

Technical Standards for Admission, Promotion and Graduation

Physical therapy is an intellectually, physically, and psychologically demanding profession. Students acquire the foundation of knowledge, attitudes, skills and behaviors needed throughout a physical therapist's career. Those abilities that physical therapists must possess to practice safely are reflected in the Technical Standards that follow.

For successful completion of degree requirements, students must be able to meet these minimum technical standards with or without reasonable accommodation.

Observation skills

Observation requires the functional use of vision, hearing, somatic sensations, and the use of common sense. Candidates must have visual perception which includes depth and acuity. A student must be able to observe lectures, laboratory dissection of cadavers, and lecture and laboratory demonstrations. The student must be able to observe a patient accurately, observe digital and waveform readings and other graphic images to determine a patient's condition. Candidates must be able to observe patients and be able to obtain an appropriate medical history directly from the patient or guardian. Examples in which these observational skills are required include: palpation of peripheral pulses, bony prominences and ligamentous structures; visual and tactile evaluation for areas of inflammation and visual and tactile assessment of the presence and degree of edema. A student must be able to observe a patient accurately at a distance and close at hand, noting nonverbal as well as verbal signals.

Communication skills

Communication includes: speech, language, reading, writing and computer literacy. Students must be able to communicate effectively, sensitively, and convey a sense of compassion and empathy with patients to elicit information regarding mood and activities, as well as perceive non-verbal communications. Physical Therapy education presents exceptional challenges in the volume and breadth of required reading and the necessity to impart information to others. Students must be able to communicate quickly, effectively and efficiently in oral and written English with all members of the health care team. Students must be able to complete forms according to directions in a complete and timely fashion.

Motor/Psychomotor skills

Students must possess sufficient motor function to elicit information from the patient examination, by palpation, auscultation, tapping and other evaluation maneuvers. Students must be able to execute movements required to provide general and therapeutic care, such as positioning large or immobile patients, gait training using therapeutic aids and orthotics, positioning, and performing manual mobilization techniques, performing non-surgical wound debridement, and placing electromyographic electrodes. Candidates must have the physical strength to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation and emergency treatment to patients. These skills require coordination of both gross and fine muscular movement, equilibrium, and the integrated use of touch and vision.

Intellectual – Conceptual Integrative and Quantitative Analysis Abilities

To effectively solve problems, students must be able to measure, calculate, reason, analyze, integrate and synthesize information in a timely fashion. For example, the student must be able to synthesize knowledge and integrate the relevant aspects of a patient's history, physical examination, and laboratory data, provide a reasoned explanation for likely therapy, recalling and retaining information in an efficient and timely manner. The ability to incorporate new information from peers, teachers, and the medical literature in formulating treatment and plans is essential. In addition, students must be able to comprehend three dimensional relationships and to understand spatial relationships of structures. Candidates must have the ability to use computers for searching, recording, storing, and retrieving information.

Behavioral/Social Attributes and Professionalism

A student must possess the psychological ability required for the full utilization of their intellectual abilities, for the exercise of good judgment, for the prompt completion of all responsibilities inherent to diagnosis and care of patients, and for the development of mature, sensitive, and effective relationships with patients. Students must be able to tolerate physically and mentally taxing workloads and function effectively under stress. They must be able to adapt to a changing environment, display flexibility and learn to function in the face of uncertainties inherent in the clinical problems of patients. As a component of their education, students must demonstrate ethical behavior.

Specifically, students must be able to:

1. Attend and participate in classes for 30 or more hours per week during each academic semester. Classes consist of a combination of lecture, discussion, laboratory, and clinical activities.
2. Use auditory, tactile, and visual senses to receive classroom instruction and to evaluate and treat patients.
3. Read, write, speak, and understand English at a level consistent with successful course completion and development of positive patient-therapist relationships.
4. Complete readings, assignments, and other activities outside of class hours.
5. Apply critical thinking processes to their work in the classroom and the clinic.
6. Exercise sound judgment in class and in the clinic.
7. Participate in Clinical Experiences which typically require students to be present 40 or more hours per week on a schedule that corresponds to the operating hours of the clinic.
8. Gather decision-making pieces of information during patient assessment activities in class or in the clinical setting without the use of an intermediary (classmate, aide, etc.)
9. Perform treatment activities in class or in the clinical setting by direct performance or by instruction and supervision of intermediaries.
10. Sit for two to 10 hours daily, stand for one to two hours daily, and walk or travel for two hours daily.
11. *Frequently* lift weights less than 10 pounds and *occasionally* lift weights between 10 and 100 pounds.
12. *Occasionally* carry up to 25 pounds while walking up to 50 feet.
13. *Frequently* exert 75 pounds of push/pull forces to objects up to 50 feet and *occasionally* exert 150 pounds of push/pull forces for this distance.
14. *Frequently* twist, bend and stoop.
15. *Occasionally* squat, crawl, climb stools, reach above shoulder level, and kneel.

16. *Frequently* move from place to place and position to position at a speed that permits safe handling of classmates and patients.
17. *Frequently* stand and walk while providing support to a classmate simulating a disability or while supporting a patient with a disability.
18. *Occasionally* climb stairs and *rarely* negotiate uneven terrain.
19. *Frequently* use their hands repetitively with a simple grasp and *frequently* use a firm grasp and manual dexterity skills.
20. *Frequently* coordinate verbal and manual activities with gross motor activities.

If a student cannot demonstrate the skills and abilities outlined in this document, it is the responsibility of the student to request reasonable accommodation. Reasonable accommodation refers to ways in which the University can assist students with disabilities to accomplish these tasks (for example, providing extra time to complete an examination or enhancing the sound system in a classroom). Reasonable accommodation does not mean that students with disabilities will be exempt from completing certain tasks; it does mean that the DPT Program will work with students with disabilities to determine whether there are ways that we can assist the student toward successful completion of the tasks.

Candidates for admission with a disability are not required to disclose the specifics of their disabilities, but prior to the start of DPT classes, they must indicate that they can complete these tasks, with or without reasonable accommodation. Students who cannot complete these tasks, even with accommodation, are ineligible for admission. Any previously made offer of admission will be withdrawn. An offer of admission may be withdrawn if it becomes apparent that the student cannot complete essential tasks even with accommodation, or that the accommodations needed are not reasonable and would cause undue hardship to the institution, or that fulfilling the functions would create a significant risk of harm to the health or safety of others.

Candidates for admission who have questions about this document or who would like to discuss potential accommodations/program modifications should contact the Program Director of the Doctor of Physical Therapy Program. The specific process is outlined in the Graduate Bulletin.