



SCHOOL OF PHYSICAL THERAPY

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

DOCTOR OF PHYSICAL THERAPY PROGRAM ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS

In keeping with the goals of the Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) Program, the highest priority is placed on developing caring physical therapists who possess the knowledge and skills to function in a broad variety of clinical settings and adapt to a changing healthcare environment. Certain essential functions are required for admission, progression, and graduation from the DPT program.

Admission and retention decisions are based not only on prior satisfactory academic achievement, but also on non-academic factors which serve to ensure that the candidate can complete the Essential Functions of the academic program required for graduation. The School of Physical Therapy faculty maintain the responsibility to evaluate achievement of these Essential Functions as they promote students based on their classroom and clinical education performance.

The School of Physical Therapy (School), as part of Texas Woman's University, is committed to the principle of equal opportunity. The School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, or disability. A student with a disability may participate in the program provided the student satisfies program requirements including these Essential Functions, with or without reasonable accommodations. Students who seek reasonable accommodations for disabilities must contact Disability Services for Students (DSS) as soon as possible. DSS will determine student eligibility and recommend appropriate accommodations and services. Students are encouraged to meet with faculty members by appointment or during office hours to discuss approved accommodations and how course requirements and activities may impact a student's ability to fully participate.

Technical standards, as distinguished from academic standards, refer to those physical, cognitive, and behavioral abilities required for satisfactory completion of all aspects of the curriculum, and the development of professional attributes required by the faculty of all students at graduation. The Essential Functions and abilities required by the curriculum are in the following areas: **observational ability, motor, sensory, communication, intellectual (conceptual, integrative, and quantitative abilities** for problem solving and patient assessment) and the **behavioral and social** aspects of the performance of a physical therapist. This list is not intended to be exhaustive and individual course instructors may identify additional requirements for successful completion of their courses.

General abilities: The student is expected to possess functional use of the senses of vision, touch, and hearing so that data received by the sense may be integrated, analyzed and synthesized in a consistent and accurate manner. The student must also possess the ability to

perceive pain, pressure, temperature, position, vibration, position equilibrium, and movement that are important to the student's ability to gather significant information needed to manage patients effectively. The student must have the ability to master information presented in course work in the form of lectures, written material, and projected images.

Observational ability: The student must be able to observe demonstrations in basic and applied sciences including, but not limited to human anatomy and neuroscience as well as in didactic courses in physical therapy theory and practice for normal and pathologic states. The student must be able to observe patients at a distance and close at hand, including non-verbal and verbal signals, to assess health and illness alterations in a variety of healthcare settings. Observation requires the use of common sense, as well as the functional use of the sense of vision, audition, olfaction, and palpation.

Communication ability:

The student must be able to communicate effectively with patients and family, physicians and other members of the health care team. The communication skills require the ability to assess all information, including the recognition of the significance of non-verbal communication and immediate assessment of information provided, to allow for appropriate, well-focused follow-up inquiry. The student must be capable of responsive, empathetic listening to establish rapport in a way that promotes openness to issues of concern and sensitivity to potential cultural differences.

The student must be able to process and communicate information regarding the patient's status with accuracy in a timely manner to physical therapist colleagues and other members of the health care team. This information needs to be communicated in a succinct yet comprehensive manner and in settings in which time available is limited. Written or dictated patient assessments, etc., must be complete and accurate. The appropriate communication may also rely on the student's ability to make a correct judgment in seeking supervision and consultation in a timely manner.

Sensory and Motor Ability

The student must possess the fine and gross motor skills necessary to provide care to patients of all ages and sizes, including the ability to perform complete physical examinations using a variety of examination maneuvers. The student must be able to perform gross and fine motor movements with coordination sufficient to perform interventions, including management and operation of therapeutic healthcare equipment used in the general practice of a physical therapist. The student must be (1) able to maintain consciousness and equilibrium, (2) have sufficient levels of postural control, neuromuscular control, and eye-to-hand coordination, and (3) possess the physical and mental stamina to meet the demands associated with extended periods of sitting, standing, moving, lifting, and physical exertion required for satisfactory performance in patient care and classroom/laboratory settings. In addition, the student must possess adequate motor ability to respond efficiently and effectively in an emergency situation.

The student must have the ability to obtain information and document in a patient's record, an appropriate history, and perform a physical examination. Such tasks require the ability to communicate with the patient and family. The student must also be capable of perceiving the

signs of disease, especially neuromusculoskeletal dysfunction, as manifested through the physical examination. Such information is derived from observation and palpation of the body surfaces, palpable changes in various organs and tissues, and auditory information (such as patient voice, joint, heart and lung sounds).

In order to master observation and palpation techniques, students are required to complete courses with laboratory components. Labs are co-educational, and students are often required to dress in shorts and t-shirts/sports bras to allow appropriate visualization and palpation. During these courses, students are required to work with classmates of all genders and all body types.

Intellectual, Conceptual, Integrative, and Quantitative Abilities:

The student must possess a range of intellectual skills that allows mastery of the broad and complex body of knowledge that comprises a DPT curriculum. The student must be able to comprehend, analyze, and synthesize information from various sources. The student must be able to develop and refine problem-solving skills crucial to physical therapist practice. Problem solving involves the abilities to (1) comprehend three-dimensional relationships and understand the spatial relationships of structures, (2) measure, calculate, reason, analyze, and synthesize objective and subjective data, and (3) make decisions in a timely manner that reflect consistent and thoughtful deliberation and sound clinical judgment. The School uses cadaver dissection in gross anatomy instruction and expects all students to participate in dissection as part of the learning process.

The student must possess the emotional health required for full use of their intellectual abilities, the exercise of good judgment, the prompt completion of all responsibilities attendant to the evaluation, diagnosis and care of patients, and the development of mature, sensitive, and effective relationships with patients. The student must be able to tolerate physically-taxing workloads and to function effectively under stress. The student must be able to adapt to changing environments, display flexibility and learn to function in the face of uncertainties inherent in the clinical problems of many patients. The student also must possess attributes which include compassion, empathy, altruism, integrity, responsibility, and tolerance.

Procedures

In order to fully inform prospective applicants, applicants, and matriculated students regarding the Doctor of Physical Therapy Program Essential Functions (Essential Functions), the School is responsible for communicating the Essential Functions to prospective and current students at regular intervals. The Essential Functions are disseminated through the following methods:

1. **Posted on website:** the Essential Functions are posted on the School website under the Pre-application FAQs and within the Academic DPT Program FAQs.
2. **Mailed out with Acceptance letter:** a copy of the Essential Functions is included in the acceptance letter mailed to students accepted to the Program. Students complete an online verification that they have read and understand the Essential Functions.
3. **Included in the DPT Program Student Handbook:** The Essential Functions are included in the DPT Program Student Handbook.

4. **Reviewed during Orientation:** The Essential Functions are included in the overview of the Handbook during Orientation.
5. **Student acknowledgement of receipt of Handbook (containing Essential Functions):** After reading the Handbook, all students sign the acknowledgement form of its receipt, and that any questions about content in the Handbook were answered.

Use of Essential Functions: The Essential Functions are in place to answer student questions about technical standards and/or performance expectations before matriculation and during enrollment in the School. Additionally, they may be used by faculty for reference during advising or counseling sessions to identify desired behavior and/or correct behavior.