

Essential Functions for Physical Therapist Assistant
Students

The Physical Therapist Assistant (PTA) Program at the University of Cincinnati, Clermont College, is an intensive course of study. The following standards resemble the physical, intellectual, and affective challenges that practicing physical therapist assistants encounter performing common physical therapy functions. The program has the responsibility to the public to assure its graduates are capable of providing safe and effective treatment.

A student's ability to progress through the PTA Program is based upon satisfactory academic performance as well as the essential functions that serve to ensure that the student possesses all the necessary attributes of the academic program for graduation. Essential functions incorporate the cognitive, psychomotor, and affective abilities required for employment as a physical therapist assistant in the clinical setting. These standards are not to be exclusionary, but to establish performance expectations that will enable students to provide safe patient practice with or without reasonable accommodations. Students are to familiarize themselves with the essential functions and determine whether they are able to perform specified technical standards with or without reasonable accommodation(s).

The University of Cincinnati does not discriminate on the basis of disability, race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, medical condition, genetic information, marital status, sex, age, sexual orientation, veteran status or gender identity and expression in its programs and activities. <http://www.uc.edu/about/policies/non-discrimination.html>.

Students with disabilities are eligible to receive a variety of support services. The policy of the University of Cincinnati Clermont College requires students to self-identify and provide proper documentation to Amy Simerly in Accessibility Resources, 732-5327 or clermondso@uc.edu.

We are committed to making reasonable accommodations for students who have disabilities. If a student determines that they cannot meet an essential function due to a disability, either upon admission or at any point thereafter, it is the responsibility of the student to notify Accessibility Resources of that determination and to request reasonable accommodation. The presence of a disability does not exempt students from completing required tasks with a reasonable accommodation.

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Categories of Essential Functions	Definition	Examples of Technical Standards
Critical Thinking/Problem Solving Skills	The ability to collect, identify, assess, question and integrate information and make decisions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect, identify, assess, question and integrate information and make decisions. • Read and comprehend relevant information in textbooks, medical records and peer reviewed professional literature. • Identify cause/effect relationships in the provision of health care. • Identify patient problems and adjust patient interventions appropriately under the plan of care. • Integrate information from all courses to provide holistic, patient-centered care. • Respond calmly and effectively to emergencies. • Utilize universal precautions for all patients. • Use effective teaching, learning and test taking strategies.
Interpersonal Skills	<p>The ability to collaboratively work with all peers and program academic and clinical faculty in the classroom, lab and clinical setting.</p> <p>The ability to interact effectively with patients, families, colleagues, other health care professionals, and the community in a culturally aware manner.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work collaboratively with all peers, academic and clinical faculty, staff, clinicians and patients in classroom, lab and clinical settings. • Embody the spirit of cooperation and collegiality, employing basic conflict management skills, as situations require. • Establish positive and supportive rapport with patients/clients and colleagues. • Participate in all lab situations to experience both clinician and patient roles, receiving and communicating empathy. • Respect differences in personality, lifestyle and learning styles during interactions with all persons. • Recognize the non-verbal and paraverbal communication and emotions that others bring to professional interactions. • Establish unconditional positive regard and effective/harmonious relationships in diverse settings, with diverse patient/clients and colleagues.

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Behavioral/Emotional/Social Coping Skills	The ability to maintain a professional demeanor in all situations, identify sources of stress and implement effective coping behaviors as it relates to work/life scenarios.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond appropriately to stressful environments or during impending deadlines. • Display maturity, good judgment, sensitivity, and emotional stability when in academic, clinical, community and professional settings. • Manage heavy academic schedules and deadlines. • Concentrate on professional duties without distraction in all settings. • Set priorities and perform all aspects of physical therapy services in fast-paced academic and clinical situations. • Cope effectively with psychosocial issues involving illness, disability and death without hindering effective performance of duties. • Maintain balance between professional and personal life.
Communication Skills	The ability to communicate effectively using verbal, non-verbal and written formats with faculty, peers, patients/clients, families, and healthcare providers for a variety of purposes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate effectively using verbal, non-verbal and paraverbal forms of communication, monitor impact of proxemics in communication and utilize appropriate written formats with faculty, peers, patients/clients, families and healthcare workers for a variety of purposes. • Communicate collaboratively in classroom, lab and clinical settings with both individuals and in groups; maintain open and constructive communication. • Describe and teach physical therapy procedures in verbal, non-verbal and written format. • Give directions to patients/clients and family members. • Demonstrate active listening skills. Recognize, interpret and respond to non-verbal behavior of self and others. • Answer questions to the satisfaction of patients/clients, co-workers, physicians and other healthcare providers. • Recognize that alternative communication methods with patient/client may be required (i.e., interpreter, language line, communication board). • Keep accurate logs and records of treatment procedures and charges using appropriate medical terminology, correct spelling and grammar.

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Categories of Essential Functions	Definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record of treatment in written or electronic format is objective, persuasive and explanatory in a logical, organized format. Examples of Technical Standards
Physical Mobility/ Motor Skills	Sufficient motor ability to execute the movement and skills required for safe and effective physical therapy treatment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Execute the movement and skills required for safe and effective physical therapy treatment. • Demonstrate adequate coordination, balance, speed and agility to assist and safely manage patients on level and uneven terrain. • Demonstrate and perform exercise programs and functional activities required of established plans of care by the physical therapist without injuring self or others. • Move, adjust and position patients or equipment that involves standing, sitting, walking, bending, stooping, kneeling, reaching overhead, lifting, carrying, pushing, pulling, or guiding a weight of (5-40 lbs.) • Provide emergency care and administer CPR. • Perform transfer and gait training techniques using correct and safe body mechanics with and without use of safe patient handling equipment. • Change position and location at speeds that permit safe handling of patients/clients. • Utilize fine motor control repetitively to manipulate testing instruments and other physical therapy equipment, perform manual techniques and document in written or electronic format.
Sensory Abilities	Sufficient auditory, visual and tactile ability to monitor and access health needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor and assess patient's health needs with sufficient auditory, visual and tactile acuity. • Observe changes in patient/client status that may require modification of activity or intervention such as color of skin, breathing regularity, heart rate, skin temperature, muscle tone, facial expressions, acute alterations in speech, and mentation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <u>Visual</u> (with accommodation/correction as necessary)—recognize and interpret facial expressions, body language and patient posture, identify normal and abnormal patterns of movement, discriminate color changes and interpret and assess the environment; recognize and distinguish between colors or contrast; read and set parameters on physical therapy equipment and testing instruments. ○ <u>Auditory</u> (with accommodation/correction as necessary)—recognize and respond to soft voices or voices under protective garb, auditory timers, equipment/emergency alarms, and effectively use devices for the measurement of vital signs and breath

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		<p>sounds; able to hear patients and respond to patient/client critical needs when not in direct line of site.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <u>Tactile</u> (with accommodation/correction as necessary)—palpate a pulse and detect changes or abnormalities of surface texture, skin temperature, body segment contour, edema, muscle tone, and joint movement.
Categories of Essential Functions	Definition	Examples of Technical Standards
Professionalism	The ability to demonstrate professional behaviors and a strong work ethic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate unselfish, honest, moral and ethical behavior in all academic and professional settings following the Standards of Ethics for the Physical Therapist Assistant, Values Based Behaviors for the Physical Therapist Assistant and the Professional Behaviors for the 21st Century. • Demonstrate leadership characteristics such as initiative, creativity, readiness to learn, preparedness, flexibility, enthusiasm, cooperation, tolerance, respect for authority, and diligence in all academic, clinical, community, and professional settings. • Demonstrate time management skills that promote punctual attendance to class, labs, and clinics as required. • Demonstrate a work ethic consistent with professional standards. • Recognize personal limitations and requests assistance as appropriate. • Demonstrate responsibility for personal and professional development. • Demonstrate respect for the patient, other health care providers and the profession of physical therapy. • Maintain confidences; comply with HIPAA guidelines. • Present professional appearance and maintain personal hygiene. • Follows standards stated in the current PTA Program Student Handbook, Policy and Procedure Manual, the Clinical Education Handbook.

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Please note: D.O.T. standards call for up to 50 lbs. occasional lifting capacity, yet the UC medical exam for uses 40 lbs., which falls within the DOT limits.

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Student Acknowledgement Statement: (For Core Students upon admission into the Summer Term)

Signed _____ Dated _____
Printed Name _____

Sources:

Clarke State Community College. (2016, June). Essential Functions, Skills, and Abilities.
http://www.clarkstate.edu/media/1407/pta_hdbk.pdf

Greenville Technical College. (n.d.). Essential Functions and Technical Standards for Physical Therapist Assistant Students.
www.gvltec.edu/PTA_Essential_Functions/

Northland Community & Technical College. (n.d.). Essential Functions for Physical Therapist Assistant Students.
http://www.northlandcollege.edu/programs/physical_therapist_assistant/program_detail.php?quick_facts=program_facts&program_code=450

University of Evansville. (2015, April). Essential Functions for the PTA. Retrieved from
<https://www.evansville.edu/majors/physicaltherapy/downloads/pta/essential.pdf>

Dictionary of Occupational Titles. (n.d.). PTA description. <https://occupationalinfo.org/07/076224010.html>

In the event that a student in the Program takes a leave of absence for medical purposes, the student may be required to submit medical verification, as provided by the University, that s/he is fit to resume participation in the Program. If a student needs an accommodation for a disability, the student should contact Accessibility Resources at Amy Simerly in Accessibility Resources, 732-5327 or clermontdso@uc.edu.