

Northern Virginia Community College
Physical Therapist Assistant Program
Technical Standards/Essential Functions

PTA students must be able to apply the knowledge and skills necessary to function in a variety of clinical situations while providing the spectrum of physical therapy interventions. PTA students must have the ability to demonstrate clinical judgment and immediately respond to the physiological and psychological needs of the patient when providing physical therapy under the direction and supervision of a physical therapist.

The following standards reflect reasonable expectations of PTA students for common physical therapy functions in the clinical setting. Each student must possess the following abilities and be able to perform the following skills. Qualified persons with a disability who can meet these technical standards/essential functions with reasonable accommodations will not be denied admission to the program. A college disabilities counselor must be contacted in order to best determine reasonable accommodations needed to be successful in the NOVA PTA program. These needs will be determined on an individual basis.

Physical Requirements:

- Perform CPR and emergency first aid
- Apply standard precautions
- Manipulate and operate physical therapy equipment and monitoring devices
- Safely, reliably, and efficiently perform physical therapy treatment procedures
- Possess sufficient endurance to maintain a full-time 40-hour consecutive-day week during clinical experiences
- Perform bending, stooping, kneeling, reaching overhead, sitting and standing while assuring the student's and patient's safety
- Meet the physical demands of healthcare support occupations, including physical therapist assistants that are typically classified as medium work. Medium work is defined as "lifting or carrying 21-50 pounds occasionally, 11-25 pounds frequently and greater than negligible up to 10 pounds frequently." (Department of Labor, Occupational Requirements Survey)

Cognitive Requirements:

- Utilize appropriate verbal, non verbal and written communication with patients, families and all members of the health care team
- Understand and interpret the verbal, non-verbal, and written communications of others and respond in an appropriate and professional manner
- Read, speak, and write in English
- Comprehend and integrate information from coursework into clinical experiences

Affective Requirements:

- Practice in a safe, ethical and legal manner
- Demonstrate respect and engage in non-judgmental interactions with individuals regardless of lifestyle, culture, race, socioeconomic class and abilities
- Work effectively in a group

Sensory Requirements:

- Possess the visual ability to observe and respond to a patient close at hand
- Possess the auditory ability to hear and respond to soft voices, equipment timers, and alarms, as well as blood pressure cuffs and breath sounds
- Use auditory, tactile, and visual senses to assess the physiological status of a patient

Critical Thinking Requirements:

- Possess the intellectual ability to use clinical judgment and problem solving in patient care
- Possess the ability to prioritize multiple tasks and make sound decisions

Sources

- American Physical Therapy Association. Minimum Required Skills of Physical Therapist Assistant Graduates at Entry Level. G11-08-09-18
- 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).
- United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2016). Occupational Requirements Survey. Retrieved from: <https://www.bls.gov/ors/>