



## **Physical Therapy Department: Professional DPT Programs**

### **Technical Standards / Essential Functions Policy for Admission, Retention, and Graduation**

#### **Background**

The Professional PT Programs have a responsibility to the public to assure that graduates can become fully competent and caring physical therapists, capable of providing benefit and doing no harm. Persons admitted and retained in these programs must possess the intelligence, integrity, compassion, humanitarian concern, physical and emotional capacity, communication skills, and professionalism necessary to practice physical therapy. To this end, all Professional DPT students must meet the requirements outlined in the Essential Functions of the DPT Student document on admission and while matriculating through the programs.

#### **Introduction**

The education of a physical therapist requires assimilation of knowledge, acquisition of skills/attributes, and development of judgment through academic preparation and patient care experience in preparation for independent and appropriate decision-making required in physical therapist practice. The current practice of physical therapy emphasizes collaboration among physical therapists (intraprofessional), with other allied health care professionals (interprofessional), the patient, the patient's family/caregivers, and other individuals that contribute to the overall management of patients/clients.

#### **Policy**

The Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) Programs at Nova Southeastern University select applicants who have the ability to become competent physical therapists. The physical therapy programs' curriculum adheres to the standards and guidelines of the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education of the American Physical Therapy Association.

Within these guidelines, the DPT Programs have the 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, retention, and graduation decisions are based not only on satisfactory academic achievement, but also on essential functions, skills, and abilities ensuring that candidates possess the necessary attributes required for graduation, licensure, and professional practice.

The PT Programs have a responsibility to the public to assure that its graduates can become fully competent and caring physical therapists, capable of providing benefit and doing no harm. It is important that persons admitted and retained in the programs possess the intelligence, integrity,

compassion, humanitarian concern, physical and emotional capacity, communication skills, and professionalism necessary to practice physical therapy. To this end, the DPT Programs may dismiss a student who is unable to perform any of the essential functions, skills, and abilities, with or without a reasonable accommodation. Students are required to notify the program of any changes in their ability to perform the essential functions of physical therapy students. Academic or clinical faculty will notify students when they are not demonstrating proficiency in the essential functions. Students with disabilities may inquire about reasonable accommodations through the Office of Student Disabilities (<http://www.nova.edu/disabilityservices/>) and in accordance with the provisions of the NSU Student Handbook. Students with disabilities may be dismissed from the DPT program if they cannot perform the essential functions, skills, and abilities, with or without a reasonable accommodation.

The DPT Programs are committed to the principle of equal opportunity. The College of Health Care Sciences and the PT Department does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, disability, or veteran status.

### **Essential Function Requirements: Doctor of Physical Therapy Students**

Essential functions, as distinguished from fund of knowledge standards, refer to those physical, cognitive, and behavioral abilities required for satisfactory completion of all aspects of the curriculum, including clinical education and the development of professional attributes required of all students at graduation. The essential functions required by the curriculum are in the following areas: cognitive, affective and communication, and psychomotor. Physical therapy students must be able to perform each of these essential functions in order to fully participate in the program and successfully complete the requirements for the Doctor of Physical Therapy degree.

#### **Cognitive Functions**

1. Comprehend, retain, and retrieve complex information from the liberal arts, basic sciences, mathematics, psychological, and clinical sciences and apply this information to professional course work.
2. Comprehend, analyze, synthesize, and integrate information from all program sources; written materials, demonstration, lectures, class discussions, laboratory practice sessions, internet based resources, and real and simulated patients.
3. Apply information obtained from classroom, laboratory, internet-based sources and written materials to the examination, evaluation, interventions, and referral of real and simulated patients.
4. Procure evidence based information and apply it to the practice of physical therapy.
5. Critically analyze information taken from lectures, class discussion, written materials, research literature, laboratory, and patient demonstrations and other sources to develop and support the rationale for appropriate patient examinations, evaluations, and interventions both verbally and in writing.
6. Determine the appropriateness of physical therapy for any person with potential movement dysfunction.

7. Develop, document and implement a physical therapy plan of care for any patient with movement dysfunction.
8. Demonstrate management skills including planning, organizing, supervising, and delegating.
9. Develop and apply programs of prevention and health promotion in a variety of client and patient populations.
10. Participate in the process of scientific inquiry.
11. Document the elements of patient/client management using standards set forth by the profession and health care regulatory agencies.
12. Integrate reimbursement principles into decision making during the patient/client management process.

### **Affective and Communication Functions**

1. Establish professional, empathic relationships with individuals from a variety of backgrounds, ages, and needs, based on mutual trust.
2. Recognize the impact and influence of lifestyle, socioeconomic class, culture, beliefs, race, and abilities on patients, caregivers, and colleagues.
3. Engage in respectful, non-judgmental interactions with individuals from various lifestyles, cultures, beliefs, races, socioeconomic classes, and abilities.
4. Develop and maintain effective, respectful working relationships with professional colleagues, peers, patients, families, and the general public.
5. Work effectively as part of an intraprofessional and interprofessional team.
6. Utilize appropriate professional verbal, nonverbal and written communication with faculty, patients, families, colleagues and others.
7. Recognize the psychosocial impact of movement dysfunction and disability on the client and family; integrate these needs into the evaluation and plan of care.
8. Apply teaching and learning theories and methods in the healthcare and community environments.
9. Meet externally imposed deadlines and time requirements, including punctuality for class, clinic, appointments, assignments, and mandatory screenings, meetings, community activities or paperwork.
10. Effectively and consistently manage personal stress and the stress of others.
11. Effectively attend to people, information, and tasks in a complex, highly stimulating environment during an entire workday or work period.
12. Demonstrate responsibility for self-assessment and the development of a life-long plan for professional growth and development.

13. Practice in a safe, ethical, and legal manner, following guidelines for standard practice as established by federal, state, and local law, the University, clinical facilities, the APTA, and related professional organizations.
14. Accept responsibility for all actions, reactions, and inactions, integrating feedback in a non-defensive manner.
15. Respond to medical crisis and emergencies in a calm, safe, and professional manner.
16. Speak and write effectively in English to convey information to other individuals and groups.
17. Understand and interpret the verbal, non-verbal, and written communications of others and respond in an appropriate, professional manner.
18. Demonstrate at all times integration of the 7 core values of the American Physical Therapy Association: Accountability, Altruism, Compassion/Caring, Excellence, Integrity, Professional Duty, & Social Responsibility.

### **Psychomotor Functions**

1. Expose body parts for examination and treatment in laboratory courses.
2. Safely, reliably, and efficiently perform tasks that include the following physical requirements:
  - a. Transfer patients using appropriate biomechanical techniques frequently throughout the course of a work day/shift. Must be capable of frequently lifting and/or moving fifty (50) pounds. Moving, lifting, or transferring of patients **may** involve lifting of up to 100 pounds
    - i. Lift at least 35 pounds in an outpatient setting
    - ii. Lift at least 50 pounds in an acute or inpatient setting

Physical Demand Ratings are an estimate of the overall strength requirements that are considered to be important for an average, successful work performance of a specific job. In order to classify the occupation of a worker with a physical demand rating, the most strenuous and frequently performed tasks are evaluated. The overall physical demand rating for a job of the PT falls within the Medium classification according to the Dictionary of Occupational Titles. However, due to the population in acute care hospitals and inpatient rehabilitation facilities, this position has been classified as Heavy (exerting 50 to 100 pounds of force occasionally, and/or 20 to 50 pounds of force frequently, and/or 10 to 20 pounds of force constantly to move objects) US Department of Labor, 1991 in the Dictionary of Occupational Titles, 4th, Edition.

- b. Ability to walk, bend, squat, stand and reach (all planes) constantly during a work day/shift.
- c. Visual acuity (near and distant) sufficient to evaluate, diagnose and monitor patient needs and to maintain accurate records, recognize people and provide directions.

- d. Ability to speak, hear, touch and see sufficiently to understand and give directions.
  - e. Ability to push wheeled equipment through a facility and in the community.
  - f. Possess fine motor skills for legible and accurate documentation of reports, charting, scheduling, daily correspondence and presentations, performed either manually through the use of a writing implement, electronically through the use of keyboard/mouse or verbally through the use of dictation equipment.
  - g. Possess fine motor skills for effective and efficient handling of diagnostic or therapeutic equipment.
  - h. Ability to use both upper extremities for performing the aforementioned psychomotor tasks.
3. Safely, reliably, and efficiently perform appropriate physical therapy tests/measures to examine the functional skills and gross motor system of patients across the lifespan. These include but are not limited to:
- a. Cognitive, mental, emotional status
  - b. Endurance
  - c. Skin integrity
  - d. Palpation of soft tissue, bony, and organ structures
  - e. Sensation
  - f. Strength
  - g. Joint motion and mobility
  - h. Muscle tone and reflexes
  - i. Movement patterns
  - j. Coordination
  - k. Balance
  - l. Developmental milestones
  - m. Pain
  - n. Posture
  - o. Gait
  - p. Functional mobility/abilities, including activities of daily living and instrumental activities of daily living
  - q. Assistive technology
  - r. Cardiopulmonary status
  - s. Segmental length, girth, and volume
3. Demonstrate the ability to observe and practice universal precautions.
4. Demonstrate the ability to perform CPR and emergency first aid.
5. Safely, reliably, and efficiently perform physical therapy interventions for patients across the lifespan, using procedures that are appropriate for the patient's status and plan of care. These include, but are not limited to:
- Therapeutic exercises to improve strength, ROM, or endurance
  - Developmental activities

- Gait activities
  - Prosthetic and orthotic training
  - Wound care
  - Wheelchair training
  - Neuromotor and neurosensory techniques
  - Thermal agents and electrotherapy
  - Balance and coordination training
  - Environmental/Adaptive Modification
  - Positioning techniques
  - Cardiopulmonary rehabilitation
  - Joint mobilization/manipulation and soft tissue procedures
  - Functional activities, bed mobility, transfers
  - Patient/caregiver education
6. Safely and reliably read meters, dials, printouts, and goniometers.
  7. Manipulate and operate physical therapy equipment and monitoring devices.
  8. Demonstrate appropriate body mechanics and safety awareness with patients, clients, and classmates.
  9. Demonstrate appropriate reaction time in response to sudden or unexpected movements of patients/clients.
  10. Demonstrate the ability to work in an environment that requires significant physical activity and mobility throughout the workday in a way that does not compromise patient or therapist safety.
  11. Recognize adverse reactions and respond appropriately.
  12. React calmly and appropriately in emergency or urgent patient related situations.

### References

1. Waters, T. When is it safe to manually lift a patient? Am J Nursing.2007.107(8): 53-58.
2. AASIG Technical Standards, Essential Functions Document. Section on Education, September 1998.
3. American Physical Therapy Association. Minimum Required Skills of Physical Therapist Graduates at Entry Level. BOD G11-05-20-449
4. Ingram, D. (1997). Opinions of Physical Therapy Program Directors on Essential Functions, Physical Therapy, 77(1): 37-45.
5. National Academy of Sciences, Committee on Occupational Classification and Analysis. DICTIONARY OF OCCUPATIONAL TITLES (DOT): PART I - CURRENT POPULATION SURVEY, APRIL 1971, AUGMENTED WITH DOT CHARACTERISTICS, AND PART II - FOURTH EDITION DICTIONARY OF DOT SCORES FOR 1970 CENSUS CATEGORIES [Computer file]. Washington, DC: U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census [producer], 197?. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 1981.,
6. U.S. Department of Labor Physical Demand Characteristics of Work, Section 37.02 at [http://www.acc.co.nz/PRD\\_EXT\\_CSMP/groups/external\\_providers/documents/guide/wcmz002335.pdf](http://www.acc.co.nz/PRD_EXT_CSMP/groups/external_providers/documents/guide/wcmz002335.pdf)

**INSERT FOR ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS DOCUMENT:**

## 10 Professional Behavior Expectations in the Classroom, Lab, and Clinic On and Off Campus

Professional Behavior Expectations	Essential Function(s)
1. Students are expected to maintain appropriate dress as per departmental policy for classroom, lab and clinic.	<p><b><u>Affective and Communication Functions # 4, 6</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop and maintain effective, respectful working relationships with professional colleagues, peers, patients, families, and the general public.</li> <li>- Utilize appropriate professional verbal, <b>nonverbal</b> and written communication with faculty, patients, families, colleagues and others.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Psychomotor Function # 10</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Demonstrate the ability to work in an environment that requires significant physical activity and mobility throughout the workday in a way that does not compromise patient or therapist safety.</li> </ul>
2. Students are expected to be in class or lab at the designated time. If going to be late, attempt should be made to communicate with the course instructor prior to the start time.	<p><b><u>Cognitive Function # 8</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Demonstrate management skills including planning, organizing, supervising, and delegating.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Affective and Communication Functions # 4, 9</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop and maintain effective, respectful working relationships with professional colleagues, peers, patients, families, and the general public.</li> <li>-Meet externally imposed deadlines and time requirements, including punctuality for class, clinic, appointments, assignments, and mandatory screenings, meetings, community activities or paperwork.</li> </ul>
3. Food and/or drink are forbidden in classroom and lab settings as per University Policy. This policy also pertains to “break times” or non-instructional times.	<p><b><u>Cognitive Function # 8</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Demonstrate management skills including planning, organizing, supervising, and delegating.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Affective and Communication Function # 4</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop and maintain effective, respectful working relationships with professional colleagues, peers, patients, families, and the general public.</li> </ul>
4. Access to non-instructional online content is prohibited during instructional settings. This includes social media, email, blogging, texting, web surfing or any other form of electronic access.	<p><b><u>Affective and Communication Function # 4</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop and maintain effective, respectful working relationships with professional colleagues, peers, patients, families, and the general public.</li> </ul>
5. Students are expected to come prepared to the classroom or lab instructional settings by completing the assigned readings and other required assignments.	<p><b><u>Cognitive Functions # 2, 8, 10</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Comprehend, analyze, synthesize, and integrate information from all program sources; written materials, demonstration, lectures, class discussions, laboratory practice sessions, internet based resources, and real and simulated patients.</li> <li>-Demonstrate management skills including planning, organizing, supervising, and delegating.</li> <li>- Participate in the process of scientific inquiry.</li> </ul>

<p>6. During lab sessions, students are expected to focus their attention to the material and practice the content while accessing available resources.</p>	<p><b><u>Cognitive Functions # 8, 10</u></b>          -Demonstrate management skills including planning, organizing, supervising, and delegating.          - Participate in the process of scientific inquiry.  <b><u>Affective and Communication Function # 4</u></b>          - Develop and maintain effective, respectful working relationships with professional colleagues, peers, patients, families, and the general public.</p>
<p>7. Communication should be with the course leader for questions and concerns related to the course logistics; and with the primary instructor for course material.</p>	<p><b><u>Affective and Communication Function # 6</u></b>          Utilize appropriate professional verbal, nonverbal and written communication with faculty, patients, families, colleagues and others.</p>
<p>8. Respect (for professors, instructors and fellow classmates) is expected in the classroom, lab and clinic. Full attention during presentations is mandatory while avoiding distractions.</p>	<p><b><u>Cognitive Function # 8</u></b>          -Demonstrate management skills including planning, organizing, supervising, and delegating.  <b><u>Affective and Communication Functions # 4, 6, 11</u></b>          - Develop and maintain effective, respectful working relationships with professional colleagues, peers, patients, families, and the general public.          -Utilize appropriate professional verbal, nonverbal and written communication with faculty, patients, families, colleagues and others.          -Effectively attend to people, information, and tasks in a complex, highly stimulating environment during an entire workday or work period.</p>
<p>9. Students are expected to excuse themselves discretely from class or lab if for any reason they are unable to abide by the prior expectations.</p>	<p><b><u>Affective and Communication Functions # 4, 14</u></b>          - Develop and maintain effective, respectful working relationships with professional colleagues, peers, patients, families, and the general public.          - Accept responsibility for all actions, reactions, and inactions, integrating feedback in a non-defensive manner.</p>
<p>10. Post course feedback is expected to be constructive and related to the course content or instructional method. It is not a forum for personal attacks or unsubstantiated rhetorical comments.</p>	<p><b><u>Affective and Communication Functions # 4, 6</u></b>          - Develop and maintain effective, respectful working relationships with professional colleagues, peers, patients, families, and the general public.          - Utilize appropriate professional verbal, nonverbal and written communication with faculty, patients, families, colleagues and others.</p>



**Statement of Understanding**

I certify that I have received, read, and understand the Nova Southeastern University Technical Standards / Essential Functions Policy and requirements to be a physical therapy student. I agree to notify the PT Program if I am unable to perform these essential functions, and understand that the inability to perform these essential functions, with or without a reasonable accommodation, can result in withdrawal, delay in progress, or dismissal from the program.

I also have received, read, and understand the Professional Behavior Expectations in the Classroom, Lab, and Clinic On and Off Campus and agree to abide by these at all times when representing the University, College and the Professional of Physical Therapy.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

N# \_\_\_\_\_

