



Essential Functions for Physical Therapist Assistants

Physical Therapist Assistant students must be able to perform essential functions during participation in the PTA program, while on clinical, and even on the job following graduation. Standards have been adopted to provide safety and quality of care for patients. The following standards reflect reasonable expectations of the PTA student for the performance of common physical therapy functions.

Cognitive: PTA students must possess critical thinking skills to use in problem-solving, reasoning, and judgment to provide safe, effective patient interventions. This includes but is not limited to the following:

Ability to collect, analyze, and interpret written, oral, and observed data

Ability to multi-task, prioritize, and make logical decisions

Ability to apply knowledge of principles, safety standards, indications, and contraindications for physical therapy interventions, including interventions for pain management, proper use of therapeutic modalities, manual treatments for human pathology or disability, and therapeutic exercise

Ability to modify treatment interventions based on sound clinical reasoning

Ability to remain focused and alert to the environment to ensure the safety of patients, colleagues, other students, instructors, and families/caregivers

Behavior: PTA students must exercise good judgment and empathy towards their patients. The student must act ethically, show no discrimination, and treat all other persons equally and fairly. The student must be tolerant of close contact with other students, patients, and staff from a broad and diverse population of people of all ages, races, and socioeconomic backgrounds. This population will also include people with varying weight disorders, physical disfigurement, and mental or physical health problems. This also includes but is not limited to the following:

Ability to work with multiple patients/families and colleagues at the same time

Ability to work with lab partners, patients, families, and others during stressful conditions that may consist of emotionally unstable persons, emergencies, or situations requiring timely decision making

Ability to develop and maintain mutually respectful relationships with other students, instructors, clinicians, patients, and families/caregivers

Ability to act safely, professionally, and ethically in the physical therapy lab and clinic

Communication: PTA students must be proficient in the English language to be able to communicate effectively and efficiently with other students, instructors, clinicians, patients, and families/caregivers. This includes but is not limited to the following:



Competent reading skills that allow the student to safely perform essential functions of assignments

Effectively interpret and express information regarding patient status, progress, and safety

Ability to orally communicate effectively with patients, families/caregivers, clinicians, laypeople, and payors

Ability to effectively communicate in writing with other students, instructors, clinicians, patients, families/caregivers

Ability to learn and navigate electronic health records (EHR) to effectively and accurately document detailed patient information and status

Ability to detect and interpret non-verbal communication of others

Ability to develop productive and polite interpersonal communication with other students, instructors, clinicians, patients, and families/caregivers

Demonstrate a willingness to give and receive constructive feedback.

Sensory: PTA students use their senses, including visual, tactile, auditory, oral, and vestibular, to communicate and provide effective patient interventions. Students must possess the following:

Ability to visually recognize and interpret facial expressions and body language. Able to read physician orders and documentation, set parameters on modalities, and read small numbers on goniometers, thermostats, etc. Able to visually interpret and assess the environment and discriminate color changes. Ability to distinguish between normal and abnormal postures/movements

Ability to recognize and respond to both soft and loud voices, timers, equipment alarms/bells, and effectively use a stethoscope to measure blood pressure and lung sounds

Ability to palpate a pulse, palpate soft tissue, and differentiate between normal and abnormal tone. Ability to detect texture as well as temperature through palpation

Sufficient balance to assist and safely guard patients, lift exercise equipment, and change surfaces during patient treatment interventions. Must possess adequate unsupported sitting balance as well

Possess tolerance of physical touch by other students and Professors during assigned laboratory tasks for learning purposes of physical exam and treatment techniques



Possess comfort and tolerance with appropriate, draped exposure of your skin to perform assigned laboratory tasks and for learning physical exam and treatment techniques

Motor: The role of the PTA student is physically demanding; therefore, students must possess sufficient motor capabilities. These include but are not limited to the following:

Ability to stand for 8 to 10 hours per day while in class and in the clinic

Ability to walk several thousand feet per day. This includes incline walking and stair ascension/descension

Ability to safely guard patients during gait training transfers from bed to chair to standing and during exercise performance activities while maintaining proper body mechanics

Ability to adjust and position heavy equipment in a safe manner

Ability to tolerate sitting for 8 to 10 hours per day during classroom and clinic activities

Ability to lift, pull, push, carry, and guide weighted objects and patients up to and including 80 pounds

Ability to use proper body mechanics to occasionally lift over 80 pounds with assistance

Ability to squat, stoop, bend, crawl, kneel, or twist safely to adjust equipment and patients

Ability to climb ladders and stairs multiple times per day

Coordination, agility, and speed to assist and safely guard patients who are walking, transferring, or exercising

Ability to use fine motor skills to adjust parameters on modality devices and use small equipment such as dynamometers and/or goniometers. Fine motor skills are also used frequently for documentation and writing

Able to perform repetitious motions with hands, arms, and legs during lab or patient treatment interventions

Ability to endure an 8 to 10 - hour day filled with patient care interventions or laboratory tasks

A student enrolled in the PTA program at Collin College is expected to be capable of the essential functions listed with or without reasonable accommodation. The PTA program fully supports the provision of reasonable accommodations to students with special needs to assist them with fulfilling the objectives of the program. The student must notify the faculty as soon as possible if they cannot meet these requirements with or without accommodation.