

1 **2019-C-06-WI** **Support for Standardization of Degree Titles**

2

3 2019-C-06 Resolved

4

5 AAPA supports a standardized degree title for all Master and Doctorate PA degrees.

6

7 Further resolved

8

9 AAPA shall communicate its support for adoption of standardized degree titles for PA
10 educational programs at the Master and Doctoral levels, to wit: Master of Medical
11 Science (MMSc) and Doctor of Medical Science (DMSc), thereby providing a logical
12 standardization and coordinating of degree titles associated with the PA profession.

13

14 **Rationale/Justification**

15 Currently, the PA profession has a myriad of inconsistent degree program titles such as Master of
16 Physician Assistant Studies, Master of Physician Assistant Science, Master of Physician
17 Associate Studies, Master of Medical Science Physician Assistant, and Master of Science in
18 Health Sciences, among various others. Recently, the phenomenon has continued with the
19 introduction of several PA specific doctoral programs with competing titles.

20

21 As our profession has matured over the last half century, a consensus has evolved that use of the
22 ‘assistant’ title sheds an unfavorable light on our profession and is harmful to our profession’s
23 growth. PAs often report that use of the term assistant adds an unnecessary layer of confusion for
24 patients that can distract from the high-quality, evidence-based care we provide. Accordingly,
25 our degree titles should reflect the true nature of the PA curriculum. Our rigorous and
26 standardized degree programs do not prepare assistants, these professional and highly
27 standardized programs prepare PAs to engage in autonomous medical decision making and
28 practice evidence-based, patient-centered medicine as part of a team-based system of modern
29 healthcare. There is no curriculum basis to support the further use of the term assistant in our
30 degree titles.

31

32 Further highlighting our lack of coordination is the fact that each of our market competitors have
33 adopted standardized degree titles while our profession continues to add programs lacking a
34 uniform and consistent nomenclature. Finally, programs at the master and doctoral level should
35 have coordinated titles to denote a clear and logical relationship to each other illustrating the
36 optional doctorate as a logical extension of the PA’s master’s degree.

37

38 **Related AAPA Policy**

39 There is no current policy addressing the standardization of degree titles.

40

41

42

43 **Possible Negative Implications**

44 It should be noted that there are outlying programs offering non-clinical, non-professional
45 degrees with similar titles to those recommended in this resolution. Nevertheless, this will be
46 quickly eclipsed by the vast number of PA programs adopting the degree title and creating a
47 brand association with our profession.

48
49 While rapidly growing numbers of new PA programs may adopt the recommended titles with
50 relative ease, established programs will require program and higher-level approval. That said,
51 these established programs will likely face a decision on degree title updates as a consequence of
52 a highly probable professional title change, particularly those programs using the term
53 ‘assistant’. Despite the administrative process for established programs to change their degree
54 title, this is an excellent time for programs to give consideration to standardization as there are
55 anticipated updates to our PA curriculum that will inevitably require the attention and action of
56 all PA programs.

57
58 **Financial Impact**

59 Minimal one-time cost to AAPA for updating website and associated articles.

60
61 **Attestation**

62 I attest that this resolution was reviewed by the submitting organization’s Board and/or officers
63 and approved as submitted (commissions, work groups and task forces are exempt).

64
65 **Signature/Contact for the Resolution**

66 Eric M. Elliot, MPAS, PA-C
67 Chief Delegate/Immediate Past President
68 Wisconsin Academy of PAs
69 EricElliotPAC@aol.com