



Montgomery County  
Community College

## Essential Functions and Program Specifications Physical Therapist Assistant Program

The Physical Therapist Assistant Program is an intensive course of study. It places specific demands on students that closely resemble the physical and intellectual challenges graduates of the Program will encounter as practicing Physical Therapist Assistants (PTAs). The Program has been designed to prepare students to enter the occupation of physical therapist assisting with the ability, knowledge, and skills necessary to successfully perform all of the essential functions expected of entry-level PTAs. Students are to familiarize themselves with these essential functions and their associated technical standards and determine whether or not they are able to perform the specified tasks. In accordance with applicable state and federal laws regarding people who have disabilities and the PTA Program's philosophy, the faculty are committed to making reasonable accommodations for students who have disabilities to enable them to successfully perform the essential functions as delineated below.

In the event that a student determines he or she cannot meet an essential function due to a disability, either upon admission to the Program or at any point thereafter, it is the responsibility of the student to notify the Program Director and the Director of Services for Students with Disabilities (215-641-6575) to request consideration for a reasonable accommodation. A reasonable accommodation is a strategy, agreed upon by the student and the Program, which enables the student to meet a technical standard. The faculty and student will work together, within the context of the agreed upon strategy, to provide the student with the opportunity to meet the technical standard. The presence of a disability will not exempt students from completing required tasks and a reasonable accommodation will not guarantee that students will be successful in meeting the requirements of any one course. Should a student be unable to meet a technical standard or course requirement after a reasonable accommodation has been made, the offer of admission or status in the Program will be withdrawn.

The essential functions are:

1. Affective/behavioral skills
2. Cognitive skills
3. Communication skills
4. Observation skills
5. Physical and emotional health
6. Psychomotor skills

To accomplish the essential functions of the role of the Physical Therapist Assistant, the student must be able to meet the following technical standards:

1. Affective/behavioral skills – use of social and professional skills to demonstrate
  - Appreciation and respect for individual, social, and cultural differences in fellow students, professional colleagues, patients, and caregivers.

- Appreciation that his or her values, attitudes, beliefs, emotions, and experiences affect his or her perceptions and relationships with others.
  - Appropriate behaviors and attitudes to protect the safety and well-being of patients, self and classmates.
  - Ability to appropriately handle situations which may be physically, emotionally or intellectually stressful including situations which must be handled swiftly and calmly.
  - Ability to adjust to changing situations and uncertainty in an academic or clinical environment.
  - Possession of attributes of altruism, caring and compassion, continuing competence, duty, integrity, PT/PTA collaboration, responsibility, and social responsibility.
  - Ability to accept constructive feedback and modify behaviors as necessary.
  - Ability to maintain mature, sensitive, and effective relationships with patients, students, faculty, staff and other professionals in academic and clinical environments.
  - Ability to reason morally and practice physical therapy in an ethical manner under the supervision of a physical therapist.
  - Willingness to learn and abide by professional standards of practice.
  - Ability to be self-reflective.
  - Ability to be assertive and take initiative as appropriate.
  - Ability to function effectively as part of a health care team.
2. Cognitive skills – possession of sufficient intellectual-conceptual ability that includes the capacity to measure, calculate, reason, analyze, integrate and synthesize information in order to make decisions. Includes demonstration of the ability to
- Comprehend, integrate and synthesize a large body of knowledge in a short period of time.
  - Utilize knowledge of natural, clinical, and social sciences to provide appropriate interventions in a clinical setting under the supervision of a physical therapist.
  - Gather appropriate information during patient interventions in order to make clinical decisions appropriate to the scope of practice of a physical therapist assistant (PTA).
  - Appraise information and determine appropriate measurements to be taken during the episode of care.
  - Assess the information gleaned from patient/client performance measurements in order to progress patient interventions appropriately within the physical therapist established written plan of care.
  - Acknowledge limitations of knowledge and/or performance in order to provide safe, effective patient/client care.
  - Instruct therapeutic home programs as indicated by the physical therapist established plan of care utilizing a variety of instructional methods for patients/clients and/or family members.
  - Self-reflect on performance to accurately assess own professional strengths and weaknesses.
  - Develop a plan to address professional areas of weakness.
3. Communication skills – use of verbal (oral and/or written) and nonverbal abilities to
- Express own ideas and feelings clearly.
  - Demonstrate willingness and ability to give and receive feedback.
  - Listen actively in order to receive and interpret oral communication.

- Communicate effectively and sensitively in English with other students, faculty, patients, patients' families, other professionals.
  - Demonstrate interpersonal skills as needed for productive classroom discussion, respectful interaction with classmates and faculty, and development of appropriate patient/therapist relationships.
  - Communicate clearly and audibly during interactions with classmates, faculty, patients and members of the health care team.
  - Elicit appropriate information from patients/caregivers.
  - Communicate complex findings in appropriate terms to patients/caregivers and other members of the health care team.
  - Receive, write and interpret written communication in both clinical and academic settings.
  - Read and record observations legibly, efficiently, and accurately in documents such as the patient's record, both handwritten and electronic.
  - Complete written assignments.
  - Establish rapport with client, caregivers, and colleagues.
  - Observe patients for the purpose of eliciting information, accurately describing changes in facial expression, mood, posture and other nonverbal communication.
  - Use therapeutic communication such as attending, clarifying, coaching, facilitating and touching.
4. Observation skills – functional use of vision, hearing, and other sensory modes to
- Observe audiovisual presentations, written materials, laboratory demonstrations and procedures.
  - Effectively perform auscultation/auditory evaluation inclusive of, but not limited to, lung, heart, apical pulse, blood pressure, and joint and prosthetic noises.
  - Appreciate environmental cues such as phones, paging systems, and verbal communication in a setting with competing ambient noise.
  - Appropriately take a patient's/client's subjective information.
  - Accurately observe a patients/client's activity and behavior during interventions.
  - Observe changes in patient/client status which may require modification of activity or intervention such as: color of skin, breathing regularity, heart rate, skin temperature, muscle tone, and facial expressions.
  - Accurately monitor dials, displays, and equipment used in treatment of patients including exercise equipment and electrical modalities.
  - Appreciate tactile feedback related to safe and accurate application of procedures such as palpation and manual muscle testing.
  - Read information from equipment and patient charts.
5. Physical and emotional health – excellent physical and emotional health and maintenance of personal hygiene and appearance as demonstrated by the ability to
- Perform the skills mentioned in the other sections of this document.
  - Avoid jeopardizing the health and safety of others with whom one interacts.
  - Avoid offending others with whom one interacts.
  - Develop rapport with patients/clients, caregivers, classmates, faculty and other health care professionals.
  - Respond appropriately to stressful situations in the classroom and clinic.

6. Psychomotor skills – gross and fine motor skills reflective of the physical capacities required to meet the responsibilities of a physical therapist assistant student in a wide variety of clinical settings. Student should demonstrate the ability to
- Assume and maintain a variety of positions, including but not limited to sitting and standing, squatting, kneeling, reaching, walking, stair climbing, and movement of the trunk and neck in all directions.
  - Perform manual material handling and manipulation of objects of various sizes and weights including lifting and transferring patients/clients, guarding patients/clients during gait training on level and uneven surfaces/ramps/stairs, pushing and pulling to provide resistance, and assisting in maneuvering patients/clients.
    - i. Safely lift up to 50 lbs. independently
    - ii. Safely lift up to 200 lbs. with assistance
    - iii. Safely push and pull up to 200 lbs. occasionally.
  - Utilize strong bilateral grasp during joint mobilization/manipulation and manually resisted exercise.
  - Utilize bilateral fine motor control to manipulate testing instruments, equipment, writing instruments, and computers.
  - Manually palpate various body structures during measurement and intervention procedures.
  - Balance self and provide support and balance to patients/clients on a variety of surfaces.
  - Perform a variety of endurance activities for up to 8-12 hours with occasional rest breaks. These include the ability to:
    - i. Sit for two to 10 hours daily, stand for one to eight hours daily, and walk or travel for two hours to eight hours daily
    - ii. Frequently lift 10 lbs. and occasionally lift weights between one and 50 lbs.
    - iii. Occasionally carry up to 25 lbs. while walking up to 50 ft.
    - iv. Frequently exert up to 75 lbs. of push/pull forces for up to 50 ft., and occasionally exert 200 lbs. for this distance.
    - v. Frequently turn, bend, stoop and squat.
    - vi. Occasionally crawl, reach above shoulder level and kneel.
    - vii. Frequently change position and location at speeds that permit safe handling of patients/clients.
    - viii. Frequently stand and walk while providing support to a patient/client with a disability.
    - ix. Continuously use hands repetitively with a firm grasp and manual dexterity skills.
    - x. Frequently coordinate verbal and manual activities with gross motor activities.
  - Respond quickly to emergency situations by lifting/pushing/pulling patients/clients and applying force to perform CPR and assist with transporting patients/clients