

## Standards for Essential Functions

In addition to meeting academic standards required for **admission into, retention, and graduation** from the Program in Physical Therapy, students must also acquire and maintain certain *Essential Functions* necessary to the practice of physical therapy. These essential functions consist of minimum physical, cognitive, and behavioral abilities required for both the successful completion of the program and the ability to practice safely once students graduate.

The essential functions outlined below have been formulated based on the mission, philosophy, and goals of the program and the University; the guidelines of the Commission on Accreditation for Physical Therapy Education of the American Physical Therapy Association; the Generic Abilities as outlined by May, et. al. (1995); the Clinical Performance Instrument of the American Physical Therapy Association (1999); the *Guide to Physical Therapist Practice* (APTA, 1997); and the *Normative Model of Physical Therapist Education* (APTA, 1997).

The Program in Physical Therapy adheres to high standards in all areas to select and graduate students who have the ability to become highly competent professionals. The entry-level program at Seton Hall University prepares students to enter the profession as generalists. Therefore, students must meet the academic, clinical, educational, and essential functions requirements that will allow them to practice **safely and ethically**. Failure to meet these functions may result in SPRC action.

Seton Hall University School of Health and Medical Sciences is committed to the education of all qualified individuals, including persons with disabilities who, with or without reasonable accommodation, are capable of performing the essential functions of the educational program in which they are enrolled and the profession that they pursue. It is the policy of each of the graduate programs in the Seton Hall University, School of Health and Medical Sciences to comply with the American with Disabilities Act, Section 504 of the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1973, and state and local requirements regarding students and applicants with disabilities. Under these laws, no otherwise qualified and competent individual with a disability shall be denied access to or participation in services, programs, and activities solely on the basis of the disability.

### ***Essential Functions: Department of Physical Therapy***

Physical therapy is a widely varying field of practice, encompassing a set of skills that tend to differ from one job to another. This diversity of practice lends itself to the employment of individuals with many different traits and abilities.

The student must be able to meet the essential functions that would allow them to learn and perform the activities and functions as outlined in the following job analysis of a physical therapist:

Plans and administers physical therapy treatment for patients suffering from injuries, or muscle, nerve, joint and bone diseases, to restore function, relieve pain, and prevent disability: Reviews medical records to assist in determining physical therapy plan of care. Tests and measures patient's strength, motor development, sensory perception, functional capacity, and respiratory and circulatory efficiency, and records findings to develop or revise plan of care. Plans and prepares written treatment programs based on evaluation of patient data. Administers handbook exercises to improve and maintain function. Instructs, motivates, and assists patient to perform various physical activities, such as non-manual exercises, ambulatory functional activities, daily-living activities, and in use of assistant and supportive devices, such as crutches, canes, and prostheses. Administers treatments involving application of biophysical agents. Evaluates effects of treatment at various stages and adjusts treatments to achieve maximum benefit. Administers manual therapeutic techniques, applying techniques and body physiology. Manually administers traction to relieve pain and/or use traction equipment. Records treatment, response, and progress in patient's chart or enters information electronically. Instructs patient and family in treatment procedures to be continued at home. Evaluates, fits, and adjusts prosthetic and orthotic devices and recommends modifications. Confers with physician and other practitioners to obtain additional patient information, suggest revisions in treatment program, and integrate physical therapy treatment with other aspects of patient's health care. Orients, instructs, and directs work activities of assistants, aides, and students. May plan and conduct lectures and training programs on physical therapy and related topics for medical staff, students, and community groups (Modified from [www.occupationalinfo.org](http://www.occupationalinfo.org)).

The Doctor of Physical Therapy curriculum at Seton Hall University educates and trains students as entry level practitioners, in keeping with the requirements of the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE), the accrediting agency for the profession's educational programs. Thus, students are prepared for employment in all general areas of practice, and are prepared with the skills needed to succeed in clinical training and practice and for the licensure exam that is required prior to practicing as a graduate of an accredited program, of which Seton Hall University's Doctor of Physical Therapy Program is one.

### **Essential Functions/Technical Standards for Graduate Enrollment**

In accord with the federal regulations established by the Americans with Disabilities Act, the following standards are described to assist each candidate in evaluating his/her prospect for academic and clinical success. General standards for the School of Health and Medical Sciences are followed by standards that apply to the professional discipline to which you have applied (see additional standards below). When a student's ability to perform is compromised, the student must demonstrate alternative means and/or abilities to perform the essential functions described. At all times the student must meet performance expectations and behaviors in accordance with course syllabi and policies and procedures of the Student Performance Review Committee (SPRC) and Disability Support Services (DSS).

For DPT students attending classes at the IHS campus, the contact information for DSS is: Carolyn Corbran, Assistant Director, Disability Support Services, Seton Hall University – IHS Campus, 340 Kingsland Street, Suite 1500, Room 1519, Nutley, NJ 07110. The Phone: (973) 542-6978

**It is important that each student read each standard carefully. By signing the appropriate Certification Statement below, the student certifies that s/he has read and understands these standards, and to the best of his/her knowledge meets each standard.**

Observation Skills:

Students must be able to acquire a defined level of required information as presented through educational experiences in both basic arts and sciences and clinical sciences. To achieve the required competencies in the classroom setting, students must perceive, assimilate, and integrate information from a variety of sources. These sources include oral presentation, printed material, visual media, and live demonstrations. Consequently, students must demonstrate adequate functional use of visual, tactile, auditory and other sensory and perceptual modalities to enable such observations and information acquisition necessary for academic and clinical performance.

Communication Skills:

Effective communication is critical for students to build relationships with faculty, advisors, fellow graduate students, coworkers, patients/clients and their families in the student's various roles of learner, colleague, consultant, educator and leader. Students must be able to gather, comprehend, utilize and disseminate information effectively, efficiently and according to professional standards. Students are required to communicate in the English language both verbally and in writing, at a level consistent with competent professional practice. Students are expected to use grammar and vocabulary proficiently. They must be able to elicit information, gather information, and describe findings verbally and in writing (e.g., in a physical examination record and treatment plan). Communication should be comprehensible by faculty, peers, patients/clients, professionals, and laypersons.

Students must be able to communicate effectively and with sensitivity with patients/clients and colleagues, classmates, faculty and administrators including individuals from different cultural and social backgrounds; this includes, but is not limited to, the ability to establish rapport with patients/clients and communicate effectively their clinical reasoning and decision making. They should also be able to observe, recognize and interpret non-verbal communication, including body language, demonstrated by others. Students should be able to recognize non-verbal communication and body language of themselves, recognize the effect it has on others and adjust it as needed to meet professional standards and facilitate effective relationships with others.

### Intellectual/Conceptual Abilities:

Students must demonstrate critical thinking skills so that they can problem-solve creatively, master abstract ideas, and synthesize information presented in academic, laboratory and fieldwork settings. Students must be able to measure, calculate, reason, analyze, process, integrate, synthesize, apply and retain facts, concepts, and data related to the art and science of health care. In some areas, this requires comprehension of three-dimensional relationships and understanding of the spatial relationships of structures. Students must develop and exhibit a sense of medical ethics, and also recognize and apply pertinent legal and ethical standards.

### Motor Skills:

Students must possess the motor functions needed to manipulate instruments or tools and to handle patients/clients. These functions will vary depending on needs of each individual according to the patient/client management process (see additional standards below). The motor capacities usually include the physical strength and coordination to safely handle and move patients/clients, perform clinical procedures, and to manage and direct patients/clients in various practice settings.

### Behavioral and Social Skills:

Students must demonstrate emotional stability and acceptable communication skills as noted above, and be capable of developing mature and effective interpersonal relationships with other students, faculty and health care workers. Students must be able to tolerate physically and emotionally stressful workloads and to function effectively under pressure. They must be able to adapt to changing environments, display flexibility, and function in the face of the uncertainties inherent in the classroom and clinical setting.

Students must exhibit the ability and commitment to work with individuals in an intense setting to meet the needs of people of diverse cultures, age groups, socioeconomic groups and challenges without bias. These individuals may be severely injured; they may be limited by cognitive, emotional and functional deficits; and their behavior may create at times an adverse environment. The ability to interact with these individuals with impairments and dysfunctions without being judgmental or prejudiced is critical in establishing one's professionalism and therapeutic relationship. Compassion, integrity, concern for others, interpersonal skills, interest and motivation are all personal qualities that are critical to complete the DPT program.

### Professional Responsibility:

Students must exhibit the ability to meet the challenges of any clinical situation that requires a readiness for immediate and appropriate response without interference of personal or medical problems. This requires training for emergencies (e.g., CPR/AED, infection control, first aid) and the on-going maintenance of clinical competencies.

It is each student's responsibility to attend and be able to travel to and from classes and clinical assignments on time, and possess the organizational skills and stamina

for performing required tasks and assignments within allotted time frames. This involves frequent oral, written, and practical examinations or demonstrations which may be performed individually or in groups. The student must have the ability to perform problem-solving tasks in a timely manner.

Students will exhibit adherence to policies of the university, their program, and clinical sites. This includes matters ranging from professional dress and behavior, to attending to their program's academic schedule, which may differ from the University's academic calendar and be subject to change at any time.

Students must demonstrate knowledge of and commitment to the APTA's Code of Ethics and behavior that reflects a sense of right and wrong in the therapeutic environment.

Students will take initiative to direct their own learning, embarking on a lifelong commitment to learning. They need to work cooperatively and collaboratively with other students on assigned projects, and participate willingly in a supervisory process involving evaluation of abilities and reasoning skills. Students will commit to participate in a reflective analysis of one's own behaviors, practice, clinical skills and communication.

## Doctor of Physical Therapy Program

In addition to the general standards above, students in the Physical Therapy program must meet the following requirements. These requirements apply to both the academic and clinical environments alike.

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Examples, including but not limited to:</b>
Critical Thinking	Ability for sufficient clinical thinking & judgment	Identify cause-effect relationships. Develop patient/client goals/plans. Respond to emergencies. Apply standard precautions. Recognize red flags and issues related to safety. Apply teaching and learning theories in health care. Design appropriate clinical questions (PICO). Analyze and interpret information, data and literature.
Reflection	Ability to self-assess behaviors and actions	Assess effectiveness of one's own performance, communication and reactions before, during and after all interactions & interventions. Establish action plans for self-based on reflections.
Interpersonal Skills	Sufficient ability to interact with individuals/groups from a variety of backgrounds	Establish rapport with peers, classmates, faculty, patient/clients, and interprofessional colleagues. Recognize psychosocial impact of dysfunction/disability. Integrate the needs of patients/clients and family into plan of care.
Communication	Ability to communicate in verbal and written form; cognizant of non-verbal communication	Perform active listening, explain procedures. Initiate health teaching. Display positive therapeutic presence. Document and interpret physical therapist actions and patient/client responses. Disseminate, convey information.
Mobility	Physical ability sufficient to move from room to room and maneuver in small spaces	Move around in classrooms, patients' rooms and treatment spaces. Administer CPR/AED procedures. Transfer patients/clients and respond to emergencies.
Motor Skills	Gross and fine motor abilities sufficient to provide safe and effective physical therapy care	Actively lift, carry, pull, push, reach, stand, walk, kneel, bend, climb, and balance. Position patients/clients. Guard and assist with functional activities. Perform full-body movement, CPR/AED, debridement. Calibrate and operate equipment and use physical agents.
Hearing Skills	Auditory ability sufficient to monitor and assess health information and patient/client needs.	Detect and monitor alarms, emergency signals, cries for help, patient/client's needs and respond to a timer.
Visual Skills	Visual ability sufficient to monitor and assess health needs	Observe patients'/clients' health status and response to care. Monitor vital signs, read stopwatch, and other equipment. Assess environment for safety.
Tactile Skills	Tactile ability for physical assessment	Perform palpation, physical examination and intervention. Gauge force during assessment and manual therapy. Ability to distinguish abnormal tissue from normal tissue.
Coping Skills	Ability to perform in stressful environments or during impending deadlines	Maintain professionalism under time and situational constraints. Recognize the need for assistance with complex and changeable patient care situations, and respond appropriately.
Behavioral & Social Skills	Emotional stability and acceptable communication skills	Tolerate emotionally and physical stressful workloads. Function under pressure.
Professional Responsibilities	Ability to engage in professional responsibilities	Practice safely, ethically, and legally. Demonstrate responsibility and accountability for one's actions, learning, professional growth and development.

# CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

## STUDENTS NOT REQUESTING ACCOMMODATIONS:

I certify that I have read and understand the standards of essential functions both for the School of Health and Medical Sciences and for the Doctor of Physical Therapy Program. I believe to the best of my knowledge that I meet each of these technical standards without accommodation. I understand that if I am unable to meet these technical standards I will not be admitted to the program.

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Print Student Name

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Student Signature

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Date

## STUDENTS REQUESTING ACCOMMODATIONS:

I certify that I have read and understand the standards of essential functions both for the School of Health and Medical Sciences and for the Doctor of Physical Therapy Program. I believe to the best of my knowledge that I can meet each of these technical standards with certain accommodations. I will contact the University's Disability Support Services to determine what accommodations may be available. I understand that if I am unable to meet these technical standards with or without accommodations, I will not be admitted into the program.

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Print Student Name

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Student Signature

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Date

### REFERENCES;

Ranel A, Wittry AS, Boucher B, Sanders B. (2001) *A survey of Essential Functions and Reasonable Accommodations in Physical Therapist Education Programs*. Journal of Physical Therapy Education, 15(1).  
Scott, S., Wells, S. Hanebrink, S. (1999) *Educating College Students with Disabilities: What Academic & Fieldwork Educators Need to Know*. Bethesda, Md: AOTA, Inc.  
Gleeson, P.B., & Utsey, C. (2000). *Manual for the PT and PTA ACCE*. Texas Consortium for Physical Therapy Clinical Education.  
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