

VWCC PHYSICAL THERAPIST  
ASSISTANT PROGRAM  
PROSPECTIVE STUDENT  
INFORMATION

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## ABOUT THIS PACKET

Reviewing this packet should help you gain a better understanding of the field of physical therapy, the role of a physical therapist assistant (PTA) and will give you an overview of the PTA program at Virginia Western Community College.

We are so excited that are you considering a career in physical therapy, it is a wonderful career that allows you to work hands-on with a wide variety of patients and help them achieve their rehabilitation goals.

As you review this packet, we recommend you pay special attention to the following areas as each area will provide you with important information regarding the program.

- ✓ Review the information regarding the field of physical therapy and make sure you think it is a good fit for you!
- ✓ Make sure to check out the links from the American Physical Therapy Association.
- ✓ Read through the steps to becoming a PTA and carefully review the licensing requirements.
- ✓ Review the program accreditation status and reach out to the Program Director with any questions.
- ✓ Read through the application process carefully and make sure you understand all minimum qualifications and due dates.
- ✓ Carefully read through the technical standards of the program and the accommodations request process.
- ✓ Review the cost of the program and make sure to visit the “Paying for Virginia Western” website.
- ✓ Read through the goals of the program and the program curriculum.
- ✓ Carefully read through the program policies including policies regarding:
  - Class and Clinical Schedules
  - Attendance
  - Access to Computers & Internet
  - Working While Enrolled in the Program
  - Student Rights and Safety
  - Grading Policies
  - Progression Through the Program
  - Professional Behavior Expectations
  - Faculty Expectations of Students
  - Community and Professional Service
  - Clinical Education
    - Travel Expectations
    - Clinical Health Requirements
- ✓ Finally, make sure to look through the wonderful variety of student services available at VWCC!

Please feel free to reach out with any questions and thank you for your interest in the VWCC PTA Program!

- Program Director: Jordan Tucker, PT, DPT [JTucker@viriniawestern.edu](mailto:JTucker@viriniawestern.edu)
- Clinical Coordinator/Faculty: Lisa Krackow, PTA, CMT [Lkrackow@viriniawestern.edu](mailto:Lkrackow@viriniawestern.edu)
- Health Professions Advisors: [healthprofessions@viriniawestern.edu](mailto:healthprofessions@viriniawestern.edu)

## ABOUT THE PROGRAM & THE FIELD OF PHYSICAL THERAPY

The Virginia Western Physical Therapist Assistant Program is a five-semester program which, if successfully completed, results in an Associates of Applied Science. The program includes learning activities in the classroom, the lab, and the clinical environment. At the end of the program, students should possess the knowledge required for the National Physical Therapy Licensing Exam, and the skills expected of a new PTA graduate. The program educates students as generalists allowing students to enter a wide variety of possible settings following graduation.

### THE FIELD OF PHYSICAL THERAPY

The field of physical therapist is an exciting field! Physical therapist assistants (PTA) play a vital role in the healthcare team and have the important job of helping to “transform society by optimizing movement to improve the human experience.”

PTAs work with patients of all ages, all backgrounds, and all ability levels who require a wide variety of interventions to help meet a patient’s ultimate goals.

### THE ROLE OF A PTA

According to the American Physical Therapy Association: PTAs perform selected components of physical therapy intervention and data collection and assess the patient's/client's safety and response to the interventions provided under the direction and supervision of the physical therapist in an ethical, legal, safe, and effective manner. Additionally, PTAs communicate with other members of the health care deliver team; interact with members of the patient's/client's family and caregivers; and work cooperatively with other health care providers. PTAs participate with the physical therapist in teaching other health care providers and providing psychosocial support for patients/clients and their families and caregivers with recognition of individual, cultural, and economic differences.

### POSSIBLE JOB OPPORTUNITIES

PTAs can work in a variety of healthcare settings including, but not limited to:

- Hospitals (acute care)
- Rehabilitation hospitals
- Skilled Nursing Facilities
- Outpatient clinics
- Schools
- Wellness/Prevention/Sports/Fitness settings
- Home Health
- Hospice
- Workplace/occupational settings
- Local, State, Federal Government
- Research

According to the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA), 72% of PTAs work in hospitals or outpatient settings. In the Roanoke area, common employment locations for PTAs are skilled nursing facilities, hospitals, outpatient clinics, and home health. Common conditions treated by PTAs include:

- Arthritis
- Back Pain
- Balance
- Burns
- Carpal Tunnel Syndrome
- Developmental Delays
- Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)
- Dislocations
- Fractures
- Hand Injuries
- Headaches
- Incontinence
- Lymphedema
- Osteoporosis
- Pelvic Pain
- Sports Injuries
- Stroke
- Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)
- Weakness/deconditioning

## BECOMING A PTA

1. Before embarking on the journey of becoming a PTA, we recommend that you explore the career and decide if you think this will be the right path for you. To learn more about becoming a PTA, check out these resources:
  - <https://www.apta.org/PTACareers/>
  - <https://www.apta.org/PTAEducation/>
  - <https://www.apta.org/PTA/>
  - <https://www.apta.org>
2. If you decide PTA is a possible career for you, the next step is to apply, and be accepted into, an accredited PTA program. In order to practice as a PTA in the United States, you must first pass a licensing examination, the National Physical Therapy Examination (NPTE). In order to take this exam, you must graduate from an accredited program. Each state has individual requirements for practice as a licensed PTA, so prospective students should review requirements of licensure in the state he/she intends to work following graduation:
  - A list of State Boards of Physical Therapy can be found here: <https://www.fsbpt.org/Free-Resources/Licensing-Authorities-Contact-Information>
  - In order to be licensed in the state of Virginia, applicants for licensure must:
    - Be 18 years of age or older
    - Be a graduate of a two-year college-level education program for physical therapist assistants acceptable to the Board
    - Satisfactorily passed an examination approved by the Board (the NPTE).
    - Meet the requirements of a background check and fingerprint screening.
      - Virginia requires that applicants complete a fingerprinting and background check process, and it is the student's responsibility to ensure that he/she will be able to successfully complete this step in the licensing process.
3. If you are accepted in a PTA program, you then complete five semesters of course work which takes place in the form of lectures, hands-on lab activities, and extended clinical experiences. During your time in the clinical environment, you will have the chance to begin to step into the role of a PTA as you treat patients and work with members of the healthcare team.
4. Once you complete your five semesters, and successfully meet the academic and clinical requirements of the program, you will be eligible to take the NPTE, and then once you pass, you can become a licensed PTA and start your career in the wonderful field of physical therapy!

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## IMPACT OF CRIMINAL HISTORY OF LICENSING

Prior to applying to this program, students should consult the State Board of Physical Therapy in which they plan to eventually work to ensure any criminal history a student may have would not bar him/her from becoming licensed in that state. Students with findings on background checks or fingerprinting checks, may not be eligible to become licensed as a PTA.

1. Students wishing to become licensed in Virginia are required to complete a fingerprinting and background check process as part of their licensing application. For more information regarding what may disqualify a graduate from practicing as a PTA in the state of Virginia, applicants should consult this document: <https://www.dhp.virginia.gov/PhysicalTherapy/guidelines/112-23.doc>
2. Students looking to be licensed in a state other than Virginia can find a list of State Boards of Physical Therapy here: <https://www.fsbpt.org/Free-Resources/Licensing-Authorities-Contact-Information>

## PROGRAM CONTACT INFORMATION

- Program Director: Jordan Tucker, PT, DPT [JTucker@viriniawestern.edu](mailto:JTucker@viriniawestern.edu)
- Clinical Coordinator/Faculty: Lisa Krackow, PTA, CMT [Lkrackow@viriniawestern.edu](mailto:Lkrackow@viriniawestern.edu)
- Health Professions Advisors: [healthprofessions@viriniawestern.edu](mailto:healthprofessions@viriniawestern.edu)

## PROGRAM ACCREDITATION STATUS AND CAPTE

Graduation from a physical therapist assistant education program accredited by the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE), 3030 Potomac Ave., Alexandria, VA 22305-3085; phone: 703-706-3245; email: [accreditation@apta.org](mailto:accreditation@apta.org) is necessary for eligibility to sit for the licensure examination, which is required in all states.

Effective November 2, 2021, Virginia Western Community College has been granted Candidate for Accreditation status by the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (3030 Potomac Ave., Suite 100, Alexandria, Virginia 22305-3085; phone: 703-706-3245; email: [accreditation@apta.org](mailto:accreditation@apta.org)). If needing to contact the program/institution directly, please call 540-857-6728 or email [jtucker@viriniawestern.edu](mailto:jtucker@viriniawestern.edu).

Candidate for Accreditation is an accreditation status of affiliation with the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education that indicates the program may matriculate students in technical/professional courses. Achievement of Candidate for Accreditation status does not assure that the program will be granted Initial Accreditation.

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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REGARDING CANDIDATE STATUS

Per CAPTE Rule 7.2: “Candidate for Accreditation is a pre-accreditation status, awarded prior to enrollment of students in the technical (PTA programs) or professional (PT programs) phase of the program, which indicates that the physical therapy education program is progressing toward accreditation. All credits and degrees earned and issued by a program holding candidacy are considered to be from an accredited program.”

Per CAPTE Rule 14.3 (a): “Decision to Withhold Accreditation: Should a program have its initial accreditation withheld on reconsideration, students in the program will be considered to be graduates of an accredited program. No new students can be enrolled. Enrolled is defined as students who have started at least one course in the professional/technical curriculum.”

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### TIMING OF ACCREDITATION DECISIONS

Students enrolled in the charter class will be notified of CAPTE’s final accreditation decision during their 5<sup>th</sup> and final semester in the program which occurs just prior to graduation. Students enrolled in the program starting in Fall 2023 would be notified of the program accreditation status in their 2<sup>nd</sup> semester. Planned graduation of the charter class is May 2024, students successfully completing the program would be eligible to sit for the licensure exam in the summer of 2024.

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### FILING COMPLAINTS WITH CAPTE

Those wishing to file complaints with accrediting body, the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE), may do so by following the instructions found here: <http://www.capteonline.org/Complaints/> or may contact CAPTE directly at 703-706-3245 or [accreditation@apta.org](mailto:accreditation@apta.org).

## VIRGINIA BOARD OF PHYSICAL THERAPY

In order to work as a PTA, you must become licensed in the state in which you intend to work. Prospective students should explore the Virginia Board of Physical Therapy website: <https://www.dhp.virginia.gov/PhysicalTherapy/>

If you think you may not remain in Virginia to work, you can find links to all state Boards of Physical Therapy here: <https://www.fsbpt.org/Free-Resources/Licensing-Authorities-Contact-Information>

## VWCC PTA PROGRAM MISSION AND PROGRAM GOALS

### **The mission of the Physical Therapist Assistant Program at Virginia Western Community College is as follows:**

The Physical Therapist Assistant program prepares graduates, through a comprehensive and contemporary curriculum delivered in an environment of academic excellence, to work as competent and professional physical therapist assistants able to work under the direction and supervision of a physical therapist. Graduates will be empowered to strengthen their community through personal service and by providing patient-centered care to a diverse population.

### **The program has the following goals:**

1. The VWCC PTA Program prepares graduates to work as competent and professional entry-level physical therapist assistants able to work under the direction and supervision of a physical therapist.
2. The VWCC PTA Program prepares students and graduates to demonstrate effective communication skills with patients, family members and other health care providers.
3. The VWCC PTA Program faculty provide a comprehensive evidence-based curriculum based on contemporary physical therapy practice in a high-quality learning environment.
4. The VWCC PTA Program supports the surrounding community through the service of program faculty and students.
5. The VWCC PTA program prepares students and graduates to work effectively with a diverse community.

## CURRICULUM

The curriculum for the PTA program is completed in two years and is listed below. You may find a link to course descriptions in the college catalog here: <https://catalog.virginiawestern.edu/> Additional program information with linksto the full catalog page are found here: [https://catalog.virginiawestern.edu/preview\\_program.php?catoid=20&poid=2702&returnto=2232](https://catalog.virginiawestern.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=20&poid=2702&returnto=2232)

Students must take any course with a “PTH” prefix in the order listed in the curriculum below. As program coursework builds on prior courses, students must successfully complete each semester prior to moving into the next semester.

Support courses (courses without a PTH prefix: SDV 101, BIO 141, ENG 11, HLT 141, BIO 142, PSY 230, PHI 220) may be eligible for transfer. Information regarding Virginia Western policies can be found here: <https://www.virginiawestern.edu/transfer/index.php> Students with specific questions regarding transferring courses should speak with college advisors and/or the health professions advisor.

### **Pre-Requisites**

SDV 101 - Orientation to Health Professions 2 CR <sup>2</sup>  
BIO 141 – Human Anatomy and Physiology I 4 CR\* <sup>1</sup>

### **First Year Fall Semester:**

ENG 111 English Composition 3 CR\*  
HLT 141 Introduction to Medical Terminology 1 CR  
BIO 142 Anatomy and Physiology II 4 CR\*  
PTH 105 Introduction to Physical Therapist Assisting 3 CR  
PTH 151 Musculoskeletal Structure and Function 4 CR

### **First Year Spring Semester:**

PSY 230 Developmental Psychology 3 CR  
PHI 220 Ethics 3 CR  
PTH 110 Medical Reporting 1 CR\*  
PTH 115 Kinesiology for the Physical Therapist Assistant 5 CR\*  
PTH 121 Therapeutic Procedures I 5 CR\*



**First Year Summer:**

PTH 122 Therapeutic Procedures II 5 CR\*  
PTH 131 Clinical Education 2 CR\*

**Second Year Fall Semester:**

PTH 210 Psychosocial Aspects of Therapy 2 CR\*  
PTH 226 Therapeutic Exercise 4 CR\*  
PTH 227 Pathological Conditions 3 CR\*  
PTH 251 Clinical Practicum I 3 CR\*

**Second Year Spring Semester:**

PTH 225 Rehabilitation Procedures 4 CR\*  
PTH 245 Professional Issues 2 CR\*  
PTH 255 Seminar in Physical Therapy 2 CR\*  
PTH 252 Clinical Practicum II 4 CR\*

Total Minimum Credits for Degree: 69

Footnotes:

<sup>1</sup>Must be completed within 5 years of beginning the program.

<sup>2</sup>The two credit SDV 108 will satisfy the SDV 101 requirement. SDV 108 is for developmental English students.

\*This course has a requisite.

**Note: Support courses (non-PTH courses) may be taken prior to entry. BIO 142 must be taken and passed with a “C” or better prior to entering the second semester. Because curricular components build upon each other, all PTH courses must be taken in the term and sequence listed.**

## ESTIMATED COSTS

A full breakdown of the costs can be found on the program [website](#), but included below are approximate costs for each semester. The costs included below are only an estimation, are subject to change, and will vary based on individual student situations. These costs do not include transportation or other living expenses.

Approximate program cost = \$15,041.21

Pre-Requisites: \$1,071 (6 credits at VWCC tuition per credit)

First Year (semesters 1-3): \$8,553.51 (39 credits of tuition plus additional expenses)

Second Year (semesters 4 & 5): \$5,467.16 (24 credits of tuition plus additional expenses)

Information about Paying for Virginia Western/Financial Aid can be found here: <https://viriniawestern.edu/pay/index.php>

## ADMISSIONS REQUIREMENTS AND PROCESS

**Admission Requirements:** Admission to the AAS Physical Therapist Assistant program will be restricted, requiring an application to the college as well as a separate application to the program. Students interested in the program will first complete an application to the College. Individuals are eligible for admission to Virginia Western if they are high school graduates or the equivalent, or if they are eighteen years of age or older and able to benefit academically from study at the community college, as demonstrated by assessment in reading, writing, and mathematics.

Once accepted to Virginia Western, students interested in the PTA program must complete and submit the program specific application; submit official high school transcript showing completion of high school diploma or copy of GED scores; submit official transcripts from all colleges attended; and meet the program admission requirements outlined below:

- Complete the prerequisites listed below with a grade of “C” or better by the end of the summer semester prior to beginning the program:
  - [SDV 101 Orientation to Health Professions](#) (2 credits)
  - [BIO 141 Human Anatomy and Physiology I](#) (4 credits)
- The applicant’s high school or college (if applicable) cumulative grade point average (GPA) must be at least 2.75. College GPA is based on at least 12 credit hours in a 12- month timeframe. The GPA is determined at the end of the fall semester prior to spring deadline. GPAs will not be rounded, and CLEP/AP scores are not calculated into the GPA.
- Complete the Test of Essential Academic Skills (TEAS) for Allied Healthcare at the student’s own expense. Applicants must score a 60% total or higher on the TEAS test to be considered for admission into the program.

**Admission Procedures:** The Physical Therapist Assistant applicant is responsible for making certain that the following have been submitted, in addition to a current college application, by the February 15 deadline:

- Completed program application form
- Official high school transcript
- Copy of GED scores if applicable
- Official transcripts from all colleges attended (VWCC and other Virginia community college transcripts are not necessary)
- Completed the Test of Essential Academic Skills (TEAS) for Allied Healthcare (at student’s expense) with a 60% or higher total score. Completed TEAS required of qualified applicants in March.

Qualified applicants (based on GPA and TEAS scores) will be invited for an on-campus interview and essay during the spring semester prior to a fall admission:

- Final admission decisions will be based on GPA as well as scores on the TEAS, interview, and essay.
- Applicants completing the interview and essay process will be notified by mail in May regarding fall admission.
- If invited to this phase of the application process, students will be assessed on the following items:
  - Interview:
    - Being on time to appointment, presenting yourself professionally, and demonstrating appropriate professional behaviors.
    - Ability to answer questions with professional body language, with confidence with clarity, and with good detail.
  - Writing sample will be assessed on content, readability (flow, organization), spelling, and grammar

The Physical Therapist Assistant application form and additional program information can be accessed from our website at <https://viriniawestern.edu/academics/health/pta/index.php>. Early application is encouraged for advising purposes. Essential Physical Therapist Assistant Functions, Curriculum, and other information regarding the program can also be found on this page.

Applicants should be aware that meeting the curriculum admission standards does not guarantee program admission. Application materials must be submitted by the published deadline.

**Developmental Requirements:** Applicants must meet the requirements for admission to credit-level coursework established by the college. Applicants must receive an ENG 111, ENG 111/EDE 11\* placement recommendation, or have successfully completed EDE 10. Students who do not demonstrate readiness for the college-level math will be required to select appropriate MDE coursework in consultation with an advisor.

## TECHNICAL STANDARDS (ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS)

The Virginia Western Physical Therapist Assistant (PTA) Program educates students with the goal of graduating PTAs able to provide quality and skilled physical therapy services. While enrolled in the program, students must demonstrate the skills and abilities of a PTA in a variety of settings while performing a variety of tasks under the supervision a physical therapist. Students must demonstrate clinical judgement and may need to immediately respond to routine and urgent patient needs. To ensure this quality of students, graduates, and eventual clinicians, the PTA program maintains academic as well as technical standards that must be met by students who wish to successfully progress through, and graduate from, this program. The standards included below reflect reasonable expectations of PTA students for common physical therapy functions in a clinical setting. PTA students enrolled in the program must possess and/or develop abilities and skills in the areas of (1) Behavior Skills (2) Communication Skills (3) Intellectual & Conceptual Skills (4) Physical Functioning and (5) Use of Sensory System.

The Virginia Western PTA Program wishes to ensure that access to its facilities, programs and services is available to all students, including students with disabilities (as defined by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008) and that all students meeting academic and technical standards can progress towards becoming a licensed PTA with or without reasonable accommodation. The PTA Program provides reasonable accommodations to all students on a nondiscriminatory basis consistent with legal requirements as outlined in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008. A reasonable accommodation is a modification or adjustment to an instructional activity, equipment, facility, program or service that enables a qualified student with a disability to have an equal opportunity to fulfill the requirements necessary for graduation from the PTA program. To be eligible for accommodations in the classroom and/or clinical settings, a student must have a documented disability of (a) a physical, psychological or learning impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual; (b) a record of such impairment; or, (c) be regarded as having such a condition. **For further information regarding services and resources to students with disabilities and/or to request accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) (540) 857-7286 Student Life Center S207 [disabilityservices@viriniawestern.edu](mailto:disabilityservices@viriniawestern.edu).**

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### LIST OF TECHNICAL STANDARDS (ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS)

Once enrolled in the PTA program, students will be required to:

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#### BEHAVIORAL SKILLS

- Display professional behaviors appropriate for the classroom and lab settings and the clinical environment.
- Demonstrate a commitment to learning.
- Demonstrate effective use of time and resources.
- Demonstrate expected interpersonal skills including compassion and caring.
- Demonstrate responsibility.
- Demonstrate appropriate stress management and flexibility.
- Demonstrate the ability to be attentive to classroom tasks and activities and demonstrate patient-centered focus in clinical settings .
- Demonstrate the ability to professionally accept, respond to, and integrate constructive feedback.

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#### COMMUNICATION SKILLS

- Communicate professionally with faculty, classmates, staff of clinical sites, other members of the healthcare team, patients, and family members at all times.
- Demonstrate effective communication skills with all parties during a simulated treatment session.
- Demonstrate the ability to efficiently document patient treatments in simulated and actual medical records.
- Demonstrate interpersonal and collaborative skills.

- Effectively communicate with a diverse population in the classroom and clinical settings.

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## INTELLECTUAL AND CONCEPTUAL SKILLS

- Demonstrate critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
- Efficiently plan and perform a complete physical therapy treatment session utilizing interventions from within the PT plan of care.
- Demonstrate academic readiness for clinical rotations.
- Possess the academic and psychomotor ability to complete a rigorous curriculum in the allotted time frame.

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## PHYSICAL FUNCTIONING

- Demonstrate the ability to maintain proper body mechanics at all times to ensure safety of self, lab partners, faculty, patients, faculty, and other members of the healthcare team
- Demonstrate the ability to efficiently move into the various positions required to perform the duties of a PTA (including, but not limited to, positions such as standing, sitting, ambulation, climbing, stooping)
- Demonstrate the appropriate motor control and strength to provide treatment techniques while ensuring patient safety (including, but not limited to, lifting up to 50 pounds occasionally and at least 10 pounds constantly, pushing, pulling, carrying, fine motor manipulation).
- Demonstrate the physical ability to respond in emergency or unexpected situations.
- Demonstrate the physical balance in various positions required to perform all variety of patient treatments.
- Possess the endurance to complete required activities or shifts in the classroom and clinical environment (40 hour weeks in the clinic).

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## USE OF SENSORY SYSTEM

- Utilize sensory systems (including touch, vision, smell, sight, hearing) to effectively engage in the teaching and learning process in the classroom and lab setting and to effectively treat patients in a variety of clinical settings.

## GENERAL PROGRAM INFORMATION

To learn more about specific expectations in the program, make sure to carefully read the program policies found later in this packet, but here is some general information about the program which may also help you decide if the VWCC PTA program is right for you!

### ATTENDANCE

The PTA program prepares students to enter the workforce as a PTA following graduation. As part of this preparation, all the skills involved in being a member of the healthcare team are taught and re-enforced. One of these expectations is attendance in class and clinical experiences. Except for excused absences, such as illness or family emergencies, it is required that students attend **ALL** PTA lecture classes, lab sessions, and associated activities. Students are expected to arrive to class on time and remain for the full class session. Excessive tardiness or leaving class early will be documented in the student's professionalism feedback and may result in point deductions. Students who are unable to meet attendance standards may also be dismissed from the program.

### ACCESS TO COMPUTERS AND INTERNET

While students are not required to own a personal computer during their time in the program, students are required to have access to both a computer and reliable internet. The PTA program utilizes technology for learning activities, testing, and assignment submission and inability to access a computer and internet during time on campus and during clinicals may impact student success. If a student is unable to access either a computer or reliable internet, students have computer and internet access at both the VWCC Brown Library and public libraries.

## CLASS SCHEDULE

The PTA program is a full-time professional program with classes typically scheduled on weekdays and during daytime hours, however late afternoon and evening may need to be scheduled to accommodate faculty availability. Students may be subjected to variations in class schedules and will be provided with as much notice as is possible to allow for personal schedule adjustments. Students may be required to complete class activities, field trips, or clinical experiences during evening or weekend hours, so students should keep this in mind when planning for successful program completion.

## CLINICAL HOURS

During the program, students will complete 3 full-time clinical experiences. Students should expect to work full-time (approximately 40 hours/week) during these experiences which are three, six, and eight weeks. Physical therapy departments are only staffed during “day shift”, so students should expect to work during typical daytime work hours during these clinical rotations. Student schedules will vary based on their clinical placement and no schedule can be guaranteed.

## WORKING WHILE ENROLLED IN THE PROGRAM

Students are advised that while the program understands that working while in the program is often necessary, students should be aware this is an intense program requiring significant time and studying outside of the classroom. Success in the program may be impacted by the inability to balance work and school responsibilities. Students should discuss any concerns with their faculty advisor and/or the campus success coach.

Students are free to work in any field while enrolled in the PTA program, but at no time should the student use the skills they are learning in their PTA courses outside of the classroom unless they are completing a clinical education experience AND under the supervision of a licensed clinician. Doing so places the patient, or other recipient of un-licensed care, at risk of harm and places the student at risk of litigation.

## PROGRAM POLICIES

If you are accepted into the PTA program, you will be expected to follow all program policies, even those not included in this packet. However, the following policies are included below as they may help guide your decisions to apply to the program. Any questions or concerns with the policies can be directed to the program director at [jtucker@virginiawestern.edu](mailto:jtucker@virginiawestern.edu).

## STUDENT RIGHTS AND SAFETY

### EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

- The PTA program maintains a stance of equal opportunity and non-discrimination for all faculty and students. The program will follow the guidance of the college equal opportunity, non-discrimination, and Title IX policies in all aspects of the program. Once enrolled in the program, all students are also expected to abide by these policies.
  - <https://www.virginiawestern.edu/about/legal-and-policies/policies/human-resources/iii-16/>
  - <https://www.virginiawestern.edu/about/legal-and-policies/policies/student-affairs/i-46/>
- The program abides by all college policies related to the creation of an environment free of harassment and discrimination based on any status protected by law.
  - Information regarding college policies related to Title IX can be found here:  
<https://www.virginiawestern.edu/about/legal-and-policies/policies/student-affairs/i-46/>

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## CONFIDENTIALITY OF STUDENT RECORDS

- The PTA Program follows the VWCC policy regarding a student's right to privacy of his/her educational records and The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Full information regarding college policies for student privacy can be found here:  
<https://www.virginiawestern.edu/get-started/records/right-to-privacy/>  
<https://www.virginiawestern.edu/about/legal-and-policies/policies/student-affairs/i-13/>  
<https://www.virginiawestern.edu/about/legal-and-policies/policies/student-affairs/i-33/>
- The PTA program maintains an additional policy related to disclosure, and privacy of, student educational records and as follows:
  - If an individual listed on a student's FERPA release form would like to meet with, or obtain information from, any PTA program faculty member, the program faculty will require the involvement and permission of the PTA student. This includes any communication with program faculty including, but not limited to, meetings, phone calls, and emails.
  - Prior to sharing any information with an individual on a PTA student's FERPA release form, the program faculty will seek the permission of the student to share information related to the specific request. Additionally, the faculty will ask the student to be present for all conversations or will be copied on any electronic communication. The program faculty reserve the right to refuse a request for confidential student information to individuals listed on a FERPA release form if the PTA student asks faculty not to share the information or if the student declines to be involved in discussions of confidential information.

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## ACCOMMODATION REQUESTS

The PTA Program follows the VWCC policy regarding disability services and access to education. It is VWCC's policy to provide reasonable accommodations to qualified students with documented disabilities. If you have a documented physical, psychological, or learning disability and you need a reasonable accommodation, please contact the Office of Disability Services in Student Life Center S207 – phone 857-7286. To best provide the accommodation you need, make this request as soon as possible.

All requests for accommodations must be processed through the [Office of Disability Services](#) (ODS) and the faculty in the PTA program will not honor requests for accommodations which are not accompanied by the proper paperwork from ODS.

Student accommodations are individual and will be developed with the ODS. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) allows for reasonable accommodations to be in place for students with demonstrated need. Accommodations that the program may deem to impact the essential nature of PTA program technical standards will be closely evaluated by the Program Director and ODS to ensure that student needs are being met while also ensuring that students will be prepared to meet the demands of a fast-paced healthcare environment.

It is the responsibility of each student to review the technical standards of the program and alert faculty immediately with concerns regarding his/her ability to meet any technical standard. Faculty will then assist a student in working with ODS to investigate reasonable accommodations to assist in student success.

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## STUDENT HEALTH AND SAFETY

While completing the PTA program is not inherently dangerous, students should be aware that there is some risk associated with a rigorous academic program which also requires significant physical activity and tasks. Students will be instructed in safety procedures in the lab setting to decrease the risk of injury to the student, classmates, and/or faculty. Inability to follow established safety procedures may increase risk of harm to the student, classmates, or faculty member.

Possible physical risks may include:

- Superficial injuries (such as bruising or mild skin irritation/burn)

- Musculoskeletal injuries (such as muscle strain or soreness)
- Exposure to infectious disease in the classroom or clinical settings
- In addition to physical risk, the rigorous cognitive nature of the program may increase stress or other psychological conditions. Students can speak with the course instructor, Program Director, or college intervention counselor regarding concerns of psychological stress.

In clinical settings, students may be exposed to different risks than in the classroom settings. Students should heed the safety procedures of the clinical setting and should work with their clinical instructor to fully understand safety procedures. Inability to follow established safety procedures may increase risk of harm to the student, patient, or clinical instructor. Students should feel comfortable to ask for further assistance or to decline to perform a task which they do not feel safe performing.

Students should speak with their course instructor or the Program Director with any concerns regarding safety in the classroom or clinical settings.

## GRADING POLICIES

Grading for all courses in the PTA program with the PTH prefix will be as follows:

A= 93-100%  
 B= 85-92.99%  
 C= 77-84.99%  
 D= 70-76.99%  
 F= below 68.99%

- Grades throughout the program will NOT be rounded. For example:
  - Final grades of 92.3 and 92.8 will both be recorded as 92% and therefore a “B”
  - Final grades of 76.1 and 76.9 will both be recorded as 76% and therefore a “D”
- No extra credit will be assigned or awarded on an individual basis so that a student can improve his/her grade. Any extra credit opportunities provided will be given to all students in a class and it is therefore advised that students take full advantage of any extra credit opportunities.
- **All** assignments must be submitted in order to receive a grade in the course. When final grades are to be posted for a course, if a student has any missing assignments per the Canvas gradebook, the student will receive an “F” for that course.

A grade of “C” or better (based on the grading scale for that course) is required in all support (non-PTH) courses. Students must achieve a 77% average on all written tests in PTA courses before quiz or project grades will be added into a course grade. This policy assists in preparing students for the rigor of passing the National Physical Therapy Exam at the completion of the program. Students not achieving 77% average on test grades will therefore receive a “D” or “F” in the course and will not be able to progress in the program at that time

Throughout the program, students will be required to complete written comprehensive examinations which will be reflective of the information learned to that point in the program. These review examinations will assist students in preparing for the eventual licensing exam as well as review material upon which further course material will be built.

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## HANDS-ON SKILL TESTING

Throughout the program students will demonstrate their understand of course material using written methods (such as tests, quizzes, or assignments) and through demonstration of hands-on skills.

Hands-on skills will be tested using both skills checks and more comprehensive lab practical examinations. In the field of physical therapy, being able to accurately and safely perform hands-on skills is equally important to demonstrating knowledge, therefore, students must pass all skills checks and lab practicals in order to pass a course. The number of

attempts to successfully demonstrate skills is limited, therefore, practicing hands-on skills is an important part of the studying process of a PTA student.

## STUDENT PROGRESSION THROUGH THE PROGRAM

The PTA program is progressive with each semester building on the semester prior. Therefore, students must also be able to progressively demonstrate a mastery of knowledge as they move through the program. To assist in progressive knowledge attainment, students must move through the program in a linear manner and must meet milestones each semester in order to continue to progress to the next semester. Inability to meet the progression milestones below will lead to program probation or dismissal.

The following progression policies will be followed by the PTA program:

- Students must achieve a grade of “C” or better is required in all PTH courses in order progress to the next course
- in sequence and remain with initial cohort of students.
- Students must achieve a grade of “C” or better (based on the grading scale for that course in all support (non-PTH) courses.
- All support (non-PTH) courses must be successfully completed with a “C” or better by the end of the student’s third semester in the program.
- A student must successfully pass all lab practical examinations each semester in order to progress to the next semester.
- A student must successfully complete all didactic coursework before progressing to a clinical education course in the same semester.
  - For example, a student must successfully pass PTH 122 prior to being cleared to start PTH 131 as both courses occur in the third semester. Inability to complete didactic coursework with a “C” or better indicates the student is not ready to apply classroom concepts in a clinical setting.

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## GRADUATION CRITERIA

- To graduate from the program, students must meet the following criteria:
  - Meet all college requirements for graduation
  - Pass all courses in the program plan of study with a “C” or better (including general education courses) AND a 77% average on all written tests in PTA courses.
  - Pass all skill checks and lab practicals in the PTA courses.
  - Complete all community service and professional service hours prior to the final clinical rotation.
  - Successfully pass the final clinical rotation, which includes:
    - Achieving “entry-level” on all 14 CPI performance criteria and “entry-level” on all professional behaviors as assessed by the Professional Behavior Assessment Tool. Inability to meet “entry-level” on all performance criteria on the CPI and/or Professional Behavior Assessment Tool will lead to a student not successfully passing the final clinical rotation and therefore not graduating from the program.
    - Complete all required clinical hours as outlined on the course syllabus.
    - Receive a “C” or better in the course.

## PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS

Adapting to the expectations of a professional program and the professional behavior standards of a healthcare environment can take time. However, once students begin their first clinical rotation, they will be formally and informally assessed on their ability to demonstrate expected behaviors. Inability to demonstrate expected behaviors may impact a student’s progression through the program. To assist in this learning process, the program maintains several professionalism standards and students will receive ongoing, formal feedback on their ability to demonstrate the expected professional behaviors. The



program takes the ability to demonstrate professional behavior seriously, therefore, an inability to meet behavior expectations may result in program probation or dismissal.

Students enrolled in the PTA program are expected to demonstrate professionalism, at a minimum, in the following ways:

- Students must abide by the program dress code in lecture classes, lab classes, and in clinical settings.
- Demonstrate behaviors consistent with program professional behavior standards. During orientation and throughout the program, students will be provided examples of what is expected in each of the following professional behavior categories:
  - Commitment to learning
  - Communication
  - Critical thinking
  - Effective use of time and resources
  - Interpersonal skills/compassion/caring
  - Problem solving
  - Professionalism
  - Responsibility
  - Stress management and flexibility
  - Use of constructive feedback
- Students must abide by the APTA Standards of Conduct & Code of Ethics and the Core Values for the Physical Therapist and Physical Therapist Assistant (these can be found on the APTA website).
- Students must abide by Virginia Western Student Conduct Standards.

## FACULTY EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS

Making the choice to pursue a career in healthcare is an excellent one that also entails hard work and dedication. The PTA program is fast-paced with a large amount of information to learn prior to becoming a licensed clinician. Once in the field of physical therapy, it will be up to you to be an independent and life-long learner so that you can help patients achieve their best possible outcomes as well as being able to serve as an advocate for your patient and the profession.

Developing into an independent learner who can seamlessly transition out of the program and into the field of physical therapy as a PTA will take work and time. The process of becoming an independent clinician starts from day one in the program by accepting responsibility for your own learning and your path towards your ultimate goals. Being independent doesn't mean you can't seek help or help others, but it means that you take the initiative to do so!

PTA faculty are here to support you through your entire journey, but the first step must start with you. PTA program faculty expect the following of our students:

- Students should take responsibility for their own learning. For example:
  - asking questions when a concept is not clear
  - seeking extra assistance when struggling in a class
  - reading a syllabus completely and asking any questions if anything is unclear
  - being aware of all due dates of assignments and health requirements
  - communicating with faculty if you are going to be late or absent from class
  - watching videos or completing required readings before coming to class

Students should:

- take responsibility to push themselves outside of what may be their learning comfort zone. Students should not expect correct answers to be immediately given and may be encouraged to use their resources to come up with a solution.
- try new ways of learning or study with someone they may not typically study with.

- take responsibility to understand and follow the professionalism expectations of the program.
- professionally seek and accept feedback from faculty and classmates.
- take responsibility to understand and follow the policies and procedures of the program and speak with a faculty member if they have any questions or concerns.
- be respectful in their communication with all faculty and classmates throughout the program. Respectful communication should also carry over into the clinical setting, on the college campus, and in the community.
- understand that their classmates may learn differently or at a different pace and should respect student differences at all times.

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## DEVELOPMENT OF TIME MANAGEMENT SKILLS

Along with the many skills that students in the PTA program will work on developing during their two years, an additional key skill for students to develop is time management. Effective time management is essential for success in all areas of healthcare. The following policies, found throughout the handbook, are in place to assist students in developing responsibility for time management.

- All assignments are to be submitted by the posted due date, and points will be deducted for any late assignments. Students are responsible for planning ahead and independently verifying successful assignment submission.
- All assignments must be turned in by the end of the semester and any missing assignments will lead to an “F” in the course.
- Students are responsible for meeting program attendance policies.
- Students must communicate with the course instructor if they are going to be late or absent from a class.
- Students are responsible for making up any missed work and communicating with the course instructor regarding any missed course material.
- It is the student’s responsibility to balance the demands of school and personal commitments and to take initiative to seek assistance from college resources if he/she is struggling with finding and maintaining an appropriate balance.
- Sometimes, it can be difficult leaving the support of classmates and faculty when entering the clinical settings, but students remain responsible for time management during clinical rotations as well. Students need to continue to plan for commuting to clinical sites, the impact of weather on a drive, and for ensuring that all assignments are submitted in a timely manner.

## COMMUNITY AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Prior to being cleared to start the final clinical experience, students are required to:

- Complete 10 hours of community service at an approved organization
- Attend 1 local VPTA meeting
- Complete an approved continuing education course

These requirements support the mission of the program and help students to become integrated into the local healthcare and physical therapy community.

## CLINICAL EDUCATION

The clinical education portions of the PTA program are an exciting time when students are able to take what they are learning in the classroom and apply it in clinical settings while working with patients, other PTAs and PTs, and various members of the healthcare team. Included in the program are 3, 6, and 8 week, full-time clinical experiences.

## TRAVEL

Clinical education experiences may take place at a variety of clinical sites throughout Central and Southwest Virginia. Therefore, it is required for students to have access to a reliable source of transportation during their clinical education experiences. Students may be asked to drive up to 90 minutes away from their home in order to reach their assigned clinical education site.

## CLINICAL HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

The following list includes all items which will need to be completed prior to students being cleared to start clinical rotations. Inability to complete any of the requirements listed below will bar a student from completing clinical rotations, and therefore not completing the requirements of the program. Students with any concerns regarding the following requirements should speak with the Program Director prior to entering the program, or as soon as possible following any change in status.

| Requirement  | Prior to Starting Program  | Prior to First Clinical Rotation         | Notes   |
|--|----------------------------|--|---|
| Physical Examination   | ✓                          |  | Physical examination must be completed by a physician, nurse practitioner, or physician's assistant. Examination should be completed within three months of starting the program and the required form submitted by the first day of classes in a student's first semester.   |
| American Heart Association CPR                                     |                            | ✓  | Must be AHA, no other certification will be accepted  |
| Health Insurance   |                            | ✓  | Advised to carry health insurance throughout the program but will be required for completion of clinical rotations.   |
| Clear Background Check   | ✓                          | ✓<br>(completed again in third semester) | Background check must be clear and include items listed below the table.  |
| Negative Drug Screen   |                            | ✓  | Drug screens will include; amphetamines, methamphetamines, barbiturates, benzodiazepine, cocaine, marijuana, methadone, methaqualone, opiates, codeine, morphine, phencyclidine, propoxyphene.  |
| <b>Vaccinations</b>  |                            |  |   |
| <b>**vaccinations must not expire during a clinical rotation**</b> |                            |  |   |
| MMR #1 AND MMR #2 (or titer)                                       | ✓                          |  | One of the following is required: Two vaccinations OR positive antibody titer for all three components (lab report required).   |
| Hepatitis B Series   | ✓<br>(at least first shot) | ✓<br>(full three-shot series)            | One of the following is required: three vaccinations OR a positive antibody titer (lab report required) OR declination waiver. Please note that a clinical site may not accept a declination form. Students must have the 1st shot in the series completed before starting the program with full series completed before the first clinical rotation. |

|                                |  |   |   |
|--------------------------------|--|---|---|
| Varicella #1 AND #2 (or titer) | ✓  |   | The student must have a Varicella titer drawn to prove serological immunity. In the event, that the student's Varicella titer is negative, the student must receive the Varicella vaccinations. |
| TDAP                           | ✓  |   | A tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (Tdap) booster is required within 10 years of entrance into the PTA program, and must remain current throughout the program.                               |
| TB Screening (annual)          | ✓<br>Must be two-step initially                        | ✓ | Students must receive a TWO-STEP test prior to beginning the program. If PPD is positive, then a chest x-ray must be obtained. Students may also complete TB Blood test (QuantiFERON Gold).     |
| Influenza                      |  | ✓ | Only required when clinical rotations are completed during flu season (October-May)   |
| COVID-19                       | Optional, must submit exemption form if not vaccinated |   | While this vaccination is optional at this time, clinical sites may require it and may not accept exemption forms.  |

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#### DRUG SCREENS AND BACKGROUND CHECKS

In addition to completing a physical examination immunization process, and in order to complete required clinical education courses, students must complete, to the program's requirements a background check and drug screen. Inability to submit a clear background check and/or drug screen may lead to immediate dismissal from the program. If a student has any concerns regarding his/her ability to successfully complete these two screenings, he/she should contact the Program Director.

#### MEDICAL MARIJUNANA

Medical marijuana (cannabis oil, CBD, THCA, or cannabis treatments and medications that utilize chemicals present in marijuana) is legal for holders of an MMJ card (Cannabis prescribed by a physician); however, medical marijuana use is prohibited at all clinical sites!

Note: It is the student's responsibility to "clear" their urine drug screen. Marijuana remains part of the urine drug screen for clinical partners associated with the VWCC health professions programs. The presence of marijuana metabolites in urine will result in a "positive" drug screen finding that prevents a student from obtaining clinical placement and resulting in removal from the program. There are no exceptions to this rule as healthcare facilities have the right to ban the use of these drugs by hospital employees or clinical students.

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#### HEALTH INSURANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY FOR MEDICAL CARE

Students are solely responsible for paying for any medical care which is rendered to the student throughout the student's enrollment in the program. This includes any care which may be required due to an injury or infectious disease exposure which may occur during classroom or clinical activities. It is advised that students carry health insurance to defray the costs of medical care, and **health insurance will be required for participation in clinical education experiences.**

Students should contact the Program Director or ACCE with any questions regarding health insurance.

There is no health clinic on campus, however, emergency and non-emergency health services are available nearby. Students or faculty requiring first aid on campus should contact campus police at 540-857-7979.

## VIRGINIA WESTERN STUDENT SERVICES

Virginia Western Community College offers a variety of services to students to aid in student success and support students throughout their time at Virginia Western. Program faculty will also work to direct students towards the right services or resources if you have any questions.

The following is a list of several of the services provided to students:

- Academic Link (including tutoring, academic success coaching, online tutoring, and the writing & research center: <https://www.viriniawestern.edu/library/academic-link/>)
- Financial Aid: <https://www.viriniawestern.edu/financial-aid/>
- Hall Associates Career Center: <https://www.viriniawestern.edu/careercenter/>
- Health Services:
  - Virginia Western does not have a clinic on campus; however, emergency medical services, clinics and hospitals are located nearby. If you need first aid on campus, please contact Campus Police at 540-857-7979.
  - Students who do not have health insurance may find the following links helpful in obtaining health care or health information. Please visit each site for more information about eligibility.
  - **Roanoke City Health Department:** <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/roanoke/>
  - **Bradley Free Clinic:** <http://www.bradleyfreeclinic.com/>
  - **Project Access:** <http://bradleyfreeclinic.com/services/project-access/>
  - **Blue Ridge Women's Center:** <http://blueridgewoman.org/services/>
- Intervention Counseling: <https://www.viriniawestern.edu/intervention>
- IT Help Desk: <https://www.viriniawestern.edu/iet-services/departments/help-desk/>
- Military Student Center: <https://www.viriniawestern.edu/military-student-center/>
- Office of Disability Services: <https://www.viriniawestern.edu/disability-services/>
- Student Life: <https://www.viriniawestern.edu/student-life/>
- VWCC Student Food Co-Op: <https://www.viriniawestern.edu/student-life/food-pantry/>
- Other Campus and Community Resources: <https://www.viriniawestern.edu/students/>  
<https://www.viriniawestern.edu/faculty-staff/community-resources/>