



Physical Therapist Assistant Program

Clinical Education Handbook For Learners

Class of 2025

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Mercer County Community College
Physical Therapist Assistant Program

This Clinical Education Handbook has been prepared as a comprehensive reference for Physical Therapist Assistant (PTA) learners who are preparing to participate or who are participating in the clinical education component of the PTA Program at Mercer County Community College.

Clinical Education is an integral part of the academic preparation of the entry-level PTA. It requires the dedication and cooperation of many parties including academic faculty, Clinical Instructors (CIs), clinical coordinators and other clinicians who interact with you during your quest to learn how to integrate all of the didactic knowledge with ease in the clinic. You will have the opportunity to work with CIs in a variety of clinical settings after demonstrating competence and safety in didactic courses. The clinical education courses provide clinical affiliations in area clinical sites to afford patient experience in the clinical setting to foster skill development.

One of the strengths of the physical therapy profession is the diversity that exists among the types of settings in which physical therapy services are delivered. The PTA program faculty members will make every effort to ensure that you have a variety of experiences through the three clinical education courses within the PTA program curriculum.

Each of the clinical education courses has a course handbook with specific objectives. Successful completion of the PTA program requires successful completion of all clinical education and classroom courses within the PTA program. Clinical education courses differ from traditional classroom based courses in that they take place off site from Mercer County Community College.

This handbook has been developed to help serve as a resource for you, the learner, with information regarding the Clinical Education component of the Physical Therapist Assistant Program at Mercer County Community College. The information contained within this handbook is in addition to the PTAP Learner Handbook distributed during the orientation session each year. All information, policies, and procedures found in the PTAP Learner Handbook also pertain to the clinical education component of the curriculum.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Knowledge of the following abbreviations and terms will assist in your understanding of this Clinical Education Handbook.

| Abbreviations & Terms | Definition | Role/Explanation |
|----------------------------------|---|--|
| ACCE | Academic Coordinator of Clinical Education | Academic faculty member responsible for the clinical education curriculum within the PTA program. |
| APTA | American Physical Therapy Association | The professional association that represents Physical Therapy on a national level including PTs, PTAs and physical therapy Learners. |
| CCCE | Clinical Coordinator of Clinical Education | An individual designated at the clinical site to act as liaison between the clinical site and the academic institution. Responsible for assigning a Clinical Instructor to the learner. |
| CI | Clinical Instructor | The practicing clinician, either a PT or PTA, responsible for providing supervision and mentorship throughout clinical education courses. Responsible for providing feedback, and assessing the ability of the learner to demonstrate course objectives. |
| Clinical Affiliation | Synonymous with Clinical Education course. | |
| Clinical Site | A facility in which physical therapy is practiced. Examples include outpatient physical therapy, acute hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, acute rehab facilities, schools, and specialty clinics. | Clinical sites act as a host to PTA learners for clinical education courses. |
| CPI | Clinical Performance Instrument | The document utilized by the Clinical Instructor to assess learner performance for each clinical education course objective. |
| PT | Physical Therapist | |
| PTA | Physical Therapist Assistant | |
| Student | A passive role where things are provided and everything is done for someone | The PTA program does not think of or refer to those involved in the program as students. |
| Learner | An active participant in education process | The PTA program uses the term learner to refer to those involved in classes and expects that there will be active participation by all learners. |

CLINICAL EDUCATION COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

PTA 224 PTA Clinical Education I (3 cr)

Course Description: Supervised full-time clinical instruction to observe the clinic environment and PT/PTA interactions; develop professional deportment and communication; refine measurement and time management skills; and learn about patient chart information. Prerequisites: PTA 210, PTA 214
40 hours per week for 4 weeks = 160 clinical hours

PTA 235 PTA Clinical Education II (4 cr)

Course Description: Supervised full-time clinical experience allows students to apply and practice skills learned in other classes and learn to become an integral part of a physical therapy department. Prerequisites: PTA 224, PTA 217
40 hours per week for 5 weeks = 200 hours

PTA 240 PTA Clinical Education III (5 cr)

Course Description: Supervised full-time clinical experience allows students to practice all of the techniques and procedures taught in the program, performing all that is normally expected of a physical therapist assistant. Prerequisite: PTA 235
40 hours per week for 6 weeks = 240 hours

CLINICAL AFFILIATION DATES – CLASS OF 2025

PTA 224 (Summer 2024) = Monday, May 20, 2024 – Tuesday, June 18, 2024 (Days off = Mon 5/27 & Mon 6/17)

PTA 235 (Fall 2024) = Monday, November 4, 2024 – Tuesday, December 12, 2024 (Days off = Thurs 11/28 & Fri 11/29)

PTA 240 (Spring 2025) = Tuesday, January 21, 2025 – Monday, March 3, 2025 (Days off = none)

CLINICAL EDUCATION HOUR REQUIREMENT

While 600 total clinical education hours are scheduled, the PTA Program requires that a minimum of 550 total clinical education hours be completed for graduation eligibility. Each learner is expected to complete ALL scheduled hours for each of the three clinical education courses. Any reduction in hours, due to illness, bereavement, etc. must be approved by the clinical site and PTA program ACCE.

PROVISIONS FOR THE PRIVILEGE OF PARTICIPATION IN CLINICAL EDUCATION COURSES

1. Clinical Education is a privilege, not a right for PTA program learners.
2. To maximize the opportunity for participation and success in clinical education courses, learners have responsibilities prior to, during, and after each clinical education course. These responsibilities are outlined below. Fulfilling all of these responsibilities does not guarantee that anyone will earn a passing grade for each clinical education course.
3. **Exemption from any of these requirements is not permitted.**

PRIOR TO PARTICIPATION IN CLINICAL EDUCATION COURSES

Many people play a role in preparing learners for participation in clinical education courses.

In preparation for clinical education, the ACCE is responsible for the following:

1. Utilizing the college academic calendar each year to determine clinical education start and end dates for each clinical education course for each graduating class.
2. Securing clinical placement slots from current clinical sites. Additional information pertaining to the details of this process can be found in Appendix A.
3. Maintaining current clinical affiliation agreements (contracts) with an adequate number and variety of clinical sites to sustain program needs.
4. Placing each learner in three separate clinical sites, ensuring a variety of clinical settings.
5. Sending each clinical site a Learner Information Packet prior to the start of each clinical education course. Learner Information Packets contain the following:
 - a. Introductory letter informing the facility of the Learner who has been assigned
 - b. Learner Profile
 - c. Letter confirming that all PTA Program health records requirements have been fulfilled and are on file.
 - d. Additional clinical site-specific required checklists
 - e. Clinical Performance Instrument
6. Providing a Clinical Education Handbook, all clinical education paperwork, and hosting a clinical education meeting prior to each clinical education course.
7. Based on the Contact Summaries submitted by all learners prior to each clinical education course, creating a midterm visit schedule and providing each learner with a letter (pertaining to on-site midterm visits) to be handed to the Clinical Instructor on the first day of each clinical education course.
8. Developing a clinical performance instrument to be completed by the clinical faculty as a means of reporting to the PTA faculty with regard to the course objectives for the clinical education course.

In preparation for clinical education, the learner is responsible for the following:

1. Attending the mandatory PTA Program Orientation to the Professional Phase.
2. Submitting the signed Forms Packet to the Program Coordinator by the second week of the first fall semester.
3. Updating the Clinical Education Placement Form as needed to ensure that the ACCE has current and accurate information pertaining to one's address, contact information, Learner visa information, and potential conflicts of interest. Additional information pertaining to potential conflicts of interest is contained in the section titled "Conflict of Interest" below.
4. Submitting hard copies of health records requirements to the health screening provider identified by the college and the health records screening form (provided by said health screen provider) directly to the ACCE by the last day of the first fall semester, to ensure that all clinical sites receive their required confirmations of compliance.
5. Keeping photocopies of all health records requirements that are submitted.
6. Fulfilling the academic requirements for participation in clinical education courses (as outlined below).
7. Attending all mandatory clinical education meetings prior to each clinical education course and submitting a completed Learner Profile to the ACCE prior to each clinical education course by the due date.
8. Submitting hard copies of any *additional* facility-specific requirements to both the facility and the ACCE prior to the first day of the clinical course (e.g. drug test, flu shot, extra criminal background check, etc.)

9. Contacting the clinical facility to which one has been assigned and submitting a completed Contact Summary to the ACCE prior to the first day of each of the clinical education courses. The following information will be requested when contacting the clinical facility, and provided on the Contact Summary:
 - a. directions to the facility
 - b. attire requirements
 - c. hours of the facility and when they are expected to report to the facility for their affiliation there
 - d. the name of the Clinical Instructor (CI) at that facility
10. Arranging transportation to and from the clinical facility at the learner's expense, and having a "transportation plan B" in place to ensure punctual arrival each day and consistent attendance.
11. Ensuring that one knows how to get to the assigned clinical site (the exact route) prior to the first day of the clinical education course.
12. Ensuring that one has appropriate attire for the clinical education courses as designated by the clinical facility.
13. Purchasing and wearing a nametag that complies with the NJ State Practice Act of PT. The nametag must indicate:
 - a. Learner Name
 - b. "MCCC PTA Learner"
13. Familiarizing oneself with the requirements and expectations of each clinical education course by reviewing the Clinical Education Handbook, and all documents provided during each clinical education meeting.

INFORMATION PROVIDED TO YOUR CLINICAL SITE

The PTA Program sends a Student Packet to each Clinical Instructor prior to the start of each clinical affiliation, both electronically and hard copy. This student packet contains the following information pertaining to the individual learner assigned to that facility:

1. A welcome letter that includes the learner's first and last name, status as a Mercer County Community College PTA students, and the clinical level (first, second, third/final).
2. A **checklist** indicating the student has completed Health Record Requirements*:
 - a. Physical Examination
 - b. CPR and First Aid certification
 - c. Criminal Background Check
 - d. Blood borne Pathogens Training (provided by the program)
3. A Learner Profile, completed by the learner, which includes the learner's full name, address, phone number, and email address

*Copies of actual physical examination forms, laboratory results, criminal background results, and CPR/first aid cards are not provided by the program or college to clinical sites.

ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATION IN CLINICAL EDUCATION COURSES

To be eligible to participate in a clinical education course, learners must be deemed *safe* and *competent* by successfully passing all competency tests associated with lab courses and successfully demonstrating all of the Critical Safety Indicators that have been identified for each course. Learners must also:

- Pass all prerequisite courses
- Pass PTA 107, PTA 112, PTA 114, PTA 210, PTA 214 PTA 222, PTA 227 and PTA 232 to be eligible for PTA 224 (summer clinical affiliation)
- Pass PTA 2p6 & PTA 217 to be eligible for PTA 235 (fall II clinical affiliation)
- Pass PTA 235 to be eligible for PTA 240 (spring II clinical affiliation).

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Learners will not be placed in facilities that would constitute a conflict of interest, as these would not represent an optimum learning environment for PTA program learners and hence the goals of the PTA program's clinical education component may not be attained. The PTA program considers the following situations to represent conflicts of interest:

- Clinical facilities where the learner has been employed in the physical therapy department in any capacity
- Clinical facilities where the learner has been or is currently employed
- Clinical facilities where a significant other or family member related to the learner is employed or has a financial interest
- Clinical facilities where the learner has a signed contract for future employment upon completion of the PTA program

Disclosure of Potential Conflict of Interest

Learners will have a formal opportunity to provide information pertaining to potential conflicts of interest to the ACCE by filling out the Clinical Education Placement Form. However, situations may change after the Clinical Education Placement Form has been provided to the ACCE. Therefore, at first knowledge that a situation could potentially be considered a conflict of interest, the learner shall disclose to the ACCE the precise nature of the interest or involvement in writing.

DURING PARTICIPATION IN CLINICAL EDUCATION COURSES

Many people play a role in the learner's participation in clinical education courses.

During each clinical education course, the ACCE is responsible for the following:

1. Maintaining communication with the learner.
2. Maintaining communication with the CI assigned to the learner and/or facility CCCE.
3. Visiting each learner for a midterm visit during at least one clinical education course during the professional phase of the PTA program.
4. Acting as an advocate for the patients, learners and clinical facilities in the event that a conflict or concern is communicated by any party.

During each clinical education course, the learner is responsible for the following:

1. Knowing and adhering to all clinical education policies and procedures set forth by the PTA Program at Mercer County Community College.
2. Knowing and adhering to all policies and procedures set forth by the clinical site.

3. Practicing physical therapy in a legal and ethical manner, in accordance with the State Practice Act for Physical Therapy and the APTA's Standards of Ethical Conduct for PTAs
4. Providing the midterm visit letter to the assigned CI on the first day of the clinical affiliation
5. Contacting the ACCE via email during the first week of the clinical affiliation to provide a clinically meaningful communication regarding the clinical experience.
6. Contacting the ACCE at any time during the clinical education course to discuss any concerns or issues.
7. Completing weekly Blackboard discussion posts
8. Wearing an appropriate nametag at all times and introducing oneself as a Physical Therapist Assistant Learner. Each learner **must** carry an MCCC ID badge with picture, at all times. On occasion, learners may be asked to identify themselves as a Learner and the MCCC picture ID will serve that purpose.
 - a. Certain clinical facilities require that facility badges be worn. Facility badges will be provided at the start of the clinical affiliation. **Failure to return it at the end of the affiliation may result in an incomplete grade for the course.**
9. Be aware that each patient has a right to decline treatment by a physical therapist assistant Learner, with no risks or repercussions to the patient. All patients are to be treated with respect, regardless of their decision to participate or decline participation in clinical education.
10. Maintaining patient confidentiality in accordance with federal guidelines and facility policies.
11. Adhering to the clinical site's dress code. See the section below titled "Guidelines for Appearance in the Clinical Setting."
12. Completing the Weekly Summary form each week with your CI.
13. Filling in timesheets each week by entering hours, totaling the weekly hours, initialing each week and having the CI initial each week. At the conclusion of the clinical education course, total all clinical hours and have the CI sign the bottom of the attendance sheet.
14. Arriving at least 10-15 minutes prior to the start of the schedule each and every day throughout the clinical affiliation. Failure to meet this requirement constitutes lateness. If one is late for any reason, contact the assigned CI immediately and do not let it happen again. Chronic lateness will affect the learner's grade for the course and may result in disciplinary action.
15. Attending all days scheduled for the clinical education course. In the event that one is unable to attend, do the following:
 - a. Call the CI and/or clinical site immediately to report the absence
 - b. If the CI or clinical site cannot be reached, call them again within 5 minutes of the time in which the clinical site opens for the day.
 - c. email the ACCE to report the absence.
 - d. If the absence is due to illness, provide a copy of a doctor's note clearing a return to the clinic to both the CI (upon return to the clinic) and to the ACCE (upon return to school).
 - e. Upon return to the clinical site, discuss a plan to make up the missed hours with the assigned CI. The missed hours will need to be made up prior to the last scheduled day of the clinical education course. Email the plan to the ACCE regarding making up missed hours.
16. Once the midterm review has been scheduled by the assigned CI, complete the Self Performance Evaluation Instrument in full prior to the scheduled midterm review, outside of scheduled clinical hours. Mark the performance along the 0-10 scale and provide a clinically meaningful summary or narrative in each narrative box.
17. Once the final review has been scheduled by the CI, complete the Self Performance Evaluation Instrument in full prior to the scheduled final review, outside of scheduled clinical hours. Mark your performance along the 0-10 scale and provide a clinically meaningful summary or narrative in each narrative box.
18. Bringing photocopies of all health records requirements that were submitted to PennMed every day.

19. Prepare, complete, and perform any additional requirements including case studies, in-services and additional assignments as assigned by the CI and/or ACCE.
20. Ask the CI questions if there is something unknown that needs to be known. Your CI does not expect learners to know everything. However, unless one needs to know the answer immediately to safely/effectively provide patient treatment, do look up the answer to questions so that both the question and the answer can be presented to the CI for discussion.
21. Strive to work at the pace of the clinic or the pace that the CI sets. Clinicians have productivity standards and physical therapy tends to be a fast paced field, even when working one-on-one with patients. While one should never compromise patient safety, an appropriate sense of urgency to keep the day/schedule moving is appropriate.
22. Learners are expected to complete the required number of clinical education hours indicated for each clinical education course. The specific schedule each week will be dependent upon the hours of operation of the clinical facility and clinical instructor availability. Daily hours can be discussed with the clinical facility and they rely heavily upon the requirements of **that** clinical facility.
 - a. All holidays observed by the college will be considered holidays for learners. Clinical sites that observe holidays that coincide with scheduled clinical days will also be regarded as holidays by those learners assigned to that facility.
 - b. When the college is closed due to inclement weather, learners will not be permitted to attend clinical education. Learners must check the MCCC website (www.mccc.edu) and/or register their telephone number with MAlert for cancellations.
23. In the event of an injury that occurs while participating in a clinical education course, the following steps must be followed to assure that expenses for any insurance claim are handled appropriately.
 - a. Inform the clinical instructor and ACCE immediately of the injury.
 - b. The clinical site may have forms that are required to be completed.
 - c. Prepare an **Injury Report** and an **Insurance Claim Form**. Copies of both of these forms can be obtained from either the nursing office on the first floor of the MS building, or from Professor Tallone. Submit completed copies of the forms to the ACCE and maintain the originals.
 - d. Attach a copy of the incident report to the insurance claim form and follow the instructions on the form to file a claim. Learners are responsible for filing all claims and for any follow up necessary, directly with the insurance company.
23. Occasionally, a patient will cancel an appointment and the Learner will have unexpected “downtime.” Learners are expected to use “downtime” in the clinic appropriately. Appropriate use of clinical “downtime” includes following a different therapist (with permission), reviewing medical charts for patients who will be seen that day or the next, reading textbooks and professional journals, cleaning equipment, checking the hydrocollator level, doing laundry, restocking linens, and asking how one can help. Inappropriate use of “downtime” includes using one’s cell phone, reading an entertainment magazine, stepping outside of the clinic for a few minutes, socializing with the secretary, etc.
24. Learners are expected to comply with HIPAA rules and regulations at all times, including facility policies pertaining to patient confidentiality.
25. Learners are expected to contact the ACCE with issues, concerns, problems and questions as soon as they arise during each clinical affiliation.
26. Learners are expected to look things up. When clinical questions arise (that are not time sensitive), the learner is expected to demonstrate resourcefulness and initiative by seeking the information to his/her questions and presenting the findings to the clinical instructor for verification/discussion.
27. Learners are not permitted to visit any client in hospital settings while in uniform nor should they go to any area of the hospital, other than their assigned area, unless they have special permission from the clinical instructor.

28. Telephones in hospitals are not for personal use. **Learners do not make or receive telephone calls or text messages while in the clinic.** Emergency calls only can be returned during lunch breaks or at the end of the day with the permission of the clinical instructor. Cell phones are to be used only in designated areas.
29. **Chewing gum is not permitted and please** check with individual facility policies regarding areas where smoking is permitted. All clinical facilities are considered “smoke free” unless indicated otherwise by a clinical instructor.
30. Learners may not act as a witness for any consent form. The learner may not transact any business for clients or patients. The Business Office of the facility or hospital must handle this.
31. Learners are **never** permitted to deliver or receive medications for patients from the clinical unit if in a hospital setting.
32. Learners are not permitted to accept or offer gifts from or to patients. This is both unprofessional and unethical.
33. All breakage of equipment must be reported to the clinical instructor in the clinical facility.
34. Clinical evaluations are performed approximately at midpoint during every clinical affiliation. A clinical failure occurs when a majority of evaluations in any one objective is graded as unsatisfactory.
 - a. **However; the ACCE reserves the right to immediately dismiss a learner from the clinical area if his/her behavior is deemed unsafe. This dismissal may result in a clinical failure if the ACCE and or Clinical Instructor believe it is warranted.**
35. Any time lost due to illness may require a doctor’s note clearing the learner to return to the clinical environment. If the clinical site requires a doctor’s note for return to the clinic, this note must be presented to the clinical instructor upon returning to the clinic and a copy must be handed to the ACCE upon return to the MCCC campus with the evaluation materials.

Remember, at all times learners are representing the college, the MCCC PTA Program and the profession of physical therapy. Learner behavior affects more than just one individual! The use of the clinical site is a privilege.

GUIDELINES FOR APPEARANCE IN THE CLINICAL SETTING

Each learner in the Physical Therapist Assistant program is required to purchase a lab coat for use during competency testing and practical exams while on campus. However; in the clinical environment each site will have its own requirements regarding what is appropriate. These guidelines must be considered when there are no other guidelines provided by the clinical site or when the class goes off campus for an activity.

1. Tops must cover the abdomen when both arms are raised overhead. Tops must also cover the entire body of the sternum.
2. Pant or slack length must be to the ankle, not above or excessively below.
3. Anything that can be worn while exercising, doing yoga, or while sleeping are not appropriate for clinical education courses. Denim, sweatpants, or stirrup pants are not acceptable.
4. Jewelry should be kept to a minimum. (no hoop earrings that could be caught in patient clothing)
5. Cologne, perfume, aftershave lotions, etc. should not be used due to allergies and patient sensitivities. Cosmetics should be kept to a minimum for the same reasons.
6. Hair must be kept clean, neat and away from the face. Long hair must be kept up and secured.
7. Hair must be a natural color.

8. Finger nails must be kept short*, neat, and clean. (**not extending beyond the end of the fingertips*). If nail polish is worn, it must be neutral.
9. Proper undergarments must be worn.
10. Name tags and required facility Identification must be worn while in the facility. Failure to do so may result in dismissal from the clinical affiliation at the discretion of the clinical coordinator and clinical instructor.

FOLLOWING YOUR PARTICIPATION IN CLINICAL EDUCATION COURSES

Many people play a role in the learner's success in clinical education courses.

At the conclusion of each clinical education course, the ACCE is responsible for the following:

1. Grading learners for the clinical education courses, based on the Clinical Instructor's assessment of Learner performance as well as other factors. Please see the course handbook for each clinical education course. See the sections below titled "Clinical Education Course Grading" and "Course Grading."

At the conclusion of each clinical education course, the learner is responsible for the following:

1. Completing and returning all clinical education evaluation instruments and documents at the conclusion of each clinical education course along with any additional forms that may have been requested by the Academic Coordinator of Clinical Education (ACCE).

CLINICAL EDUCATION COURSE GRADING

Clinical education courses are graded by PTA program faculty members who are responsible for determining that course objectives have been met by the learner.

The Academic Coordinator of Clinical Education (ACCE) for the PTA program assigns clinical rotations for learners based on the individual's interests, experiences, commute, and the sites available to meet the needs of the learner. It is the sole responsibility of the ACCE from the college to communicate directly with the clinical instructor(s) who will be working with the learner during the clinical course. The ACCE is also responsible for scheduling either a visit or telephone conference with the sites so that the clinical instructor, learner and ACCE have a chance to speak to each other regarding the progress of the learner. Each learner will be visited during at least one of their clinical affiliations. For those who are not visited, a telephone conference may be set up with the Clinical Instructor approximately halfway through the clinical education course.

After each clinical site visit, a form is completed that indicates the content of the discussions with the learner, the clinical instructor, and possibly the Center Coordinator of Clinical Education (CCCE). The form details any further actions that might need to be taken or concerns that were raised during the visit. This completed form is placed in the learner's file maintained by the PTA program.

Learners are encouraged to contact the ACCE at any time during the clinical education course to express concerns and questions. Those learners who are not scheduled for a site visit halfway through the course are

encouraged to contact the ACCE to discuss the clinical education experience, professional behavior, progress toward clinical education goals, safety, and competence level of the learner.

This activity is viewed as a powerful learning experience where the learner has the ability to self-evaluate and discuss self-assessment in a non-defensive environment. Essentially, the on-going communication provides all parties the opportunity to make sure that “they are all on the same page” in terms of learner progress.

COURSE GRADING

Grade ranges are as follows:

| | |
|------------|--------|
| P (pass) = | 77-100 |
| F (fail) = | 0-76 |

All PTA program courses must be completed with a grade of 77 or higher, which equates to a “pass” for clinical education courses. All PTA program courses may be attempted only twice. Numerical grades will be converted to pass/fail for all clinical education courses.

To meet the criteria for passing a clinical education course, learners must demonstrate the following five behaviors by the end of the clinical affiliation:

- a. Consistent competence in the cognitive domain (the ability to integrate classroom knowledge into the clinical environment).
- b. Consistent competence in the psychomotor domain (the ability to execute hands-on skills required in the field of physical therapy)
- c. Consistent competence in the affective domain (demonstration of professional behaviors valued by the Physical Therapy profession)
- d. Safety (learners must demonstrate safety in their clinical decision making and execution of tasks)
- e. Progress (learners must demonstrate progress and growth during the clinical affiliation)

At the conclusion of a clinical education course, grading by the ACCE may include consideration of the following:

1. clinical setting
2. experience with patients in that setting
3. relative weighting or importance of each performance criterion
4. expectations for the clinical course
5. expectations of the clinical site
6. progression of performance from midterm to final evaluations
7. level of experience with the didactic and clinical components
8. whether significant concerns were reported by the Clinical Instructor
9. congruence between the CI’s narrative midterm and final related to the ratings provided on the CPI
10. additional assignments
11. site visit information

EXTENSION OF A CLINICAL EDUCATION COURSE

If a learner is unable to demonstrate the criteria necessary to pass a clinical education course, an opportunity to extend the affiliation (in the form of additional days) may be provided and will be based upon:

1. the ability of the clinical facility and clinical faculty to accommodate an extension
2. the ability of the PTA program and faculty to accommodate an extension

3. the extent of concerns and deficits.
 - a. Learners who demonstrate difficulty in one learning domain may be offered an extension.
 - b. Learners who demonstrate difficulty in two or more learning domains will not be offered an extension.

NOT PASSING A CLINICAL EDUCATION COURSE ON THE FIRST ATTEMPT

In the event that a learner does not earn the academic requirement of a C+ or higher during a clinical education course, he/she may re-enter the program with the following cohort and initiate the second/final attempt of the clinical education course during the next semester in which that clinical education course is *regularly scheduled*. Clinical Education I (PTA 224) is regularly scheduled each summer semester. Clinical Education II (PTA 235) is regularly scheduled each fall semester. Clinical Education III (PTA 240) is regularly scheduled each spring semester.

- Please refer to the Practical Examination Policies in the Learner Handbook
- Please refer to the “Re-Entry, Repeating and Returning” portion of the PTA Program Learner Handbook
 - The learner may be required to submit an application, complete a re-entry practical examination, submit updated health records requirements, and complete a remediation plan prior to being eligible for the second attempt of a clinical education course

LEARNER INJURIES DURING CLINICAL EDUCATION COURSES

If a learner is injured while participating in a clinical education course the following steps must be followed to assure that expenses for any insurance claim are handled appropriately.

1. Advise the clinical instructor of the injury immediately, and the ACCE as soon as possible
2. Prepare an **Injury Report** and an **Insurance Claim Form**. Copies of both of these forms can be obtained from either the nursing office on the first floor of the HS building, or from the ACE. Submit completed copies of the forms to the ACCE and maintain the originals.
3. Attach a copy of the incident report to the insurance claim form and follow the instructions on the form to file a claim. Learners are responsible for filing all claims and for any follow up necessary, directly with the insurance company.

SAFETY IN ON-CAMPUS AND OFF-CAMPUS EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

1. Mercer County Community College has a Learner body, faculty, administrative staff and personnel, who all commute to either the West Windsor or James Kerney (Trenton) campuses of the college. There are no provisions for dormitory facilities at either campus.
2. Whether learners are attending a class on one of the campuses or at an alternate location, every learner is individually responsible for his or her own transportation, and motor vehicle insurance coverage.
3. PTA program faculty members will not assume any additional risk by transporting learners to an off-campus activity. If a PTA learner requires minor medical assistance e.g. for a cut or abrasion, the PTA Lab MS 352 has a First Aid Kit, which contains bandages and first aid cream.
4. If a learner requires immediate medical assistance during a PTA program course on one of the MCCC campuses, then either a PTA program faculty member or designee will **call security at 570- 3503** or by

picking up one of the “red” telephones located in the middle of the long hallways of the academic buildings. Security will dispatch an EMT to the scene.

5. Mercer has a security Hot Line which can be reached by dialing 609-570-3200 from any telephone or just 3200 from any telephone on campus that is part of the Mercer extension system.

PREFERRED PTA CLINICAL FACULTY

Mercer County Community College PTA learners find that many of the attributes that they have admired in their clinical instructors are skills that can be mentored. They also learn that there is a real place in the clinical environment for PTA role models. At the PTA forum, clinical instructors often encourage PTA Learners to think about giving back to the profession as clinical instructors themselves, reflecting back on the preferred list of attributes that is included in the clinical education handbook, which follows:

Preferred PTA clinical faculty members will give evidence of/or demonstrate:

- PT or PTA degree with at least one year of clinical experience in the practice setting which the person serves as the clinical faculty or significant comparable experience.
- Effective interpersonal and communication skills with Learners by clearly articulating expectations, providing and receiving constructive feedback, and active listening.
- Professionalism; practicing in a professional, ethical and legal manner.
- Competency; demonstrating knowledge, skills, and safety required for effective delivery of care.
- Organizational and time management skills (e.g. setting priorities and planning learning experiences for learners.)
- Enthusiasm for the role of clinical faculty in the program.
- Ability to evaluate a learner’s performance, especially as it related to safe and unsafe practice, ethical and legal behaviors, and the achievement of specific clinical performance objectives.
- Supervision skills commensurate with the learner’s needs and the patient’s acuity (e.g. illness, impairment, disability)

ASSIGNMENT OF LEARNERS TO CLINICAL SITES

Clinical assignments are made by the ACCE who considers each learner’s request as well as the needs and expectations of the clinic sites, and the academic requirements of all learners. The placement of learners at clinical sites will have the primary purpose of providing learners with quality experiences in both inpatient and outpatient settings. While every *attempt* will be made to ensure that clinical sites are not more than one hour from the learner’s home, travel distance for Learners will **not** be a primary concern when assigning clinical sites. Proximity to the clinical site cannot be guaranteed. Due to limited availability of clinical sites, learners will be expected to travel to any site to which they are assigned. Learners must keep the ACCE abreast of address changes in writing as soon as they occur to offset unanticipated scheduling problems.

Depending on traffic, distance and other travel/time issues, learners may opt to find short term housing close to the clinical site. All costs incurred due to required clinical education experiences/assignments (including, but

not limited to, fuel, car maintenance and repair, housing, food and appropriate attire) are the responsibility of the learner.

Each learner will have at least one inpatient experience and one outpatient experience. An inpatient experience is defined as an experience in which the learner will minimally be exposed to adult patients who are currently residing on the premises of the clinical site. These sites generally include acute care hospitals, rehabilitation centers, and skilled nursing facilities. An outpatient experience is defined as an experience in which the learner will minimally be exposed to adult patients who come to the clinical site at specified times for services. These sites are generally outpatient orthopedic facilities. In cases where an inpatient facility offers outpatient services, the ACCE will determine which type of affiliation the facility can currently offer based on communication with the CCCE of the facility.

Learners are not allowed to make contact with any clinic site without explicit prior approval from the ACCE. Clinical assignments can only be made once it is determined that the facility:

- a) Is accepting learners
- b) Meets the clinical education criteria and is able to provide the expected learning experiences.
- c) Establishes a clinical affiliation agreement with Mercer County Community College.

Learners will not be assigned to clinical sites where he/she has a prior or existing relationship with the site or the CI. This relationship may include previous work at the facility, familial or personal relationships. Learners must disclose any conflicts of interest to the ACCE when clinical assignments are given. Failure to do so could delay clinical site placement and progression through the program.

LEARNER EXPENSES

Learners in the PTA program are entitled to know approximately what costs are associated with the curriculum in addition to the tuition to the college. Costs are subject to change after the publication of this document; however, this should provide learners with a reasonable expectation for the amounts involved (*where known*).

Medical

Learners are responsible for all costs incurred while having a physical with their family physician for the purpose of completing the necessary health information worksheet. Learners are also responsible for attaining and maintaining their own health insurance policy. Clinical Sites may also have their own additional requirements (such as drug testing and separate background investigations). It is the responsibility of the learner to fulfill those requirements within the given timeframe and to incur all costs associated with those requirements.

All learners are financially responsible for medical treatment if illness or injury occurs while enrolled in the PTA program.

Due to the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA), health coverage requirements have changed significantly. As of July 2013, community colleges are no longer required to provide health insurance to full timelearners.

Anyone who was relying on the health insurance provided by Mercer will now be asked to secure their own healthcare coverage. Everyone is being directed to the New Jersey Web site http://www.state.nj.us/dobi/division_insurance/ihcseh/shop_ihc.htm. This appears to be NJ's insurance

exchange site from the NJ Department of Banking and Insurance, which will enable one to shop directly for insurance plans, find an insurer, policy rate information and a list of other programs which provide health insurance coverage.

This site will allow one to shop various individual markets and purchase a plan based on individual demographics, and also a specific time line as opposed to a year offered most group plans. The site also provides information on Medicaid options to cover people making under \$14,400 a year and also explains parameters for Learners to stay on their parents' health plans up to the age of 26.

Transportation Expenses

Learners are responsible for their own transportation costs **to and from** all scheduled classes and clinical affiliations. This includes any other expenses incurred for food, parking, tolls etc., while attending PTA program classes.

In addition to previously mentioned criteria for clinical placements, the learner is expected to be responsible for:

- reliable transportation to and from the clinical site
- all expenses incurred with regard to transportation to and from the clinical site
- all expensed incurred with regard to parking if necessary for the clinical site
- all liability for incidents involved with transportation to and from the clinical site

Tuition and Fees

Tuition and fees are established by the MCCC College Board of Trustees. Different rates apply to residents of Mercer County, other resident of New Jersey, out-of-state residents, and non-U.S. citizens. Tuition is charged based upon a credit (or credit equivalent) hour basis. The college has entered into an agreement with Bucks County College so that those individuals who reside in Bucks county PA, will be considered "out of county" and be charged accordingly for PTA prefixed courses. This also applies for those individuals who live in counties within NJ where their own county community college does not have a PTA program. The college reserves the right to change tuition or fees at any time by action of the Board of Trustees. In addition to tuition and fees, learners are responsible for their purchasing their books and supplies for classes.

Lab Coats

Lab Coats are required for competency testing and Clinical Education courses. The lab coat must have a patch on the Left shoulder that indicates Mercer County Community College PTA Learner, and learners must also wear a name tag that indicates their name, and that they are an MCCC PTA Learner. These items are available through various vendors. Vendor information will be provided once finalized.

DUE PROCESS AND GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

Please refer to the college's Learner handbook for an explanation of Learner due process procedures. The procedures applicable to campus activities are also applicable to medical laboratory technology, nursing, physical therapist assistant, and radiography program clinical education.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

On July 26, 1990, the President of the United States signed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The ADA is intended to remove barriers against the more than 43 million people with disabilities in the United States. If a learner has a documented learning disability, psychological disability, physical disability, or other hidden disability that requires an accommodation, it is the responsibility of that individual to make an appointment to meet with the Course Instructor to provide documentation indicating the accommodation that supports that request that is being made. This meeting must occur **prior to** the due date for any course examinations or assignments to discuss what accommodations might be necessary. It is the responsibility of the learner to provide written documentation for the need.

A list of Essential Functions for PTA program learners and graduates is included in the PTAP Learner Handbook. Any learner in this class who has special needs because of a disability is entitled to receive accommodations. Eligible Learners at Mercer County Community College are assured services under the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. If you believe you are eligible for services, please contact Arlene Stinson, the Director of Academic Support Services. Ms. Stinson's office is LB217, and she can be reached at (609) 570-3525. stinsona@mccc.edu

DISMISSAL FROM A CLINICAL SITE

Faculty members are authorized to deny any learner the privilege of participation in clinical affiliations, competency tests, lab activities or classroom lectures when the learner is:

- 1) Unprepared (which would make him or her potentially dangerous to others),
- 2) Presents a health hazard to clients or fellow classmates,
- 3) When the learner's performance falls below a competent level with regard to patient safety
- 4) When the learner does not meet agency or facility health standards.

In such situations, participation in the experience will be discontinued until there is evidence that the learner's progress meets minimal criteria for safe clinical performance. This may require medical documentation from the learner's health care provider if indicated. Learners who are identified as not meeting clinical objectives will have an action plan for performance improvement developed by their clinical instructor.

Clinical faculty are authorized to deny any learner the privilege of participation in clinical affiliation hours when the learner:

1. Unprepared (which would make him or her potentially dangerous to others),
2. Presents a health hazard to clients or fellow classmates,
3. When the learner's performance falls below a competent level with regard to patient safety
4. When the learner does not meet agency or facility health standards.
5. Displays unprofessional behavior after receiving feedback from the clinical site

When a learner is dismissed from a clinical site and unable to complete the clinical affiliation course, the grade earned will be a “fail” and will count as an attempt for that professional phase clinical education course.

CRITERIA FOR CLINICAL EDUCATION COURSE PASS, INCOMPLETE, AND FAIL

Criteria for PASS

1. Perfect attendance is mandatory, and learners will abide by the facility’s schedule, making every possible attempt to arrive at least 15 minutes prior to when he or she is expected to treat the first patient of the day. If this arrival time cannot be met, the learner is expected to notify both the CI and the ACCE of any change in arrival for clinical whenever it might occur. Any deviation in the schedule will need to be addressed and negotiated between the learner and the CI in advance.
2. Learner Self Performance Evaluations must be completed prior to both the midterm and final meetings with the Clinical Instructor.
3. It is the responsibility of the learner to make sure that the Clinical Performance Instrument (CPI) is completed by the Clinical Instructor and returned to the ACCE at Mercer.
4. Skills completed will vary based on the affiliation, and where the learner is within the curriculum. A list of acceptable skills to be addressed will be given to the learner and the Clinical Instructor prior to each affiliation.
5. Special assignments may be made at the discretion of the ACCE for each rotation and are due prior to being assigned a grade for that course. These may include, but are not limited to, case studies, journal entries, research projects, or in-service presentations. Clinical Instructors may also require special projects of a learner, which must be completed in the clinic. These may include in-service presentations, reading assignments, or other assignments that have been discussed and agreed to by the learner, the clinical instructor and the ACCE and are considered reasonable expectations.

Criteria for a Grade of INCOMPLETE

If time is missed during the clinical affiliation which inhibits the learner’s ability to successfully complete the objectives for that clinical education course due to medical reasons or personal emergencies, then the learner will receive a grade of Incomplete for the course and may be able to complete the course during the next semester depending on the availability and cooperation of clinical sites. This will delay the graduation date by one semester or more depending upon the individual circumstances of the Learner learner.

HB 05/12

Criteria for a FAILING Grade

A learner will receive a failing grade for a clinical education course if:

- He or she is removed from the clinical setting for violating the rules and regulations of the clinical facility for disclosing confidential information, engaging in conduct that disrupts the activities of the facility, or threatens the safety of the facility personnel or patients
- He or she engages in unprofessional or unethical behavior in accordance with professional guidelines or Code of Ethics as defined by the profession
- He or she fails to meet the necessary academic requirements to pass the course as stated in the course handbook
- He or she is found to be involved in criminal activity within the clinical site or hospital
- He or she uses alcohol, drugs or other toxic or foreign agents, which tend to limit or adversely affect the learner’s duties and responsibilities
- He or she engages in any behavior which violates a hospital/clinical site regulation and/or resulting in denial by the hospital/clinical site of clinical privileges
- He or she takes any action which knowingly endangers the health or well-being of the learner, a fellow learner, patient or hospital personnel or visitor

- He or she vandalizes or abuses clinical equipment

If a learner is removed from a clinical education site, he or she may be dismissed from the PTA education program.

CLINICAL EDUCATION DISCIPLINE

Although it is presumed that all medical laboratory technology, nursing, physical therapist assistant, and radiography Learners/learners exercise maturity and sound judgment in the process of becoming productive members of the health care community, there are occasions when it becomes necessary to address matters of conduct and discipline. In the event that disciplinary action becomes necessary, the program faculty will exercise fairness, utilizing progressive discipline when possible.

The type of disciplinary action taken will depend on the seriousness and nature of the offense, and the learner's history of problems.

Disciplinary action may include one or more of the following:

1. Verbal counseling when the infraction is relatively minor or a first offense.
2. Written warning which may become part of the learner's permanent file when verbal counseling fails to achieve the desired change in behavior.
3. Removal from the clinical site when previous disciplinary actions fail to produce desired changes in behavior, or conduct presents a danger to self and others.

Remember, the aim is to promote those behaviors, which best serve the needs of patients, the health care institution and the community.

THE FOLLOWING ARE CONSIDERED JUST CAUSE FOR DISMISSAL FROM CLINICAL EDUCATION:

- Unprofessional or unethical behavior on the part of the learner in accordance with professional guidelines or Code of Ethics as defined by the profession
- Failure on the part of the learner to meet any necessary academic requirements
- Criminal activity within the clinical site or hospital
- Use of alcohol, drugs or other toxic or foreign agents, which tend to limit or adversely affect the learner's duties and responsibilities
- Any behavior which violated a hospital/clinical site regulation and/or resulting in denial by the hospital/clinical site of clinical privileges
- Action which knowingly endangers the health or well-being of the learner, a fellow learner, patient or hospital personnel or visitor
- Vandalism or abuse of clinical equipment

When a learner is removed from a clinical education site, he or she may be dismissed from the education program.

DISCLOSURE, INCIDENT, AND INJURY FORMS

Clinical Education Disclosure Form

One of the tasks of the clinical education component of the PTA curriculum is to provide learners with the opportunity to work in a clinical setting with a diagnosed patient population. Through contractual arrangement, facilities have agreed to allow MCCC PTA learners to work directly with their patients under the supervision of a clinical instructor who is employed by the clinical facility. This type of agreement relies heavily on the trust between the clinical facility and the PTA program's academic preparation of the learner to be able to successfully integrate him or herself into the clinical environment.

Faculty and clinical instructors are committed to learners' successful completion of the clinical education component of the curriculum. In the event that a learner must re-take a clinical education course some decisions need to be made.

1. What remediation needs to take place for the learner to be more successful in the clinical setting?
2. Whether or not to disclose the reasons that the learner was not successful in the first attempt with the clinical education course.
3. Which clinical sites would provide an opportunity for a learner to repeat a clinical education course?

Every learner has the right to privacy with regard to his or her academic and clinical performance. This information is not disclosed to anyone without the expressed consent of the learner. When a learner needs to re-take a clinical education course it is the opinion of the PTA faculty that this information would be very helpful to disclose. Once the information is disclosed to the clinical instructor, a remediation plan can be developed by the PTA program faculty and implemented. This plan would be designed to assist the learner to become more successful as he or she re-takes the clinical education course.

Please indicate whether or not you agree to let the PTA program faculty members disclose this information on your behalf and develop a remediation plan for you. Failure to grant this permission will make you ineligible for the development of any remediation when you re-take this clinical education course.

☐ I agree to have the PTA program faculty disclose that I am re-taking this clinical education course, and the reasons that I need to re-take this course. I understand that the purpose of this disclosure is to help me be more successful.

Signature

Date

Name

☐ I do not want the PTA program faculty to disclose any information about my re-taking this clinical education course. I understand that this makes me ineligible for the development of a remediation plan for this course.

Signature

Date

Name

Disciplinary Action Form

Program of Study: Medical Laboratory Technology, Nursing, Physical Therapist Assistant, Radiography

Learner Name: _____

Faculty Member: _____

Meeting Date: _____

Nature of offense: _____

Written Warning:

This offense was originally discussed with you on _____. Recommended changes in behaviors or actions have not been demonstrated.

This copy serves as your written notice that the desired effect has not yet been achieved. Failure to produce the agreed upon change(s) within _____ will result in your removal from the clinical education site.

Learner Name: _____

Faculty Member: _____

Notice Date: _____

A copy of this page is to be retained by both the learner and the Program Coordinator or designee.

**Mercer County Community College
Physical Therapist Assistant Program**

ANECDOTAL RECORD

Learner's Name:

Date:

Evaluator/Observer:

Setting (place, persons involved, atmosphere, etc.):

Learner Action or Behavior:

Evaluator Interpretation:

Learner's Signature: _____ Evaluator's Signature: _____

Learner's Comments:

**Mercer County Community College
Physical Therapist Assistant Program**

CRITICAL INCIDENT REPORT

Directions: Record each entry clearly and concisely without reflecting any biases.

Learner's Name:

Evaluator/Observer:

| | Antecedents | Behaviors | Consequences |
|--|-------------|-----------|--------------|
| Date/Time: Learner Initials: Evaluator Initials: | | | |
| Date/Time: Learner Initials: Evaluator Initials: | | | |
| Date/Time: Learner Initials: Evaluator Initials: | | | |
| | | | |

Learner's Signature:

Evaluator's Signature:

**Mercer County Community College
Division of Math, Science & Health Professions**

Learner Injury Report

INJURED

Name: _____ Social Security Number: _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Date Injured: _____ Time: _____ Place: _____

INJURY

Describe the injury: _____

Referred to: _____

By Whom: _____

Date: _____ Time: _____

Learner Signature: _____ Date: _____

MCCC Staff Signature: _____ Date: _____

WAIVER:

I, _____ decline treatment

Learner Signature: _____ Date: _____

MCCC Staff Signature: _____ Date: _____

**Mercer County Community College
Physical Therapist Assistant Program**

Probation from Clinical Education

Notification of Safety Related Clinical Probation

Based upon both written and verbal information received by MCCC faculty, you have been placed on Clinical Probation. This decision was not made without considerable thought and concern for your ability to successfully complete the PTA program curriculum. Probation will last for a time period agreed to between yourself, your clinical instructor, the academic coordinator of clinical education, and the PTA program coordinator.

| | |
|-------------|------------------|
| Start Date: | Completion Date: |
|-------------|------------------|

Successful completion of the probation indicates that the learner has performed in a safe and appropriate manner throughout the probationary period. At that point, the learner may continue in the clinical education course as described in the clinical education course handbook.

Unsuccessful completion of the probationary period may result in a learner's inability to progress within the academic courses of the PTA program curriculum. This decision will be based upon individual learner records, and in accordance with the PTA program Learner handbook.

Your signature represents that you understand the information that has been explained to you.

| | | | |
|--------------------|--|-------|--|
| Learner Name: | | Date: | |
| Learner Signature: | | | |

Signatures of the clinical instructor, academic coordinator of clinical education (ACCE) and the PTA program coordinator indicate that they too understand the gravity (*severity*) of this decision, and that this has been explained to you.

| | | | |
|---------------|--|-------|--|
| CI Name: | | Date: | |
| CI Signature: | | | |

| | | |
|--|--|--------------|
| Signature: | | Date: |
| Rachel Tallone, PT, DPT, CSCS, ACCE | CordascR@mccc.edu | 609-570-3321 |

CONTACT INFORMATION

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| PTA Program Coordinator | Professor Holly Beinert PT, DPT <i>NJ License # 40QA01114200</i> beinertH@mccc.edu HS 137 | 609-570-3478 |
| Academic Coordinator of Clinical Education | Professor Rachel Tallone PT, DPT, CSCS <i>NJ License # 40QA01847400</i> CordascR@mccc.edu HS 128 | 609-570-3321 |
| Dean, Division of Health Professions | Kevin Duffy, ABD, MS, ATC, CSCS, CES, PES, NSCA-NPT DuffyK@mccc.edu HS 119 | 609-570-3384 |
| Executive Assistant Division of Health Professions | Kara De Bonis debonisk@mccc.edu HS 118 | 609-570-3383 |
| Health Professions Success Coach | Ed Griffith Griffith@mccc.edu | 609-570-3236 |
| Support Services for Differing Abilities | Arlene Stinson StinsonA@mccc.edu LB 212 | 609-570-3525 |
| Fax: 609-570-3831 "To the attention of" Must be included with the use of the Fax number and then include the name of the individual you want your fax delivered to. <i>The fax is in MS 128, not the office of either faculty member.</i> | Mailing Address: Physical Therapist Assistant Program Mercer County Community College PO Box 17202 West Windsor, NJ 08550-3407 | Shipping Address: Mercer County Community College Physical Therapist Assistant Program 1200 Old Trenton Rd. West Windsor, NJ 08550-3407 |