

Essential Functions of the Student in the DPT Program

Students enrolled in the University of Central Arkansas Doctor of Physical Therapy program must perform certain essential functions in order to participate in and complete program requirements. The following essential functions define the minimal physical, cognitive, and behavioral abilities required for successful program completion as well as entry-level physical therapy practice.

The practice of physical therapy includes the examination, diagnosis, and treatment of individuals with physical disabilities, movement dysfunction, and pain. The demands of physical therapy practice require that the student is able to perform certain essential functions. Physical therapists must be prepared to conduct components of clinical practice in a timely manner. These components include performance of a relevant patient examination, evaluation of the results of the examination, synthesis of data to establish an accurate diagnosis, prognosis and plan of care, implementation of interventions and utilization of re-examination to assess patient outcomes. Physical therapists must also possess the skills necessary to determine when referral of the patient/client to another health care professional is appropriate. Physical therapists must provide evidence that the care they provide is effective, often through the conduct of clinically based research.

The Commission on Accreditation of Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE) accredits professional physical therapy programs and requires that graduates of these programs are able to deliver entry-level clinical services. Graduates of entry-level programs are required to possess a broad base of knowledge and skills requisite for the practice of physical therapy. Physical therapists must possess the intellectual, communication, behavioral – social, observational, and motor abilities to meet the standard of practice.

All applicants are questioned regarding their ability to complete these essential functions, with or without reasonable accommodation. Reasonable accommodation refers to ways in which the university can assist students with disabilities to accomplish tasks. For example, provide support services to significantly decrease or eliminate physical and educational barriers caused by disability. Reasonable accommodation does not mean that students with disabilities will be exempt from certain tasks.

Prospective DPT students who can complete these tasks with or without reasonable accommodation are not required to disclose their disability prior to an admission decision. Prospective DPT students who cannot complete these tasks with or without reasonable accommodation are ineligible for consideration for admission. If admitted, a student with a disability, who requires reasonable accommodation must register with UCA Disability Support Services Center. An offer of admission may be withdrawn or a student may be dismissed from the program if it becomes apparent that the student cannot complete essential tasks, or that fulfilling functions would create a significant risk of harm to the health or safety of others.

The demands of physical therapy practice require the student to perform certain essential functions. The following is a list of the essential functions required of the prospective DPT student in order to participate in academic and clinical components of the curriculum.

1. Intellectual Abilities

Intellectual skills include the ability to recall and comprehend large amounts of information and to apply this information to the patient's complex problems.

The DPT student has the ability to:

- a) Recognize and define problems, develop and implement solutions, and evaluate outcomes.
- b) Demonstrate critical thinking skills and appropriate clinical decision making with ability to differentiate relevant vs. irrelevant information
- c) Memorize, analyze, synthesize and apply large volumes of information.

2. Communication Abilities

Effective communication skills enable the physical therapist to obtain appropriate information from patients and to effectively explain treatment procedures to patients and other professionals.

The DPT student has the ability to:

- a) Effectively process and comprehend written and verbal communications, in the English language, in any form of media at a level consistent with full participation in academic and clinical coursework.
- b) Utilize appropriate and effective verbal, written and non-verbal communication.
- c) In all situations, respond appropriately verbally and in writing, in the English language, when communicating with any personnel.
- d) Respond to situations that indicate an individual's need for assistance.
- e) Participate in group and individual discussions, present oral and written reports and provide constructive feedback in the English language.

3. Observational Abilities

Observation is one of the key tools that a physical therapist possesses. These skills are essential in order for the PT to gather data regarding the patient and the patient's condition. The DPT student has the ability to:

- a) Observe and recognize abnormalities/ changes in a patient's position, posture, movements, skin condition, and appearance.
- b) Recognize potential safety hazards.
- c) Read equipment dials, graphs, patient's charts, professional literature, and notes from patients, physicians and other health professionals.

4. Behavioral – Social Abilities

The physical therapist must demonstrate the ability to practice in a professional and ethical manner and possess the emotional stability to practice in a stressful work environment. The DPT student has the ability to:

- a) Appropriately handle the physical, emotional and mental challenges of a rigorous curriculum and varied clinical environments.
- b) Demonstrate flexibility and willingness to adapt to changing environments.
- c) Demonstrate empathy, compassion, integrity, honesty, and concern for others of all cultures.
- d) Demonstrate the ability to respond appropriately to unpredictable or stressful situations.
- e) Demonstrate behaviors and attitudes that protect the safety and well being of others especially patients and classmates.
- f) Demonstrate professional, ethical and legal behavior in academic and clinical environments.

5. **Motor Abilities**

The practice of physical therapy requires that the practitioner possess the ability to perform basic evaluation and therapy procedures that require specific physical skills and stamina. A therapist must also use vision and somatic sensation in the evaluation and treatment of patients. The DPT student has the ability to:

- a) Attend classes 30 or more hours per week during each academic semester. Classes consist of a combination of lecture, discussion, laboratory, and clinical activities.
- b) Participate in clinical rotations 40 or more hours per week on a schedule that corresponds to the operating hours of the clinic.
- c) Sit for two to 10 hours daily, stand for one to four hours daily, and walk or travel for two to four hours daily.
- d) Relocate outside the Conway area to complete one or more clinical rotations of five to 10 weeks duration each.
- e) Lift a minimum weight of 10 pounds overhead and be able to move a 150 lb dependent person from one surface to another.
- f) Carry in your arms (as opposed to in a box, backpack, on your head or shoulders) up to 25 pounds while walking up to a minimum of 50 feet.
- g) Exert 75 pounds of push/pull forces up to 50 feet and sometimes exert 150 pounds of push/pull forces from a standing or seated position.
- h) Twist, bend, stoop, squat, crawl, climb onto equipment, reach above shoulder level, and kneel.
- i) Move from place to place and position to position at a speed that permits safe handling of classmates and patients.
- j) Stand and walk while providing support to a classmate simulating a disability or while supporting a patient with a disability.
- k) Climb stairs and negotiate uneven terrain with good balance. (ex: without stumbling or falling and without holding on to rails or other objects)
- l) Administer CPR – upon successful completion of CPR training with the American Heart Association.
- m) Use hands to manipulate very small equipment, palpate body structures, handle injured body parts without causing injury to the subject, and safely guide a patient's movement.
- n) Perform physical tasks while maintaining awareness of external factors; including patient response, monitor displays, equipment function and/or surroundings.