

Physical Therapist Assistant Performance Essentials

(also found on Program web page)

Performance essentials or essential functions are defined as those physical, mental, and psycho-social characteristics that are necessary to meet the demands of the PTA educational process and eventual therapeutic care of patients and all tasks associated with that function.

Becoming a physical therapist assistant requires the completion of a technical education program that is both intellectually and physically challenging. The purpose of this policy is to articulate the demands of the program in a way that will allow students to compare their own capabilities against these demands.

There are times when reasonable accommodations [i.e.: hearing devices to improve communication] will be made in order to assist a student with a disability. Reasonable accommodation does not mean that students with disabilities will be exempt from certain tasks; it does mean that we will work with students with disabilities to determine whether there are ways that we can assist the student toward completion of the tasks.

If admitted, a student with a disability who wishes reasonable accommodations must request it through the Coordinator of the Physical Therapist Assistant Program. An offer of admission may be withdrawn if it becomes apparent that:

- the student cannot complete essential tasks even with accommodations.
- accommodations are not reasonable and would cause undue hardship to the institution.
- fulfilling the functions would create a significant risk to the health or safety of others.

Performance Essentials for the Classroom/Lab/Clinical Experience

Students must:

- meet class standards for course completion throughout the curriculum.
- complete readings, assignments, and other activities outside of class hours.
- be able to read, write, speak, and understand English at a level consistent with successful course completion and development of appropriate relationships with peers, instructors, patients, family, other allied health professionals, and the community.
- have interpersonal skills as needed for productive classroom discussion, respectful interaction with classmates and faculty, and development of appropriate therapist-patient relationships.
- collect decision-making data during patient assessment activities in class or in the clinical setting.
- perform therapeutic interventions in the class or in the clinical setting.
- apply critical thinking to their work, exercise sound judgement and follow safety procedures established in the classroom and the clinic.
- maintain personal appearance and hygiene conducive to classroom and clinical settings. (*see note regarding appropriate/inappropriate attire, body piercings, tattoos, etc under dress code information*)
- be certified in cardiopulmonary resuscitation at the health provider level.
- demonstrate appropriate health status prior to class enrollment per medical examination.
- follow standards and policies specified in the Student Handbook.

Typical Physical Functions required of the Physical Therapist Assistant:

- Uses auditory, tactile, and visual senses to collect data regarding patient status and to provide patient intervention. (e.g. auditory cues to hear breath sounds, take blood pressure measurements; tactile cues to monitor pulse, feel muscle contractions; visual cues to inspect skin, report postural stance/gait pattern)
- Applies standard and/or transmission precautions regularly in the classroom and clinic – regular hand washing (free of skin conditions irritated by frequent washing), applies mask, gown, gloves (applies without assistance of another individual).
- Coordinates verbal and manual activities with gross motor activities. (e.g. Can move the sound head of an ultrasound machine while turning up intensity and verbally communicate with patient or can assist patient with movement and give directions with the correct timing to complete the activity.)
- Uses hands repetitively with simple grasp and frequently uses a firm grasp and manual dexterity skills.
- Pushes or pulls equipment or devices.
- Provides sufficient support to safely assist patients/classmates when they are moving from sitting to standing positions or from one surface to another (e.g. chair to bed).
- Provides sufficient support to safely assist patients/classmates with standing or walking activities.
- Quickly and coordinately moves from one position to another. e.g. Squats, kneels, bends, stands, reaches above shoulders, etc.
- Balances self and/or patient, as patient requires assist during treatment sessions.

Typical mental functions required of the Physical Therapist Assistant:

- Attentively listens to patients.
- Controls verbal and nonverbal behaviors when communicating with others.
- Accurately self-assesses own strengths and weaknesses.
- Modifies behaviors after receiving corrective feedback.
- Takes responsibility for own actions-does not blame others for situation or behaviors.
- Behaves honestly and truthfully (see APTA Standards of Ethical Conduct and Guide for Conduct of the PTA on the following pages).
- Concentrates on task at hand for extended period of time.
- Utilizes problem-solving skills to meet needs of situation.
- Handles stress of an intensive training program in preparation for clinical situations-
 - heavy academic demands
 - fast paced clinical situations
 - psychosocial responses of patients with disabilities.