any charge or arrest, including, but not limited to, all charges whether they are misdemeanors, and felonies. Students should be aware that charges are generally found on the background check that is required prior to acceptance. Applicants who do not disclose prior arrest or criminal charge will be considered as not acting in a professional or ethical manner and omission of such information may be cause to rescind the admissions offer for failure to disclose essential information or such information is discovered after

matriculation will result in a Progress & Promotions Committee hearing. Applicants who have serious prior convictions that will impact their ability to obtain a hospital credentialing or become licensed are not considered. The applicant should realize that medical licensing boards and hospital credentialing departments also require background checks and base their acceptance or non-acceptance of an applicant on the nature of the prior criminal record.

4.3. Interview Selection and Admissions Process

To be considered for an interview, an applicant must meet all the preceding admissions requirements and technical standards for admissions and have a complete file. After the Office of Admissions receives these materials, the applicant's file is reviewed to determine eligibility for an interview, based on the established criteria for admission. If the applicant accepts the interview, they are invited to the campus where he/she meets with several members of the faculty and administration.

The applicant also joins other applicants in this process. Information sought during the interview includes, not only the applicant's academic history and knowledge, but those attributes that demonstrate the potential to become an Anesthesiologist Assistant and fit with Program's mission. These include such areas as personal record of accomplishment, health care experience, rural or underserved orientation, community service, volunteering for compassionate and altruistic care service, personal goals, and other information that reflects his/her preparedness for professional training and a medical career. At the conclusion of the interviews, the interviewers forward their recommendation to the Admissions Committee.

An admissions decision, based on academic performance, professional experience, and interview, will be provided to the applicant usually within two weeks following the interview. The Admissions Committee may make any of the following recommendations: to accept, to deny, or to place the applicant on an alternate or hold list. The applicant will receive the decision letter at the address provided with the application. Applicants should keep the Admissions Office apprised of any change of address.

4.4. Rescinding Admission Offer

Reasons for rescinding an offer of admission include:

- intentional misrepresentation or omission of information on any form relevant to admissions or records;
- failure to report prior illegal behaviors or arrests made after admissions offer;
- unprofessional or unethical behavior that does not comply with VCOM, Bluefield University or MHSA Program policies and procedures;
- failure to comply with the procedures required for matriculation;
- failure to maintain a good record of scholastic performance and/or good record of personal conduct between the time of their acceptance and their matriculation in the Program;
- failure to pay tuition and fees by required dates;
- failure to attend all orientation activities; or
- failure to provide all required documentation by the required dates to the Registrar's Office.

6. EARLY DECISION ADMISSIONS TRACK

The Early Decision Admissions Track is an admissions option for those candidates who identify VCOM-Bluefield as their first choice for pursuing an Anesthesiologist Assistant education amongst all other equivalent programs. In order to be considered for the Early Decision Admissions Track, the candidate must meet all of the following requirements and agree to apply only to the VCOM-Bluefield MHTSA Program until an early decision notification has been made. Please note the Early Decision Admissions Track requirements are in addition to the General Admissions requirements listed above.

Early decision applicants must meet the following requirements, in addition to the general admission requirements listed above:

- Minimum Science and Overall GPA of 3.3;
- Submit an application, transcripts from all institutions attended, and all other required materials to the Centralized Application Service for Anesthesiologist Assistants (CASAA) or directly to the MHTSA Program by July 15th;
- Submit a letter of intent to the Office of Admissions indicating that the MHTSA Program is your first choice for Anesthesiologist Assistant program by July 1 and request review for Early Decision Admissions Track;
- Submit all Supplemental Application materials including the application, letter of recommendation from a premedical advisor/science faculty member, and a letter of recommendation from a qualified anesthesia provider by August 1st; and
- Withhold all applications to other Anesthesiologist Assistant programs until early decisions are made by the VCOM-Bluefield MHTSA Program.

Applicants who are ranked highly on the hold or wait list from the prior academic year may be offered early decision for the next academic year without resubmission of all materials.

7. DURATION OF POLICY

This Admissions Policy for the Master of Health Science in Anesthesia Program established by MHTSA Program Administration and is effective as of the date above and shall remain effective until amended or terminated by the President and Provost.

- **Publication**

This policy shall be widely published and distributed to the Program community to ensure publication and distribution thereof. The Office of the Dean of Anesthesiologist Assistant Programs will make every effort to:


- Communicate the policy in writing, electronic or otherwise, to the MHTSA Program community within 14 days of approval by the Program Advisory Council
- Submit the policy for including in the online *MHTSA Policy Manual* within 14 days of approval by the Program Advisory Council
- Post the policy on the appropriate audiences on the policy's content, as necessary; and
- Educate and train all stakeholders and appropriate audiences on the policy's content, as necessary.

Failure to meet the publication requirements does not invalidate this policy.

- **Review Schedule**
List the following:

Next Scheduled Review Date:	01/15/2025
Ratification by, Date:	Advisory Council, March 29 th , 2024 (<i>pending</i>)
Revision History:	06/15/2022. 3/10/23. 12/28/23.
Supersedes:	Not applicable

- **Related Documents**



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