



Doctor of Physical Therapy Program Essential Functions and Technical Standards

A practicing physical therapist must be physically, cognitively, emotionally and mentally capable to meet the rigorous demands of clinical practice. The following information defines some of the essential functions and technical standards that PT students must meet in order to successfully progress through the program. All students must be capable of meeting these or similar requirements with or without reasonable accommodation.

St. Catherine University has systems in place to assist any student with a documented disability. After admission to the program has been offered or at any time during the course of the program, it is the student's responsibility to schedule an appointment with a Disabilities Specialist in The Learning Center on the 3rd floor of the Education Building - Minneapolis Campus if she/he believes that accommodations may be required for successful performance of the essential functions and technical standards described within this document. The Learning Center is responsible for screening for suspected disability, verifying disability documentation, developing an accommodation plan, and notifying the faculty. Reasonable accommodations will be considered and administered in accordance with applicable law.

Description of Essential Functions for Physical Therapist Students

During the physical therapy program, the PT student must demonstrate the ability to perform at least the following essential functions in a technically competent and professional manner, in compliance with legal and ethical standards of practice, with or without reasonable accommodation.

The following list of sample behaviors is not inclusive, nor should it be interpreted as an exhaustive list of all potential essential functions that may be encountered in clinical or academic settings.

1. Demonstrate the core values of professionalism in physical therapy: accountability, altruism, compassion/caring, excellence, integrity, professional duty and social responsibility.

Sample behaviors:

- a. Adhere to applicable federal and state laws (example, Minnesota State Statute for Physical Therapy).
- b. Practice in a manner consistent with the professional Code of Ethics.
- c. Adhere to program and clinic departmental standards for personal hygiene and professional appearance (example, clothing appropriate for lab participation and clinical education experiences).
- d. Participate and show leadership in community organizations and volunteer services.
- e. Take initiative to advocate for patients regarding community services or payers.
- f. Plan and implement strategies for continued self-assessment and personal and professional growth.

2. Screen individuals to determine the need for physical therapy evaluation or referral to other health professionals.

Sample behaviors:

- a. Identify potential health problems; recognize signs and symptoms.
 - b. Identify need for physical therapy evaluation; assess patient movement; evaluate patient abilities based on observation.
 - c. Recognize problems that may require other professional attention in addition to, or instead of treatment by a physical therapist.
3. Perform a physical therapy examination, evaluate examination data and establish a diagnosis and prognosis that is within the scope of physical therapy practice.

Sample behaviors:

- a. Review and evaluate a client's written medical history.
 - b. Perform client interviews.
 - c. Perform a systems review.
 - d. Select and administer culturally appropriate and age-related tests and measures.
 - e. Modify evaluation procedures according to client's age, disability, mental status, level of cooperation and medical status.
 - e. Accurately synthesize and analyze evaluative findings and medical history to identify client problem.
 - f. Use appropriate terminology to describe problem/diagnosis.
4. Develop an appropriate physical therapy plan of care including prevention, enhancement, referral and discharge plan.

Sample behaviors:

- a. Identify and modify realistic, measurable, time-specific, functional goals in collaboration with client/caregiver.
 - b. Recognize and adjust for familial, cultural, socioeconomic, psychological, and cognitive factors that will influence goal attainment.
 - c. Collaborate effectively with other professionals and with client/caregivers in establishing the plan of care.
 - d. Establish an appropriate plan for reevaluation/discharge/follow-up care (i.e., equipment needs, community resources, instructions to caregivers, home program).
5. Implement/manage a physical therapy plan of care.

Sample behaviors:

- a. Manage more than one client at a time.
 - b. Effectively explain the intervention rationale to client/caregivers.
 - c. Accurately assess changes in clients' physical, emotional and cognitive status (e.g., observe and evaluate patient reaction to pain).
 - d. Provide physical therapy interventions including, but not limited to: therapeutic exercise, functional training, manual therapy, bio-physical agents and electrotherapeutic modalities, and cardiopulmonary resuscitation.
 - e. Adjust the plan of care as needed based on patient feedback or status change.
 - f. Appropriately direct portions of the plan of care based upon the needs of the patient/client, legal requirements, and the capabilities of the provider.
6. Select and analyze individual patient/client outcomes related to the plan of care.

Sample behaviors:

- a. Use analysis from individual outcome measures to modify the plan of care.
- b. Accurately determine when to discontinue physical therapy intervention.

7. Practice in a manner consistent with current literature/evidence, patient input and preference and clinical expertise.

Sample behaviors:

- a. Utilize information technology to access sources of information to support clinical decisions.
- b. Read and interpret professional literature.
- c. Critically apply concepts and findings of research to clinical practice where appropriate.
- d. Articulate rationale for selecting/avoiding particular tests, measures or interventions.

8. Communicate effectively with clients, caregivers, colleagues, educators and the public.

Sample behaviors:

- a. Produce documents that are well organized, accurate, and concise (e.g., care plans, evaluations, progress notes and discharge notes).
- b. Communicate in a manner that is tactful, appropriate and is understood.
- c. Adjust level of communication appropriate to recipient's level of understanding, age and disability; taking into account psychosocial, cultural, and emotional factors.
- d. Read body language, tone, expressions, and/or word choice of others in order to recognize the effect of his/her communication and modify as needed to achieve positive/productive interaction.
- e. Maintain appropriate professional/client relationship (example, recognizes and respects patient/client physical and emotional boundaries).
- f. Respond positively to suggestions for improving performance.
- g. Seek assistance/collaboration/consultation from colleagues, supervisors and other professionals and staff when necessary.
- h. Demonstrate flexibility in unexpected or unusual circumstances.
- i. Present materials/tasks in an appropriate format (description, demonstration, written instructions).
- j. Give feedback appropriately.
- k. Provide opportunities for practice and active involvement of recipient in learning process.
- l. Demonstrate proficient technology skills with basic software (e.g., email, electronic health record, word processing and spreadsheets).

9. Participate in practice management and supervisory processes.

Sample behaviors:

- a. Direct tasks, assign duties and collaborate in an appropriate manner (physical therapist assistants, physical therapy aides, other caregivers).
- b. Understand and effectively utilize quality improvement programs.
- c. Provide training to physical therapist assistants, physical therapy aides, and other care givers.

10. Demonstrate the ability to learn in a graduate-level classroom and clinical environment.

Sample behaviors:

- a. Sit and attend to extended lecture periods.
- b. Actively participate in all classroom and lab activities.
- c. Actively participate in cadaver dissection experiences.
- b. Complete written and practical exams that may be perceived as stressful.
- c. Retain and recall terminology and detailed information.
- e. Access unfamiliar clinical sites during clinical education courses.
- f. Attend class regularly; arrive on time.

- g. Assimilate and apply theory to physical therapy practice in the clinical environment.
- h. Perform clinical duties and patient interventions in a timely manner.
- i. Perform clinical duties and patient interventions in environments that may be noisy, distracting, and/or fast-paced.

Description of Technical Standards for Physical Therapy Students

In order to perform these essential functions, students must demonstrate specific skills and abilities, with or without accommodation, as described in the categories below:

Observation/Sensory

- Observe demonstrations in basic science classes, clinical lab courses and clinical experiences and use these demonstrations as the basis for performance.
- Observe patients both from a distance and when in close range.
- Demonstrate the ability to respond to occurrences such as a patient calling from behind a curtain, warning calls from anyone and machine alarms.
- Possess sufficient exteroceptive sense (touch, pain, temperature) and proprioceptive sense (position, pressure, movement, stereognosis and vibratory) to carry out physical therapy assessments, interventions and emergency care.
- Specific vision related requirements include, but are not limited to, observation of: skin integrity; imaging tests; written and illustrated material; supplemental classroom media (e.g. slides, video); dials, displays and equipment used in patient/client management and research [e.g., electrocardiogram (ECG) or electromyography (EMG)]; anatomic structures; body posture and movement; and changes in mood or affect.

Communication

- Use verbal and nonverbal communication orally and in writing to effectively and efficiently convey and receive information.
- Read, write and speak standard English at a level consistent with successful course completion and development of positive personal and therapeutic relationships.
- Demonstrate social perceptiveness (being aware of others' reactions and understanding why they react as they do).

Motor

- Sufficient gross motor, fine motor and equilibrium functions to carry out physical therapy assessments (e.g. palpation, auscultation, percussion and other diagnostic tests), interventions and emergency care.
- Ability to lift, carry, and exert push/pull forces for activities such as lifting and transferring patients; assisting and guarding patients during ambulation, and administration of exercise and examination procedures which require resistance or facilitation.
- Frequent bending, twisting, stooping and squatting.
- Specific motor requirements include, but are not limited to:
 - *Trunk Strength*: use abdominal and lower back muscles to support part of the body repeatedly or continuously over time without 'giving out' or fatiguing
 - *Finger Dexterity*: make precisely coordinated movements of the fingers of one or both hands to grasp, manipulate or assemble very small objects
 - *Static Strength*: exert maximum muscle force to lift, push, pull or carry objects
 - *Manual Dexterity*: quickly move hand, hand together with arm, or two hands to grasp, manipulate or assemble objects
 - *Multilimb Coordination*: coordinate two or more limbs while sitting, standing, or lying down.
 - *Stamina*: physical exertion over long periods of time without getting winded or out of breath
 - *Dynamic Strength*: exert muscle force repeatedly or continuously over time.²

Cognitive

Adopted May 2008,

Revised & re-adopted May 2009, March 2012, November 2018

- Exhibit problem sensitivity (the ability to tell when something is wrong or is likely to go wrong).
- Demonstrate selective attention (the ability to concentrate on a task over a period of time without being distracted).
- Demonstrate time sharing (the ability to shift back and forth between two or more activities or sources of information).
- Interpret what is read, seen and heard including the ability to:
 - Extract pertinent facts from readings; interpret their meaning.
 - Summarize and interpret communications of others.
 - Measure, calculate, reason, analyze, integrate and synthesize information in a timely fashion including in situations that require divided attention.
 - Recall, retain, incorporate and appropriately apply new information from peers, teachers, and readings and other sources.
 - Comprehend three dimensional relationships and understand the spatial relationships of structures.

Behavioral/Social

- Demonstrate appreciation and respect for individual, social and cultural differences in fellow students, professional colleagues, patients and caregivers.
- Possess and exhibit a level of emotional health that allows for:
 - Demonstration of empathy, integrity, and honesty.
 - Development of mature, sensitive and professional relationships.
 - Exercise of good judgment.
 - Completion of all classroom and clinic responsibilities promptly and effectively; make productive use of available resources and time.
 - Recognition and appropriate reactions to his or her immediate emotional responses and maintenance of a professional demeanor.
 - Tolerance of physically and emotionally taxing workloads and the ability to function under stress.
 - Function in the face of uncertainty and ambiguity as is inherent in the learning and practice of physical therapy.
 - Assume responsibility for own learning in academic and clinical setting.
 - Acceptance of constructive comments and suggestions for behavioral changes as well as modification of behavior as needed.

References

1. Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education. *Standards and Required Elements for Accreditation of Physical Therapist Education Programs*. Alexandria, VA. APTA; 2017.
2. O*NET/ERGOS Web site. Available at: <http://online.onetcenter.org>. Accessed September 25, 2018.

St. Catherine University
Doctor of Physical Therapy Program
Description of Essential Functions and Technical Standards for Physical Therapy Students

In accordance with applicable law, St. Catherine University admits students through a process that does not discriminate on the basis of age, race, color, national and ethnic origin, sexual orientation, religion, creed, disability, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, membership or activity in state or local commission, and gender, to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded to or made available to students at the college. Similarly, in accordance with applicable law, the college does not discriminate on the basis of any of the above factors in its educational policies, programs, or activities.

I have read and understand this document, *Description of Essential Functions and Technical Standards for Physical Therapy Students* in its entirety. My reference copy is in the DPT Program *Student Guide to Information and Policies & Procedures*. I believe I will be able to comply with the expectations as stated regarding performing these elements with or without reasonable accommodation, as required by law. If I am uncertain about my ability to perform these elements, I understand that I may approach a Disability Specialist in the Learning Center for additional guidance and information about these demands.

Print Name _____ Date _____

Signature _____

Revised May 2008, November 2018

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