

# FUNCTIONAL ABILITIES FOR THE ASSOCIATE OF APPLIED SCIENCE DEGREE PHYSICAL THERAPIST ASSISTANT PROGRAM

---

## Functional Ability Categories & Representative Activities/Attributes for the Associate Degree Physical Therapist Assistant Program

The Federal American with Disabilities Act (ADA) bans discrimination of persons with disabilities. In keeping with this law, Gateway Technical College makes every effort to ensure quality education for all students. However, we feel obliged to inform students of the functional abilities demanded by a particular occupation.

The following is a list of essential functions which a student must possess or be able to demonstrate in order to successfully complete the Physical Therapist Assistant program.

1. **Academic:** Students must possess and demonstrate sufficient academic and intellectual abilities to pass all required general education courses, and to pass each PTA program course with a minimum overall grade of “C” (76%), including both academic and laboratory competencies. Additionally, graduates of the program must pass a national licensing examination in order to obtain a license to practice as a PTA.
2. **General health:** Students must be able to comply with all pre-clinical health requirements of the college and affiliating institutions in a timely manner, and must be able to attend all classes and clinicals faithfully and punctually.
3. **Motor:** Students must have sufficient motor capabilities to execute the movements and skills required for providing safe and effective physical therapy treatment. This includes but is not limited to the following:
  - a. Ability to obtain and maintain current CPR certification.
  - b. Coordination, speed, agility, and strength sufficient to safely and effectively teach, assist, and guard patients who are walking, exercising, or performing other treatment or functional activities.
  - c. Ability to move, adjust, and position equipment, including the ability to bend/stoop to floor level and to reach above the head.
  - d. Ability to move, lift, position, and transfer patients, using good body mechanics and safety techniques (50 pounds minimum).
  - e. Ability and dexterity to manipulate and adjust the devices used in physical therapy.

4. **Sensory:** Students must be able to observe, participate in, and obtain information from classroom activities, laboratory and clinical demonstrations, and physical measures applied to real and simulated patients. This includes but is not limited to the following:
  - a. Visual ability (corrected as necessary) to recognize and interpret facial expression and body language, identify normal and abnormal patterns of movement, read or set parameters on physical therapy equipment, discriminate changes in skin color and other features, and interpret and assess the environment.
  - b. Auditory ability (corrected as necessary) to recognize, assess, and respond to soft voices, timers, equipment alarms, and equipment used to monitor blood pressure and respiratory sounds.
  - c. Tactile ability to palpate a pulse or body landmarks, and to detect changes or abnormalities in surface texture, skin temperature, body segment contour, muscle tone, and joint movement.
  
5. **Communication:** Students must be able to effectively and efficiently communicate with peers, instructors, patients and their families, and other health providers. This includes but is not limited to the following:
  - a. Reading ability sufficient to allow safe and correct performance of all required skills and activities, such as classroom assignments and notes, tests, handwritten patient charts, operation manuals, professional literature).
  - b. Ability to effectively receive, interpret, and express information regarding patient condition and status, and to communicate with peers, patients, families, other providers, and third-party payers.
  - c. Ability to recognize, interpret, and respond to nonverbal behavior of others.
  
6. **Behavior:** Students must be capable of exercising good judgment, developing empathetic and therapeutic relationships with patients, developing and maintaining mature and professional relationships with laboratory and clinical colleagues, tolerating close physical contact with others in laboratory and clinical settings. This includes but is not limited to the following:
  - a. Ability to work with multiple patients/families and colleagues at the same time.
  - b. Ability to work with lab partners, patients, families, and others in stressful conditions, including but not limited to medically or emotionally unstable individuals, situations requiring rapid adaptations, provision of CPR, and other emergency situations.
  - c. Ability to effectively organize time and materials, and meet deadlines.
  
7. **Critical thinking:** Students must have sufficient capabilities in the areas of calculation, problem solving, reasoning, and assessment to be able to comprehend

and process information in a timely manner. This includes but is not limited to the following:

- a. Ability to collect, interpret, and assess data about patients.
  - b. Ability to prioritize multiple tasks, integrate information, and make decisions.
  - c. Ability to apply classroom knowledge of diagnosis and treatment to laboratory situations and to patients in clinical settings.
  - d. Ability to act safely, responsibly, and ethically in laboratory and clinic.
8. **Clinical experiences:** Students are required to complete three clinical courses during the program. This is a series of work experiences with patients in a variety of off-campus settings, under the supervision of practicing PTA's and PT's. This includes an eight-week, full-time (40 hours per week) clinical experience during their final semester, at the end of which the student must display sufficient skill and competence to enter the field as a practicing PTA. Students must be willing and able to organize their time, transportation, and other life responsibilities to complete and benefit fully from their clinical experiences.