

Title: **Essential Technical Standards**  
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To be eligible to obtain a University degree from the School of Physical Therapy, a student will be required to meet the following minimum technical standards and competencies outlined in this document. It is the student's responsibility to read, understand and ensure that he/she has these capacities.

## I. Introduction

The **University of Puget Sound, School of Physical Therapy Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) Program** complies with Section 504 of the 1973 Vocational Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (the ADA) in providing opportunities for qualified individuals with disabilities. At the same time, prospective candidates and current **DPT students** must be capable of meeting certain essential technical standards. The following essential technical standards specify those skills, abilities and competencies that faculty has determined to be necessary in successfully completing didactic and practical training, clinical education internships, and practicing physical therapy safely and responsibly. These standards describe the **essential functions** that DPT students must demonstrate in the requirements of professional education, and thus are **necessary for** continuation and/or completion of the training in the **Physical Therapy Program**. Requests for reasonable accommodation are evaluated on an individual basis and will be permitted, if appropriate, to foster the student's ability to meet these essential standards. Candidates seeking admission and current students should understand that the Physical Therapy Program will not waive or substitute any essential technical standard or lower programmatic expectations.

## II. Essential Technical Standards

**The DPT student will possess abilities sufficient to enable skill development in the following five areas with or without reasonable accommodations:**

### a. Observation

- i. Observe a patient/client accurately at a distance and close at hand, noting non-verbal as well as verbal signals
- ii. Visualize and discriminate findings on imaging and other studies
- iii. Interpret digital or analog representations of physiologic phenomena, such as EKGs
- iv. Acquire information from written documents, films, slides, video or other media
- v. Observe and differentiate changes in body movement
- vi. Observe anatomic structures, skin integrity including skin color, texture, odors, bony landmarks, anatomical/pathological structures

- vii. Efficiently read written and illustrated materials
- viii. Observe and detect the various signs and symptoms of disease processes and movement dysfunction
- ix. Effectively gather auscultation and auditory data, such as heart and breath sounds, pulses, joint noises, blood pressure, gait and prosthetic sounds
- x. Discriminate numbers and findings with diagnostic instruments, tests and measures

**b. Communication**

- i. Communicate in a culturally competent manner with patients/clients
- ii. Communicate effectively and efficiently with all members of the health care team in oral and written English
- iii. Communicate clearly with and observe patient/clients and families in order to elicit information including a thorough history from patient/clients, families, caregivers and other sources
- iv. Accurately describe changes in mood, activity, posture and biomechanics
- v. Perceive verbal as well as nonverbal communications, and promptly respond to emotional communications (sadness, worry, agitation, confusion)
- vi. Communicate complex findings in appropriate and understandable terms to patients/clients and their families and caregivers
- vii. Adjust form and content of communications to the patient/client's functional level or mental state
- viii. Engage in collaborative relationship with patient/clients and families/caregivers
- ix. Record observations and plans legibly, efficiently and accurately
- x. Prepare and communicate precise but complete summaries of individual encounters
- xi. Complete documentation forms according to directions, in a timely manner, including manual, electronic and other recording methods
- xii. Demonstrate effective communication skills to provide patient/client education and with families/caregivers and support personnel
- xiii. Receive, write and interpret verbal and nonverbal communication in both academic and clinical settings
- xiv. Demonstrate appropriate interpersonal skills as needed for productive classroom discussion, respectful interaction with classmates and faculty, and development of appropriate therapist to patient/client relationships
- xv. Demonstrate appropriate ability to develop therapeutic interpersonal communications such as attending, clarifying, motivating, coaching, facilitation and touching
- xvi. In emergency and potentially unsafe situations, understand and convey information for the safe and effective care of patient/clients in a clear, unambiguous and rapid fashion including receiving and understanding input from multiple sources simultaneously or in rapid-fire sequence

**c. Motor**

- i. Stand and walk independently while providing care in practice and internship settings; frequently lift 10 pounds, occasionally lift 10-50 pounds and more than

50 pounds; frequent twisting, squatting, reaching, pushing/pulling, grasping and crawling

- ii. Climb and descend stairs and negotiate uneven surfaces including varying terrains and ramps while providing care in practice and internship settings.
- iii. Perform palpation, percussion, auscultation and other diagnostic maneuvers while manipulating devices, e.g. goniometer, reflex hammer, IV poles, catheter bags, walkers, etc.
- iv. Provide general care and emergency medical care such as airway management, handling of catheters, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, application of pressure to control bleeding, infection control procedures
- v. Respond promptly to medical emergencies within the training facility and within DPT scope of practice
- vi. Not hinder the ability of co-workers to provide prompt care
- vii. Perform diagnostic and therapeutic procedures (e.g. APTA Guide to PT Practice Tests, Measures and Interventions)

**d. Cognitive**

- i. Recall and retain information
- ii. Deal with several tasks or problems simultaneously
- iii. Demonstrate reasoning and problem solving
- iv. Perceive subtle cognitive and behavioral findings
- v. Identify and communicate the limits of knowledge to others
- vi. Identify significant findings from history, physical exam, laboratory data, test and measures, and other sources
- vii. Perform a mental status evaluation
- viii. Determine appropriate and reasonable tests and measures
- ix. Provide a reasoned explanation for likely diagnoses
- x. Construct an appropriate plan of care
- xi. Prescribe appropriate therapeutic interventions
- xii. Incorporate new information for peers, teachers and medical literature in formulating diagnoses and plans
- xiii. Show good judgment in patient/client assessment, diagnosis and therapeutic planning

**e. Social and Behavioral**

- i. Maintain a professional demeanor
- ii. Maintain appropriate professional and ethical conduct (e.g., APTA Code of Ethics)
- iii. Be able to function at a high level in the face of long hours and a high stress environment
- iv. Develop empathetic relationships with patient/clients and families while establishing professional boundaries
- v. Provide comfort and reassurance where appropriate
- vi. Protect patient/client confidentiality and the confidentiality of written and electronic records
- vii. Possess adequate endurance to tolerate physically taxing workloads
- viii. Flexibly adapt to changing environments

- ix. Function in the face of uncertainties inherent in the clinical problems of patient/clients
- x. Accept appropriate suggestions and criticisms, and modify behavior
- xi. Give and accept criticism appropriately and without prejudice
- xii. Work effectively under stress and delegate responsibility appropriately
- xiii. Maintain respectful working relationships with peers, faculty, professional colleagues, other health care professionals, patients/clients, family members and the general public