

Technical Standards and Essential Functions

Certain disabilities can interfere with a student's ability to complete the program of study and acquire the essential functions necessary for the practice physical therapy.* **Reasonable accommodation** can be made to compensate for some limitations. However, those that interfere with patient care, safety or require the use of an intermediary may be incompatible with independent professional practice.

*having these essential functions does not guarantee successful completion of the physical therapy program.

Observational skills (includes functional use of vision, hearing and somatic sensations):

The student must be able to:

- Observe lecture and laboratory demonstrations.
- Read and interpret equipment dials, assessment graphs, patient charts, professional literature, and notes from patients, physicians, and other health professionals.
- Obtain visual information from clients.
- Effective auscultation/auditory evaluation such as lungs, heart, apical pulse, blood pressure, joint noises, prostheses.
- Respond to such things as a patient calling from behind a curtain, warning calls from anyone, and machine alarms.

Communication skills

The student must be able to:

- Effectively communicate with other students, faculty, patients, peers/other health care professionals, staff and families. Communication shall require the student to ask questions, explain conditions and procedures, teach home programs, and to maintain safety.
- Receive, write, and interpret written communication in both academic and clinical settings.
- Receive, send and interpret verbal communication in emergency situations.
- Demonstrate interpersonal skills as needed for productive classroom discussion, respectful interaction with classmates and faculty, and development of appropriate therapist –patient relationships.
- Use appropriate verbal, nonverbal, and written communication with patients, families and others.

Motor skills

The student must be able to:

- Attend class approximately 30+ hours per week, which includes lecture, laboratory, and integrated clinical experience.
- Sit and maintain upright posture for approximately 2-6 hours in an average academic day.
- Stand and maintain upright posture for approximately 1-3 hours in an average academic day.
- Walk or travel approximately 2 hours in an average academic day.
- Get to lecture, lab and clinical locations in a timely manner.
- Move within rooms as needed for changing groups, lab partners and work stations.
- Perform assigned clinical tasks in a timely manner
- Safely maneuver self or move another individual's body parts.
- Safely move another individual's body in transfers, gait, positioning, and mobilization techniques.
- Safely maneuver or move clinical equipment in all directions.
- Safely and effectively guide, facilitate, inhibit, and resist movement and motor patterns.
- Manipulate common tools used for screening tests of nerves, joints, and muscles which would include sensation, range of motion, and muscle testing procedures.
- Perform CPR using guidelines by the American Heart Association.

- Legibly record/document evaluations, and progress notes in medical charts.
- Legibly record thoughts for written assignments and tests.
- Palpate changes in an individual's muscle tone, soft tissues, skin quality, joint play, kinesthesia, and temperature, and sense the individual's response to environmental changes and treatment.
- Apply and adjust therapeutic modalities.
- Apply and position hands to apply soft tissue and mobilization/manipulation techniques.
- Walk and balance well enough to help patients walk and transfer with or without equipment, and prevent injury to patient and self.
- Provide for the patient's safety and well being in all therapeutic or transporting activities.

Over the length of the curriculum, the student is required to perform the motor skills listed below.

- Twist
- Lift more than 50 pounds
- Bend/Stoop
- Straight leg sit
- Squat
- Crawl
- Climb stools
- Reach above shoulder level
- Kneel/ ½ kneel
- Use standing balance
- Push/Pull
- Climb stairs
- Walk on uneven ground
- Use hand repetitively
- Use simple grasp
- Use firm grasp
- Use manual dexterity
- Finger dexterity (manipulation of objects less than 1 inch)
- Coordinate verbal/manual instruction
- Use auditory/tactile/visual senses to evaluate physical, physiological signs

Intellectual-conceptual, integrative and quantitative abilities

The student must be able to:

- Apply critical thinking processes to his/her work in the classroom and the clinic.
- Gather decision-making pieces of information during patient assessment activities in class or in the clinical setting without the use of an intermediary or assistant.
- Retain and use information in order to solve problems, evaluate patients, and generate new ways of processing or categorizing symptoms.
- Perform an examination and evaluation of a patient's posture and movement.
- Analyze physical, biomechanical, pathological, behavioral, and environmental factors in a timely manner.
- Determine an appropriate diagnosis and prognosis based upon the results of a patient evaluation.
- Use information to formulate and execute an appropriate intervention in a timely, safe, and effective manner appropriate for the problems identified.
- Reassess the treatment plan as needed for effective and efficient management of physical therapy problems.
- Apply teaching/learning theories and methods in health care and community environments.
- Participate in the process of scientific inquiry.
- Recognize the psychosocial impact of dysfunction and disability and integrate the needs of the patient and family into the plan of care.

Behavioral and social attributes

The student must be able to:

- Demonstrate appropriate behaviors and attitudes in order not to jeopardize the emotional, physical, mental, and safety of patients and other individuals in the academic and clinical settings.
- Comply with the ethical standards of the American Physical Therapy Association.
- Cope with the mental and emotional rigors of a demanding educational program within the set time constraints, which includes both the academic and clinical aspects.
- Acknowledge and respect individual values and opinions in order to foster harmonious working relationships with colleagues, peers, and patients.
- Judge and value professionalism in physical therapy.
- Integrate the roles of a physical therapist.
- Support society and the health care system.
- Perform treatment procedures in a manner that is appropriate to the patient's status and desired goals.
- Perform self-teaching skills and accurately self-assess abilities
- Maintain general good health, self-care, and hygiene in order not to jeopardize the health, and safety of self and others or offend the sensitivities of others with whom one interacts.
- Arrange transportation and living accommodations for/during off campus clinical assignments and classes.
- Recognize and respond appropriately to individuals of all race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, disability, age, sex, or sexual orientation, marital status, or nationality, socioeconomic, and cultural background.
- Cope with the stress of heavy workloads, demanding patients, and critical clinical situations.
- Recognize and respond appropriately to potentially hazardous situations.

Curriculum requirements

The student must be able to:

- Meet class and program standards for course completion throughout the curriculum including lecture, laboratory and clinical requirements.

Clinical assessments

The student must be able to:

- Participate in clinical experiences.
- Demonstrate clinical competence in a variety of settings including acute, outpatient, and neurological settings.

- *I _____(printed name) certify by my signature below, that I have read and understand the essential functions for the Physical Therapy Program at the University of Texas at El Paso. I believe to the best of my knowledge that I meet these standards with or without reasonable accommodation. If I believe that I do not meet these essential functions I know that it is solely my responsibility to contact the University of Texas at El Paso Office Center for Accommodations and Support Services at (915)747-5148.*

Signature **Date**

References

1. University of South Carolina website. *Essential Functions*.
<http://www.sph.sc.edu/dpt/pdf/Essential%20Functions%2004-03.pdf>. Accessed September 30, 2010.
2. Richard Stockton College website. *Technical Standards and Essential Functions*.
<http://intraweb.stockton.edu/eyos/page.cfm?siteID=57&pageID=15> Accessed September 30, 2010.