

## **Pacific University**

### **Guidelines for Essential Functions for Entry-Level Physical Therapy Education**

#### **History and Rationale**

The landmark Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, P.L. 101-336 (“ADA” or “the Act”), enacted on July 26, 1990, provides comprehensive civil rights protections to qualified individuals with disabilities. The ADA was modeled after Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which marked the beginning of equal opportunity for persons with disabilities. As amended, Section 504 “prohibits all programs or activities receiving federal financial assistance from discrimination against individuals with disabilities who are „otherwise qualified“ to participate in those programs.” With respect to post-secondary educational services, an “otherwise qualified” individual is a person with a disability “who meets the academic and Essential Functions requisite to admission or participation in the recipient's education program or activity.” Given the intent of Section 504 and the ADA, the development of standards of practice for a profession, and the establishment of essential requirements to the student's program of study, or directly related to licensing requirements, is allowable under these laws. In applying Section 504 regulations, which require individuals to meet the “academic and Essential Functions for admission,” the Supreme Court has stated that physical qualifications could lawfully be considered “technical standard(s) for admission.” Institutions may not, however, exclude an “otherwise qualified” applicant or student merely because of a disability, if the institution can reasonably modify its program or facilities to accommodate the applicant or student with a disability. However, an institution need not provide accommodations or modify its program of study or facilities such that (a) would “fundamentally alter” and/or (b) place an “undue burden on” the educational program or academic requirements and Essential Functions which are essential to the program of study. The following guidelines embody the physical, cognitive, and attitudinal abilities an Entry-Level Physical Therapist must be able to demonstrate in order to function in a broad variety of clinical situations; and to render a wide spectrum of care to patients/clients and individuals engaged in physical activity. The guidelines serve to recognize abilities essential to the development of these Entry-Level abilities. Further, the guidelines reflect the necessary and required skills and abilities identified for the Entry-Level Physical Therapist as detailed in *A Normative Model of Physical Therapist Professional Education* (APTA, 2004) and the CAPTE Evaluative Criteria for Physical Therapy Education.

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##### **Physical Therapy Essential Functions**

The Doctor of Physical Therapy Program at Pacific University is a rigorous and intense program. Students complete a professional education program that is both intellectually and physically challenging. The purpose of these Essential Functions is to articulate the demands of this program to allow students applying for admission to the program to compare their own capabilities to these demands.

Applicants to this program are asked to **verify that they understand** the demands of the program and that they understand they will be required to complete the tasks, with or without reasonable accommodations, associated with performance as a physical therapy student. Reasonable accommodation refers to the way in which Pacific University can assist students with disabilities to accomplish these tasks (i.e. providing extra time to complete an examination, enhancing the sound system in a classroom or providing a push cart for a student who may not have the strength to carry a heavy item for moderate distances). Reasonable accommodation does not mean that students with disabilities will be exempt from certain tasks; it does, however, mean that the physical therapy faculty/staff will work with students with disabilities to determine whether there are ways to assist the students towards completion of these tasks while continuing to maintain the integrity of the Physical Therapy Education Program and protecting the safety of all involved. After acceptance into the program, a student who needs reasonable accommodation for disability must make a formal request to the PT Program Director and must be prepared to provide documentation substantiating the claimed disability to the Office of Learning Support Services. A student may be administratively withdrawn if it becomes apparent that the student cannot complete essential tasks even with accommodations, that the accommodations needed are not reasonable and would cause undue hardship to the institution, or that fulfilling the functions would create a significant risk of harm to the health or safety of others. Students who have questions about this document or who would like to discuss specific accommodations should make an inquiry both with the Physical Therapy Program Director and the Pacific University Office of Learning Support Services.

**The following are considered Essential Tasks required for DPT students to complete the Physical Therapy Program:**

1. Students must meet class standards for course completion throughout the curriculum.
2. Students must be able to read, write, speak, and understand English at a level consistent with successful course completion, having the ability to communicate with patients/clients and successfully complete medical records.
3. Students must complete readings, assignments and other activities outside of class hours.
4. Students must gather decision-making pieces of information during an assessment activity in class or in the clinical setting without the use of an intermediary such as a classmate, clinical instructor or other personnel.
5. Students must perform treatment and rehabilitation activities in class or in the clinical setting by direct performance or by instruction and supervision of intermediaries.
6. Students must apply critical thinking processes to their work in the classroom and in the clinical setting, and must exercise sound judgment in the class and in the clinical setting and must follow safety procedures established for each class and clinical setting.
7. Students must maintain personal appearance and hygiene conducive to the classroom and clinical setting.
8. Students must annually pass a cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) course at the health professional level.

9. Students must annually complete OSHA-regulated Blood borne Pathogen Exposure Training and complete the Hepatitis B Vaccine series or have a written denial on file.

**Skills typically required in order to complete the Essential Tasks are as follows:**

1. Students typically sit for 4-8 hours daily in the classroom, stand for 1-3 hours daily at clinical assignments and must be able to ambulate 10 yards at 2 miles per hour.
2. Students frequently lift less than 10 pounds and occasionally lift between 10-20 pounds overhead.
3. Students occasionally carry up to 25-30 pounds while walking 10-20 feet.
4. Students frequently exert 25 pounds of push/pull forces to objects, sometimes while ambulating 50 feet or more.
5. Students frequently twist, bend, stoop and kneel on the floor up to 15 minutes.
6. Students frequently move from place to place and position to position and must do so at a speed that permits safe handling of classmates and patients/clients.
7. Students frequently stand and walk while providing support to patients/clients.
8. Students frequently coordinate verbal and manual activities with gross motor activities.
9. Students use auditory, tactile, and visual senses to receive classroom instruction and to evaluate and treat patients requiring physical therapy.
10. Students must have basic neurological function to perceive hot, cold, change in contour of surface/body part and to maintain 10 pounds of grip strength for 30 seconds.
11. Students must possess the ability to make and execute quick, appropriate and accurate decisions in a stressful environment.
12. Students must be able to assimilate, analyze, synthesize, integrate concepts and problem solve to formulate assessment and therapeutic judgments and to be able to distinguish deviations from the norm.
13. Students must have sufficient postural and neuromuscular control, sensory function, and coordination to perform appropriate physical examinations using accepted techniques; and accurately, safely, and efficiently use equipment and material during the assessment and treatment of patients.
14. Students must be able to communicate effectively and sensitively with patients and colleagues, including individuals from different cultural and social backgrounds; this includes, but is not limited to, the ability to establish rapport with patients, communicate judgments and treatment information effectively.
15. Students must be able to record the physical examination results and a treatment plan clearly and accurately.
16. Students must have the capacity to maintain composure and continue to function well during periods of high stress.
17. Students must have the perseverance, diligence and commitment to complete the physical therapy education program as outlined and sequenced.
18. Students must be flexible and have the ability to adjust to changing situations and uncertainty in clinical situations.
19. Students must demonstrate affective skills and appropriate demeanor and rapport that relate to professional education and quality patient care.

It is the policy of Pacific University that all opportunities are to be made available to qualified individuals on the basis of merit and without discrimination against any employee, applicant for employment, student, or applicant for admission because of race, color, religion, gender, disability, age, national origin, or sexual orientation.

Candidates for selection to the Physical Therapy Program will be required to verify they have read and understand these Essential Functions and that they believe that they can meet (with or without accommodation) the Essential Functions tasks as outlined above. Compliance with the program's Essential Functions simply allows continued enrollment in the DPT Program and does not guarantee a student's eligibility for the NPTE.

All technical and academic standards must be met throughout enrollment in the Physical Therapy curriculum. It is the student's responsibility to notify the School of Physical Therapy Director if, during enrollment, circumstances occur and he/she can no longer meet the Essential Functions or needs reasonable accommodation, at which time he/she will be referred to the Office of Learning Support Services. Failure to continue to meet the Essential Functions, with or without accommodation will prevent the student from continuing in the Physical Therapy Program.

**Essential Functions Verification Statement:**

I certify that I have read and understand the Physical Therapy Essential Functions, and I believe to the best of my knowledge that **I can meet each of these standards with or without accommodation**. I also understand that if I am unable, or become unable, to meet the standards with or without accommodation, I cannot continue enrollment in the Physical Therapy Program.

I am also aware that if the need for accommodations for disability arises, I must contact the Office of Learning Support Services 503-352-2107 to submit documentation and have my need for accommodation reviewed. To have requests for accommodations considered, I understand I will need to work with the Physical Therapy Program Director and the Office of Learning Support Services to determine potentially reasonable and appropriate accommodation options.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Student

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Name (Printed)