

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS AND TECHNICAL STANDARDS FOR SCC PHYSICAL THERAPIST ASSISTANT STUDENTS

The Sacramento City College Physical Therapist Assistant program is a rigorous program academically and physically. The demands placed on the students during their academic and clinical preparation correspond closely to the intellectual and physical demands which a graduate will encounter as a practicing physical therapist assistant.

The program has been designed to prepare students to enter the profession as a generalist with the skills, knowledge, and abilities to successfully perform all the required functions associated with the role of an entry-level physical therapist for any setting. Our goal is that all graduates will be competent in performing the skills defined in the APTA's Minimum Required Skills of Physical Therapist Assistant Graduates at Entry- Level¹.

In keeping with applicable federal and state laws regarding disabilities and with our program philosophy, we are committed to making reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities to enable them to successfully complete their education and to perform the skills necessary to carry out the role of an entry-level physical therapist assistant. There is an expectation that every student will be able to perform the essential functions required for entry-level physical therapist assistants, with or without reasonable accommodations, while practicing safely, ethically, and in a legal manner. A reasonable accommodation is any reasonable modification of the institution's rules, policies or practices. This may include, but is not limited to, environmental adjustments (such as the removal of architectural or communicative barriers) or auxiliary aids and services. An accommodation is not reasonable if it would result in undue financial or administrative burdens, require a fundamental alteration to the vertical and horizontal integrity of the physical therapy program curriculum, violate accreditation requirements, or require the waiver of essential program requirements.

Please read carefully the document below titled "Essential Functions and Technical Standards for SCC Physical Therapist Assistant Students" to help determine whether you are able to perform the required tasks. The purpose of this document is to delineate the essential functions associated with the role of the physical therapist assistant student and the entry-level physical therapist assistant, and to identify the physical, cognitive, affective and communication abilities needed to perform those functions. Prior to the start of the program, students will be required to sign each page of this document including the statement (also included in the PTA Policies and Procedures Manual) at the end, stating that you have read, understand and can meet the essential functions and technical standards for physical therapist assistant students.

¹ American Physical Therapy Association, Minimum required skills of physical therapist assistant graduates at entry- level. BOD G11-08-09-18;2009

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ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS

To perform the role of an entry-level physical therapist assistant and be successful in the physical therapist assistant program the student must be able to:

1. Perform all aspects of physical therapy in a safe manner minimizing risk to patients, self, and others.
2. Perform appropriate physical therapy (PT) intervention procedures in a safe, reliable, ethical, legal and efficient manner that are consistent with the plan of care established by the physical therapist assistant.
3. Demonstrate professional behavior in all aspects of the program, including academic and clinical settings.
4. Able to practice under the supervision of a physical therapist in a manner consistent with legal standards, ethical guidelines, and standards of the profession.
5. Demonstrate the ability to consistently adhere to and apply universal precautions in appropriate situations.
6. Gather data effectively to measure and report patient responses.
7. Demonstrate effective clinical problem-solving skills.
8. Utilize appropriate and effective spoken, written and non-verbal communication with faculty, students, staff, administrators, patients, families and others. Students must be able to use and understand the English language at a level consistent with competent professional practice.
9. Adapt delivery of care with recognition and respect for individual differences, including the psychosocial impact of dysfunction and disability, and integrate the goals and needs of the patient and family following the plan of care established by the physical therapist.
10. Produce quality documentation to support delivery of care following legal requirements.
11. Utilize resources effectively.
12. Prepare for employment in a variety of settings to meet the healthcare resource needs of the community.
13. Participate in ongoing self-assessment and learning activities to enhance clinical performance.
14. Comprehend, integrate, and synthesize information from the didactic and clinical settings.

TECHNICAL STANDARDS

Technical standards, as distinguished from academic standards, refer to those abilities required for satisfactory completion of all aspects of the curriculum, and the development of professional attributes required by the faculty of all students at graduation. To perform the essential functions and be successful in this physical therapy educational curriculum, an individual must possess specific skills and abilities. These abilities can be divided into 4 categories:

1. Motor and Sensory abilities
2. Cognitive abilities
3. Communication abilities
4. Affective/behavioral abilities

To accomplish the essential functions of the role of an entry-level physical therapist assistant, the student must be able to:

1. Motor and Sensory abilities

A. Observational abilities

- Accurately observe the patient's activity, movement, and behavior during interventions, both from up close and at a distance up to 30 feet away.
- Appropriately take an oral patient history/current status.
- Detect and respond to alarms, timers, emergency signals, cries for help.
- Demonstrate auditory, visual, and tactile abilities to detect changes in patient status which may indicate signs of physiological changes or signs of distress, such as: color and integrity of skin, breathing pattern, muscle tone, and facial expressions.
- Read and interpret materials in patient charts.
- Accurately monitor dials, displays, and equipment used in treatment of patients including exercise equipment and electrical modalities.

B. Mobility

- Demonstrate sufficient balance, coordination and ability to accompany and detect loss of balance in patients who are walking.
- Demonstrate the ability to support and guard patients who lose their balance regardless of the activity being performed or the environment in which it is being performed (level surface, stairs, and unlevel surface).
- Demonstrate sufficient freedom of movement to be able to participate in all classroom and clinical activities and provide safe and effective examination and interventions.
- Demonstrate sufficient balance and coordination to be able to participate in all classroom and clinic activities and provide safe and effective examinations and interventions, including positioning patients.
- Travel to and from clinical practicums in assigned locations (up to 3 hours/day), complete required hours, and accomplish required mobility tasks (standing 6+ hours, sitting 2+ hours, ambulation throughout day including slopes and stairs) in clinical settings.
- Perform emergency procedures such as CPR in a clinical setting.
- Able to move room to room and maneuver in small spaces while providing care and/or support for peers and patients.
- Able to squat, deep squat, crawl, bend/stoop, reach above shoulder level, kneel, use standing balance, and climb stairs.

C. Strength tasks

- Demonstrate sufficient strength to be able to participate in all classroom and clinic activities and provide safe and effective examinations and interventions, such as accommodating resistance and stability to all parts of the body, lifting and carrying heavy objects, pushing and pulling, guarding and transferring patients.
- Safely lift and transfer patients between lying and/or sitting surfaces or transfer sit to/from standing position requiring up to total assist (100% of patient body weight).

- Safely assist and facilitate patients during gait training up to total assist (100% of patient body weight).
- Safely and effectively administer exercise, examination, and intervention procedures which require resistance or facilitation.
- Demonstrate sufficient strength and endurance to tolerate physically demanding workloads sustained over the course of a typical work or school day.
- Able to perform exercise techniques, including applying up to max manual resistance.
- Manually adjust exercise equipment and assistive devices safely and effectively.

D. Fine motor and coordination skills

- Use palpation and touch to accurately assess changes in muscle tone, tissue and skin temperature, joint position, auscultation, joint play and other diagnostic maneuvers.
- Effectively apply compression, retraction, resistance, and percussion.
- Accurately set equipment dials and apply modalities.
- Complete and accurately assess vital signs (e.g., BP, pulse, and other examination procedures).
- Demonstrate sufficient fine motor skills to be able to manipulate small objects.
- Demonstrate sufficient fine motor and gross motor coordination skills to be able to provide safe and effective examinations and interventions.
- Demonstrate sufficient spatial awareness to be able to perform gross motor movements with student partners and patients.
- Coordinate verbal and manual instruction in academic and clinical settings.
- Demonstrate sufficient visual, auditory, or tactile senses to respond to patient/client needs in a busy clinical environment.
- Able to use hands repetitively using manual dexterity for fine and gross motor skills for didactic and clinical activities.
- Able to adjust, apply, and clean therapeutic and treatment equipment.
- Respond to bells and alarms related to emergencies and/or patient/client care.
- Submit clear and complete documentation in a timely fashion.

2. Cognitive abilities

- Comprehend, integrate, and synthesize a large body of knowledge in a short period of time.
- Utilize knowledge to develop appropriate interventions in a clinical setting.
- Use appropriate written and verbal formats for communication of patient information and classroom assignments.
- Use critical analysis to understand theory, research literature, and principles that apply to physical therapy practice.
- Apply inductive and deductive clinical reasoning to solve complex patient problems.
- Reflect on performance accurately to self-assess.
- Measure, calculate, and reason.
- Interpret laboratory and diagnostic imaging data.
- Comprehend three-dimensional spatial relationships of anatomic structures.
- Utilize sufficient judgment to ensure safe encounters with peers and patients.

- Demonstrate auditory, visual, and tactile abilities to detect changes in patient status and make appropriate adjustment to treatment.
- Use sound judgement and safety precautions in academic and clinical settings.

3. Communication abilities

- Communicate effectively and efficiently in oral and written English.
- Communicate appropriately with patients, family members, physicians, and other health care providers.
- Effectively adapt communication for intended audience.
- Interact and establish rapport with individuals, families, and groups from a variety of social, emotional, cultural, and intellectual backgrounds.
- Participate in group meetings to deliver and receive complex information.
- Respond to questions from a variety of sources.
- Assume the role of a health care team member and function effectively under supervision.
- Respond appropriately to verbal and non-verbal communication.
- Share information formally and informally with others.
- Complete paper and/or online forms and documentation according to directions in a timely fashion.
- Demonstrate sufficient communication skills to effectively train patients, family members, and assistive personnel.
- Address problems or questions to the appropriate person at the appropriate time.

4. Affective/behavioral abilities

- Demonstrate appreciation and respect for individual, social, and cultural differences in fellow students, professional colleagues, patients and caregivers.
- Demonstrate appropriate behaviors and attitudes to protect the safety, confidentiality and well-being of patients, faculty and classmates.
- Demonstrate effective ability to appropriately handle situations in the academic and clinical settings which may be physically, emotionally, or intellectually stressful including situations which must be handled swiftly and calmly.
- Demonstrate flexibility and the ability to adjust to changing situations and uncertainty in an academic or clinical environment.
- Demonstrate appropriate responses to emergencies.
- Demonstrate ability to follow policies and procedures required in academic and clinical settings.
- Demonstrate adherence to infection control procedures in academic and clinical settings.
- Abide by the APTA code of Ethics, the Standards of Physical Therapy Practice and the Core Values which can be found on the American Physical Therapy Association website at www.apta.org.
- Establish professional, empathic relationships with individuals across the life span and from various cultures.
- Demonstrate integrity and honesty in the academic and clinical environment.

- Engage in respectful interactions with individuals from various lifestyles, cultures, races, socioeconomic classes, and abilities.
- Develop and maintain respectful working relationships with peers, faculty, professional colleagues, patients, family members and the general public.
- Recognize the psychosocial impact of movement dysfunctions and disability on clients and families.
- Demonstrate proper organization skills and ability to prioritize job tasks.
- Self-evaluate through a process of reflection and provide objective peer assessments and constructive faculty assessments.
- Accept constructive feedback and respond with suitable action.

STUDENT:

“I have reviewed the Essential Functions and Technical Standards of Physical Therapist Assistant Students and anticipate that I will be able to meet these essential functions and technical standards.”*

Student Name (Printed) _____

Student Signature _____ Date _____

* If student has reasonable accommodations request, please attach separate written documentation detailing the accommodations requested including duration for the academic and/or clinical settings and supportive documentation. Reasonable accommodations must be approved by the college/PTA program by the July 15th deadline.