



## Radiation Therapy Program Frequently Asked Questions

**Q: “What is a Radiation Therapist?”**

A: Radiation Therapists are part of a multi-disciplinary cancer management team of physicians, physicists, dosimetrists, nurses, and other support staff who administers the application of ionizing radiation to patients with neoplastic diseases.

They are responsible for accurately positioning patients for treatment, operating equipment to deliver ionizing radiation, monitoring and documenting the prescribed course of treatment, utilizing effective interpersonal abilities to assessing the physical and emotional needs of the patients in challenging and changing situations. *Excellent communication and critical thinking skills are keys to success.*

Radiation therapists must possess competent technical abilities to understand simulation and the treatment delivery process, and thorough clinical knowledge of the disease processes, histopathology, and biological reactions to tissues.

See more by referring to [The Practice Standards for Medical Imaging and Radiation Therapy](#) published by the American Society of Radiologic Technologists (ASRT, 2017, p. RT3) and the videos in the *Admissions Policies and Procedures* section of the RTH web page.

**Q: “Why choose the Radiation Therapy program at CCAC?”**

A: The Community College of Allegheny County is dedicated to preparing individuals to succeed in a complex global society by providing affordable access to high quality career and transfer education delivered in a diverse, caring, and innovative learning environment. The college is accredited by the **Middle States (Mid-Atlantic Region) Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE; [www.msche.org](http://www.msche.org))**.

The RTH program is also accredited by the **Joint Review Committee on Education in Radiologic Technology (JRCERT; [www.jrcert.org](http://www.jrcert.org))**. This organization promotes excellence in education and elevates the quality and safety of patient care.



The RTH program at CCAC provides hands-on clinical learning in numerous award-winning, global health care leaders. These include university-affiliated hospitals and outpatient community centers within the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, the Allegheny Health Network and other independent medical facilities.

The curriculum includes training using the [VERT](#) system (Virtual Environment Radiotherapy Training). This virtual simulator replicates the controls of the linear accelerator to bring the hands-on training typically only used in the clinical setting into the classroom. VERT allows students to practice real-life scenarios in a virtual setting which permits them to learn from mistakes without risk to the patient. Students go into the clinic with more confidence and enhanced technical abilities.

The program provides training and practice with the most up-to-date technology in the field of radiation oncology such as IMRT, VMAT, IGRT, SRS/SBRT and 4D respiratory management techniques. Observations are provided for TBI, TESI, brachytherapy, MR Linac and Gamma Knife®.

**Q: “When can I apply?”**

A: The program currently accepts applications between **January 1 and March 31** each year for the Certificate program and January 1 and March 31 in odd years for the A.S. program. However, the dates will change to the fall semester once approved for the A.S. degree program spring start change.

**Q: “How do I apply and what do I need to submit?”**

A: Refer to the *Admission to Radiation Therapy* section on our web page for detailed information.

**Q: “If I have transcripts from another school, how can I find out if they are accepted?”**

A: Schedule to meet with an [advisor](#) at CCAC to determine which credits are transferrable into CCAC.

**Q: “How many students does the program accept?”**

A: Each program accepts on average 12 students per program based on the availability of clinical facilities. Student selection for enrollment is based upon academic qualifications, personal interview, previous healthcare and/or work experience, and the individual's projected ability to make a significant contribution to the health care profession.

**Q: “How many students apply to the radiation therapy program?”**

A: About 10-16 for the certificate program and about 30-38 for the A.S. degree program.

**Q: “When do the programs start?”**

A: The Certificate program begins every fall in accordance with the CCAC semester academic schedule and continues through the end of July the following summer.

The AS program currently begins every other fall in odd years and continues through July of the second summer. **However, the program is in the governance process to change the start date to the spring semester starting in spring 2024.**

**Q: “Am I qualified for the same job by completing the AS program as students who complete the Certificate program?”**

A: Graduates of both programs are equally eligible to take the national A.R.R.T. registry examination to become certified professionals to qualify for an entry-level position in the field of radiation therapy.

**Q: “What are clinicals?”**

A: The Radiation Therapy Program is a competency-based program which will be performed at off- site JRCERT approved clinical education setting. Students work under the direct supervision of a certified radiation therapist at all times. Students are required to provide their own transportation to all clinical education settings.

**Q: “Am I able to work while attending the program?”**

A: The Radiation Therapy Program is an in-depth and fast-paced program that requires a full-time commitment. Students are required to be on campus or at the clinical facility Monday through Friday during daylight hours with the possibility of an evening class. Students will not be able to work a full-time job during the program. Some students choose to work part-time on evenings and/or weekends, but are still required to keep the program obligations a top priority.

**Q: “Can I take the program classes at night?”**

A: The Radiation Therapy Program is a day-time program. There is no night-time curriculum track offered. A significant portion of the program is spent in off campus clinical locations, which are open during

daytime hours only. There are, however, some general education courses that may be offered in the evening.

**Q: “Is there an online program option?”**

A: The Radiation Therapy Program is offered as an “on campus” curriculum only. A couple of program courses are offered online or more likely, in a combined face-to-face and remote learning option. Students must be in the Pittsburgh area to attend clinical education settings.

**Q: “Can I take classes at any campus at CCAC?”**

A: Many prerequisite and general education courses are offered at all campuses, but all “RTH” and program science classes are offered only at the Allegheny Campus. Visit the [CCAC course catalog](#) on the CCAC website for schedules and locations.

**Q: “May I take any of the required courses before I am admitted to the Radiation Therapy program?”**

A: It depends. All “RTH” courses may only be taken once enrolled in the RTH program. General education courses can be taken before program admittance, as long as the prerequisites of those course are met. It is strongly recommended, however, to take PHY-125 and PHY-126 after enrolled in the program.

NOTE: Completion of other degree- required courses does not guarantee admittance into the Radiation Therapy Program.

**Q: “When do I find out if I’ve been accepted?”**

A: All applicants will be notified of their status within 2-3 weeks after the application deadline has closed. The top 24 applicants will move on to the interview stage. After interviews are completed, applicants will be notified no later than one week of their acceptance status.

**Q: “Is there a waiting list for the radiation therapy program?”**

A: 1-2 students from the interview process will be added to a waitlist. For the certificate program, waitlisted applicants will be notified by the 6-week mark prior to the start of the semester. This gives the applicant time to complete clearances and immunizations prior to the start of clinicals (day 3). For the A.S. degree program, waitlisted applicants may be notified up through the first week of the semester as clinical work does not start until the next semester.



**Q: “If I am not accepted do I still go on a waitlist for the next program?”**

A: NO. Students who are not accepted may reapply the following program. Application packets are not kept on file.

**Q: “Do students get breaks during the radiation therapy program?”**

A: Yes. The radiation therapy program follows the CCAC academic calendar with breaks between semesters and several holidays. If accepted to the program, it is understood that you are making a commitment to place your learning as a top priority and vacations are reserved for semester breaks, holidays, or after the program has completed. Students are not permitted to take class or clinical time off for vacation.

**Q: “If I have further questions not found on the RTH web page, who may I contact to ask?”**

A: You may contact the Allied Health Senior Secretary at 412-237-2681 or the RTH Program Director, Kelli Collette, via email at [kcollette@ccac.edu](mailto:kcollette@ccac.edu). Indicate your phone number and a good time to call you back.