

**MARSHALL UNIVERSITY**  
**SCHOOL OF PHYSICAL THERAPY**  
**Technical Standards (Essential Functions) Policy \***

The American with Disabilities Act (ADA – PL 101-336) enacted by Congress in 1990 ensures the qualified applicant with a disability the opportunity to pursue program admission at public institutions. To determine whether an individual is a qualified applicant for programs or services, the ADA states that applicants must meet essential eligibility requirements. The following performance standards are set forth so that the student will understand the essential eligibility requirements for participation and progression in the physical therapy curriculum. Standards address interpersonal skills, communication, psychomotor skills, and cognitive skills. The ability to observe, evaluate, analyze, synthesize, and treat a patient independently, while ensuring patient safety at all times is an expectation of the School of Physical Therapy.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all physical therapy students are able to provide swift, safe, and competent evaluation and treatment to patients. All students will be held to the same standards and must be able to perform the technical standards of their positions with or without reasonable accommodation.

Upon request of persons with disabilities, Marshall University will provide reasonable accommodations. However, the School of Physical Therapy is unable to make accommodations that impose an undue burden, are outside of the standard practice of physical therapy, present a threat to the health or safety of the individual or others, or fundamentally alter the nature of the curriculum including didactic components, laboratory sessions, clinical affiliations, and the assessment of student competence.

Each accepted applicant must complete an affidavit that attests to their ability to fulfill the technical standards of the Physical Therapy School. The procedures for submitting a request for an accommodation is located in the Student Handbook. Questions about the accommodation process may be directed to the SOPT Chairperson: 304-696-5614.

**TECHNICAL STANDARDS: PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS FOR DPT STUDENTS**

\* Adapted with permission from Howard University

The information below delineates the cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills deemed essential to completion of the Physical Therapy degree programs at Marshall University and to perform as a competent generalist physical therapist.

If a student cannot demonstrate the following skills and abilities, it is the responsibility of the student to request an appropriate accommodation. The University will provide reasonable accommodations as long as it does not fundamentally alter the nature of the program offered and do not impose an undue hardship such as those that cause significant expense, difficulty or are unduly disruptive to the educational process.

## **Cognitive Skills**

The student must possess and demonstrate the following technical abilities upon admission to the program and notify the SOPT Chairperson immediately of any change in status:

1. Read, receive, interpret, remember, reproduce and use written, auditory, non-verbal, and visual information in the cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domains of learning to solve problems and generate new ways of processing or categorizing information as listed in course objectives. This includes: a) the ability to read, interpret, synthesize, and analyze medical records (printed chart or electronic health record) in a timely manner in order to safely and effectively plan for a patient encounter; b) the ability to read, interpret, and analyze data obtained in simulated patient cases, examination questions, textbooks, and scientific literature in a timely manner to safely and effectively provide appropriate physical therapy services.
2. Perform a physical therapy examination including synthesis and analysis of physiologic, biomechanical, behavioral, cultural and environmental factors in a timely manner, consistent with the norms of clinical settings.
3. Use examination findings to execute a plan of care in a timely manner, appropriate to the problems identified consistent with the acceptable norms of clinical settings.

## **Psychomotor Skills**

The student must demonstrate the following abilities:

1. Locomotion:
  - a. Get to lecture, laboratory and clinical locations, and move within rooms as necessary to change groups, partners and workstations.
  - b. Physically maneuver in required clinical settings to accomplish assigned tasks.
2. Manual skills:
  - a. Maneuver another person's body parts to perform examination and treatment techniques effectively.
  - b. Manipulate common tools used for screening and examination tests, e.g., sphygmomanometer, goniometer, cotton balls, safety pins, reflex hammer.
  - c. Safely and effectively guide, facilitate, inhibit and resist movement and motor patterns through physical facilitation and inhibition techniques, including the ability to give urgent verbal feedback.
  - d. Safely manipulate another person's body in transfers, gait, positioning, exercise and mobilization techniques.
  - e. Manipulate examination and intervention equipment and safely and accurately apply to patients.
  - f. Manipulate bolsters, pillows, plinths, mats, gait assistive devices, and other supports or chairs to aid in positioning, moving or treating a patient safely and effectively.
  - g. Competently perform and supervise cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) using guidelines issued by the American Heart Association or the American Red Cross.

### 3. Fine motor skills:

- a. Legibly record/document examinations, patient care notes, referrals, etc. in standard medical charts in clinical settings in a timely manner and consistent with the acceptable norms of the clinical setting.
- b. Legibly record thoughts for written assignments and tests.
- c. Sense subtle changes in an individual's muscle tone, skin quality, joint play, and temperature to gather accurate and objective information in a timely manner.
- d. Safely apply and adjust settings on therapeutic modalities.
- e. Use a telephone, computer, and other electronic devices that are required for safe and effective physical therapy practice.

### 4. Visual acuity to:

- a. Receive visual information from classmates, faculty, and patients regarding movement, posture, body mechanics and gait necessary for comparison to normal standards for purposes of examination and evaluation of movement dysfunctions.
- b. Receive visual information from the treatment environment, including but not limited to dials on modalities and monitors, assistive devices, furniture, flooring, and structures.

### 5. Communication:

- a. Effectively communicate with other students, faculty, patients, peers, staff, and personnel to ask questions, explain conditions and procedures, teach home programs, and for patient safety. Communication must be provided in a timely manner and within the acceptable norms of the academic and clinical settings.
- b. Independently read, receive and interpret written communication in both academic and clinical settings in a timely manner consistent with the demands of entry-level clinical practice.
- c. Receive and send verbal communication in life-threatening situations in a timely manner and within acceptable norms of clinical settings.

## **Affective Skills**

The student must be able to:

1. Demonstrate appropriate affective behaviors and mental aptitude in order not to jeopardize the emotional, physical, mental and behavioral safety of clients and other individuals with whom they interact in the academic and clinical settings.
2. Comply with the ethical standards of the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA).
3. Sustain the mental and emotional rigors of a demanding educational program in physical therapy, which includes academic and clinical components that occur within set time constraints. This includes a demonstration of attitudinal, behavioral, interpersonal, and emotional attributes including but not limited to:

- Emotional health and maturity
- The ability to establish mature, honest, professional relationships with patients, families, and colleagues
- The ability to self-assess one's own abilities and competence and to seek help from the appropriate resource
- The ability to self-assess one's own physical, mental and emotional readiness for professional education and supervised physical therapy practice
- The ability to manage stress effectively and seek assistance when needed
- The ability to accept constructive criticism both in the classroom and in the clinical setting.
- Acknowledge personal-biases, respect cultural differences, and adapt behavior accordingly

4. Acknowledge and respect individual values and opinions in order to foster harmonious working relationships with colleagues, peers, and patients.

By signing below, I hereby certify that I have read and understand the Marshall University School of Physical Therapy Standards. My signature also indicates that I understand if I do not meet the above technical standards and I choose not to seek help through disability services and/or seek accommodations; then this may jeopardize my success in the physical therapy program.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (Print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student ID Number

*Reviewed and adopted by the School of Physical Therapy on February 27, 2019.*

Marshall University is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action employer and educational institution and does not discriminate on the basis of age, race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, disability, national origin or Vietnam era or other veteran status, in the admission to, or participation in, any educational program or activity which it conducts, or in any employment policy or practice. Any complaint arising because of alleged discrimination should be directed to the Office of Disability Services, Marshall University, Prichard Hall, Room 117, Huntington, WV 25755, (304) 696-2271, or the Director of the Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education, Philadelphia, PA.

Additional Sources

1. APTA BOD G11-05-20-49 Minimum Required Skills of Physical Therapist Graduates at Entry-Level
2. CAPTE Standards and Required Elements for Accreditation of Physical Therapist Education Programs. Revised 11/11/16; 3/4/16; 10/31/17; 12/7/17.
3. Ingram D. Opinions of Physical Therapy Education Program Directors on Essential Functions. *Phys Ther* 1997;77:37-45.