

**CENTENARY COLLEGE**  
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## **THERAPEUTIC RIDING INSTRUCTOR CERTIFICATION PROGRAM**

**Approved by the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH)**

Today's equestrian professionals recognize that there is a growing market among people with disabilities who want to take the equine route to improved health and well-being. Centenary's Therapeutic Riding Concentration will prepare equine studies students to add this skill to their instructional expertise.

Teaching riders with disabilities offers many rewards:

- Studying the nature of disabilities aids in understanding the varying abilities of any group of riders.
- Riders with disabilities tend to be less competitive in the traditional sense, preferring to concentrate on their own individual challenges rather than chasing ribbons in the show ring. This offers a welcome change for many instructors.
- Setting individual goals and assessing progress improves the instructor's eye for physical improvement in other riders.
- Horses trained for therapeutic riding are often seasoned campaigners whose useful life can be significantly prolonged through this type of regular exercise which avoids the stress of frequent jumping and showing.
- Becoming part of the therapeutic riding team brings psychological rewards to the instructor as well as the rider. The fun and excitement of teaching someone how to overcome the effects of disability and successfully ride a horse add up to an immensely uplifting experience.

### **About Therapeutic Riding . . .**

Horseback riding for people with disabilities is "therapeutic" on several levels:

- As a physical activity, sitting on a moving horse causes the rider's upper body to respond in an unconscious, three-dimensional manner to the movement of the horse's back. The rhythm of 80 - 100 steps each minute stimulates righting reflexes and balance reactions in a way that cannot be duplicated by the human therapist. In addition, overall physical condition is improved as muscles and tendons are exercised mildly and repeatedly.
- On the psychological and emotional level, the thrill of being seated on a large, powerful animal that is trained to respond willingly to the rider's signals is reported by many as the most obvious benefit.
- As a form of cognitive therapy, the rider must learn to relate to the space of the riding arena including other riders and special equipment, and interact with his horse to navigate safely.

These effects have been documented by physical therapists, occupational therapists, special educators and, of course, by riders themselves. To achieve these benefits, riding instructors need special training in adapting their teaching skills to this population.

### **TRACK A for non-traditional part time students ONLY:**

Following, or in conjunction with, EST 3017 and 3018, students take EST 4017 Therapeutic Riding Practicum and EST 4018 Teaching Practicum\*\* When they have completed 85 hours of hands-on work, including a minimum of 25 hours of instruction under supervision, students are eligible to take the on-line PATH Registered Instructor written examination.

**\*\*The teaching practicum may be partially fulfilled by working at another PATH Accredited Center with permission of the Instructor.**

This track allows for in-depth development of instruction skills, and can lead to Advanced Instructor certification following the accumulation of additional teaching hours. **Tuition: about \$1500 per semester (subject to change). Additional fees are listed below.**

### **Prerequisites for Non-Traditional students:**

**Knowledge of Horsemanship:** Non-Centenary applicants will be assessed on their knowledge of horsemanship (stable management, equine systems and disorders, and equine physiology and performance). If they are not able to meet the minimum requirements satisfactorily, they are required to take appropriate courses in Horse Management before they are ready to sit for the PATH certification exam.

**Riding skills:** All students must be able to ride at an intermediate level: walk, trot, canter, perform simple change of lead, know leads and diagonals, work over ground poles, be able to perform basic suppling exercises and understand the principles of lateral work (shoulder in and leg yielding). Western riding skills will be assessed by an appropriate expert.

### **TRACK B for full time undergraduate students at Centenary ONLY:**

#### **Prerequisites for full-time undergraduate students:**

**EST 1010 and 1012** Practical Horse Management I and II 8 credits

**EST 1011** Fundamental Theories of Riding - 4 credits

**EST 3015** Methods of Teaching Riding - 4 credits

**EST 3016** Teaching Practicum (able-bodied riders) – 1 credit

**Riding Skills** – Intermediate level skills without jumping

#### **Courses for both Tracks A and B:**

**EST 3017 and 3018: Teaching Therapeutic Riding - 4 credits each**

#### **Course Content**

Topics include:

- human physical, emotional, educational and psychological development
- in-depth study of a variety of disabling conditions
- selection and training of therapeutic horses
- working with volunteers
- teaching techniques
- adapting the teaching of riding skills to accommodate individual needs
- special equipment
- mounting and dismounting techniques for the safety of each rider
- goal setting and record keeping
- hippotherapy
- working with health and education professionals as part of the therapeutic riding team
- creating a non-profit organization; management skills
- fund raising and financial management

#### **Therapeutic Riding Practicum**

**EST 4017 - 1 credit**

Students will attend lessons for at least two hours a week acting as aides to the instructor. They will learn:

- to lead and sidewalk with a variety of riders with disabilities
- to evaluate horses, design and implement a training/schooling program for at least one horse

#### **Teaching Practicum**

**EST 4018 – 1 credit**

Students will attend lessons for at least two hours a week in the capacity of Assistant Instructor. By the end of the semester, they will have achieved the following:

- taught a minimum of 25 hours under supervision of a Certified Instructor
- evaluated riders with various disabilities
- kept detailed progress notes
- kept a daily log of all activities and hours accomplished

- participated in a volunteer training session as Assistant Instructor
- demonstrated riding skills sufficient to meet PATH's standards

**Age:** Must be 18 or older.

**CPR/First Aid:** All students must become certified in both before taking the Teaching Practicum.

**PATH Membership and Instructor Certification Fee:** Before taking the PATH Certification Examination, students must become PATH members (\$50 annually) and pay an \$80 registration fee. (*fees subject to change*)

**Text:** PATH Instructor Education Guide 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition  
 available through website <http://www.PATHIntl.org>  
 CHA Composite Horsemanship Manual available from <http://www.cha-ahse.org/>

**Faculty**

**Instructors:** Dr. Octavia Brown, Ed.M., D.H.L.  
 Professor of Equine Studies, Centenary College  
 PATH Master Instructor

**Therapists:** Sheri Haiken, MS, CCCP Pediatric Speech Pathologist  
 Bonnie Cunningham, RPT Physical Therapist

***(This information provided by PATH) What is PATH Instructor Certification Status?***

Like many sports, horseback riding and other equine activities provide challenges as well as rewards. For a rider with a disability, however, these challenges can be even greater. The **Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH)** was formed in order to establish safety standards, provide educational opportunities, and offer networking opportunities for its estimated 40,000 participants at over 500 Operating Centers serving riders with disabilities.

In order to ensure that riders at PATH Operating Centers are receiving safe and therapeutically beneficial riding lessons, PATH has established a method of certifying an instructor's level of teaching ability through successful completion of a PATH-Approved Instructor Training Course. All candidates completing this PATH-Approved Training Course will complete the PATH Registered Instructor examination either during the course or at the end of the course.

Candidates who successfully complete all training course requirements and pass the PATH Registered Instructor Examination will be granted PATH Registered Instructor status. The PATH Registered Instructor level provides certification for teaching riders with physical and cognitive disabilities.

Candidates will also have the option of taking the Advanced level exam at the end of the course. These candidates must pay an additional examination fee and meet the Advanced level criteria before taking the exam. Please refer to the PATH Instructor Certification Handbook for details regarding the levels of certification and their requirements.

Candidates who achieve a level of PATH Instructor Certification will be required to maintain PATH Individual Membership, submit copies of current CPR and First Aid cards and complete the required 20 hours of continuing education on an annual basis. An Annual Compliance Form will be sent to instructors by PATH.

For additional information regarding the PATH Instructor Certification Program and PATH individual Membership, please contact the PATH office at 800-369-RIDE (7433) or write to PATH at P.O. Box 33150, Denver, CO 80233.

**For more information . .**

Call Centenary College, TRAC Program Office: (908) 852-1400, ext. 2174.  
 Or e-mail: [brown@centenarycollege.edu](mailto:brown@centenarycollege.edu)