

**Mercy College of Health Sciences
Physical Therapist Assistant Program**

Clinical Course Frequently Asked Questions

1. Who is the key contact person for questions related to clinical courses?

The key contact for clinical courses is the Academic Coordinator of Clinical Education (ACCE), Justin Helbing, PTA, MA.

2. How do I contact the ACCE?

The ACCE may be contacted by phone at 515-643-6773, Microsoft Teams phone number at 515-257-6243, or by email at justing.helbing@mchs.edu

3. What resources are available regarding course expectations?

Clinical instructor resources can be found at www.mchs.edu/clinical-resources. This link contains course syllabi, competency checklists, and other helpful information for clinical instructors. The ACCE is also available to answer questions related to clinical courses.

4. What tools are utilized to evaluate student performance?

The APTA Clinical Performance Instrument 3.0 (APTA CPI) and the Generic Abilities Assessment are used to evaluate student performance. If you have not utilized the APTA CPI before, you will need to complete the free online training through the APTA Learning Center. Instructions to access the evaluation tool will be sent once the clinical experience is underway. You will need to have an account through APTA. If you do not already have an account, you can create one for free via this [link](#).

5. Who do I contact for technical support related to the PTA CPI?

For questions about the instrument, contact CPI@apta.org or call 703-706-8582. For APTA username and password issues, contact APTA's Member Success team at membersuccess@apta.org.

If you receive an error message, please contact the ACCE as they will need to add you to the CPI 3.0 system.

6. How many hours of clinical are students expected to attend each week?

The course expectation is 40 hours of clinical experience per week. Providing direct patient care should comprise the majority of the clinical hours. Additional activities may include skill development, research, or observation of other clinical specialties. Any time not spent providing direct patient care or enhancing learning and skill development must be reported to the ACCE.

7. What schedule should students follow?

Students should follow the schedule of their primary clinical instructor. If the primary clinical instructor does not work 40 hours per week, the student may work with another practitioner to complete required hours.

8. Are student absences allowed?

Attendance is mandatory during all clinical education experiences. There are no unexcused absences. Excused absences (illness, injury and family emergencies) will be made up at the discretion of the clinical instructor, the SCCE, and the ACCE. The student is expected to notify the clinical instructor at the designated number and the Program's ACCE by email or calling (515) 643-6773 at least one half (½) hour prior to the start of your shift.

9. What are the recommended methods for providing feedback and guidance to a student?

Formal opportunities for feedback are built into the clinical course. Weekly planning forms and clinical performance instrument assessments are required sources of feedback. Informal feedback and guidance are also important for student success. The frequency and method of feedback may vary.

10. Are there specific skills a PTA student should NOT perform while on a clinical experience?

The PTA curriculum at Mercy College of Health Sciences is designed to provide students with a strong foundation of fundamental knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to enter the profession. The purpose of the clinical education curriculum is to provide students with ample opportunities to practice the fundamental skills. These are identified on the student competency lists for each experience. Students should NOT perform skills considered outside the scope of work for a PTA. The Program supports the position statement of the APTA that a PTA should not perform skills requiring immediate and ongoing evaluation, such as peripheral and spinal joint mobilization/manipulation, dry needling, and sharp debridement. The clinical instructor assumes liability if he/she instructs the student on skills outside of the entry-level curriculum.