

Clinical Education

Clinical education is a critical component of the Masters of Athletic Training Program at Pacific University. Clinical educators (preceptors) provide an important link between the academic and clinical environments. Through the preceptor's instruction, supervision and insight athletic training students are provided the opportunity to refine basic knowledge, skills and behavior. The athletic training student spends nearly half of their time in clinical settings during their two years in the MSAT program. During the second year of the program, athletic training students actually spend more time in clinical settings than in the classroom.

The primary goal of the MSAT program is to graduate well-rounded, collaborative, highly competent clinicians ready to assume duties in any of the standard areas of athletic training practice. High-quality clinical education is essential to this goal. Clinical rotations allow athletic training students the opportunity to experience actual patient care in real-time situations. The athletic training students benefit from working alongside a variety of experienced preceptors. They see and experience different styles of providing athletic training services. They are exposed to new ideas and skills. All preceptors in the MSAT program must demonstrate a willingness and enthusiasm for educating athletic training students. They should also have the ability to plan, conduct and evaluate a clinical education experience based on sound educational principles. Clinical sites and preceptors are evaluated on a regular basis by the students and the Clinical Education Coordinator (CEC).

The Masters of Athletic Training program has clinical sites primarily in Oregon and Washington. The sites include high schools, private and public colleges, community colleges, professional sports, orthopedic practices, general medical clinics and rehabilitation clinics. The athletic training students are rotated through a variety of clinical sites during their time in the program. Clinical assignments are done by the CEC. The goal is to give each student an opportunity to experience a variety of settings and clinicians while allowing them to develop skills in areas of special interest to them.

Many different factors are considered in selecting and maintaining clinical sites. These include location, type of facility, qualifications of the preceptors, the facility's overall philosophy on clinical education and the resources available to the student and the preceptor. Athletic training students are allowed to provide input regarding their clinical assignment. The CEC will make the final determination about a clinical placement. The CEC matches the athletic training student and their preceptor considering experience, qualifications and personality to ensure a successful, collaborative experience for all involved. Athletic training students will not be placed at a site if it is felt their learning style or educational needs are incompatible with the site or preceptor.

Athletic training students are encouraged to regard their clinical experiences as a unique opportunity to expand their education, skills and proficiencies. Typically, the student-to-preceptor ratio will be one-to-one. In some instances, a preceptor will have an additional student. In this scenario, a first-year student would be typically placed with a second-year student. Peer education is a component of the MSAT program and this situation allows this to occur.

Professional behavior is vital to the success of the athletic training student. The process of becoming an effective athletic trainer involves attaining competency not only in professional knowledge and skill, but behavior as well. Athletic training students are evaluated regularly on professional behavior by their preceptors. Specific professional behavior is assessed during clinical internships and in the classroom. The expectation is athletic training students will display professional behaviors at all time as they are

essential for success in the profession. The abilities which define expected behavior within a given profession serve as the foundation for ability-based learning.

Athletic training students are expected to abide by the dress code established by each clinical site. Attire should be appropriate for the setting as well as the activity in which the student is involved. Each student is provided a name badge to easily identify them and is expected to wear this name badge during all time spent at a clinical site.

Athletic training students must ultimately be responsible for their own education. Each student is thoroughly briefed on expectations prior to each clinical rotation. Students are encouraged to take an active role in their education, particularly in the clinical setting. Students are encouraged to recognize the importance of self-assessment in their development as students and certified athletic trainers. Reflecting on past experiences is a valuable method of assessing one's own performance and planning more useful strategies for the future.