



Policy Title:
Dress Code

Policy Identifier:
PA106

Prepared by: PA Program Faculty	Creation Date: 01/01/2026
Reviewed by: PA Program Executive Committee	Review Date: 01/01/2026
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Category: Professionalism	

Scope

This policy applies to all University of South Carolina (USC) School of Medicine Columbia Physician Assistant (PA) students in academic, laboratory, and clinical settings.

Policy Statement

In line with the professional standards of the USC PA Program, students are expected to maintain an appearance that reflects respect for the profession, patients, faculty, and peers. Professional attire promotes trust, demonstrates competence, and supports a safe and effective learning and patient care environment.

The standard dress for PA students is business casual unless otherwise specified. Final determination of appropriate attire rests with program faculty.

Reason for Policy

This policy establishes clear expectations for student appearance to promote professionalism, patient safety, infection control, and appropriate representation of the USC School of Medicine Columbia and the PA profession.

Definitions

- **Business Casual Attire:** Clothing appropriate for outpatient clinical environments that allows safe and effective patient care while maintaining a professional appearance.
- **Professional Appearance:** Being neatly dressed, well-groomed, and appropriately attired in a manner that reflects the standards of the PA profession.

Procedures

1. General Attire Standards

- a. Clothing must be clean, neat, and free of tears, holes, or stains.
- b. Attire must allow movement required for patient care and should not be excessively tight, short, or revealing.

2. Clothing Guidelines

a. Slacks/Pants

- i. Acceptable: Slacks, dress capris, dress pants.
- ii. Not acceptable: Jeans, sweatpants, exercise/yoga pants, shorts, overalls, leggings worn as pants, pajama/lounge pants, Spandex, Lycra, or other form-fitting pants.

b. Skirts/Dresses

- i. Acceptable: Skirts and dresses at or below mid-thigh that allow bending and sitting comfortably.
- ii. Not acceptable: Mini-skirts, skorts, sun/beach dresses, strapless or spaghetti-strap dresses, or tight/short garments above mid-thigh.

c. Shirts/Tops

- i. Acceptable: Polo shirts, blouses, dress shirts, sweaters, turtlenecks, suit or sport jackets.
- ii. Not acceptable: Tank tops, halter tops, hooded sweatshirts, midriff-baring tops, inappropriate graphics or slogans.

3. Footwear

- a. Acceptable: Conservative walking shoes, loafers, clogs, sneakers, flats, dress heels, boots.
- b. Not acceptable: Flip-flops, slippers, flashy athletic shoes, and open-toed shoes in clinical or lab settings.

4. Personal Grooming and Accessories

- a. Strong scents (perfume, cologne, smoke) are not permitted.
- b. Hair and facial hair must be clean, neat, and secured.
- c. Nails must be trimmed to fingertip length; artificial nails are not permitted.
- d. Jewelry should be minimal and not interfere with patient care.
- e. Tattoos with offensive or inappropriate content must be covered.
- f. Hats are not permitted indoors except for religious or cultural purposes.

5. Identification Requirement (A3.04)

- a. Students must wear a USC SOMC PA Program nametag at all times, clearly visible above the waist.
- b. During clinical experiences, students must be clearly identifiable as PA students.

6. Scrubs and Clinical Attire

- a. Program-issued scrubs may only be worn when directed by course or program leadership.
- b. A short white lab coat must be worn over professional attire during patient encounters and clinical activities.

Compliance and Enforcement

- Students are expected to comply with all dress code requirements.
- Faculty reserve the right to determine appropriateness of attire and may require students to change if not in compliance.



Contacts

Program Director
USC School of Medicine Columbia
Physician Assistant Program

History

Date of Change	Change
01/01/2026	Policy drafted into new template.