

Physical Therapy Student Requirements

TECHNICAL STANDARDS

The technical standards have been established through consideration by faculty and consultation with the following sources: The Vocational Rehabilitation Act; The Americans with Disabilities Act; Guide for Occupational Information; Dictionary of Occupational Titles; and the Occupational Skills Standards Project from the National Health Care Skills Standards Projects.

Sensorimotor Skills:

Candidates must have sufficient gross motor, fine motor and equilibrium functions reasonably required to carry out assessments and elicit information from patients (palpation, auscultation, percussion, and other assessment maneuvers, gait training, and transfers), as well as those motor skills necessary to provide physical therapy intervention. A candidate must be able to execute motor movements required to provide physical therapy treatment (patient transfers, gait training, therapeutic exercise, etc.) and be able to respond quickly to emergency situations. Quick reactions are necessary for safety and therapeutic purposes. Physical Therapy evaluation, examination, and intervention procedures require coordination of both gross and fine motor movements, equilibrium, and functional use of the senses of touch and vision. For this reason, candidates for admission to the Program of Doctor of Physical Therapy must have manual dexterity and the ability to engage in procedures involving grasping, pushing, pulling, holding, manipulating, extending, and rotating. This includes but is not limited to the ability to lift, push and pull at least 50 pounds for routine transfer of patients from varying surfaces and be able to manually adjust equipment found in the physical therapy clinic setting.

Observational Skills:

Candidates/current physical therapist students must be able to observe demonstrations and participate in laboratory experiments as required in the curriculum. Candidates/current DPT students must be able to observe patients and be able to obtain an appropriate medical history directly from the patient or guardian. Such observations require the functional use of vision, hearing, and other sensory modalities. Candidates/current DPT students must have visual perception which includes depth and acuity.

Communication Skills:

Candidates/current DPT students must be able to communicate in English effectively and sensitively with patients. In addition, candidates/current DPT students must be able to communicate in English in oral and hand written form with faculty, allied personnel, and peers in the classroom, laboratory, and clinical settings. Candidates/current DPT students must also be sensitive to multicultural and multilingual needs. Such communication skills include not only speech, but reading and writing in English. Candidates/current DPT students must have the ability to complete reading assignments and search and evaluate the literature. Candidates/current DPT students must be able to complete written assignments and maintain written records. Candidates/current DPT students must have the ability to complete assessment exercises. Candidates/current DPT students must also have the ability to use therapeutic communication, such as attending, clarifying, coaching, facilitating, and touching. These skills must be performed in clinical settings, as well as the didactic and laboratory environments.

Intellectual/Conceptual, Integrative, and Qualitative Skills:

Candidates/current DPT students must have the ability to measure, calculate, reason, analyze, and synthesize data. Problem solving and diagnosis, including obtaining, interpreting, and documenting data, are critical skills demanded of physical therapists which require all of these intellectual abilities. These skills allow students to make proper assessments, sound judgments, appropriately prioritize therapeutic interventions, and measure and record patient care outcomes. Candidates/current DPT students must have the ability to learn to use computers for searching, recording, storing, and retrieving information.

Behavioral/Social Skills and Professionalism:

Candidates/current DPT students must demonstrate attributes of empathy, integrity, concern for others, interpersonal skills, interest, and motivation. Candidates/current DPT students must possess the emotional well-being required for use of their intellectual abilities, the exercise of sound judgment, the prompt completion of all responsibilities attendant to the assessment and treatment of patients, and the development of mature, sensitive, and effective relationships with patients. Candidates/current DPT students must be able to adapt to ever-changing environments, display flexibility, and learn to function in the face of uncertainties and stresses which are inherent in the educational process, as well as the clinical problems of many patients.

Candidates/current DPT students must be able to maintain professional conduct and appearance, maintain client confidentiality and operate within the scope of practice. Candidates/current DPT students must also have the ability to be assertive, delegate responsibilities appropriately, and function as part of a medical team. Such abilities require organizational skills necessary to meet deadlines and manage time.

Professional Behaviors

Aristotle said, “We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.”

Professional Behaviors are behaviors, attributes, or characteristics that are not explicitly part of a profession's core of knowledge and technical skills, but nonetheless are required for success in that profession. They define expected behavior within a given profession. Professional behaviors specific to the practice of physical therapy were identified by the UW-Madison Physical Therapy Program faculty, and have been validated and accepted as defining physical therapy professional behavior and will exemplify the quality of professional behavior expected of DPT Program graduates.

The Professional Behaviors will be used throughout the DPT program to guide development of appropriate professional behaviors. Students will be introduced to the items in the first semester, and they will be reinforced in subsequent coursework and clinical affiliations. Students will be expected to reflect on their personal development of these behaviors, and will be required to provide examples of how they meet each criterion through both formal assignments. Each student will discuss their development in this area with their professional advisor.

1. Critical Thinking	The ability to question logically; identify, generate and evaluate elements of logical argument; recognize and differentiate facts, appropriate or faulty inferences, and assumptions; and distinguish relevant from irrelevant information. The ability to appropriately utilize, analyze, and critically evaluate scientific evidence to develop a logical argument, and to identify and determine the impact of bias on the decision making process.
2. Communication	The ability to communicate effectively (i.e. verbal, non-verbal, reading, writing, and listening) for varied audiences and purposes.
3. Problem Solving	The ability to recognize and define problems, analyzes data, develop and implement solutions, and evaluate outcomes.
4. Interpersonal Skills	The ability to interact effectively with patients, families, colleagues, other health care professionals, and the community in a culturally aware manner.
5. Responsibility	The ability to be accountable for the outcomes of personal and professional actions and to follow through on commitments that encompass the profession within the scope of work, community and social responsibilities.
6. Professionalism	The ability to exhibit appropriate professional conduct and to represent the profession effectively while promoting the growth/development of the Physical Therapy profession.
7. Use of Constructive Feedback	The ability to seek out and identify quality sources of feedback, reflects on and integrates the feedback, and provides meaningful feedback to others.
8. Effective Use of Time and Resources	The ability to manage time and resources effectively to obtain the maximum possible benefit.
9. Stress Management	The ability to identify sources of stress and to develop and implement effective coping behaviors; this applies for interactions for: self, patient/clients and their families, members of the health care team and in work/life scenarios.
10. Commitment to Learning	The ability to self direct learning to include the identification of needs and sources of learning; and to continually seek and apply new knowledge, behaviors, and skills.

**Originally developed by the Physical Therapy Program, University of Wisconsin-Madison
May, W.W., Morgan, B.J., Lemke, J.C., Karst, G.M., & Stone, H.L. (1995). Model for ability-based assessment in physical therapy education. Journal of Physical Therapy Education, 9(1), 3-6.
Updated 2010, to be publish*

