



PHYSICAL THERAPIST ASSISTANT PROGRAM

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: What do physical therapist assistants do?

A: Physical Therapist Assistants (PTAs) work under the direction and supervision of licensed Physical Therapists (PTs) in providing therapy treatments to patients/clients. PT services include manual techniques, activities and modalities to assist persons with functional impairment to reach their full potential and are found in a variety of settings: acute care and rehabilitation hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, outpatient clinics, schools and in athletics. Well-trained PTAs are highly respected in the PT field.

Q: How can I be sure that the physical therapy field is for me?

A: Applicants must complete a minimum of 80 hours of work or observation in a PT work setting. At least 20 hours must be completed in an in-patient setting (hospital or skilled nursing facility) and at least 20 hours must be done in an outpatient setting. Contact a local hospital or PT clinic in order to make arrangements to observe. During this time you will see how PTs and PTAs work with patients and have opportunity to converse with clinicians. This experience may help you decide if PT is the field for you.

Q: Where can I find information for the LLU PTA Program regarding.....

- the acceptance rate of applicants?
- the graduation rate?
- the passing rate for the national PTA licensing exam?
- the employment rate for graduates?

A: Please use this link to find the "Student Outcomes Information"

<http://alliedhealth.llu.edu/sites/alliedhealth.llu.edu/files/docs/pta-student-outcomes.pdf>

Q: What is the job market like for PTAs?

A: The current job market for PTAs is strong and demand is projected to increase. The employment projections for 2014-2024 by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics ranked PTAs as 3rd among the 20 occupations with the fastest projected employment growth in the next decade. This increase is partly due to the high number of "baby boomers" retiring in the coming decade, a large group of individuals who also may need more rehabilitation services. The *median* pay was calculated as \$55,170/year; income varies depending on experience, location and type of setting.

Q: Does Loma Linda University find a job for me when I have finished the PTA program?

A: Not exactly, but we do offer help: 1) The annual SAHP **Job Fair**, where you can meet Human Resource Department reps from local and national clinical facilities who are interested in our grads; 2) **Email announcements of PTA job openings** received by the program are routinely forwarded to PTA graduates; 3) The **Job Openings Bulletin Board** near our PTA office for announcements updated almost daily with new additions. Many of our students receive job offers subsequent to networking related to their clinical education experiences.

Q: Do students take all of the required courses for the PTA program at LLU?

A: No, only the courses in the *technical* portion of the program are completed in the PTA curriculum at LLU. All of our students must transfer general education courses from other schools to LLU. The natural science prerequisite courses may be taken at LLU or elsewhere. For information on the **natural science courses offered at LLU**, see <http://alliedhealth.llu.edu/academics/general-education/natural-sciences>

Q: **Where can I find the prerequisite courses?**

A: The prerequisite courses may be completed via any *regionally* accredited university or community college. Prerequisites and transfer patterns for many colleges can be found at <http://www.llu.edu/allied-health/sahp/transfer/index.page>? Click on the college name and then scroll down to the PTA program prerequisites section.

Q: **When does the program at Loma Linda University begin?**

A: We start a new class of students once every year in mid June.

Q: **Is this a weekday, full time program or is it done on evenings and weekends?**

A: This is a full time program, meeting approximately 8 hours per day, Monday through Thursday, typically 8:00 am. – 5:00 pm. However, for the first 8 weeks during the first summer quarter, classes run 1:00 pm – 9:00 pm with a break between 5 pm - 6:00pm. The clinical education courses are generally 40 hours/wk, Monday through Friday.

Q: **How long is the PTA program?**

A: The length of the PTA (technical) program at Loma Linda University spans five quarters, with four days/week for didactic courses and five days/week for clinical courses. The prerequisite courses that must be taken before starting the program can be completed in one academic year (three quarters or two semesters). For the Class of 2016, the entire program will be equivalent to 80 weeks in length including prerequisites.

Q: **Can I take longer than five quarters to complete the PTA program?**

A: We offer a two-year option that spreads the curriculum over a period of nine quarter terms instead of five quarter terms. Essentially, one-half of the didactic coursework is covered in the first four quarters, and the other half is covered in the next four quarters, followed by the terminal clinical experiences.

Q: **Can I take the courses one by one at my own pace?**

A: No. You can either take the program in five quarters or in nine quarters. The curriculum must be taken in sequence as one course builds upon another. You will enroll in a specific “block” of courses reserved for the PTA students each quarter.

Q: **When should I apply?**

A: The preferred "early" application window is between Aug. 1 and Nov. 1 for the following June starting date; applications are accepted until April 1. You may apply if you have a plan to complete all prerequisite courses before the next June. If you have difficulty finding and enrolling in the prerequisite courses, you may call the program office for assistance: 909.558.4634.

Q: **What Grade Point Average (GPA) do I need in my prerequisites?**

A: You must have a GPA of at least 2.5 in the three science courses, and at least 2.5 GPA in the non-science prerequisite courses. We do not accept any courses with a C- grade or lower. When calculating your GPA, we only include the grades earned on the prerequisite courses. No other courses are included.

Q: If I do not have the required GPA, is there any hope of getting into the program?

A: You may re-take one or more prerequisite courses to get higher grades and improve your GPA. If you retake a course, we re-calculate your GPA using the grade from the most recent course.

Q: What degree will I get when I finish the program?

A: Graduates of the PTA program receive an Associate of Science degree (AS) in physical therapy.

Q: Where will I complete my clinical experiences?

A: We have clinical affiliation agreements with many hospitals, skilled nursing facilities and clinics throughout the country which allow for a wide variety of both inpatient and outpatient PT settings for clinical instruction. We have a full time faculty member, the Director of Clinical Education (DCE), who assigns and supervises the clinical education experiences. You will work with the DCE to find a site that is available and appropriate.

Q: How much does the program cost?

A: Because we are a private university, we do not receive any funding from Federal or State Government agencies. We need to provide for our expenses through tuition and fees alone which cover the additional costs of student health insurance, clinical liability insurance, graduation expenses, membership in the beautiful Drayson Center (a health and fitness center) and central administration support. For the 2016 – 2017, the LLU PTA program will cost approximately \$29,500 for tuition and fees. Other school-related expenses (including text-books, APTA membership dues, supplies) will be approx \$1,000. Tuition and fees are subject to change.

Q: How do I come up with this money?

A: Our Financial Aid Office will work with you to see what grants and loans are available. Contact them at (909) 558-4509, or visit the website at <http://www.llu.edu/students/financial-aid/>. The sooner you start the financial aid process, the more likely you are to get the best rates. **FAFSA FORMS MUST BE SUBMITTED BY MID FEBRUARY OF THE YEAR YOU PLAN TO START THE PROGRAM.** The FAFSA website is www.fafsa.ed.gov

Q: What is the difference in accreditation between the LLU PTA program, and programs at community colleges or career colleges?

A: CAPTE is the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education. Only graduates from CAPTE-accredited programs are eligible to take the PTA National Licensing Examination. All states except Colorado and Hawaii require a license to practice. The LLU PTA program is accredited by CAPTE through December 2021, and Loma Linda University is accredited by the regional accrediting body, *Western Association of Schools and Colleges*.

Most *community* colleges are accredited by their respective regional accrediting agencies, such as WASC, and some community colleges have CAPTE-accredited PTA programs. The *career* colleges are not accredited by WASC, although a few have CAPTE-accredited PTA programs. Only regionally accredited colleges and universities are able to transfer coursework for their students to LLU, or any other regionally accredited institution. For more information on PTA Education in general, visit this website: <http://www.apta.org/PTAEducation/Overview/>

Q: Can I talk to someone to get advice?

A: Yes, indeed! We would be happy to advise you. You can contact us at (909) 558-4634 for questions or to make a personal appointment for advising. You may email the program director, Professor Jeannine Mendes, at jmendes@llu.edu.