

Appendix A: Essential Functions of a Physical Therapy Student

The doctor of physical therapy (DPT) degree implies that the individual earning this degree has been educated to competently practice the profession in all entry level settings. The education of a healthcare professional necessitates the integration of specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes in preparation for a) independent, or b) collaborative practice.

The curriculum leading to the DPT degree requires students to demonstrate essential functions that are expected of all physical therapists. Demonstration of these functions (abilities, standards or qualifications) is necessary to ensure the health and safety of patients, peers, faculty and other healthcare providers. These essential functions are **required** for successful admission to, and continuation in the Physical Therapy Program at Utica University. Deficiencies in knowledge, judgment, integrity, character, or professional attitude or demeanor that may jeopardize patient care may be grounds for course failure and/or dismissal from the program.

This document identifies the required “Essential Functions” and serves as a guideline for professional expectations. Together with the “Policies, Procedures, Rules, and Regulations” set forth in the Utica University Student Handbook and the DPT Handbook, these essential functions include, but are not limited to, the following:

Observation: A student must be able to observe and monitor fellow students, patients, simulated patients, caregivers, volunteers, and faculty. The essential observation functions require the use of senses (e.g. vision, hearing, touch) and include, the student must be able to:

- Observe movement patterns, activities and behaviors.
- Observe signs related to physical status (e.g. vital signs, symmetry and condition of the skin, soft tissue & wounds) and behavioral status (e.g. facial expressions, tone & volume of voice).
- Read information in classrooms and clinical environments such as course materials, patient medical records, diagnostic tests, dials, displays and equipment related to patient care.

Communication: A student must communicate in a professional manner that meets the needs of the target audience (fellow students, faculty, staff, patients, caregivers, health care team members, policy makers & third-party payers) in written, verbal and nonverbal forms. The essential communication standards include, the student must be able to:

- Receive and respond to verbal and written communications in an appropriate and professional manner.
- Obtain and report information verbally and in writing using the English language.
- Participate in student, curricular and community group activities.
- Apply teaching principles for patients, caregiver or simulated caregiver skill development to manage patients and simulated patients in academic and clinical activities.

Physical Performance Skills: A student must have sufficient mobility, coordination, gross and fine motor skills to manage heavy or immobile patients or simulated patients and equipment necessary for academic and clinical activities typically performed by a physical therapist. These essential physical performance functions include, the student must be able to:

- Safely lift, push, pull and carry heavy or immobile patients.
- Generate and apply force (strength and power) with all body parts.
- Have adequate joint and soft tissue range of motion and flexibility.
- Apply timely reactions to maintain safety to self and others.



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- Apply body mechanic principles to maintain safety to self and others.
- Apply fine motor skills and hand dexterity to safely perform examination and therapeutic interventions.

Cognition: A student must have the requisite cognitive abilities necessary for timely problem solving, safety judgment, and reasoning in academic and clinical settings. The essential cognitive functions include, the student must be able to:

- Measure, calculate, analyze, comprehend, integrate, and synthesize a large body of knowledge.
- Assimilate, understand and integrate information from multiple sources such as textbooks, published literature, internet, and presentations.
- Selecting and utilizing appropriate verbal, non-verbal, and electronic communications.
- Utilizing critical thinking skills and creating effective solutions in all levels of the program.
- Assessing self-performance to continually improve professional skills and implement plans for professional growth and development.

Behavioral and Social Attributes: A student must possess maturity, emotional health, and physical abilities required to fulfill all responsibilities in academic and clinical settings. Essential behavioral and social functions include, the student must be able to:

- Act in an ethical, legal, and responsible manner consistent with the Core Values and Professional Behaviors outlined by the American Physical Therapy Association.
- Engage in patient care delivery in **all** settings and deliver care to **all** patient populations including but not limited to children, adolescents, adults, vulnerable adults, or persons with developmental disability.
- Demonstrate behaviors that protect the safety and well-being of fellow students, faculty, staff, patients, simulated patients, and caregivers.
- Recognize and demonstrate respect for cultural, ethnic, ethical, and value differences among students, faculty, staff, patients, caregivers, and other health care professionals.
- Participation in collegial productive group and team activities with diverse populations.
- Manage personal and work-related stresses that may be physically, emotionally, psychologically or intellectually challenging in a timely professional manner.
- Demonstrate flexibility and adaptability to changing situations and uncertainty.
- Maintain personal hygiene at all times.
- Adhere to timeliness and attendance requirements.
- Transportation and access to curricular on-campus and off-campus locations.

Reasonable Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

Utica University is committed to ensuring that otherwise qualified students with disabilities are given equal access through reasonable accommodations to its services, programs, activities, and education. The Department of physical Therapy works closely with the Office of Learning Services. Any student who has a documented disability and need specific accommodations, should contact the Director of Learning Services in order to determine eligibility for services.

Students with disabilities are expected to perform all the essential functions of the program with or without accommodation. While the University will make every effort to work with students 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, qualifications,



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technical standards, or other academic or clinical requirements of the program, or result in an undue financial or administrative burden.

Certain chronic or recurrent illnesses and problems that interfere with patient care or safety may be incompatible with training as a healthcare professional or interfere with the ability to manage modern clinical practice. Other illnesses may lead to a high likelihood of student absenteeism and should be carefully considered.

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I certify, by my signature below, that I have read and understand the Essential Functions expected by the academic faculty and clinical instructors of the Utica University Doctor of Physical Therapy Program. I believe to the best of my knowledge that I meet each of these standards with or without reasonable accommodation.

Student Name

Signature

Date