

RPA and RA Which Career is Best for You?

A technologist recently inquired about the career opportunities for Radiology Practitioner Assistants (RPA) and Radiologist Assistants (RA) and differences between the two. According to my research on these professions, I have provided some information that addresses the differences, responsibilities, education and salary potential for both professions. I hope this information will *guide* you in researching and deciding which career is best for you.

	RPA	RA
Definition	An RPA is a mid-level health care professional that works under the supervision of a radiologist. RPAs are Radiologic technologists with additional education, responsibilities and can perform radiological procedures. RPAs function as an extender of the Radiologist, not independent from a Radiologist.	According to the ARRT, an RA is “an advanced-level Radiologic technologist who enhances patient care by extending the capacity of the radiologist in the diagnostic imaging environment. Their role falls between the traditional roles of the radiologist and the radiographer.”
Procedures	The RPA has a scope of practice* . An RPA can do all fluoroscopic procedures, static and dynamic, evaluate imaging procedures to determine normal from abnormal, provide the radiologist with a technical report and perform invasive procedures, such as arthrograms, fluid drainage, biopsies, placement of nasogastric and enteroclysis tubes, and myelograms.	The RA is guided by a Role Delineation. SEE the ARRT’s Final RA Role Delineation*
Responsibilities	The RPA can conduct a preliminary evaluation of images and provide a technical report to the Radiologist, perform invasive imaging procedures under the supervision of the radiologist and participate in all phases of patient assessment and management.	The RA is able to lead in patient management and assessment, perform selected radiology exams and procedures under the supervision of a radiologist, evaluate image quality and makes initial image observations (The RA cannot make a final written report, interpretation or diagnosis)
Requirements	Must be a Registered Radiographer. Must have current and active standing with ARRT. Must have a minimum of 3 years experience, have the consent of a radiologist who is willing to be a preceptor during the program and have obtained permission from a healthcare facility in order to do a clinical preceptorship. Must be a graduate of a CBRPA recognized educational program and successfully pass the CBPRA certification exam.	Must be a Registered Radiographer. Must have current and active standing with ARRT. Must have at least 1 year of full-time clinical experience following the radiography certification. Must have earned a baccalaureate degree from an accredited educational institution. Must meet standards covering educational preparation, ethics and examination. The ARRT will offer a certification program to identify individuals qualified as R.A.s.

Education	Must successfully complete appropriate course work of an approved curriculum* . Must complete a 2 year accredited program. Typically, students receive a bachelor of science degree upon completion of the program. Upon graduation, the CBRPA offers a certification examination for RPAs.	Must successfully complete appropriate course work of a nationally recognized curriculum** such as the one published by ASRT. Must complete a preceptorship. Must document the clinical procedures conducted in a portfolio. There is an 18-month and 21-month program offered by Loma Linda University in California which has graduated the first class of RAs. in September 2005.
Salary	Annual Range: \$75,000 to \$140,000 SEE the CBRPA Salary Survey*	Annual Range is projected to be \$80,000-\$100,000.
scope of practice*	http://www.cbrpa.org/pdf/SCOPE%20of%20practice.pdf	
Final RA Role Delineation*	http://www.arrt.org/web/radasst/finalraroledelineation.pdf	
curriculum*	http://departments.weber.edu/radsci1/rpa/rpa.htm http://www.weber.edu/RadSci/Degrees_Programs/b_rpa.html	
curriculum**	http://www.asrt.org/Media/Pdf/2002RACurriculum042704.pdf	
CBRPA Salary Survey*	http://www.cbrpa.org/pdf/2002RACurriculum042704.pdf	

Educational Programs

RPA

Weber State University – Ogden, UT www.weber.edu

RA

Loma Linda University – Loma Linda, CA www.llu.edu

University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey – Newark, NJ www.umdnj.edu

Midwestern State University – Wichita Falls, TX www.mwsu.edu

Virginia Commonwealth University – Richmond, VA www.vcu.edu

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill – Chapel Hill, NC www.unc.edu

University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences – Little Rock, AR www.uams.edu

Bloomsburg University – Bloomsburg, PA www.bloomu.edu

State University of New York Upstate Medical University – Syracuse, NY www.upstate.edu

University of Alabama at Birmingham – Birmingham, AL www.uab.edu

Quinnipiac University – Hamden, CT www.quinnipiac.edu

For More Information

RPA

Certification Board for Radiology Practitioner Assistants (CBRPA) www.cbrpa.org

National Society of Radiology Practitioner Assistants (NSRPA) www.radiologypa.org

FAQ about RPAs <http://www.cbrpa.org/FAQ.htm>

Decisions in Imaging Economics <http://www.imagingeconomics.com/library/200107-03.asp>

RPAs and RPAs: The Distinctions <http://www.aapa.org/gandp/rpas.html>

RPA Position Description <http://www.cbrpa.org/pdf/RPA%20position%20description.pdf>

RA

ARRT Certification for RAs <http://www.rrt.org/web/radasst/rabooklet.pdf>

FAQ about ARRT RAs <http://www.rrt.org/web/content.jsp?include=/radasst/rafaqs.htm>

Introduction to the RA Certification Application Packet <http://www.rrt.org/web/radasst/racap.pdf>

Radiology Today Article http://www.radiologytoday.net/archive/rt_081604p14.shtml

Certifying RAs <http://www.rt-image.com/content=8504J05C487E9E8640B69C72448880441>

Improving Patient Care http://www.asrt.org/media/pdf/ra_consensuspaper.pdf

RPA v. RA

RAs and RPAs: Questions and Answers http://www.acr.org/s_acr/doc.asp?CID=969&DID=16889

RA and RPA: A Comparative Fact Sheet http://www.cbrpa.org/rpa_ra.htm

The Future of Radiology <http://www.radiologistassistant.net/>

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