



PHYSICAL THERAPIST ASSISTANT PROGRAM
Observation Hours Requirements and Expectations

Observation Requirements

Purpose of Observation hours: Observation hours are required to help students gain insight into the profession of physical therapy, to provide the student the opportunity to ask questions to therapists in the field, and to ensure that this is the correct career choice.

Students are required to complete and have verification of **a minimum of 10 hours of observation** under the supervision of a licensed **physical therapist** or a **physical therapist assistant**.

1. Observation experiences can occur **in any type of physical therapy setting** (i.e. outpatient orthopedics facility, hospital, rehabilitation center, skilled nursing center, nursing home or long term care, school-based pediatrics, home health).
2. **Observation Verification forms must not be more than three years old at** the time of application to the PTA Program.

***Please note:** Students who submit observation verification forms that are incomplete or do not meet the above criteria will be disqualified from admission to the Physical Therapist Assistant Program.*

Process for Setting up Hours for Observation and Attendance:

1. Call the site and speak with the rehab director or designated contact person to inquire if the site accepts students for observation. Explain that you are a Polk State College seeking admission to the PTA Program. If acceptable, schedule the days and times to observe at least one week in advance. Some hospitals and facilities may require students to meet certain criteria before allowing them to complete observation in their facilities.
2. Communicate with the rehab director or designated contact person to determine what your duties will be, rules for observation, dress code, and the site's expectations of you.
3. You will need to comply with all of the facility's policies and procedures including rules and regulations concerning dress code, behavior, and confidentiality. Students should plan to

dress in khaki pants and collared shirts with closed shoes unless instructed otherwise by the site (do not wear shorts, jeans, t-shirts, flip flops/sandals, crocks, etc). Avoid eating, drinking, or chewing gum during your observation sessions (except in approved areas).

4. Confirm your visit with the PT/PTA at least two days in advance.
5. Bring a notebook/pen to take notes as applicable. You may need to write down questions or observations during treatments to avoid interrupting the session.
6. Arrive promptly at the facility at scheduled time as planned by your supervisor or contact person. Introduce yourself and state your purpose for being there.
 - Notify your supervisor 24 hours in advance if there is a need to cancel or reschedule your observation appointment.
7. Remain attentive and professional at all times. Thank the staff for their time and allowing you to observe their facility.
8. Track hours and complete the required observation form. Have the PT/PTA sign the form. **A new form should be used for each different clinical site where observations are completed.** It is the student's responsibility to ensure this form is filled out completely for each observation site as incomplete forms will not be accepted or considered for meeting the requirement.

Preparing the Observation Forms for Submission

Students will be required to upload completed [Observation Verification forms](#) when completing the PTA Program online application.

1. The form(s) should be filled out completely. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure the form is completed. Incomplete forms will not be accepted and the applicant will not be admitted into the program.
2. Scan each completed Observation Verification Form and save it to your computer or memory device as a **PDF file**.

3. Upload each Observation Verification Form PDF at the appropriate point in the online application process. **NOTE: DO NOT** save Observation Verification Forms as DOC, JPG, TXT, or any other file type.

STUDENTS WHO HAVE BEEN EMPLOYED AS REHAB TECHNICIANS

Students seeking admission to the Physical Therapist Assistant Program who had been employed as Rehab Technicians within the last three years may submit an Employer Verification letter in lieu of observation hours forms. This employment verification letter should:

- Be on the official letterhead of the employer
- Include dates of employment
- Include description of duties and assignments
- Be signed by Rehab Director or Facility Administrator

The employment verification letter should be scanned into a PDF document that is to be uploaded at the appropriate time during the online application process. **NOTE: DO NOT** upload these forms as JPG, DOC, TXT, or any other formats.