

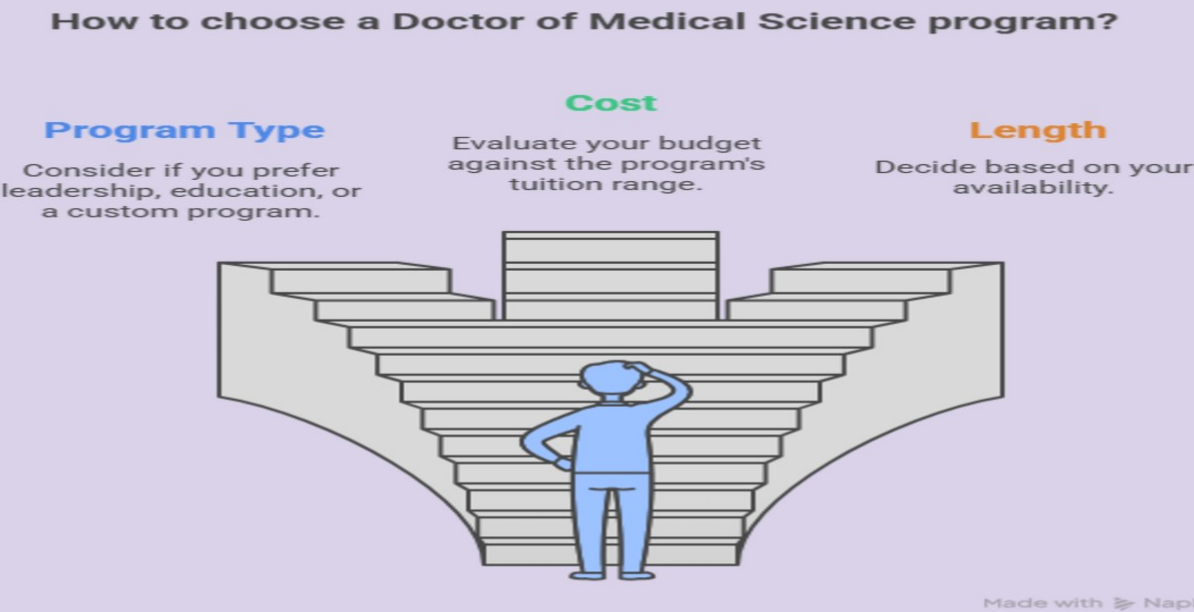
# Key Factors for Choosing Doctor of Medical Science (DMSc) Programs

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## Introduction

While the Master's degree remains the entry and terminal credential for PAs, a notable trend indicates an increasing pursuit of doctoral-level education. Currently, 2.4% of PAs hold doctoral degrees, reflecting a 0.6% increase from prior years and demonstrating a growing demand.<sup>1</sup> The wide variety of doctoral programs, encompassing PhDs, DHScs, EdDs, and the PA-designed Doctor of Medical Science (DMSc), presents PAs with a complex decision-making landscape. Within the DMSc category alone, programs offer diverse specializations across clinical, professional, and academic tracks, each with distinct advantages and limitations. This complexity creates a significant decision-making challenge for PAs considering doctoral education. This research examines the critical factors that inform these consequential educational advancement decisions.

## Research Questions



## Methodology

This mixed-methods study examined DMSc programs for PAs. Programs were identified via online searches Nov’24-Feb’25. Four researchers collected data from websites and materials, with cross-checks for accuracy. Extracted variables included program name, location, eligibility, prerequisites, GPA, transfer credits, length, cost, certificates, CME, and CAQ options. Online forums were searched for prospective student inquiries.

## Findings



## Discussion

Our research projects substantial growth in Doctor of Medical Science programs, revealing significant variability in program duration, specialization tracks, costs, and scholarly requirements. A critical finding is the absence of standardized curricula or independent accreditation mechanisms comparable to ARC-PA standards for PA programs—a regulatory gap affecting quality assurance and program equivalency. These findings highlight the urgent need for a centralized, comprehensive resource that systematically presents program information. This would enable prospective doctoral candidates to make meaningful comparisons and evidence-based educational decisions, addressing the information fragmentation currently complicating the selection process for PAs pursuing advanced degrees.

## Conclusion

The heterogeneity in DMSc programs underscores the need for a dedicated resource to aid prospective students. To address this need, our research team is developing a comprehensive DMSc program guide that will facilitate informed decision-making through standardized comparison metrics aligned with professional development goals.

## References

1. National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants. 2023 Statistical Profile of Board Certified PAs. [PDF] Published May 3, 2024. Accessed February 27, 2025.[https://www.nccpa.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/2023-Statistical-Profile-of-Board-Certified-PAs5\\_3\\_24.pdf](https://www.nccpa.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/2023-Statistical-Profile-of-Board-Certified-PAs5_3_24.pdf)

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