

14. ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS AND TECHNICAL STANDARDS CANDIDATES FOR PHYSICAL THERAPY PROGRAM ADMISSION, CONTINUANCE AND GRADUATION

Policy

The Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) Division of Physical Therapy endeavors to select applicants who have the ability to become highly competent physical therapists. As an accredited physical therapy program, the MUSC Curriculum in Physical Therapy adheres to the standards and guidelines of the Commission on Accreditation for Physical Therapy Education of the American Physical Therapy Association.

Within these guidelines, the MUSC Division of Physical Therapy has the freedom and ultimate responsibility for the selection and evaluation of its students, the design, implementation, and evaluation of its curriculum, and the determination of who should be awarded a degree. 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 Division has the responsibility to the public to assure that its graduates can become fully competent and caring physical therapists, capable of doing benefit and not harm. Thus, it is important the persons admitted possess the intelligence, integrity, compassion, humanitarian concern, and physical and emotional capacity necessary to practice physical therapy.

The Division is committed to the principle of equal opportunity. The Division does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, or disability. When requested, the University will provide reasonable accommodation to otherwise qualified students with disabilities. Additional information related to disabilities is addressed below.

Program

The purpose of technical standards is to delineate skills deemed essential for continuation in and completion of the educational program, as distinguished from academic standards. Technical 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 required by the curriculum are in the following areas: sensory, communication, motor, 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.

The student must have the ability to master information presented in course work in the form of lectures, written material, and projected images. The student is held accountable to all compliance documents (including CPR, First Aid, HIPAA, OSHA, immunizations, TB, criminal background screening and drug screening) and **any lapse in currency will result in the student being removed from the classroom or clinic.** Additional compliance items may be required by affiliating facilities during the clinical practicums.

The Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) degree signifies that the holder of that degree has been educated to competently practice the profession in all healthcare settings and to apply for licensure. The education of a healthcare professional requires the assimilation of knowledge,

acquisition of skills and development of judgment through patient care experiences in preparation for practice. The practice of the profession emphasizes collaboration among healthcare providers and the patient.

The curriculum for the DPT requires the student to engage in diverse, complex and specific experiences essential to the acquisition and practice of physical therapy. Unique combinations of cognitive, affective, psychomotor, physical and social abilities are required to satisfactorily perform these functions. In addition to being essential for the completion of the requirements for the DPT, these functions are necessary to ensure the health and safety of patients/clients, fellow candidates, faculty and other healthcare providers.

The essential functions necessary to acquire or demonstrate competence in physical therapy and needed for successful admissions and continuance by candidates for the DPT Program at MUSC, in addition to the standards of professional conduct set forth by the College of Health Professions, include but are not limited to the following abilities:

Sensory/Observational Skills: The student must be able to demonstrate the functional use of vision, hearing and other sensory modalities. These include but are not limited to:

- Ability to acquire the information presented through demonstrations and participate in lecture and laboratory settings.
- Ability to observe patients accurately both at a distance and close at hand and observe and appreciate non-verbal communications during patient interactions.
- Capable of perceiving signs of disease and malfunction as manifested through the physical examination
- Palpate a pulse and detect changes or abnormalities of surface texture, skin temperature, body contour, muscle tone, joint movement.
- Sufficient position, movement and balance sensation to assist and safely guard/protect patients with movement dysfunctions.
- Ability to use vision, hearing, and tactile means for acquisition of information.

Communication Skills: Students must be able to utilize effective communication with peers, faculty, patients, families and other healthcare providers. These include but are not limited to:

- Ability to effectively use English to communicate in oral and written form.
- Ability to express ideas clearly and freely, and demonstrate a willingness to give and receive feedback.
- Ability to exchange information in order to obtain a health history, identify problems presented, explain alternative solutions and give directions during treatment and post-treatment.
- Ability to process and communicate information on the patient's status with accuracy in a timely manner to members of the health care team.
- Ability to complete reading assignments, writing assignments, search and evaluate the literature, and maintain written records in a timely manner.
- Ability to recognize, interpret and respond to non-verbal behavior of self and others.

Motor Skills: The student must have sufficient motor capabilities to execute the movements and skills required to provide safe and effective patient/client management. These include but are not limited to:

- Ability to execute movements required to provide care and treatment to patients in all health care settings.
- Ability to elicit information from patients by palpation, auscultation, percussion and other evaluative procedures.
- Ability to execute motor movements required to provide physical therapy including coordination, balance, speed and agility to assist and safely guard patients who are walking, exercising or performing other therapeutic activities.
- Ability to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation.
- Ability to lift and transfer patients.
- Ability to demonstrate adequate gross and fine motor movements, balance, manual dexterity and kinesthetic awareness to safely perform physical therapy procedures.

Intellectual and Cognitive Skills: Students must be able to utilize effective cognitive functioning. These include but are not limited to:

- Ability to measure, calculate, reason, analyze and synthesize data.
- Ability to obtain, interpret, analyze, evaluate, and document data to determine a physical therapy diagnosis.
- Ability to quickly read and comprehend extensive written material.
- Ability to use sound judgment, prioritize therapeutic interventions, and measure and record outcomes.
- Ability to use the computer for searching, recording, storing and retrieving information.
- Ability to comprehend 3-dimensional and spatial relationships of anatomic structures.

Behavioral, Professionalism and Social Attributes: Students must be capable of behaviors required for the successful conduct of physical therapy in all environments. These include but are not limited to:

- Ability to use their intellectual capacity, exercise good judgment and promptly complete all duties related to diagnosis and care of patients under potentially stressful circumstances.
- Ability to carry full DPT course load, as it reflects the nature of the area of practice.
- Ability to demonstrate the emotional stability to function effectively under stress and to adapt to an environment that may change rapidly without warning or in an unpredictable manner.
- Ability to demonstrate empathy, integrity, ethical standards, mature interpersonal skills, motivation and interest, not only for admission, but also throughout their careers as physical therapists.
- Ability to demonstrate cultural sensitivity.
- Ability to demonstrate effective, collegial, collaborative and harmonious relationships in diverse academic and working environments.
- Ability to reason morally and practice physical therapy in an ethical manner.
- Ability to learn and abide by professional standards of practice.
- Ability to demonstrate cooperation, compassion, empathy, altruism, integrity, honesty, responsibility and tolerance.
- Ability to engage in patient care in all clinical settings.
- Ability to deliver care to all patient population.

Reasonable Accommodation for Disabilities

MUSC Division of Physical Therapy is committed to ensuring that otherwise qualified candidates with disabilities are given equal access through reasonable accommodations to its services, programs, activities and education. The Division of Physical Therapy works closely with the ADA officers in this process. Each case is considered individually for best outcomes.

Students wishing to request reasonable accommodations are encouraged to contact disability services to start the process of documenting their disability and determining eligibility for services prior to the start of the program. While this can be started at any time, accommodations cannot be implemented retrospectively. MUSC does have policies regarding the type of documentation required in order to document a disability and request accommodations.

Students requesting special accommodations for testing / examinations, lab courses, and learning experiences must have the appropriate documentation. The request for accommodations is made through the MUSC ADA compliance officer. For more information as well as the necessary request form, please visit this

Website: <http://academicdepartments.musc.edu/vpfa/dei/ada/Policies%20and%20Procedures>.

Students with disabilities are expected to perform all essential functions of the program with or without reasonable accommodation. The University will work with the student and respective campus disability office to provide reasonable and appropriate accommodations. While we will make every effort to work with our students with disabilities to accommodate their disability-related needs, it is important to note we are not required to provide requested accommodations that would fundamentally alter the essential functions or technical standards of the program.

Implementation of Essential Functions for Admission, Continuance and Graduation

Incoming students will be alerted to the Essential Functions during program orientation and where to locate the information for future reference (student handbook). Faculty will address student performance and abilities to meet essential functions during regularly scheduled faculty meetings. Faculty advisors in conjunction with course instructors and the Division Director will be responsible for monitoring whether the student is meeting the essential functions for the program.

By signing below, you indicate that you have read and understand the content of the previous four pages entitled **Division of Physical Therapy Essential Functions and Technical Standards**. I confirm that I have the ability to demonstrate all of the above requirements.

Print your name on this line

Sign your name on this line

Date _____