

TECHNICAL STANDARDS / ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS

Technical (“standards”) of the profession apply to the professional course of study, clinical experiences during that course of study, and the actual practice of physical therapy. We require that student physical therapists be able to meet these standards, with or without reasonable accommodation, for admission and progression through the DPT program.

Consistent with the description of physical therapy practice provided in The Guide To Physical Therapy Practice, and in compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act of 2008, the DPT program has adopted the following standards for all DPT students:

Motor Skills: Physical therapy students must demonstrate sufficient motor function to perform all physical tasks necessary for satisfactory academic performance and effective patient/client management. Students must have the physical strength and balance needed to safely assist with the movement another person’s body during transfers and with gait training. Students also must have the strength and endurance to perform maximal manual muscle testing and cardiopulmonary resuscitation. Students must be able palpate body structures. Students must demonstrate the strength and stamina to participate in all clinical placements, 40 hours/week.

Mobility: Physical therapy students must be able to perform duties while standing, lifting, reaching, bending, stretching or assuming any other posture that provides support and assistance, and ensures the safety of each individual client. Students must be able to move in rapid succession from the floor to upright and, in an emergency situation, must be able to move quickly to ensure client safety.

Coordination: Physical therapy students must have the sensorimotor function, manipulative skills, and eye/hand coordination to permit appropriate grasp and provide assistance with therapeutic activities.

Sensory: Physical therapy students must have adequate sensory skills necessary for patient/client management, including the ability to observe and detect changes, take a history, perform accurate palpation, sense muscle tension and joint movement, and ensure the client’s safety. Students also must be able to obtain information quickly and accurately from written documents, videotaped data, graphic images, and equipment. These skills necessitate the functional use of vision, hearing, touch and other sensory modalities. The student must have functional visual acuity, the ability to hear or to lip read and the ability to sense light touch and proprioceptive changes.

Communication: Students must be able to communicate in English for both oral and written communication with faculty, other students, and clients. Students must recognize the significance of verbal and non-verbal communication in academic and clinical settings. They must be capable of responsive, empathetic listening to establish rapport in a way that promotes openness on issues of concern and sensitivity to potential cultural differences. Students also must

be able to read and understand English written communication as well as produce communication, which is accurate, timely, and complete.

Cognitive: Physical therapy students must have the intellectual capacity to efficiently gather relevant information during patient examinations; analyze collected data in a timely manner; and effectively synthesize data to formulate a plan of care. Students must demonstrate sound judgment and critical thinking in all aspects of patient/client management. Cognitive skills in problem-solving, as well as the integration of theory with practice, are critical to the determination of appropriate evaluation and treatment decisions in all areas of practice.

Behavior/Social Skills and Professionalism: Physical Therapy students must have the stability of emotional health required to exercise sound judgment, complete their responsibilities, and develop and maintain effective appropriate relationships in the health care setting, with clients and members of the health care team. They must possess attributes that include compassion, empathy, altruism, integrity, honesty, and responsibility. Students must recognize and respond appropriately to individuals regardless of age, sex, gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, national origin, cultural background, race, creed, color, disability, or socioeconomic status. Students must demonstrate maturity, tolerance and adaptability in stressful situations. Students must possess the ability to reason morally and practice physical therapy in an ethical manner.

After an offer of admission, students are required to review these standards and consider their ability to meet each. If an admitted or matriculating student is concerned about the ability to meet any standard, they should immediately notify the program chair and the Office of Disability Support Resources. The DPT faculty will work with the student and the Office of Disability Support Resources to determine if reasonable accommodations are available and appropriate. An offer of admission may be withdrawn, or a student may be dismissed from the program if the student cannot articulate or demonstrate how a standard will be met, even with reasonable accommodation.