

Essential Functions of Students in the Pre-professional and Professional

The University's Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) Program prepares students and graduates to competently practice as a physical therapist and to apply for licensure for any state in the United States. The education of a physical therapist requires assimilation of knowledge, acquisition of skills, and development of judgment through patient care experiences in preparation for a) independent, b) semi- autonomous, or c) collaborative practice, and making appropriate decisions required in such practice.

The curriculum leading to the DPT requires students to engage in diverse, complex, and specific experiences essential to the acquisition and practice of physical therapy skills and functions. Unique combinations of cognitive, affective, psychomotor, physical and interpersonal abilities are required to satisfactorily perform these functions. In addition to being essential to the successful completion of the requirements of the DPT, these functions are necessary to ensure the health and safety of the student, patients, fellow students, faculty, and other healthcare providers.

The essential qualifications are necessary to acquire or demonstrate competence in physical therapy and needed for successful progression by students for the DPT. These essential qualifications are in addition to the standards of behavior and academic conduct set forth in the University Conduct Code, and includes, but is not limited to the following functions, skills, competencies, abilities and behaviors.

Motor Skills/ Physical Demands

Students shall have sufficient motor function so that they are able to execute movements required to provide general care and treatment to patients in **all** health care settings. [For example: students must have the ability, within reasonable limits, to safely assist a patient in moving from a chair to a bed, examination table, or from a wheelchair to another location. For the safety and protection of the patients, the students must be able to perform basic life support, including CPR, and function in an emergency situation.] Physical demands of a physical therapist include but are not limited to the following:

- **Auditory ability:** Auditory ability sufficient to assess and monitor health status.
- **Physical ability:** Sufficient to move from room to room, in a patient's room, and treatment spaces.
- **Gross and fine motor abilities:** Calibrate and operate equipment; position patients/clients; guard patients and perform facilitation techniques during gait training and other therapeutic interventions; perform ROM, MMT, debridement, transfers, CPR, or use of physical agents.
- **Tactile Ability:** Palpate, apply resistance during examinations or interventions.
- **Visual Ability:** Assess and monitor health status.

Cognitive, Observation, and Sensory, Skills

A student must be able to measure, calculate, reason, analyze, integrate, and synthesize information in the context of undergraduate and graduate professional study and clinical setting. The student must be able to read and comprehend extensive written material. A student must be able to acquire the information presented through demonstrations and experiences in the basic and professional sciences and courses. He or she must also be able to evaluate and apply information and engage in critical thinking in the classroom and clinical setting.

The student must be able to observe a patient accurately, at a distance and close at hand, and observe and interpret non-verbal communications when performing an assessment and intervention or administering of treatment. The students must be capable of perceiving the signs of limited function, disease, and infection as manifested through physical examination. Such information is derived from accurately reviewing the medical history and assessing the patient's limitations in function, observation of the body surfaces, physical tests and measures, palpable changes in various organs and tissues, and auditory information (patient voice, heart tones, bowel and lung sounds).

Communication Skills

The student must communicate effectively and sensitively with other students, faculty, staff, patients, family, and other professionals. The student must express his or her ideas and feelings clearly and demonstrate a willingness and ability to give and receive feedback. A students must be able to: convey or exchange information at a level allowing development of a health history; identify problems presented; explain alternative solutions; and provide directions during treatment and post-treatment. The student must be able to communicate effectively in oral and written forms in English. The student must be able to process and communicate information on the patient's status with accuracy in a timely manner (i.e. complete the medical record, effectively communicate with members of the health care team, the patient and their caregivers, and third-party payers). Effective communication includes the student's ability to make a correct judgment in seeking supervision and consultation in a timely manner.

Behavioral/Emotional Skills

A student must possess the emotional health required for the full utilization of his or her intellectual abilities, the exercise of good judgment, the prompt completion of all responsibilities attendant to the examination and care of patients and their families. In addition, he or she must be able to maintain mature, sensitive, and effective relationships with patients and their caregivers, family, students, faculty, staff and other professionals under all circumstances including highly stressful situations. The student must have the emotional stability to function effectively under stress and to adapt to an environment that may change rapidly without warning and/or in unpredictable ways. The student must be able to demonstrate an awareness to experience empathy for the situations and circumstances of others and effectively communicate that empathy. The student must know that his or her values, attitudes, beliefs, emotions, and experiences affect his or her perceptions and relationships with others. The student must be able and willing to examine and change his or her behavior when it interferes with productive individual or team relationships. The student must possess skills and experience necessary for effective and harmonious relationships in diverse academic and working environments.

Professional Behaviors and Conduct

Students must possess the ability to reason morally and practice in an ethical manner. Students must learn and abide by professional standards of practice. Students must possess attributes that include: compassion, empathy, altruism, integrity, honesty, responsibility and tolerance. Students must be able to engage in patient care delivery in all settings and be able to deliver care to all patient populations including but not limited to children, adolescents, adults, developmentally disabled persons, medically compromised patients, and vulnerable adults. Students must adhere to the APTA Code of Ethics for the Physical Therapist.

Reasonable Accommodation for Disabilities

The University is committed to ensuring that otherwise qualified students with physical/ psychological disabilities are given equal access through reasonable accommodations to its services, programs, activities, and education for students with disabilities. The University and Department of Physical Therapy work closely with Center for Academic Success (CAS) (on campus) in this process. CAS is the contact point for students with permanent or temporary sensory, physical, or psychological disabilities interested in requesting accommodations due to the effects of a disability.

Students who wish to request accommodations must contact CAS to start the process for documenting their disability and determining eligibility for services prior to the start of the program. While this process can be started at any time, reasonable accommodations may not be implemented retroactively, so being timely in requesting your accommodations is very important. The University does have policies regarding the type of documentation required in order to diagnose different disabilities and a process for requesting accommodations. To learn more about the process for establishing services through these offices please contact CAS for more assistance.

Students with disabilities are expected to perform all the essential functions of the program with or without reasonable accommodation. The University will work with the student and CAS to provide, if possible, reasonable accommodations. While the University will make every effort to work with our students with disabilities to accommodate their disability-related needs, it is important to note we are not required to provide requested accommodations that would fundamentally alter the essential qualifications, functions, technical standards, or other academic requirements of the physical therapy program, or result in an undue financial or administrative burden. The University does not guarantee that any clinical site or future employer will provide the same accommodations that are utilized on campus.

Implementation of the Essential Functions for the Undergraduate and Graduate Physical Therapy Program

Potential students will be advised of the Essential Functions in materials on the Web. Students in the first year of the undergraduate program will review the Essential Functions expectations during PHTH 101 Physical Therapy Seminar. Students entering the professional phase of the program will review the Essential Functions during the orientation meeting in the summer semester of the first year. All students in the program will be told where to locate the Essential Functions in Department of Physical Therapy's Student Handbook located on the Department's website, <http://info.francis.edu/Physical-therapy-department>.

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