

## ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS OF A PHYSICAL THERAPIST

Success in the physical therapy curriculum requires a student demonstrate the knowledge, skills and professional behaviors expected of an entry-level physical therapist. Entry-level physical therapists are competent clinicians who evaluate and provide interventions to the general population of acute and rehabilitation clients in current health care settings. The purpose of this document is to delineate the knowledge, skills and professional behaviors deemed essential for completion of the physical therapy program and entrance into professional practice.

The following list is illustrative and **does not represent an all-inclusive listing** of the functions of a physical therapist. Throughout the professional DPT program, students will be assessed not only on their scholastic accomplishments, but also on their physical and emotional capacities to meet the full requirements of the college's curricula and to graduate as skilled and effective practitioners.

If a student cannot demonstrate the following skills and abilities, it is the responsibility of the student to request an appropriate accommodation. The college will provide reasonable accommodation as long as it does not fundamentally alter the nature of the program offered and does not impose an undue hardship such as those that cause a significant expense, difficulty or are unduly disruptive to the educational process.

### KNOWLEDGE (Cognitive) Learning Skills

The student must demonstrate the following abilities:

- Receive, interpret, remember, reproduce, and use information in the cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domains of learning to solve problems, evaluate work, and generate new ways of processing or categorizing similar information as listed in course objectives.
- Perform a physical therapy evaluation of a patient's posture and movement including analysis of physiological, biomechanical, behavioral, and environmental factors in a timely manner, consistent with the acceptable norms of clinical settings.
- Use evaluation data to formulate and execute a plan of physical therapy management in a timely manner, appropriate to the problems identified consistent with the acceptable norms of clinical settings.
- Reassess and revise plans as needed for effective and efficient management of physical therapy problems, in a timely manner and consistent with the acceptable norms of clinical settings.

### SKILL (Psychomotor) Skills

The student must demonstrate the following skills:

- Sitting: maintain an upright posture
- Standing: maintain an upright posture
- Locomotion ability to:
- Get to lecture, laboratory, and clinical locations, and move within rooms as needed for changing groups, partners, and work stations.
- Physically maneuver in required clinical settings to accomplish assigned tasks

### Manual tasks:

- Maneuver another person's body parts to effectively perform examination techniques
- Manipulate common tools used for screening tests of the cranial nerves, sensation, range of motion, blood pressure, (e.g. cotton balls, safety pins, goniometers, aesthesiometer, sphygmomanometer, etc.)
- Safely and effectively guide, facilitate, inhibit, and resist movement and motor patterns through physical facilitation and inhibition techniques (including the ability to give time sensitive urgent verbal feedback).
- Manipulate another person's body in transfers, gait, positioning, therapeutic exercises, and mobilization techniques.
- Manipulate evaluation and intervention equipment and safely and accurately apply to patients/clients.
- Manipulate bolsters, pillows, plinths, mats, gait assistive devices, and other supports or chairs to aid in positioning, moving, or treating a patient effectively.
- Competently perform and supervise cardiopulmonary resuscitation (C.P.R.) using guidelines issued by the American Heart Association or the American Red Cross.

### Small motor/hand skills:

- Legibly record/document evaluations, patient care notes, referrals, etc. in standard medical charts in hospital/clinical settings in a timely manner and consistent with the acceptable norms of clinical settings.
- Legibly record thoughts for written assignments and tests.
- Sense changes in an individual's muscle tone, skin quality, joint play, kinesthesia, and temperature to gather accurate objective evaluative information in a timely manner and sense that individual's response to environmental changes and treatment.
- Safely apply and adjust therapeutic modalities.
- Safely and effectively position hands and apply mobilization techniques.
- Use a telephone.

### Visual acuity to:

- Receive visual information from clients, e.g. movement, posture, body mechanics, and gait necessary for comparison to normal standards for purposes of evaluation of movement dysfunctions. Receive visual information from treatment environment, e.g., dials on modalities and monitors, assistive devices, furniture, flooring, structures, etc.

### Communication:

- Effectively communicate with other students, teachers, patients, peers, staff and personnel to ask questions, explain conditions and procedures, teach home programs, and for safety in a timely manner and within the acceptable norms of academic and clinical settings.
- Receive and interpret written communications in both academic and clinical settings in a timely manner.
- Receive and send verbal communication in life threatening situations in a timely manner within the acceptable norms of clinical settings.

Self care:

- Maintain general good health, hygiene, and self-care in order not to jeopardize the health and safety of self and individuals with whom one interacts in the academic and clinical settings.
- Arrange transportation and living accommodations for/during off campus clinical assignments to foster timely reporting to the classroom and clinical center.

Affective learning skills

The student must be able to:

- Demonstrate appropriate affective behaviors and mental attitudes in order not to jeopardize the emotional, physical, mental and behavioral safety of clients and other individuals with whom one interacts in the academic and clinical settings and to be in compliance with the ethical standards of the American Physical Therapy Association.
- Sustain the mental and emotional rigors of a demanding educational program in physical therapy which includes academic and clinical components that occur within set time constraints.
- Acknowledge and respect individual values and opinions in order to foster harmonious working relationships with colleagues, peers and patients/clients.

Physical therapy education requires that the accumulation of scientific knowledge be accompanied by the simultaneous acquisition of skills and professional behaviors. The Doctorate of Physical Therapy (DPT) degree awarded by Utica College certifies that the individual has acquired foundational knowledge, skills and behaviors requisite for the practice of physical therapy. The student is required to successfully complete each required course, comprehensive examination and clinical education experience in order to graduate. Reasonable accommodations are considered to provide the student with the option to successfully meet essential functions as outlined in this document.

**NOTE: The need for a trained intermediary means that a candidate's judgment must be mediated by someone else's power of selection and observation. This strategy is not compatible with independent professional practice and is not an acceptable accommodation.**

Certain chronic or recurrent illnesses and problems that interfere with patient care or safety may be incompatible with training as a healthcare professional or interfere with the ability to manage modern clinical practice. Other illnesses may lead to a high likelihood of student absenteeism and should be carefully considered. Deficiencies in knowledge, judgment, integrity, character, or professional attitude or demeanor that may jeopardize patient care may be grounds for course failure and possible dismissal from the program.

*I certify, by my signature below, that I have read and understand the Essential Functions for admission into the Utica College Doctor of Physical Therapy Program.*

***I believe to the best of my knowledge that I meet each of these standards with or without reasonable accommodation.***

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*Signature of Applicant*

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*Date*

*(over)*

**Compiled from Technical Standards and Essential Functions documents from the following institutions:**

Samuel Merritt College, Physical Therapy Program; Shenandoah University Division of Athletic Training; University of Colorado Health Sciences Center, Department of Rehabilitation Medicine, Physical Therapy Program; University of Indianapolis, Krannert School of Physical Therapy; University of Kentucky, College of Allied Health Professions; University of Miami School of Medicine, Division of Physical Therapy; University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse; University of Wisconsin-Madison Medical School, Physical Therapy Program; University of Washington Division of Physical Therapy.