

THE UNIVERSITY OF FINDLAY  
COLLEGE OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS  
PHYSICAL THERAPY PROGRAM

## **Technical Standards and Essential Functions**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Performing successfully as a student physical therapist involves completing significant intellectual, social, and physical tasks throughout the curriculum.<sup>1-3</sup> Both the Traditional and Weekend PTA to DPT Bridge Programs are rigorous. *The Weekend PTA to DPT Bridge Program in particular is rigorous; fast paced and has less time on campus than the Traditional program. The students in the Weekend PTA to DPT Bridge Program are expected to be able to manage full time coursework with a significantly reduced face-to-face component along with maintaining clinical work as a PTA.*

Upon graduation, students from this program are expected to deliver entry-level clinical services in a safe and ethical manner. Successful entry-level practice requires a broad array of basic knowledge, skills, and behaviors, including abilities in the areas of judgment, integrity, character, professional attitude, and demeanor. The purpose of this document is to delineate the specific demands of this professional education program so that students may compare their own capabilities with these educational challenges.

### **REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION**

Students are expected to complete the tasks articulated in this document independently either with or without reasonable accommodation. The university can assist students who have disabilities to accomplish the essential tasks necessary to complete this educational program by reasonably accommodating their needs. For example the university can provide extra time to complete an examination. Providing reasonable accommodation does not imply that a student will be exempt from performing any tasks essential to completion of the program. Reasonable accommodation does mean, however, that the university will do its best to cooperate with any student who has a disability to determine if it can assist the student to successfully complete the necessary tasks.

### **IMPLICATION FOR ADMISSION**

After reading this document, students must decide whether or not they are able to complete the essential tasks required for this program either with or without reasonable accommodation. They are not required to disclose the presence of a disability prior to a decision being made with regard to their admission to the program. Students should be realistic and recognize that they are ineligible for admission if they are unable to complete these tasks with reasonable accommodation. Students are encouraged to discuss any questions they have with regard to this document with the Office of Disability Services prior to admission.

If an offer of admission to the program is made to a student who has a disability and that student desires reasonable accommodation to assist in completing the essential tasks of this program, he or she must request this assistance from the Office of Disability Services. This Office, in consultation with the program director and other physical therapy faculty members, will decide whether the student will be able to perform the essential tasks with reasonable accommodation. An offer of admission may be withdrawn in any of the following circumstances:

- It becomes apparent that a student is unable to complete essential tasks even when reasonable accommodation is made.
- The accommodations required by the student are not reasonable and would cause undue hardship to the University.
- Attempting to perform the essential functions with reasonable accommodation would create a risk to the health and safety of the student with the disability or to the health and safety of others with whom the student would interact.

## **FIVE AREAS IN WHICH STUDENTS MUST POSSESS APTITUDES, ABILITIES, AND SKILLS:**

### **I. OBSERVATION – use of visual system**

Specific examples of requirements related to use of the visual system include:

- A. Observing demonstrations in basic science classes, in clinical lab courses, and in clinical experiences; using these demonstrations as the basis for performance.
- B. Observing students in the laboratory and observing patients accurately both at a distance and when close at hand; noting both verbal and non-verbal signals.
- C. Observing skin integrity.
- D. Observing findings on imaging tests.
- E. Reading written material; observing illustrated and graphic material in texts, handouts, and in visual displays presented in class.
- F. Observing anatomic structures.
- G. Observing body movement; differentiating changes in body movement.
- H. Observing changes in mood or affect.
- I. Discriminating numbers and patterns associated with instruments used for examination of patients and for treatment intervention.

## **II. COMMUNICATION – specific communication requirements include:**

- A. Using verbal and nonverbal communication orally and in writing to convey and receive communication.
- B. Reading, writing legibly, and speaking standard English at a level consistent with successful course completion and development of positive personal and therapeutic relationships.
  - 1. Communication must be quick, effective, and efficient to handle the volume and breadth of required reading and to impart information to others
  - 2. Written communication must be possible both by manual technique and computer technique
  - 3. Computer literacy is required

## **III. SENSORY AND MOTOR COORDINATION AND FUNCTION**

- A. Students must be able to use their senses to perform a physical examination and to provide physical therapy intervention for standard treatment, as well as to provide care during emergency situations. Using the following specific sensory abilities is required:
  - 1. Touch
  - 2. Pain
  - 3. Temperature
  - 4. Position sense
  - 5. Pressure sense
  - 6. Movement sense
  - 7. Ability to discern the shape and type of object by feeling it without using the sense of vision
  - 8. Vibratory sense
- B. Students must be able to use their abilities to move to successfully complete classroom requirements, perform a physical examination, and provide physical therapy intervention for standard treatment, as well as to provide care during emergency situations. The following specific movement abilities are required<sup>1</sup>. Please note that the terms “frequently” (frequent repetition for 1/3 to 2/3 of a full work shift) and “occasionally” (repetition for up to 1/3 of a full work shift) have been used in the context of their definitions from the ERGOS job description program:
  - 1. When not participating in clinical education, ability to sit between two to 10 hours daily.
  - 2. When not participating in clinical education, ability to stand for one to two hours daily.
  - 3. When not participating in clinical education, ability to walk intermittently for up to two hours daily.

4. When participating in clinical education, ability to stand or walk for at least seven hours daily and to sit for at least one hour daily – modifiable according to the schedule of the specific facility to which the student is assigned.
5. Ability to relocate living arrangements outside the area in which the student customarily lives to complete one or more clinical rotations of up to ten weeks in duration.
6. Frequently lift items less than 10 pounds and occasionally lift items between 10 and 50 pounds.
7. Carry up to 25 pounds while walking up to 50 feet.
8. Frequently exert 14 pounds of push/pull forces to objects up to 50 feet and occasionally exert 27 pounds of push/pull forces for up to 50 feet.
9. Frequently twist, bend, stoop, and squat.
10. Depending on what class is being taken, or depending on what setting a student is placed in for clinical rotation, either occasionally or frequently kneel, crawl, climb stools, reach above shoulder level.
11. Frequently move from one location to another and from one position to another at a speed that permits safe handling of classmates and patients. Handling a workload efficiently and safely requires the ability to respond promptly with appropriate movement patterns.
12. In most cases, when required to travel from one floor to another in a building, a student will have access to an elevator. However, students must have the ability to negotiate stairs and uneven terrain when elevators are not available (for example, when participating in clinical assignments in patient homes), or when assisting patients to learn how to safely negotiate stairs.
13. Frequently use the hands with repetitive motions using a simple grasp and using a firm grasp and manual dexterity skills.
14. Frequently coordinate verbal and manual activities with large movement activities.

#### **IV. CONCEPTUALIZATION, INTEGRATION, AND QUANTIFICATION**

A. Students must be able to interpret what they read, see, and hear. For example, they must be able to:

1. Extract pertinent facts from readings; interpret their meaning.
2. Summarize and interpret the communications of others.
3. Collate data obtained from patient examinations into clear and concise written summaries following standard documentation protocols.

4. Interpret the data to provide a likely explanation for identified patient problems and justification for recommended therapeutic interventions based on clinical judgment and evidence based practice.
5. Interpret graphs and charts and use the information appropriately in both learning and in planning therapeutic interventions.
  - A. Students must demonstrate a high level of problem solving and critical thinking skill.
  - B. Students must be able to recall previously presented information as well as retain and incorporate new information when communicating and when formulating therapeutic plans of intervention.
  - C. Students must exercise good judgment in all encounters.
  - D. Students must be able to identify and communicate the limits of their knowledge to others when appropriate. They must be able to refer others to professionals with other spheres of reference when appropriate.

## **V. BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL SKILLS, ABILITIES, APTITUDES, AND GENERAL HEALTH**

- A. Students must possess and exhibit a level of emotional health that allows:
  1. Using their intellectual abilities to the fullest.
  2. Developing mature, sensitive, and effective professional relationships.
  3. Exercising good judgment.
  4. Completing all classroom and clinical responsibilities promptly and effectively.
  5. Accurately recognizing, describing, and responding to changes of emotional communication or other nonverbal behavior.
  6. Recognizing and appropriately reacting to one's own immediate emotional responses to allow maintenance of a professional demeanor.
  7. Tolerating physically and emotionally taxing workloads.
  8. Functioning in the face of uncertainty and ambiguity inherent in the learning of and practice of physical therapy.
  9. Accepting constructive comments and suggestions for behavioral changes as well as modifying behavior as needed.

B. Students must possess a general health status congruent with:

1. Completion of all functions noted in this document.
2. Ability to withstand exposure to microorganisms present in the environment of anyone working in health care.
  - i. Depending on what setting a student is placed in for clinical rotation, either occasionally or frequently students will be exposed to open wounds, blood, and other body fluids.
  - ii. Although students are taught every appropriate measure to protect themselves from microorganisms associated with such exposure, students should be aware that an intact immune system enhances the ability to withstand such exposure.

References:

1. O\*NET/ERGOS Web site. Available at: <http://online.onetcenter.org>. Accessed July 17, 2001.
2. US Dept of Labor Web site. Available at: <http://www.bls.gov>. Accessed July 17, 2001.
3. American Physical Therapy Association Web site. Available at: <http://www.apta.org>. Accessed July 17, 2001.