



Essential Functions of a PTA Student

(Policy of same name)

The Physical Therapist Assistant Program has established minimum essential requirements (separate from academic standards for admission), which every student must meet, with or without reasonable accommodations, in order to participate fully in all aspects of the training and educational program. Following admittance to the program, each PTA student will be required to review and complete the Essential Functions for Physical Therapist Assistant Students form. Completed forms will be maintained in the individual student's file located in the Program Director's office.

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS for PHYSICAL THERAPIST ASSISTANT STUDENTS

Candidates applying to the Physical Therapist Assistant Program should consider the following essential skills. Physical therapist assistants are technically trained individuals in physical therapy and provide certain physical therapy interventions after an evaluation and examination by the physical therapist. The PTA follows the plan of care established by the physical therapist regarding interventions and patient care provided. The following standards indicate reasonable expectations of the PTA student for the performance of common physical therapy functions. The following essential functions include physical, cognitive, behavioral, psychomotor, environmental factors, as well as affective and communication functions encountered by students in training and these functions may vary depending by the specific area of practice. These essential functions do not reflect what may be required for employment of a graduate PTA.

The Physical Therapist Assistant Program adopted these Essential Functions because of the patient's right to safe and quality health care by our PTA students and PTA graduates. The PTA student must be able to apply the knowledge and skills required to function in a wide variety of clinical settings and situations, while providing the spectrum of physical therapy interventions. Each candidate in this Associate of Applied Science degree program must be able to perform, with or without reasonable accommodations, each of these essential functions in order to fully participate in our PTA program and successfully complete the requirements for the AAS degree in PTA.

Adoption of these Essential Functions by the Physical Therapist Assistant Program is integrated with the patient's right to safe and quality health care by our students and graduates.

Instructions:

Each essential function is described with specific examples provided. The applicant should place a check in the appropriate box if capable of meeting the requirement or not capable of meeting the requirement. The last page of this form requires completion and signature. This completed form should be included with the application process and again following admission to the PTA Program no later than one month prior to the beginning of the first semester.

1. MOBILITY and PSYCHOMOTOR SKILLS: The applicant must be able to have sufficient motor capabilities to execute the movements and skills required for providing safe, reliable and effective physical therapy interventions of patients across the lifespan. These include but are not limited to:



	<i>Some specifics for mobility and motor essential function</i>	<i>I am capable of meeting these requirements</i>	<i>I am not capable of meeting these requirements</i>
1	Ability to move or position patients and equipment which involves bending or stooping freely to floor level and reaching above the head.		
2	Ability to exert 25-50 pounds of force when lifting, carrying, pushing, or pulling.		
3	Ability to move or adjust patients and equipment which involves lifting, carrying, pulling, pushing, and guiding weights up to and including 50 lb.		
4	Ability to safely and efficiently transfer a 150 lb patient from the bed to the wheelchair using maximal assistance.		
5	Ability to bend, twist, stoop, and balance safety.		
6	Coordination, speed and agility to assist and safely guard (protect) a patient who is walking, exercising or performing other rehabilitation activities.		
7	Ability to guide, resist and assist a patient or to provide emergency care, which may involve the activities of standing, kneeling, sitting, walking or crawling, for 90 minutes with no rest.		
8	Appropriate body mechanics for all skills related to physical therapy and react safely and appropriate to sudden and unexpected movements of patients/classmates.		
9	Ability to endure and successfully complete a 40 hour work week during clinical education courses.		
10	Ability to provide for the patient's safety in all physical therapy activities		
11	Manipulate and operate PTA equipment and demonstrate the ability and dexterity to manipulate the devices used in physical therapy which involves adjusting gauges, dials, small nuts/bolts, goniometers, equipment settings, tape measures, printouts, etc.		
12	Ability to administer/perform CPR and emergency first aid safely and reliably without assistance.		
13	Ability to observe and practice standard precautions.		
14	Ability to work in an environment that requires significant physical activity and mobility throughout the workday in a way that does not compromise patient, classmate or therapist safety.		

2. SENSORY: The applicant must have the ability to observe and participate in demonstrations and in physical interventions applied to patients. This includes the ability to obtain information in classroom, laboratory or clinical settings through observation, auscultation, palpation, and other measures including but not limited to:

	<i>Some specific essential functions for sensory</i>	<i>I am capable of meeting these requirements</i>	<i>I am not capable of meeting these requirements</i>
1	Visual ability (corrected as necessary) to recognize and interpret facial expressions and body language, identify normal and abnormal patterns of movement, to read or set parameters on physical therapy equipment, to discriminate color changes, and to interpret and access the environment.		
2	Visual ability (corrected as necessary) to gather information from medical records and professional literature.		



4	Auditory ability (corrected as necessary) to recognize and respond to soft voices, auditory timers, call bells, equipment alarms, and to effectively use devices for measurement of blood pressure and breath sounds.		
5	Ability to effectively use a telephone.		
6	Ability to palpate a pulse and to detect changes or abnormalities of surface skin texture, skin temperature, body segment contour, muscle tone and joint movement.		
7	Adequate and functional positional, and movement, and balance sensations to assist and safely guard (protect) patients who are walking, exercising or performing other rehabilitation activities.		

3. COMMUNICATION SKILLS: The applicant must be able to utilize effective and efficient communication with peers, faculty, various clinical medical practitioners, patients and their families. This includes but is not limited to the following:

	<i>Some specific essential functions of communication</i>	<i>I am capable of meeting these requirements</i>	<i>I am not capable of meeting these requirements</i>
1	Ability to communicate effectively using standard English (interpret and express) both verbally and in writing. Able to correctly follow and interpret verbal instructions.		
2	Ability to communicate effectively (interpret and express) information regarding the status, safety and rehabilitation of patients verbally and in writing		
3	Ability to effectively and efficiently communicate verbally and in documentation with patients, families, health care professionals, community, and with reimbursement payers. Correct spelling required.		
4	Ability to communicate and document effectively via computer or paper.		
5	Ability to recognize, interpret and respond appropriately to nonverbal communications from patients, self and others. .		
6	Ability to modify communications (verbal and written) to meet the needs of different audiences such as patients, families, peers, physicians and other health care personnel.		
7	Work effectively as part of an interdisciplinary team.		
8	Ability to prepare medical documentation using prescribed format and conforming to all the rules of English punctuation, grammar, diction and style.		
9	Ability to effectively use a computer and operate other software programs for billing, documentation or scheduling.		
10	Ability to apply and communicate principles of logical or scientific thinking to define problems, establish facts and draw valid conclusions.		
11	Ability to manage several abstract and concrete variables.		
12	Engage in respectful, non-judgmental interactions with individuals from various lifestyles, cultures, beliefs, races, socioeconomic classes and abilities.		
13	Develop and maintain effective, respectful working relationships with professional colleagues, peers, patients, families, and the general public.		
14	Establish trustworthy professional, empathetic relationships with individuals from a variety of backgrounds, ages and needs.		
15	Apply teaching and learning theories and methods in the healthcare and community environments.		
16	Graciously admit mistakes and accept constructive criticism.		



4. ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS: The applicant must be capable and able to adhere to infection control environmental aspects as related to exposure to Bloodborne pathogens.

	<i>Some specific essential functions of the environment</i>	<i>I am capable of meeting these requirements</i>	<i>I am not capable of meeting these requirements</i>
1	Willingness to treat patients regardless of health condition or infectious state of patient.		
2	Ability to adhere to standard precautions.		

5. BEHAVIOR and PSYCHOSOCIAL SKILLS: The applicant must demonstrate good judgment, and the ability to develop empathetic and therapeutic relationships with patients and others. The applicant must have a tolerance for close and direct physical contact with a diverse population. This includes individuals of all ages, races, socioeconomic, ethnic backgrounds and a variety of people with weight disorders, physical disfigurements and medical or mental health problems. This includes but is not limited to:

	<i>Some specific behavioral and psychosocial essential functions</i>	<i>I am capable of meeting these requirements</i>	<i>I am not capable of meeting these requirements</i>
1	Ability to recognize and respond appropriately to potentially dangerous situations.		
2	Ability to uphold the APTA Code of Ethics.		
3	Ability to maintain patient confidentiality.		
4	Ability to simultaneously work with multiple patients, families and colleagues.		
5	Ability to work with lab partners, patients, families and others during stressful conditions, including but not limited to medically or emotionally unstable individuals, and providing CPR or other emergency interventions.		
6	Ability to encourage cooperation and collegial relationships with classmates, instructors, other health care providers, patients and families.		
7	Ability to prioritize multiple tasks integrates information and makes appropriate decisions.		
8	Ability to cope with heavy workloads, patient demands and changes in schedules. Flexibility important.		
9	Ability to practice professional and respectful physical touch across genders.		
10	Ability to maintain professional demeanor in all clinical interactions.		
11	Ability to interact appropriately with individuals of all ages, genders, ethnicity, socio-economic, religious and cultural backgrounds.		
12	Ability to motivate and positively influence patients and others.		
13	Ability to work effectively with challenging and terminally ill patients.		
14	Ability to delegate appropriately to others.		
15	Ability to appropriately receive direction and collaborate with supervisors, academic and clinical instructors, physicians and other designated health professionals.		
16	Ability to consistently display professional behaviors.		



6. CRITICAL THINKING/PROBLEM SOLVING:

The applicant must be able to critically think and problem-solve, calculate, reason and be able to comprehend and process information within the time frame of a session of physical therapy interventions. The applicant must be able to organize, prioritize and attend to tasks and responsibilities efficiently and effectively. This includes but is not limited to:

	<i>Some specific critical thinking and problem solving essential functions</i>	<i>I am capable of meeting these requirements</i>	<i>I am not capable of meeting these requirements</i>
1	Ability to collect, interpret and analyze written, verbal and observed data about patients. This requires basic math and algebra computation skills.		
2	Ability to prioritize multiple tasks, integrate information and make appropriate decisions. Able to do this with just verbal instructions/directions if necessary.		
3	Ability to act safely and ethically in the physical therapy classroom, lab and clinical settings.		
4	Ability to communicate the rationale or reasoning to justify decisions made.		
5	Ability to consult with others to clarify information and to problem solve.		
6	Ability to recognize potentially unsafe situations and react in an appropriate and timely manner.		
7	Ability to apply knowledge of principles, indications and contraindications for physical therapy interventions. This includes therapeutic interventions related to human pathology and disability, therapeutic modalities, therapeutic massage, pulmonary hygiene, physical and functional measures, and therapeutic exercises.		
8	Ability to educate PTA students, aides, volunteers, patients, families and caregivers.		
9	Comprehend, retain and retrieve complex information from the liberal arts, basic sciences, mathematics, psychological sciences and clinical sciences applying that information to professional course work.		
10	Participate in the process of scientific inquiry.		
11	Procure evidence-based information and apply it to the practice of physical therapy.		
12	Comprehend, synthesize and integrate information from written materials, demonstrations, lectures, class discussions, laboratory practice sessions, and real and simulated patients.		
13	Apply information obtained from classroom, laboratory and written materials to the examination, assessment and intervention of real and simulated patients.		

Clinical rotations occur throughout the two year program and each rotation increases in the time required per week in the clinical setting. The final clinical experience of this PTA educational program occurs during the 5th and final semester with the applicant providing physical therapy interventions in a clinical setting under the supervision of physical therapists. The applicant must arrange their personal schedule and have the ability to compete eight hour days (40 hours/ week) for six weeks during the final rotation. This final clinical experience provides an integrative measure of the applicants' capabilities and functionality. Modification to the clinical program or an individual clinic's work schedule is at the discretion of the Academic Coordinator of Clinical Education (ACCE).



Individuals with disabilities who are otherwise qualified will not be denied admission to the program, if they can perform these essential functions with reasonable accommodations. (*Individuals with Disabilities Policy*)

Applicants to the PTA Program who have questions or concerns about these requirements are encouraged to contact the PTA Program Director (847) 214-7289 or email at mbanks@elgin.edu.

I _____ can perform the essential functions listed above: (*check one of the options*)
(*sign name*)

- _____ with reasonable accommodations (I need reasonable accommodations to fully participate)
- _____ without reasonable accommodations (I do not need any accommodations to fully participate)

Applicants for the PTA Program are required to acknowledge that these essential functions have been provided to them and any questions have been addressed.

Name: (Print) _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Sources:

AASIG Technical Standards, Essential Functions Document. Section on Education, September, 1998.
Ingram, D. (1997). Opinions of Physical Therapy Program Directors on Essential Functions, *Physical Therapy*, 77 (1).
Simmons College Essential Functions, Boston, MA.
University of Rhode Island Essential Functions, Kingston, RI.
Northeastern University Essential Functions, Boston, MA.
Illinois Central College, Peoria, IL