

SOUTH TEXAS COLLEGE

PHYSICAL THERAPIST ASSISTANT PROGRAM

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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FAQs

What Is A Physical Therapist Assistant?

Physical Therapist Assistants, or PTAs, are skilled health care providers who work under the supervision of a physical therapist. PTAs assist the physical therapist in implementing treatment programs to help restore or improve function, relieve pain, encourage independence, and educate patients and their families. The main goal in physical therapy is to help people help themselves.

Do I Need A License To Be A PTA In Texas?

Yes, the State of Texas requires licensure in order to practice as a PTA. After successful completion of this program, graduates are eligible to sit for the licensure examination. To date, 100% of program graduates have successfully gained licensure.

100% of Program Graduates passing their licensure exam and seeking employment in physical therapy have obtained positions as PTAs. Program Graduates are working in a large variety of practice settings.

What Are Common Tasks Performed By PTAs?

Under the direction and supervision of a physical therapist, some of a PTAs tasks might involve:

- Stretching and flexibility exercises
- Strengthening and endurance exercises
- Balance and coordination activities
- Aquatic Therapy
- Physical agent modalities such as electrical stimulation, therapeutic ultrasound, thermotherapy, cryotherapy, and massage
- Mechanical Traction
- Gait and Locomotion Training
- Documentation of patient's responses to treatment
- Patient/family/healthcare provider education

Where Can PTAs Find Employment?

PTAs work with patients/clients in a variety of settings including:

- Hospitals
- Rehabilitation centers
- Nursing home facilities
- Outpatient clinics
- Home health care services
- School systems
- Industry

What Are The Qualities And Behavioral Expectations Of A PTA?

Because of the humanitarian nature of this profession, PTAs must have a genuine interest in caring for and service to others.

- Critical thinking
- Problem solving
- Strong oral and written communication skills
- Interpersonal skills

- Commitment to learning
- Effective use of time and resources
- Use of constructive feedback
- Responsibility
- Commitment to safety

What Other Desirable Qualities And/Or Abilities Must A PTA Possess?

Other qualities include:

- Integrity □ Altruism
- Cultural competence
- Accountability
- Social responsibility
- Professional presentation
- Emotional health
- Attention to detail
- Effective organization

What Are The Physical Demands Of The PTA Student As Well As In The Typical Work Setting?

Physical exertion is common in the P.T. profession. PTAs need to be in good physical condition and have a moderate amount of strength in order to:

- Safely adjust, move, position, and lift patients and equipment
- Safely assist and protect patients who are walking with and without assistive devices, exercising, or performing other activities
- Independently adjust equipment parts, perform manual therapy techniques , and utilize PT equipment such as goniometers, grip gauges, wheelchairs and free weights
- Provide for the patient's safety in all physical therapy activities
- Reach arms above head and below waist, stoop/twist, stretch, bend, kneel, squat, push, pull, walk, sit, or crawl as the need arises; move quickly (respond to emergency) while maintaining safe posture/body mechanics
- Perform bimanual activities easily
- Obtain and maintain CPR certification (American Heart Association CPR for Healthcare Providers)
- Use proper body mechanics for all skills related to physical therapy, and apply standard precautions when rendering physical therapy treatment
- Possess the endurance necessary to perform 40 hour work weeks during clinical education courses
- Stand and maintain balance during classroom or therapeutic procedures/ activities for long periods of time, and maintain a high energy level throughout the day

A comprehensive list of the PTA program's [Technical Standards](#) is available on the PTA program web page.

What Is The Employment Outlook For A Physical Therapist Assistant?

The following information was taken from the United States Department of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook website:

The employment outlook for PTAs in the United States and the Rio Grande Valley is good at the present time. The physical therapist assistant career employment is projected to increase much faster than average. Growth is projected to increase by 40% from 2012-2022. In 2013, the National average wage was \$25.63/hr. or \$53,320/year and the Texas average wage was \$33.04/hr. or \$68,730/year for PTA's. Retrieved 6/24/2014 from <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/physical-therapist-assistants-and-aides.htm>

When Can I Apply To The PTA Program?

- Applications are available by the first week of March of each year.
- Students can obtain an application at the PTA program office.
- The application deadline is July 10, 2018, by 5:00 p.m.
- A class is selected and accepted prior to each fall semester.

Will I Get In The Program If I Meet All The Admission Requirements?

Due to program size limitations, a number of applicants who meet the program admission requirements may not be admitted to the program.

Does The PTA Program Utilize A Waiting List?

The program does not utilize a "waiting list"; a new applicant pool is established each year. All students interested in the program who are not granted admission (qualified and nonqualified) must reapply if they wish to be considered for enrollment.

What Is The STC PTA Program Application Process?

The PTA program selects an average of 18-20 students each year. In order to be eligible to apply, students must first meet all [PTA Program Application Requirements](#). Applications are evaluated through a competitive selection process utilizing verified points accumulated by the student. Phase I scores are calculated using:

1. GPA of general education courses completed in the degree plan multiplied by the number of courses completed (see below). *NOTE: One point will be deducted for each repeated degree plan course.* (Max 32 points)
2. "[Documentation of Experience Form](#)" scores. (Max 6 points)

Additional Points (Max 16) are awarded for:

- An ACT Composite score above 19
- An ACT Writing score above 6
- An "A" on the first attempt in Introduction to Physical Therapy (must have been taken within the last 2 years)
- A "B" or better in a College Success for Health Care course
- A previous degree
- Qualifying certificate (verifiable certificate and related to medical/professional allied health)

Please see [Application Points Computation Worksheet](#) for more detailed information.

Once Phase I points have been tabulated, the 30 applicants with the highest scores will be notified via email and asked to return for the second phase of the selection process by mid-June. Other applicants not selected for the second phase will be notified via email within 30 days of the application deadline. Phase II typically includes a [Health Occupations Aptitude Examination](#) (maximum 23 points) and brief interview with a small committee of clinicians and faculty (maximum 23 points). Phase I (maximum 54 points) and phase II (maximum 46 points) scores will be added (100 point scale) and applicants will be numerically ranked in descending order until maximum class size is reached.

The typical number of new positions available on an annual basis is 18-20. The final number of admissions is dependent on available resources. Applicants will receive notice via email of their status, i.e. accepted, alternate, or not accepted, by early July of the current year. In the case of tied applicants, finalists will be chosen based on 1) previous acceptance/alternate status, and 2) date of application.

What Are The PTA Program Application Requirements?

In order to be eligible to apply, students must meet requirement that include testing, experience, and academic preparation. A complete list of [application requirements](#) can be found on the program webpage.

What Are The PTA Program Requirements On The Act?

- Complete the [ACT](#) Exam including the Writing Component.
- Achieve an ACT Composite Score of a 19 or above and a minimum score of a 16 in all individual areas of (English, Math, Reading, and Science).
- ACT Writing score must be a 6 or above.
- Scores must be current within the last five years.
- ACT Exemptions are not accepted.

Does The Program Require A Particular GPA?

Applicants must earn a minimum cumulative GPA of a 3.0 on a 4.0 scale in all courses, including transfer courses and those completed at STC. All pre-requisite courses must be completed with a “B” or better.

How Long Is The STC PTA Program?

The [PTA degree plan](#) requires a minimum of 6 semesters. A prerequisite semester must be completed in order to apply. Once accepted into the program, the remaining four (5) semesters occur over a two year period.

What Prerequisite Course Do I Need To Complete Before Applying To The PTA Program?

The following pre-requisite courses need to be completed with a “B” or better.

- BIOL 2401 - Anatomy & Physiology I (grade must be within the last 5 years)
- ENGL 1301 - English Composition
- PTHA 1409 - Introduction to Physical Therapy * (grade must be within the last 2 years) ○ *ACT + Writing Exam requirements must be met to be eligible to register for PTHA 1409.
 - *Program approval is required before registering for this course.

Can I Take Other Courses In The Degree Plan For Additional Points?

Yes, applicants have the option of taking the remaining general education courses in the PTA degree plan, which are not considered pre-requisites. More GPA points can be earned (see [Application Points Computation Worksheet](#)) if these courses are taken before the application deadline. All courses must be passed with a grade of a “C” or better. Applicants can take any or all of the following:

- BIOL 2402 - Anatomy & Physiology II
- PSYC 2314 - Lifespan Growth and Development
- HUMANITIES ELECTIVE: Choose **one** of the following
 - HUMA 1301 - Introduction to Humanities I
 - PHIL 1301 - Introduction to Philosophy

- PHIL 2303 - Introduction to Logic
- PHIL 2306 - Introduction to Ethics

Can I Take My Pre-Requisites At Another College Or University?

Credits for courses in which a passing grade, "C" or better, has been earned may be transferred to South Texas College from any college accredited through one of the regional accrediting associations of the Association of Colleges and Schools. Pre-requisite course grades must be a "B" or better in order to satisfy program application requirements. Please refer to the STC [Academic Information](#) web page for information related to transferability.

Is PTA Program Advising Required Prior To Application?

The program requires that students attend an Early Program Information/Advising Session prior to application. For session times and to schedule an appointment, contact the Physical Therapist Assistant Program at (956) 872-3161 or log on to the [PTA website](#).

Where Do I Complete My Volunteer Work?

The PTA Program does NOT assist in finding volunteer placements. Interested applicants are responsible for identifying two appropriate locations and completing 25 hours of observation in each. Please refer to the [Documentation of Experience Form](#) for additional instructions. One experience should be completed in an inpatient setting (hospital or nursing facility), and the other should be completed in a different type of setting such as an outpatient clinic or pediatric center. Home health hours are not accepted. Therapists who supervise volunteer experiences cannot be a relative or personal friend of the student applicant. The volunteer should be supervised by a PT or PTA in order to acquire a realistic understanding of physical therapy. Forms that are filled out by professionals from other disciplines such as Chiropractors, Athletic Trainers, or Physicians will not be accepted.

Does The Program Require A Criminal Background Check And Drug Screen?

Yes. [STC Board Policy #3337](#) requires that all students participating in a Nursing or Allied Health Program clinical course pass a criminal background check, drug screen, and satisfy medical health requirements prior to enrolling in a clinical course. In addition, students participating in the program are subject to periodic—"for cause" drug screening.

- According to the Texas Board of Physical Therapy Examiners PT Rules 343.5 the Board may deny a license to or discipline an applicant/respondent who has been found to have a history of substance abuse.
- According to the Texas Board of Physical Therapy Examiners PT Rules 343.9 the Board may revoke or suspend an existing valid license, disqualify a person from receiving or renewing a license or deny to a person the opportunity to be examined for a license because of a person's conviction of a felony or misdemeanor if the crime directly relates to the practice of physical therapy.

Following acceptance to the program, students will be provided specific procedures for obtaining the prescreening criminal background check and drug/alcohol test. The student is responsible for the cost of these requirements/tests.

NOTE: Applicants with known criminal histories should initiate the process for providing proof of licensure eligibility from the Executive Council of OT and PT Examiners prior to acceptance, as this may take up to 6 months to complete. Only the licensing board may rule on a student's eligibility for

licensure. Please log onto the [Executive Council of Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy](#) web site or contact the ECPTOTE Chief Investigator at (512) 305-6900 for additional information or to request a [Criminal History Evaluation Letter](#). If a student is unable to provide timely proof of licensure eligibility, he/she will be considered ineligible for program entry.

The Clinical Affairs Specialist, at the Nursing and Allied Health Campus is available to assist students with criminal histories in initiating the pre-application review. All consultations are confidential.

Does The Program Have Additional Eligibility Requirements?

Yes, once a student has been notified of acceptance, they are required to provide verification of attendance and a copy of a CPR (American Heart Association CPR for Healthcare Providers) and First Aid Certification card. The CPR must be an adult and infant certification course. First Aid is certified through the National Safety Council.

NAH students must also provide proof of immunizations and testing to comply with both Texas law and clinical facility requirements. Log on to the NAH Division webpage for addition information on the [required immunizations](#).

Can Students Attend The PTA Program Part-Time?

No. PTA program courses are only offered once per year and in a fixed sequence. All students must enroll on a full-time basis.

What Is The PTA Program Schedule Like?

- All PTA Program classroom instruction takes place in McAllen at the Ramiro R. Casso Nursing & Allied Health Campus
- The first year of the program includes classes and activities that typically run from Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.
- The second year includes classroom instruction as well as Practicum (clinical) courses. One academic course includes an average of six (6) Saturday morning sessions.
- Schedules for Practicum (clinical) courses will vary depending on the facility in which a student is placed and may include early mornings or late afternoons.
- Due to the time commitment necessary to attend classes and study, it is recommended that students do not work while in the program.

What Are The Skills Practice Labs Like?

- In practice labs, students take turns role-playing the student PTA and the client/patient in a simulated clinic setting.
- Practice labs provide the student multiple opportunities for practice, and feedback. They enhance classroom and laboratory instruction and facilitate timely attainment of technical skills needed to be successful on lab practical exams and help the student achieve competence with various intervention skills prior to clinical placement.
- These labs are supervised by PTA faculty and/or a lab assistant. Attendance is not mandatory it is strongly recommended.

What Is Your Grading Scale Like?

The following grading scale is utilized in all PTA courses:

A=90-100

B=80-89

C=75-79

D=66-74 F=65 or Below

In order to ensure competency prior to clinical placement, students must demonstrate a final average of 75% or higher for “Examination (written) Component” of each PTHA course, regardless of the overall final course average. Students must also demonstrate a final average of 75% or higher on the “Laboratory Component” as well.

What Happens If I Make Below 75% In One Of The Components?

Students who fail to meet the minimum 75% average in either category/component will receive a maximum grade of “D” in the course and will be ineligible to continue in the program until the course has been repeated successfully. Readmission into the program will be required.

What Does The PTA Program Cost?

Based on the 2014-2015 STC scales, the estimated program cost is \$12,725.00. This includes tuition and fees*, textbooks, professional liability insurance, uniforms, clinical supplies, immunizations, criminal background check, and drug screening. ****Tuition and fees are based on current in-district estimates and include ALL pre-requisite, general education, and program specific courses. Book costs are estimated.***

Is Financial Aid Offered For Students In This Program?

Students enrolled in the Physical Therapist Assistant Program are eligible to apply for financial aid or [other forms of assistance](#) offered by the college. For more information visit the STC [Student Financial Services](#) web page. Students are also encouraged to apply for scholarships. There are several scholarship opportunities that are specifically to assist Physical Therapist Assistant students, as well as others that are available to the College community. Students may be eligible to receive assistance from:

- South Texas College’s Community Health Outreach Committee (CHOC) Scholarships
- Valley Initiative for Development and Advancement (VIDA)
- Edinburg Regional Medical Center Auxiliary Scholarship for Medical Related Studies
- Texas Alliance of PTA Educators Transitional Scholarship (PTA Students)
- TPTA Coastal Bend District Student Scholarship (PTA Students/transitional)
- [APTA Minority Scholarship Award](#)

Information and applications for PTA specific scholarships will be made available to all students by the PTA Program Chair.

PTA students have an additional financial assistance opportunity through the Texas Alliance of PTA Educators, Inc. in the form of an Annual Outstanding PTA Award. This award is typically based on nomination, TPTA involvement, and scholastic achievement. The monetary award consists of \$250 to the individual student winner and \$250 to their respective program student club. Information regarding this award will be made available to all students by the PTA Program Chair.

Students are also encouraged to log on to the APTA website for additional information on [scholarships, awards, and grants](#) related to physical therapy.

How Can I Increase My Chances Of Success Once In The PTA Program?

Here is a Success Checklist

- Are you in good physical and emotional health?
- Do you have a financial plan and means to complete the program?
- Have you made plans for adequate, stable, and flexible childcare?

- Do you have dependable transportation and is it possible for you to drive to Rio Grande or Brownsville during clinical rotations if necessary?
- Can you attend school for class, and practice labs 40 hours a week?
- Are you available to commit additional preparation and study time as needed?
- Do you have a support system (family and friends) that will understand the demands of the program and who are committed to helping you succeed?

Who Are The Faculty And Staff With The PTA Program At STC And How May I Contact Them?

Position	Name	Phone
PTA Program Chair:	Diana S. Hernandez, PT, MEd	872-3152
PTA Program ACCE	Arlene P. Garcia, PTA	872-3153
PTA Instructor	Sayda Ruelas, PT	872-3154
PTA Instructor	Sharlene Polvado, PTA	872-3016
Department Secretary	Mari Ponce-Vargas	872-3161
PTA Office Fax Number		872-3163

Thank you for your interest in the STC PTA Program. We hope to have answered many of your questions. You may contact Mari Ponce Vargas at marip@southtexascollege.edu. You may also call her at 956-872-3161 to schedule an advising appointment at Office #331 of the Ramiro R. Casso NAH Campus.

STC PTA PROGRAM GRADUATES PHOTO ALBUM

STC PTA Class of 2017



STC PTA Class of 2016



STC PTA Class of 2015



STC PTA Class of 2014



STC PTA Class of 2013



STC PTA Class of 2012



STC PTA Class of 2011



STC PTA Class of 2010



STC PTA Class of 2009



STC PTA CLASS OF 2008



STC PTA CLASS OF 2007



STC PTA CLASS OF 2006



STC PTA CLASS OF 2005



STC PTA CLASS OF 2004



STC PTA CLASS OF 2003



STC PTA CLASS OF 2002



STC PTA CLASS OF 2001



STC PTA CLASS OF 2000

