

**Connecticut State Community College**  
**Physical Therapist Assistant Programs**  
Technical Standards

**Preface**

Decisions made by the candidate to enter this educational program for physical therapist assistants should be made with consideration of the following technical standards. The physical therapist assistant (PTA) is a licensed health care professional in physical therapy, providing physical therapy interventions after a physical therapist has evaluated the patient and established a treatment plan. The following standards reflect reasonable expectations of the PTA student for the performance of common physical therapy functions. These standards do not reflect what may be required for employment of the graduate PTA.

Physical therapy education and practice requires technical standards to manage patients/clients safely, appropriately, and effectively. In adopting these standards, the Physical Therapist Assistant Program is mindful of the patient's right to safe and quality health care by our students and graduates. The PTA student must be able to apply the knowledge and skills necessary to function in a broad variety of clinical situations while providing the spectrum of physical therapy treatments. Each candidate in this Associate in Science degree program must have the ability to learn and perform the following competencies and skills.

**Critical Thinking Skills**

Student must possess sufficient abilities in the areas of critical problem solving, reasoning, and decision-making in a timely and safe manner.

Student must be able to prioritize, organize, and attend to tasks and responsibilities efficiently. This includes, but is not limited to the:

- Ability to collect, interpret, and analyze written, verbal, and observed data.
- Ability to prioritize multiple tasks, integrate information, and make decisions.
- Ability to apply knowledge of the principles, indications, contraindications, and application of physical therapy interventions in the physical therapy plan of care.
- Ability to act safely, legally, and ethically.
- Ability to analyze physical, biomechanical, pathological, behavioral, and environmental factors in a timely manner.

**Communication Skills**

Student must be able to utilize effective and efficient communications with peers, faculty, patients and their families, and other health care providers, and others in the English language. This includes, but is not limited to the:

- Ability to read and write at a competency level that allows one to safely carry out the essential functions in both academic and clinical settings and assignments (examples: handwritten chart data, printed equipment operations manuals).
- Ability to effectively communicate (interpret and express) information regarding the status, safety, and rehabilitation of patients.
- Ability to effectively communicate (verbally and in writing) with patients/families, health care professionals and others within the community, and with third party payers.
- Document in the medical record within a specific time frame, reflective of industry standards and formats.

- Ability to communicate and document effectively via electronic device.
- Ability to recognize, to interpret, and respond to nonverbal behavior of self and others.
- Ability to initiate conversations with peers, faculty, patients and their families, and others medical professionals.

### **Motor Skills**

Student must have sufficient motor capabilities to execute the movements and skills required to provide safe and effective physical therapy interventions patient/client management. These include, but are not limited to:

- Coordination, speed, and agility to assist and safely guard (protect) patients who are walking, exercising, or performing other rehabilitation activities.
- Ability to adjust and position equipment and patients, which involves bending or stooping freely to floor level and reaching above the head.
- Ability to move, transfer, or position patients and equipment, which involves lifting, carrying, pushing, pulling, and guiding weight.
- Ability to continuously guide, resist, and assist patients, or to provide emergency care, which involves the activities of standing, kneeling, sitting, walking, or crawling, for up to 90 minutes.
- Ability to perform, with safe and proper body mechanics, transfer and gait training techniques, and positioning and mobilization procedures used during physical therapy interventions with patients.
- Ability and dexterity to manipulate the devices used in physical therapy, which involves adjusting gauges, dials, small nuts/bolts, equipment settings, etc.
- Manipulate common tools used for screening tests of nerves, joints, and muscles which would include sensation, range of motion, and muscle testing procedures.
- Ability to legibly record/document all records required for academic and clinical coursework
- Ability to administer cardiopulmonary resuscitation and First Aid without assistance.
- Ability to elicit information from patients through manual techniques, palpation, auscultation, and percussion for data collection procedures.
- Ability to apply manual therapy techniques.

### **Sensory Skills**

Student must possess the ability to observe demonstrations and participate in laboratory and clinical activities, observe and participate in demonstrations, and observe physical measures applied to patients. This includes the ability to obtain information in classroom, laboratory, and clinical settings through observation, auscultation, palpation, and other measures, including but not limited to:

- 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 assess the environment.
- Auditory ability (corrected as necessary) to recognize and respond to soft voices, auditory timers, equipment alarms, call bells, and to effectively use devices for auscultation measurement of blood pressure and breath sounds.
- Tactile ability to palpate a pulse and to detect changes or abnormalities of surface texture, skin temperature, body segment contour, muscle tone, and joint movement.
- Sufficient position, movement, and balance sensations to assist and safely guard (protect) patients who are walking, exercising, or performing other rehabilitation activities.

## **Behavioral Skills**

Student must be capable of professional behaviors required for the successful conduct of physical therapy in all environments. Student must be able to exercise good judgment, develop empathetic and therapeutic relationships with patients and others, and tolerate close and direct physical contact with a broad and very diverse population of peers and patients. This will include people of all ages, races, genders, sexual orientations, socioeconomic statuses, ethnic backgrounds, as well as individuals with varied physical, medical, or mental health problems. This also includes, but is not limited to:

- Ability to work with multiple patients/families and colleagues at the same time.
- Ability to work with faculty, staff, clinical instructors, classmates, patients, families, healthcare providers, and others. under stressful conditions, including but not limited to medically or emotionally unstable individuals, situations requiring rapid adaptations, the provision of CPR, or other emergency interventions.
- Ability to prioritize multiple tasks, integrate information, and make decisions in a timely manner.
- Ability to foster cooperative and collegial relationships with faculty, staff, clinical instructors, classmates, patients, families, other health care providers, and others.
- Ability to follow college, program, and clinical procedures in a professional and timely manner.
- Demonstrate interpersonal skills necessary for productive classroom discussion and respectful interaction with classmates, faculty, staff, and others.
- Maintain general good health, self-care, and hygiene in order not to jeopardize the health and safety of self and individuals with which one interacts.

## **Capstone**

The capstone experience of this educational program occurs during the final semester, with the student providing physical therapy interventions services in clinic settings under the direction and supervision of physical therapist. The student must have the capacity to work varying schedules for an average of 35 hours per week, to participate in clinical education experiences, for a full semester. Outside of scheduled hours, the student must also have the ability to independently prepare for activities in the clinical environment, for example, reviewing information related to the following day's activities. The clinical education experience provides for a truly integrative measure of the student's capabilities and requires that the student consistently demonstrates entry-level performance of the abilities of the Physical Therapist Assistant.