

Gulf Coast State College Physical Therapist Assistant Program



Physical Therapist Assistant Program

Clinical Handbook 2026-2027

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Physical Therapist Assistant Program Mission Statement

The PTA program mission is to educate students to become competent in the physical therapy skills needed to perform evidence-based practice in a variety of settings, while meeting the needs of patients, families and healthcare providers in the community. Graduates will be working with clients with psychological, social, and physical needs and must be sensitive to the total individual.

Division of Health Sciences Mission Statement

The Divisions of Health Sciences and Nursing are dedicated to maintaining high academic and clinical standards to meet community needs. Division programs strive to prepare effective, motivated professionals who value interprofessional collaboration while demonstrating awareness and respect for others. This goal is accomplished by addressing the varied needs of all students through academic advising, recruitment, counseling, and innovative teaching and learning strategies.

Non-Discrimination Policy

Gulf Coast State College does not discriminate against any person in its programs, activities, policies or procedures on the basis of race, ethnicity, color, national origin, marital status, religion, age, gender, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, disability, or veteran status. All questions or inquiries regarding compliance with laws relating to non-discrimination and all complaints regarding sexual misconduct or discrimination, may be directed to the Executive Director of Human Resources/Title II/504/Title IX Coordinator and Employment Equity Officer, Gulf Coast State College, 5230 W. US Highway 98, Panama City, FL 32401; 850-872-3302.

Disclaimer

This handbook was developed using the “Guidelines and Self-Assessments for Clinical Education” adopted by the APTA and the Gulf Coast State College “Physical Therapist Assistant Program Handbook.” The preparation and review of the information contained in this handbook was carried out with great care to ensure that all policies contained herein do not conflict with Gulf Coast State College policies. Should a question arise, and an apparent conflict is uncovered, Gulf Coast policy may override program policy. Gulf Coast policies in reference to students may be found in the General Catalog, and in the Gulf Coast State College Student Handbook. If your clinical center would like a copy of either of these documents, please contact the Director of Clinical Education (DCE).

The Physical Therapist Assistant Program reserves the right to make changes in regulations and policies in this handbook as circumstances may dictate. If changes are required during an academic year, the student will be notified.

The student is required to adhere to all policies found in the PTA Program Handbook which is provided to the student at the beginning of the program as well as additional policies within the Clinical Education Handbook.

Gulf Coast State College's Expectations for Student Clinical Experience

- The clinical experience will provide students with the opportunity to practice and perform clinical and professional responsibilities under appropriate PT or PTA supervision.
- The clinical experience will expose the student to a variety of patients and treatment techniques.
- The student will participate in direct patient care.
- Performance evaluations will be constructive and timely.
- The Clinical Instructor will be a positive role model.
- The student will achieve entry-level competency prior to graduation.

Timeline for Information Exchange

Timeframe	Action
January	Students review clinical center information forms. Students will rank clinical site choices on the Clinical Request Form.
March	DCE will make initial contact with clinical sites to formally request clinical placement.
6 weeks prior to Clinical	Confirmation letters are sent to clinical sites (by DCE) to confirm student placement.
4 weeks prior to Clinical	Clinical Inservice: Students will review the Clinical Education Handbook and receive tentative clinical assignment. DCE mails/emails clinical agencies a copy of liability insurance (This is only performed for the agencies who request a hard copy).
3 weeks prior to Clinical	Student will make initial contact with clinical site. They will mail/email a letter in which they introduce themselves, state their goals for the clinical experience, and provide the CI with appropriate contact information. If the clinical site contacts you directly regarding the need to personal information for onboarding purposes, please notify the DCE immediately so that this process may be performed correctly and safely.

1 week prior to Clinical	If the student has not yet received a response from the clinical site/clinical instructor, the student should contact both the clinical site/CI (by phone or make a physical visit) as well as inform the DCE.
Start of Clinical Experience	
Day 1 – Clinical Experience	Orientation (if needed/not already performed prior to clinical start date). Review of clinics written policies and procedures. Review student goals and the CI's expectations for the clinical experience.
Midterm	The DCE will make a site visit or phone call to meet with the student and CI. The CPI Web midterm evaluation should be completed prior to DCE visit.
Completion of Clinical Experience	The CPI Web final evaluation is due (and signed off by both student and CI) by the last day of the clinical experience. Any additional paperwork, surveys, or assignments for the clinical experience are also due by the last day of the clinical experience.

List of Skills Mastered Prior to First Clinical Experience

Performance Evaluation

The students have been evaluated on the skills listed below in the table. If an item falls under the "Skill Check" category, the student demonstrated the skill upon demand. If the item falls under the "Practical" category, then the student was given a patient scenario/POC and was required to carry out a mock treatment on a simulated patient. Many skills fall under both categories indicating that the student demonstrated the skill both in isolation and applied the skill in a mock patient simulation.

Evaluation Criteria

The following grading system is used in the laboratory:

- **3** - Performs all functions and tasks with mastery. Demonstrates efficiency and skill in the preparation, adjustment and use of all materials and equipment. Operates in a confident and professional manner. Is well organized in communication and actions. Demonstrates awareness of personal and patient safety at all times.
- **2** - One verbal cue is from the instructor to perform required functions competently and maintain safety in a clinically acceptable manner.
- **1** - Needs multiple prompts from the instructor. Disorganized and/or inefficient. Uses minimum care in safety. Needs improvement.
- **0** - Performs required tasks or functions in an unacceptable manner. Lacks knowledge of procedures and/or equipment. Inattentive to safety or infection control issues. Actions and/or appearance unprofessional.

Each lab practical also has critical safety elements and required components of the skill that must be passed with a level “3” in order to pass the practical. A critical safety element is a portion of the skill which is intended to prevent or mitigate injury. A required component of the skill is an essential part of the skill that is necessary to ensure student has mastered the particular skill.

PHT 1200

Skill/Technique	Skill Check	Practical	Both
Communication		✓	
Body Mechanics		✓	
Transfers		✓	
Bed Mobility		✓	
Palpation	✓		
Draping		✓	
Wheelchair Mobility	✓		
PROM	✓		
Vital signs (Blood pressure, pulse, respiration rate, SpO2)	✓		
Handwashing/Infection Control			✓
Sterile Technique	✓		

PHT 1131

Skill/Technique	Skill Check	Practical	Both
Communication		✓	
Infection Control		✓	
Documentation	✓		
Goniometry	✓		
Manual Muscle Testing	✓		
Sensory Testing	✓		
Reflex Testing	✓		

PHT 1220

Skill/Technique	Skill Check	Practical	Both
Communication		✓	
Infection Control		✓	
Documentation		✓	
PROM, AAROM, AROM		✓	

Strength Training: OKC/CKC, eccentric/concentric, Isometric/isotonic/isokinetic. (Using gym equipment, free weights, & theraband)			✓
Stretching techniques: PNF, static, & self-stretching		✓	
Postural Stabilization, McKenzie/Williams, Swiss ball ther-ex, plyometrics, aerobic/endurance training		✓	
Monitors and responds to patient's physiological response to exercise/treatment		✓	
Balance (static & dynamic) and coordination		✓	
PNF patterns and strengthening			✓
Functional training (including ther-ex progression to obtain function/meet goals)		✓	

PHT 1124

Skill/Technique	Skill Check	Practical	Both
Communication			✓
Infection Control			✓
Muscle Length Testing	✓		
Scoliosis treatment		✓	
Leg length assessment	✓		
Postural Analysis	✓		
Gait training (patterns, patient education, stairs, curbs, un-level surfaces, guarding)		✓	

PHT 2224

Skill/Technique	Skill Check	Practical	Both
Communication		✓	
Infection control		✓	
Anthropometrics		✓	
Documentation		✓	
Intermittent compression		✓	
Amputee treating (with and without prosthetic)		✓	
Residual limb wrapping	✓		
Pulmonary Hygiene (percussion, chest mobilization, coughing technique, and breathing techniques)		✓	
Cardiac Rehab (levels and intervention)	✓		

Vital and physiologic response to treatment/exercise – specially with cardiac & pulmonary pathology.			✓
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PHT 2211

Skill/Technique	Skill Check	Practical	Both
Communication		✓	
Infection Control		✓	
Anthropometrics		✓	
Documentation		✓	
Hot pack			✓
Fluidotherapy			✓
Paraffin			✓
Laser/Light therapy	✓		
Cold pack			✓
Cold compression (Game Ready and Cryocuff)			✓
Ice massage			✓
Contrast bath			✓
Electrotherapeutic agents (IFC, Premod, TENS, HiVolt, NMES, iontophoresis)		✓	
Ultrasound		✓	
Traction		✓	

Gulf Coast State College Physical Therapist Assistant Program Curriculum

Fall I Courses	Fall I Course Descriptions	Fall I Semester Credits
BSC 2085	Anatomy and Physiology I	3
BSC 2085L	Anatomy and Physiology I Lab	1
	College Level Math (MAC1105, MGF1130, MGF1131, STA2023 or higher)	3
HSC 1531	Medical Terminology	2
PHT 1000	Introduction to Physical Therapy	2
PHT 1102	Applied Anatomy for PTA's	2
PHT 1102L	Applied Anatomy Lab for the PTA	1
PHT 1200	Basic Skills in Patient Care	2

PHT 1200L	Basic Skills in Patient Care Lab	2
Fall I Total = 18 credit hours		
Spring I Courses	Spring I Course Descriptions	Spring I Semester Credits
BSC 2086	Anatomy and Physiology II	3
BSC 2086L	Anatomy and Physiology II Lab	1
PHT 1124	Functional Human Motion	2
PHT 1124L	Functional Human Motion Lab	1
PHT 1220	Introduction to Therapeutic Exercise	3
PHT 1220L	Therapeutic Exercise Lab	2
PHT 1131	Assessment, Measurement, and Documentation	1
PHT 1131L	Assessment, Measurement, and Documentation Lab	2
	Civic Literacy Req (POS 2041, AMH 2010 or AMH 2020)	3
Spring I Total = 18 credit hours		
Summer I Courses	Summer I Course Descriptions	Summer I Semester Credits
PSY 2012	General Psychology	3
ENC 1101	English Composition I	3
PHT 2224	Therapeutic Interventions I: Medical/Surgical Disabilities	2
PHT 2224L	Therapeutic Interventions I Lab	1
	Humanities Elective (Level I, II, or III)	3
PHT 2211	Therapeutic Modalities	2
PHT 2211L	Therapeutic Modalities Lab	2
Summer I Total = 16 credit hours		
Fall II Courses	Fall II Course Descriptions	Fall II Semester Credits
PHT 2801	PTA Clinical Practice I	2
PHT 2225	Therapeutic Interventions II: Orthopedic Disabilities	3
PHT 2225L	Therapeutic Interventions II Lab	2
PHT 2226	Therapeutic Interventions III: Neurologic Disabilities	3
PHT 2226L	Therapeutic Interventions III Lab	2
Fall II Total = 12 credit hours		
Spring II Courses	Spring II Course Descriptions	Spring II Semester Credits

Spring II Courses	Spring II Course Descriptions	Spring II Semester Credits
PHT 2931	Seminar	2
PHT 2810	PTA Clinical Practice II	4
PHT 2820	PTA Clinical Practice III	4
Spring II Total = 10 credit hours		
Program Total Credits = 74		

Clinical Policies

Health and Wellness Policy

As a future healthcare provider, it is important for students to remain healthy and protect themselves from infection, disease, and injury. There are several protocols in place to help students safely navigate through the PTA Program. It is important to read and adhere to each policy or guideline listed below, referenced in the respective appendices:

- Personal Protection Precautions, Appendix D
- GCSC Policy for needle stick, blood or potentially infectious bodily fluids exposure, Appendix D
- Following accident, injury, exposure reporting Appendix D.

*Note: For specific vaccination and individual health insurance requirements necessary for clinical placement, please refer to the **Health Requirements** and **Insurance Requirements** sections under Qualifications for Clinical Placement.*

Transportation and Other Expenses

- The student may be required to travel up to 100 miles from the campus for clinical placement. Therefore, students should anticipate that clinical assignments may not always be conveniently located near their homes.
- This distance refers solely to the total miles from the main campus and does not include travel time to the clinical center (i.e., The amount of traffic or other potential delays are not considered with clinical placements).
- Each student is responsible for their own transportation to and from the clinical site. Ride sharing cannot be used as a reason to modify working hours as required by the clinical agency.

- Chronic car problems are not acceptable reasons for tardiness or absences from clinical assignments.
- Inability to arrange childcare will not be considered in clinical placement arrangements.

Dress Code

A professional appearance is expected while enrolled in the Physical Therapist Assistant program. You are responsible for adhering to the dress code at each clinical site. If a dress code is not indicated by the clinical facility, then a navy-blue polo and khakis are required.

- No jeans or shorts. In most facilities, khakis and polo shirts, or scrubs are standard attire. Khaki pants and a navy-blue polo shirt with a collar are required for the program.
- Students should not wear T-shirts, tank tops, or low-cut necklines to the clinical center.
- Students should wear good shoes (closed-toes), preferably with non-slip soles. No high heels or sandals. Many facilities will allow sneakers, but some will not. Check prior to each affiliation.
- Extravagant jewelry must be avoided. (Medic alert bracelet or simple necklace is acceptable.) Rings other than plain wedding bands are unacceptable. Rings are a scratch hazard to patients, and they may harbor organisms that can be transmitted from patient to patient, or even carry an infection to the wearer. Earrings, other than the small stud-type for pierced ears are not permitted. Dangling earrings may be a source of personal injury should a patient grab hold of one. Visible piercings other than in the ear are not permitted.
- A watch with a second hand or digital second indicator is considered part of your uniform and is required.
- Nails should be neatly trimmed to fingertip length and clean. Nail polish, if worn, should be clear or natural. Dark pinks, reds, purple, green or black, etc. are not acceptable. Artificial nails are not allowed.
- Hair must be pulled back or secured up, if longer than shoulder length. No radical haircuts or hair dyes are permissible, as they are not considered professional.
- Personal hygiene is of vital importance. Daily bathing and the use of deodorant should be routine. Consideration should be shown for the fact that the scent of strong perfume, hair spray, coffee or cigarette smoke is offensive to many patients who may not be feeling well.
- Some clinical sites are smoke-free facilities. It is the student's responsibility to adhere to the smoke-free policy. Violation of a clinical policy is grounds for dismissal from the program.
- Each student must be identified by an approved nametag acquired through the college.
- All visible tattoos must be covered while in the clinic. Policies may vary from facility to facility. It is your responsibility to discuss proper dress code/policy with your CI and/or SCCE.

Confidentiality

All information, which you read, observe, generate, hear, or over-hear about a patient, is considered confidential and may not be passed on to anyone who is not involved in the direct care of the patient. Violation of confidentiality may be cause for the student to be terminated from the clinical affiliation and/or withdrawn from the program. All program students must review, sign, and abide by the confidentiality statement (provided in the Appendix E). Approved HIPAA training is also mandatory prior to clinical affiliation and is available through the college.

Cancellation of the Clinical Experience

Any student who is found to be frequently tardy, absent, untrustworthy, unsafe, unable to accept supervisory criticism, unacceptable in terms of professional appearance, quality of work or who is otherwise a disruptive influence may be terminated from the clinical experience after counseling by the clinical instructor and a conference with the student and the Director of Clinical Education. Depending on the circumstances this may result in the student not being allowed to continue in the PTA program, as clinical experience is a required component of the course. Please refer to Problem Resolution Procedures in Student Problems and Complaints for further details.

Student Attendance Policy

Clinical attendance is expected as assigned. The student has the responsibility to be at the clinical site at the specified time. If the student cannot be present or will be late it is mandatory that he/she:

1. Call the clinical supervisor at the agency.
2. Call and email the Physical Therapist Assistant program at Gulf Coast State College by 8:30 a.m. (DCE or a designated individual).

Since placements are provided by the agency at time and expense to themselves (they provide the training and take supervisory responsibility without compensation from the college), we attempt to disrupt their schedule as little as possible. Therefore,

- You are expected to be present for the days you are assigned, taking lunch and coffee breaks as assigned by the clinic.
- The working hours for a clinical experience will be the working hours of the agency to which the student is assigned and may vary from one clinical site to another.
- Holidays and vacations are at the discretion of the clinical agency. Should the college have a scheduled holiday or vacation period, which the clinical agency does not observe, the student is required to report to the clinical experience as usual. The agency schedule takes priority over the college schedule.

Clinical attendance is expected as assigned. If a student has been injured during the program or elects to have a surgery, clearance (updated physical form with technical standards) must be updated four weeks prior to beginning date of the scheduled clinical experience. If injury should occur during this timeframe, the DCE must be notified immediately, and clearance to resume the clinical must be obtained. This may delay the scheduled clinical experience and/or graduation.

In the event of an emergency situation, where the college is required to close/cancel classes, the student will not be required to report to the clinical facility. It is the student's responsibility to notify the clinical instructor of the excused & required absence from the clinical experience.

All missed clinical hours in excess of 1 day per clinical course must be made up, regardless of the reason for the absence, at the convenience of the clinical site. It is the student's responsibility to schedule make-up hours with the clinical center and the make-up schedule must be approved by the DCE prior to being completed. For liability reasons, no unapproved make-up time will be permitted. *This may affect the student's spring break*

Any time missed during a clinical rotation (even if it is just one hour) must be approved by the DCE. The student must fill out the Clinical Leave of Absence Form —see Appendix G.

Absence of Clinical Instructor (CI)

Should the CI be absent from the clinic (due to illness, vacation, etc.) and be unable to assign supervisory responsibilities to another qualified PT or PTA, the student must be notified not to attend the clinic that day. These missed clinical days must be made up and scheduled at a time convenient for the CI and student.

Student Problems and Complaints

Students are expected to follow the Problem Resolution Procedure and Formal Complaint procedures as fully outlined in the GCSC PTA Program Handbook. This includes a structured 3-step resolution process starting with the clinical instructor or faculty advisor, as well as formal procedures for submitting and tracking written complaints through the college administration.

For full details on grievances, resolution steps, and CAPTE-specific complaint procedures, please refer to the "Student Problems and Complaints" section of the PTA Program Handbook.

Qualifications for Clinical Placement

Authorization for Release of Personal Information

Per student authorization (Appendix F), Gulf Coast State College and the Health Sciences Division are authorized to release the last four digits of the student's social security number and any other personally identifiable information required to enter any Health Sciences program, participate in educational or clinical training experiences, graduate or complete my application for licensure or certification. This release includes, but is not limited to, the following agencies: any affiliate utilized for clinical training, Florida Department of Health, state licensing agencies and the Florida Community College Risk Management Consortium. Revocation of this release may be requested in writing to the Health Sciences Division.

Student Requirements

In order to qualify for clinical placement, the student must:

- Be at least 18 years of age (by the time they enter the clinical experience).
- Maintain an overall cumulative grade point average of 2.0.
- Have passed all required courses (including both PHT courses and general studies courses) with a "C" or better and must have a sophomore standing in the college.
- Provide current, valid cards/certifications in CPR (BLS) and First Aid from the American Heart Association or American Red Cross. Students are required to get these cards on their own; they are not part of the curriculum. Copies of the cards/certificates must be submitted to the program coordinator.
- Provide documentation of a negative TB test annually. If positive, must provide evidence of a clear chest x-ray and follow-up report. The Mantoux Test (two-step TB skin test) may not meet some clinical facility requirements. The QuantiFERON-TB Gold or T-SPOT may be required prior to clinical assignment.
- Submit proof of attendance at the HIV/AIDS, Hospital Orientation, Domestic Violence, HIPAA, Infection Control, Human Trafficking, TB with Mask Fit and Prevention of Medical Errors training programs. A copy of each certificate must be submitted online as part of the student's secure document records account. Students are required to get this training on their own. It is not part of the curriculum.
- Submit all immunizations required by the college and by the clinical facility to which assigned. (Some facilities have requirements beyond those of the program.)
- Have a clear physical examination & signed technical standards form on file.
- Complete APTA's Values-Based Behaviors Self-Assessment Tool prior to the first and second clinical experiences.

Health Requirements

- Students must provide an immunization record.
- Students are required to report their vaccination status for clinical placement purposes. Vaccination requirements are determined by each clinical facility and outlined in the clinical affiliation agreement (accessible online by GCSC Faculty). While some facilities may permit exemptions for certain vaccines (e.g., Flu, Hepatitis B, COVID-19), others may not. Consequently, a student's vaccination status may affect their clinical placement. The Director of Clinical Education (DCE) will make every attempt to secure an alternate placement if needed; however, if an alternative cannot be arranged, it may delay graduation.
- It is strongly recommended that all students receive the Hepatitis B vaccine (HBV) due to possible exposure in clinical agencies. The influenza (Flu) and COVID-19 vaccines are also recommended seasonally. Students must either provide documentation of each vaccine date(s) or sign a statement declaring they have declined each respective vaccine.
- The cost of these vaccines is the responsibility of the student and should be arranged with the student's personal physician or with the Public Health Department.
- Students currently employed in a hospital or other health care agency may be provided with certain vaccines free of charge. Check with your employer.
- Prior to clinical placement in the Sophomore year, the student may need to repeat a tuberculosis test. Certain clinical agencies may have other specific health requirements, which relate to students affiliating with them. These must be adhered to as a condition for affiliation. Check with the DCE regarding specific requirements for the clinical facility requested/assigned.

Drug Screening and Background Checks

For clinical placement, all students are required to have a drug screening and background check prior to clinical placement. A positive drug screen will result in immediate dismissal from the program. More frequent testing (drug screening or background checks) may be required for the clinical site.

All students will be required to complete a second drug test prior to clinical placement. In addition, some facilities may request additional drug testing specific to their needs (i.e., within a six-month window, or one from their facility). It may be necessary for the student to pay for and complete drug tests/and or background checks prior to each of the three clinical experiences in order to satisfy clinical site requirements.

Insurance Requirements

There are three types of insurance relevant to your clinical experiences. The college facilitates two of these via required fees, while the third is the student's personal responsibility.

- **Liability Insurance (Malpractice):** The college will carry liability insurance for all students while practicing at a contracted clinical site. Each student is required to pay a lab fee for liability insurance once a year, payable at the time of registration for the clinical course. This policy covers the student in the event that they accidentally injure a patient while providing care. Upon request from the clinical center, a certificate of insurance will be sent to the clinical site.
- **Accident Insurance:** Each student is required to pay a fee for accident insurance once a year. This insurance covers the student for medical costs incurred if the *student* is injured while providing direct patient care as a student within the program (e.g., a needle stick, lifting injury). Should an accident occur during a clinical experience, the student must notify the DCE as soon as possible, fill out the appropriate accident form for the facility with the Clinical Instructor, and obtain/submit the GCSC Accident-Incident form within 48-72 hours.
- **Personal Health Insurance:** It is highly recommended that students have their own personal health insurance coverage while enrolled in the program. **The college does not pay for or provide personal health insurance.** Healthcare costs associated with a student's enrollment in the program are the financial responsibility of the student. While most clinical sites do not require proof of personal health insurance, a rare few do. If a student chooses not to carry personal health insurance, those specific clinical placements may not be available to them.

Note: Non-payment of college insurance fees (Liability and Accident) will disqualify the student from being assigned a clinical experience placement and will be considered as voluntary withdrawal from the Physical Therapist Assistant program.

PTA Technical Standards

Students must continuously meet the physical, cognitive, and interpersonal PTA Technical Standards required for safe and effective clinical placement. A comprehensive breakdown of these standards (including specific requirements for critical thinking, communication, mobility, motor skills, hearing, vision, and environmental tolerance) is detailed in full within the GCSC PTA Program Handbook. Students must maintain the ability to safely perform all activities outlined in the Technical Standards throughout the duration of their clinical experiences.

The Clinical Center and Faculty

Criteria for Acceptance as a Clinical Center

- The clinical center's philosophy regarding patient care and clinical education must be compatible with that of Gulf Coast State College.
- Student learning experiences must be planned with clearly stated objectives and good communication among the CI, the DCE, and the SCCE.
- All PT's and PTAs on staff must practice ethically and legally as outlined by the state standards of practice, the state practice act, clinical center policy, and the APTA's Code of Ethics for the Physical Therapy Profession and Core Values for the Physical Therapist and Physical Therapist Assistant.
- The clinical centers written personnel and patient treatment policies and protocols must be readily available to students and staff.
- Roles and responsibilities of physical therapy personnel are clearly defined and consistent with the state practice act, rules, and regulations.
- Commitment to the principles of equal opportunity must be evidenced.
- Physical therapy clinical education must be supported by the clinical center's administration. CI and SCCE training and development is encouraged.
- The clinical center must have a variety of learning experiences available to the student.
- The clinical center must provide an active, stimulating, and flexible environment for the learning needs of the student.
- The PT staff must be adequate in number to provide quality educational programs for students and quality care for patients.
- The PT staff is active in professional activities. Activities may include self-improvement activities, career enhancement activities, membership in professional associations, activities related to offices or committees, written or verbal presentations, community, and human service organization activities, etc.
- The clinical center supports staff development & education. Student participation in career development activities is expected and encouraged.
- The clinical center has active quality assurance and internal evaluation procedures for all aspects of the clinical center, which assure the proper maintenance and inspection of all equipment which might be used by students and provide for the safety of students and the patients entrusted to their care.
- Evaluation of the physical therapy personnel should be completed at regularly scheduled intervals and should include appropriate feedback to the individuals evaluated.
- The clinical education site has successfully met the requirements of appropriate external agencies.
- An organized procedure for the orientation of students exists. May include orientation manual, clinical center tour, information related to housing, transportation, parking, dress code, documentation, scheduling procedures, and other important subjects.

Criteria for Acceptance as a Site Coordinator of Clinical Education (SCCE)

- The SCCE is responsible for coordinating the assignments and activities of students at the clinical site.
- The SCCE may or may not be from the physical therapy profession; however, they must be experienced in clinical education, be interested in students, possess good interpersonal relationships, communication, and organizational skills, and demonstrate knowledge of current issues relating to clinical practice and education regardless of their professional background.
- The SCCE must demonstrate professional and ethical behavior in addition to effective supervisory and instructional skills.
- The SCCE must have administration and managerial skills and be skilled in performance evaluation.

Criteria for Acceptance as a Clinical Instructor (CI)

- At least one year of clinical experience and a current license as required by the practice act in the state in which they practice. The CI must be a competent PT or PTA who practices ethically as outlined by the APTA Core Values and ethical standards.
- Demonstrates use of professional skills (per SCCE).
- Demonstrates adequate performance evaluation and feedback skills (per SCCE).
- Must have effective communication skills as demonstrated by the ability to encourage dialogue with the student and to initiate communication that may be difficult or confrontational (per SCCE).
- Effective skill in interpersonal relationships as evidenced by interaction with patients/clients, colleagues, and other health care providers to achieve identified goal (per SCCE).
- Effective instructional skills including: the ability to develop written objectives, facilitate learning & clinical reasoning, and evaluation of the clinical experience (per SCCE).
- Effective supervisory skills as evidenced by: providing formal and informal feedback to the student, presenting clear performance expectations of the student, and developing goals that are mutually agreed-upon by the CI and the student (per SCCE).
- A willingness to work with students as evidenced by pursuing learning experiences to develop knowledge and skills in clinical teaching (per SCCE).
- A clear understanding of the scope of practice for the student (per SCCE).
- A positive evaluation by DCE, with input from SCCE/CI regarding CI readiness prior to clinical affiliation. DCE will continue to monitor all CIs based on student feedback, DCE mid-term site evaluations & input from SCCE as needed.
- Understanding and demonstration of effective PT/PTA teamwork where the physical therapist assumes the ultimate responsibility of patient care (per SCCE).
- Adherence to legal practice standards (per SCCE).
- Knowledge of issues which are pertinent to the physical therapy profession (per SCCE).
- Completion of CPI web training.

Responsibilities of the College to the Clinical Center and Faculty

- The college/program will periodically conduct a Clinical Instructor's workshop.
- The college/program will provide any additional forms needed for student evaluations, assessments, or other clinical education needs. (Note: student clinical evaluations are performed using the CPI Web online tool)
- The college/program will acknowledge the student's supervisor and/or the Site Coordinator of Clinical Education (SCCE) as "Clinical Faculty".
- To meet with the supervising physical therapist or physical therapist assistant to discuss matters of mutual concern.
- To make "on-site" visits for local student affiliations and personal phone calls to both the student and supervising therapist for "out-of-town" student affiliations to discuss the student's clinical performance.

Responsibilities of the Clinical Center to the College

- To provide a planned program for affiliating students to meet specific objectives of the PTA program curriculum, the clinical center, and the individual student.
- To provide a variety of learning experiences that are appropriate for the student.
- To provide one person designated as the Site Coordinator of Clinical Education (SCCE) who will be responsible for coordinating the assignments and activities of students at the Clinical Center.
- To provide Clinical Instructors who are able to apply basic principles of general education (teaching and learning) to clinical education.
- To provide an objective evaluation of the student's performance using CPI web by the completion of the affiliation period.
- To encourage members of the physical therapy staff to attend the Clinical Instructor meetings held by the College.
- To ensure safe practices to all patients while facilitating a positive clinical education experience.

Responsibilities of the Clinical Center to the Student

Orientation of the student must be conducted prior to the clinical experience or during the first two days of the clinical experience. This orientation must include, but is not limited to:

- Introduction to staff
- Walk through department and clinical center – Orient the student to the department and clinical center by providing a tour/introduction on the location of appropriate equipment, policies, personnel, and operation for the site.
- The location and review of departmental and clinical center policies and procedures
- Identify and review the safety and emergency procedures for the clinical center.

- The clinical sites policies and procedures for record keeping and documentation protocols.
- The clinical sites scheduling and billing process and procedures.
- The familiarization and assignment of the student's workspace.
- Identify the location and use of equipment, supplies, modalities
- Inform students on clinical centers preferred treatment protocols and/or where they are located for reference.
- Inform student on their work schedule, in addition to the clinical centers required dress code and appropriate student/employee parking.
- Review of student objectives, CI expectations, and critical skills needed
- Schedule a time for the CI to review the midterm and final evaluations (CPI Web) with the student.

Responsibilities of the Clinical Instructor to the Student

- Establish an environment in which the student feels comfortable, providing appropriate support for student concerns, frustrations, and anxieties. (#22 PTA Student Evaluation of Clinical Experience and Clinical Instructor)
- Practice physical therapy with competence, demonstrating professional, ethical behavior as an exemplary role model for the student. (#11 on CI Survey, was #3 CI Self-Assessment)
- Utilize appropriate time management to allow for sufficient time to explain procedures/treatments and assist the student in performing assigned skills. (#22 P, L, F PTA Student Evaluation; #12 CI Survey)
- Provide constructive feedback to the student privately, and in a non-threatening manner. Additionally, the CI will openly and honestly assess student performance and encourage interactive dialogue with the student. (#6. Mid-Term Clinical Site Contact Form; #22. E, T PTA Student Evaluation)
- Allow the student progressive, appropriate independence. (#22 N. PTA Student Evaluation; Midterm Clinical Site Contact Form; #8 Mid-term Clinical Site Contact Form; #11 CI Survey)
- Plan effective learning experiences with a variety of patients, helping the student to understand the relationship between academic knowledge and clinical practice. (#22. R PTA Student Evaluation; #8 Midterm Clinical Site Contact Form)
- Be available to the student to answer questions and make effective learning experiences out of situations as they arise. (#22 D, L, P PTA Student Evaluation; Midterm Clinical Site Contact Form #6)
- Help the student define specific objectives for the clinical experience under the general guidelines of the clinical course syllabus. (#22 B, C PTA Student Evaluation; #2 Midterm Clinical Site Contact Form)
- Schedule formal regular meetings with the student (at least once weekly is suggested) for discussion of strengths and weaknesses. (#22 F, P PTA Student Evaluation #6 Midterm Clinical Site Form; #5 CI Survey)

- Accept each student as an individual and not judge their performance by comparing them to other students. Be prepared to modify learning experiences to meet individual student needs, objectives, and interests. (#22 E, S PTA Student Evaluation; #10 CI Survey)
- Make the mid-term and final evaluation a constructive process. (#22 T, 23, 24 PTA Student Evaluation; #6 on Midterm Clinical Site Contact Form; #5 CI Survey)
- If the clinical instructor teaches the student a new treatment technique that has not been presented and practiced in the academic setting, the CI is responsible for defining the student's level of competence or proficiency in that technique and for determining if, and when, the student should use the technique with a patient. (#18, 21, 22 N, PTA Student Evaluation; #9. Midterm Clinical Site Contact Form)

Responsibilities of the Director of Clinical Education (DCE) to the Student

- Assign all eligible students to a variety of clinical experience and confirm the assignment, in writing, to each clinical supervisor.
- Assure that all written contracts and letters of agreement between the educational institution and facility are signed and reviewed regularly.
- Make regular contacts with each clinical agency in which students are placed, either by phone or in person.
- Maintain a current file for information on each agency.
- Expand the number of clinical contracts to provide a wide variety of options for student clinical experience.
- Orient students to the process and purposes of clinical experience and provide the needed evaluation forms.
- Assign a grade to each clinical experience based on the clinical instructor's evaluation and any conferences held with the clinical instructor and the SCCE or CI.
- Be available for personal visits to a clinical agency if requested by the student or the agency.
- Act as intermediary between the clinical agency and Gulf Coast State College in the case of the necessity for a disciplinary action against a student. Act as the responsible individual for Step 1 in the problem resolution process.

CI and SCCE Benefits and Privileges

To express our appreciation to those functioning as adjunct clinical staff, Gulf Coast State College offers the following benefits to CI's and SCCE's:

- Use of college and PTA program library guides and facility.
- Free tickets to GCSC ball games.
- Opportunity to serve as teaching assistants in the academic environment.

- The PTA Program Coordinator or DCE should be contacted to coordinate receipt of these benefits.

The Student

Responsibilities of the Student to the Clinical Center

- To report to the clinical center on time and professionally attired on each day of the clinical affiliation or to request permission from the clinical supervisor & DCE for an unavoidable absence, according to established policy.
- To learn and adhere to policies and procedures of the clinical center in which the student is assigned.
- To exhibit exemplary professional behavior at all times as a representative of Gulf Coast State College and a member of the physical therapy profession, and to exhibit the highest of ethical and moral standards while dealing with patients and their families, staff and employees of the clinical center.
- To complete an evaluation of the clinical experience and return to the DCE.
- To strictly adhere to policies regarding confidentiality of information.
- To adhere to health prerequisites of the clinical center.
- To demonstrate a commitment to patient/client care and delivery of service.

Responsibilities of the Student to the Clinical Instructor

As part of the contractual agreement with clinical facilities providing training sites for physical therapist assistant students, students are bound to the following responsibilities and will sign a form prior to clinical experience agreeing to adhere to these conditions:

- Report to the clinical agency on time, properly attired and prepared to go to work every day of the scheduled affiliation period, or immediately call the CI and DCE in case of tardiness or emergency.
- Attempt to do his/her best to safely and effectively perform any tasks requested. The student will ask for supervision or help when unsure of how to proceed.
- Discuss problems or concerns with the clinical instructor as soon as they arise. The student will let the instructor know if they are going too slowly or too fast.
- Observe, ask questions at appropriate times and places, and review academic and textbook resources in relation to the day's experiences.
- Represent the Physical Therapist Assistant program and Gulf Coast State College with the highest standards of moral and ethical behavior at all times.
- Strictly adhere to policies regarding confidentiality of patient information.
- Complete the student evaluation of the clinical experience and share it with the clinical instructor (if the student feels comfortable doing so), on or before the last day of the

affiliation. The evaluation will be an objective, constructive interaction with the clinical agency, with the goal to improve the clinical experience for the next student.

Responsibilities of the Student to the Director of Clinical Education (DCE)

- Keep the DCE informed of any problems arising in the clinical experience on an ongoing basis after discussing the problem with the clinical instructor.
- After receiving a clinical assignment, check with the DCE to review the facility file. You must check for dress code, working hours, health, and other requirements unique to that facility and make sure that you will be in compliance prior to the start of your clinical experience.
- Provide the DCE with proof of 1) Certificates for immunizations, TB tests etc. as required, 2) CPR and First Aid, 3.) Drug Testing, 4.) Background Checks, 5) Health Insurance (as indicated), and 6) Orientation certificates for HIPAA, Human Trafficking, HIV/AIDS, Infection Control, Prevention of Medical Errors, etc.
- Although special requests for a particular clinical experience is not guaranteed, should you have a special request, please discuss it with the DCE no less than six weeks prior to the anticipated date of the start of the clinical experience. No changes can be made once assignments have been posted. (Approximately four weeks prior to the clinical experience)

Clinical Site Selection Process

Selection Criteria

The prospective clinical site must pass the selection criteria outlined in **Criteria for Acceptance as a Clinical Center**. With successful adherence to these criteria, the clinical site will be added to the site list for students to consider. A current contract and Clinical Site Information Form must be on file prior to eligibility. Students will use the Clinical Site Information Form provided by the DCE to help in their selection process. This form also helps the student prepare for their affiliation.

Notification of Site Selection

In March of each year, the DCE will begin placement of the students. Sites will be contacted by the DCE via telephone or email for confirmation and acceptance of student placement. Written confirmation of placement will be mailed a minimum of six weeks prior to the affiliation start date.

Clinical sites must notify DCE 4 weeks prior to the start of the affiliation should unforeseen circumstances warrant withdrawal of site availability.

Students will mail an information letter to the SCCE at their assigned site a minimum of three weeks prior to their affiliation. Upon request, evidence of current CPR certification, medical insurance coverage, background check clearance and the name of a responsible person to contact in the event of an emergency will be sent to the clinical center. One week prior to the clinical start date, students will call or, if possible, visit the site to establish contact and make final preparations. Students shall not make any direct contact with sites unless given permission by the DCE.

Clinical Agreements

A written agreement, which defines the rights and responsibilities of the college, the student and the clinical center is necessary and must be properly endorsed by all parties and on file at GCSC prior to the first day of affiliation. By accepting assignment to a clinical center, the student agrees to carry out all contractual responsibilities.

Clinical Site Review

Clinical Site Information Forms will be updated yearly and filed electronically by the DCE. The DCE is responsible for updating and maintaining these forms.

Clinical Standards

American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) guidelines state that clinical experiences must be consistent with the APTA's Code of Ethics for the Physical Therapy Profession and Core Values for the Physical Therapist and Physical Therapist Assistant, as well as the philosophy of the college program. The clinical education is an organized sequence of learning activities integrated within the curriculum. The collective experiences should allow for opportunities in patient care and teaching, as well as opportunities for students to learn through participation and observation of activities such as administration, quality assurance, and supervision of other supportive personnel.

Clinical education provides students with the opportunity to perform their responsibilities under appropriate physical therapist or physical therapist assistant supervision and with positive role modeling. The clinical experiences should provide exposure to a variety of patients and learning activities in a variety of practice and health care settings and ensure participation in direct patient care.

Clinical Competencies, Evaluations, and Criteria

Clinical Performance Instrument (CPI Web) Clinical competence for specific skills must be demonstrated to successfully complete clinical affiliations. Students must complete each clinical at certain levels as established by the PTA program in accordance with CPI web and syllabus for the respective course. Clinical Instructors should strictly adhere to the ratings below when grading the student on CPI Web to ensure accurate progression.

- **Clinical I:** Must be completed at an **Advanced Beginner** level.
- **Clinical II:** Must be completed at an **Advanced Intermediate** level.
- **Clinical III:** Must be completed at **Entry-Level**.

In addition, skills listed under intervention or data collection must be marked as performed by both the CI and the student, in order for credit to be given. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that they have mastered all skills at the appropriate level. The student should keep a list of the skills that need to be mastered and share the information with the CI at the beginning of each clinical affiliation.

Evaluation of Student Performance Specific objectives have been developed for each clinical experience. They reflect the technical skills completed at the time of the clinical experience and the level of the clinical experience. All technical competencies passed in the laboratory setting may be asked of the student in the clinical setting and should be practiced to clinical competency as opportunities arise. In the supervisory relationship, both the clinical instructor and the student assume responsibility for:

1. Identifying the students specific learning needs and goals.
2. Formulating a plan of growth which leads to achievement of technical competencies as outlined in the specific objectives for the given clinical experience.

Students will be evaluated at the end of the first clinical experience, and at both the mid-point and end of clinical experiences II and III by the clinical supervisor. Performance should be discussed at those times.

Students will evaluate the clinical experience at the end of each affiliation and will share this evaluation with the clinical supervisor. This evaluation form is to be turned in with your performance evaluation. Your grade is not complete until it is turned in. After you have discussed and signed the final evaluation form, the final form will be returned to the DCE.

A midterm evaluation must be conducted within 5 days of the midterm date. Final evaluations must be completed and reviewed by the last day of the affiliation. The final clinical grade is determined by the DCE.

A review of the critical competencies required for successful completion as defined by CPI web should be conducted within the first few days. The CI must provide verbal or written feedback at least weekly (informal feedback should be given more frequently – daily is suggested).

Clinical Criteria and Projects Students will be required to conduct in-services, quality assurance projects, journal reflections, and case studies during their clinical experience. All references to patients will be anonymous and confidentiality will be maintained.

Students will show evidence of experiencing the following elements during their clinical practice.

- Management of patients with diseases and conditions representative of those commonly seen in practice across the lifespan and the continuum of care. (Journal Assignments)
- Practice in settings representative of those in which physical therapy is commonly practiced. (Journal Assignments)
- Involvement in interprofessional practice. (Discussion board)
- Participation as a member of the PT and PTA team. (Discussion board)

Student Evaluation of Clinical Instructor and Clinical Center Students will conduct an evaluation of the CI and clinical site during the final week of their affiliation. Students may share this evaluation with their CI. This evaluation must be returned to the DCE before a grade will be assigned for the clinical rotation. The evaluation will be shared with the SCCE upon request. The student is responsible for contacting the DCE with any problems or concerns that require immediate attention. These concerns will be documented in writing by the DCE. The DCE will contact the SCCE and/or clinical instructor to begin the resolution process for any problems.

Obedience to State Laws and Code of Ethics

Any behaviors or activities conducted by the student in the clinic that violate state law, the state practice act, or the APTA's Code of Ethics for the Physical Therapy Profession or Core Values for the Physical Therapist and Physical Therapist Assistant will result in immediate dismissal from the program. If a student is arrested or convicted during the program, this must be reported to the PTA Program Director and the DCE within 24 hours.

Poor Student Performance Procedures

A rating below the required levels for each respective clinical as outlined in Clinical Performance Instrument Competencies (CPI Web), will result in a failure of the clinical affiliation. If the student is in danger of falling below the level required, the DCE should be notified immediately by the CI. The student will be placed on academic warning and a written plan will be established to improve performance.

Managing the Problem Situation Upon recognition of a problem with a student's clinical performance, it is important that the DCE, CI, and SCCE collaborate in its management and resolution. Careful documentation of the problem must be completed. A chronological journal of observations, initiated at the first sign of a potential problem, is suggested. The student, CI and DCE will meet to review the documented problem(s), and a plan for corrective action will be formulated and signed by all parties. The plan will contain the defined areas of deficits, the desired behaviors required to correct these deficits, and a plan for attainment of each one.

The DCE will remain in close contact with the student and will facilitate the remediation process. A calendar of weekly reviews of progress will be established to assess the effectiveness of the plan and the progress of the student. The student will be allowed to submit written comments in response, which will be added to these documents.

If a discrepancy between the student's report of the situation and the report given by the SCCE or CI exists, it is the role of the DCE to clarify the behaviors or deficient skills at the heart of the problem.

The CI is responsible for ensuring that the student was treated fairly and given regular feedback regarding performance. Documentation of performance and records of meetings with the student are essential.

Assessment Policy of Clinical Instructors

Assessment of Clinical Educators will occur through a variety of mechanisms. This assessment will include evaluating the effectiveness of individual CIs as well as the effectiveness of the CIs collectively. The assessment will determine the effectiveness of the clinical instructor's student instruction abilities, if the site CI would benefit from individual mentoring by the DCE for future student instruction and for aiding in determining future developmental areas for all clinical instructors associated with the college clinical experiences.

Individual CI assessment will occur prior, during, and immediately after the time the CI has a student. This assessment will include gathering information from the student, CI, DCE, and SCCE as appropriate.

Student:

- Students will assess the clinical instruction using the PTA Student Evaluation of Clinical Experience and Clinical Instruction forms at mid-term and end of the clinical experience.
- Mid-term evaluation will be completed by the student and available for review by the DCE prior to the scheduled mid-term visit/call. Any CI receiving a student score of 1 or 2 will trigger the DCE to have a further discussion with the student during the midterm visit.

- Final evaluations will be completed by the student and shared with the CI at the end of the clinical. The form will then be submitted to the DCE. Any score of 1 or 2 will be recorded on the CI Performance Log and will be discussed with the SCCE. If the CI receives a score of 1 or 2 by more than one student an individual CI development plan will be created.
- During the mid-term site call/visit the student will be asked about CI effectiveness. Special attention will be given to findings from the PTA Student Evaluation of Clinical Experience, question #22. Student responses will also be recorded on the Mid-term Clinical Site Contact Form questions, #13-17.

All issues regarding a specific CI will be recorded and kept electronically on the R drive under clinical files.

The concerns are tabulated and saved for future discussion with the Site Coordinator of Clinical Education (SCCE). Discussion with the SCCE will occur at least on a yearly basis by email or phone and documented in the Clinical Site Concerns Log. If the DCE determines critical safety, or ethical issues are the main concern, the DCE will initiate a discussion with the site SCCE immediately after such issues have been identified. The discussion will be documented on both the Clinical Site Concerns Log and the CI/SCCE Development Activity Log.

Clinical Instructor:

- The CI will be interviewed by the DCE during the mid-term call/visit. The DCE will ask questions regarding the CI's self-perception of their effectiveness as a clinical instructor.
- Mid-term Clinical Site Contact Form questions (#1,3,4,6,8,9,10)
- Each CI will be asked to complete a CI Survey on his/her performance at the end of the clinical rotation. Information gathered from this document will be used by the DCE to assess the CI's self-reported instruction performance and aide in identifying areas of clinical education concern or weakness that may be improved through continued education offered by the college. The DCE will note the areas of concern and offer one-on-one advising if the CI is likely to be supervising PTA students in the future.

Director of Clinical Education (DCE):

- During the mid-term call/visit the DCE will evaluate the CIs general knowledge of clinical education strategies and determine if there are any areas of need for development. This will be recorded on the Mid-Term Clinical Site Contact Form.
- Upon review of CIs completion of CPI if the DCE notes any issues or concerns. Concerns will be documented on the CI Performance Log.

Site Coordinator of Clinical Education (SCCE):

- If student interview and CI interview indicate a significant concern the DCE will interview the SCCE regarding the CIs performance as a clinical educator.

- Effectiveness of all developmental activities will be evaluated based upon the trigger that indicated the need for the plan.

Aggregate Clinical Instructor Assessment

Student:

- Students will assess the clinical instruction using the PTA Student Evaluation of Clinical Experience and Clinical Instructor at the end of the clinical experience. Any area indicated as a 1 or 2 for more than one CI will be considered an area of global concern and a CI developmental plan will be established.

Clinical Instructor (CI):

- CI self-assessments completed after each clinical experience will be compiled. Any area rated as a 1 or 2 by five or more CIs will trigger a developmental activity.

Director of Clinical Education (DCE):

- DCE notes from mid-term site/call visit logs and from final evaluation of CPI completion will be compiled. Any area noted as a concern with five or more CIs will trigger a developmental activity.

Site Coordinator of Clinical Education (SCCE):

- A survey will be sent to all CIs/SCCEs on an annual basis. Any area rated as a 1 or 2 by five or more SCCEs will trigger a developmental activity.

Developmental activities could include a special mailing, a newsletter, a CE course/workshop, article review, consultation or an online instructional activity.

Appendices

[**Appendix A** - CPI Web 3.0 User Guide for the CI](#)

[**Appendix B** - CPI Web 3.0 User Guide for the SCCE](#)

[**Appendix C** - CPI Web 3.0 User Guide for the PTA Student](#)

[**Appendix D** - Health Sciences Division Infection Control Resource Manual](#)

[**Appendix E** - Confidentiality Statement](#)

[**Appendix F** - Authorization for Release of Personal Information](#)

[**Appendix G** - Clinical Leave of Absence Form](#)

[**Appendix H** - Health Sciences Responsible Use of Social Media](#)

[**Appendix I** - APTA Standards of Conduct in the Use of Social Media](#)

[**Appendix J** - Health Sciences Division Alcohol and Drug Policy](#)

[**Appendix K** - CI Correspondence Form for all Clinical Rotations](#)