

Physical Therapist Assistant

Associate of Applied Science Degree

Program Director: Brad Bechard

Program Faculty: Michael Hansell

Program Website (<https://gfcmsu.edu/academic-program/physical-therapist-assistant/>)

Program Application (https://gfcmsu.edu/pta_application/) (Fall 2026 Application available February 13, 2026)

The Physical Therapist Assistant degree is offered onsite.

The formal portion of the Physical Therapist Assistant (PTA) program begins fall semester with a limited enrollment of 20 students. There are 30 credits of prerequisite courses, which may take one year or longer to complete. All prerequisite coursework must be completed with a grade of C or higher (not a C-). The student must apply for acceptance into the formal portion of the PTA program and be accepted. A grade of 76% or Pass is required for all coursework within the PTA program after formal acceptance.

The formal portion of the PTA program is challenging and consists of fall, spring, and summer semesters, taking one full year. This time includes built-in clinical experiences, which may or may not be in the Great Falls area. Upon completion of the PTA program, the graduate is prepared to take the National Physical Therapist Assistant Examination (NPTAE) provided by the Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy and must receive a passing score in order to become a licensed PTA. Licensure is required to practice as a physical therapist assistant in Montana and is overseen by the State of Montana Board of Physical Therapy Examiners.

The PTA program is designed to graduate individuals who are knowledgeable, competent, self-assured, adaptable, and service-oriented patient/client care providers performing their duties within the ethical and legal guidelines of the physical therapy profession as an entry-level PTA having successfully passed the NPTAE. Graduates are prepared to work in a variety of healthcare settings including acute care, outpatient, rehabilitation, and extended care.

The Great Falls College Montana State University Physical Therapist Assistant program is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE).

Outcomes

Graduates are prepared to:

- The student will demonstrate an entry level skill set of interventions utilizing critical thinking, ethics, safety skills, and knowledge of red flags for the provision of services under the direction and supervision of a licensed physical therapist.
- The student will construct effective communication and documentation between colleagues, patients, interdisciplinary team, and various other stakeholders regarding provision of physical therapy services.
- The student will effectively implement best practice outcome measures under the direction and supervision of a licensed physical therapist.

- The student will effectively educate the implementation of preventative and evidence-based practice as it relates to the clinical decision making.
- The student will demonstrate commitment to the profession by serving the needs of their patients and community through participation in service-related activities.
- The student will practice ethical billing, quality assurance standards, and scheduling of patients in the provision of services under the direction and supervision of a licensed physical therapist.

Estimated Cost

Estimated Resident Program Cost *

Tuition and Fees	\$10,360
Lab/Course Fees	\$530
Program Fee	\$300
Books/Supplies	\$2,414
Total	\$13,604

* Fall 2025 MUS Student Health Insurance Premiums may be changing. Please check the Health Insurance website (<https://gfcmsu.edu/home/current-students/studentengagement/wellness/student-insurance/>) and/or Student Central for confirmed premium rates.

Program Requirements

Many students need preliminary math, science, and writing courses before enrolling in the program requirements. These courses may increase the total number of program credits. Students should review their math and writing placement before planning out their full program schedules.

The Great Falls College PTA Program is a limited enrollment program, accepting 20 students each year. Interested students are urged to contact the PTA Program Director or Advising and Career Center Advisors for student advising specific to admission requirements and criteria for program acceptance.

Prerequisites Courses

Background in basic sciences and proficiency in keyboarding are essential to success in the Physical Therapy Assistant Program.

Prior to fall admission into the PTA program students must:

- Computer literacy and keyboarding are assumed.
- Be admitted to GFC MSU and be in good academic standing. Application information may be acquired at the College, or by calling Admissions at 406-268-3700 or online at <http://www.gfcmsu.edu>.
- Complete 40 hours or more of observation with a licensed physical therapist or physical therapist assistant. Please note that higher point values for admission to the PTA Program are awarded at 10 hour intervals. Refer to section "Observation Hours" in the application packet (https://www.gfcmsu.edu/webs/pta/documents/PTA_Application.pdf).
- Coursework will be evaluated as follows: **Anatomy/Physiology courses need to have a lab component and to be taken within 5 years of application to the program and all other general education classes (including chemistry) need to be taken within 15 yrs of application to the program.** The PTA Program director at their discretion may accept courses that are older than the 5 years for Anatomy/Physiology courses and/or older than 15 years for general education pre-requisite courses. Exceptions to age limits above may be accepted for students that have earned a degree and are using/utilizing the course as part of

their profession/career. Students may be asked to take a placement test to determining if their math and English skills are at the appropriate level for the program.

- Earn a grade of C or higher (not a C-) in all pre-requisite courses:

Course	Title	Credits	Grade/Sem
BIOH 201	Human Anatomy Phys I w/ Lab (= 301) **,+	4	_____
BIOH 211	Human Anatomy Phys II w/ Lab (=311) *,+	4	_____
NOTE: UM Western students may substitute BIOB 160, BIOH 365 & BIOH 370 for GFC MSU BIOH 201 & BIOH 211. All 3 classes are required and must have a grade of C or higher (not C-) within the last 5 years of application.			
M 105	Contemporary Mathematics (OR any math course in the MUS Core) **,+	3-4	_____
PSYX 100	Introduction to Psychology +	3	_____
Any additional course in the social sciences, humanities, or cultural diversity core. +		3	_____
WRIT 101	College Writing I **,+	3	_____
PHSX 105	Fundamentals of Physical Science w/Lab (OR a college level chemistry course) +	4	_____
Select one of the following:			
COMX 111	Introduction to Public Speaking +	3	_____
COMX 115	Introduction to Interpersonal Communication +	3	_____
Subtotal		27-28	_____

+ A grade of C (not C-) or above is required for graduation.

* Indicates prerequisites needed.

** Placement in course(s) is determined by placement assessment.

Co-requisite OR Prerequisites Course

Background in basic sciences and proficiency in keyboarding are essential to success in the Physical Therapy Assistant Program.

Course	Title	Credits	Grade/Sem
AHPT 105	Introduction to Physical Therapist Assisting +	3	_____
Subtotal		3	_____

+ A grade of C (not C-) or above is required for graduation.

* Indicates prerequisites needed.

** Placement in course(s) is determined by placement assessment.

Program Course Requirements after Formal Acceptance

A grade of 76% or better is required to pass each class within the professional phase of the program:

Course	Title	Credits	Grade/Sem
First Year			
Fall			
AHPT 101	Physical Therapist Assisting I / Lab *, +	5	_____

AHPT 205	Anatomy and Kinesiology for the PTA **,+	6	_____
AHPT 206	Pathophysiology for the Physical Therapist Assistant **,+	3	_____
AHPT 210	Clinical Experience I **,+	3	_____
AHPT 218	Therapeutic Exercise for the PTA **,+	2	_____
Credits		19	

Spring			
AHPT 201	Physical Therapist Assisting II / Lab **,+	5	_____
AHPT 213	Neurorehabilitation for the PTA **,+	6	_____
AHPT 215	Introduction to Orthopedics **,+	4	_____
AHPT 220	Clinical Experience II **,+	3	_____
Credits		18	

Summer			
AHPT 225	Seminar and Project in Physical Therapist Assisting **,+	1	_____
AHPT 230	Clinical Experience III **,+	7	_____
Credits		8	
Total Credits		45	

TOTAL PROGRAM CREDITS: 75-76

+ A grade of 76% or above is required for graduation.

* Indicates prerequisites needed.

** Placement in course(s) is determined by placement assessment.