

Regis University
School of Physical Therapy
Essential Functions

Technical Standards

Based on the philosophy of the School of Physical Therapy at Regis University, the intent of the professional program is to educate competent physical therapists who can examine, evaluate, diagnose, determine a prognosis, establish interventions for the general population of acute, rehabilitation and chronic patients/clients in health care settings, and establish wellness/prevention programs. The purpose of this policy is to delineate the observational, cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills deemed essential to complete this program and to perform as a competent practitioner of physical therapy.

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 accommodation as long as it does not fundamentally alter the nature of the program offered and does not impose an undue hardship, such as those that cause a significant expense, difficulty or are unduly disruptive to the educational process.

An offer of admission can be withdrawn and a student in the DPT program may be withdrawn if it becomes apparent that the applicant/student is unable to perform the essential functions required to complete the program with or without reasonable accommodations.

Essential Functions

Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) provides comprehensive civil right protections for “qualified individuals with disabilities.” An “individual with a disability” is a person who:

- Has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a “major life activity” , or
- Has a record of such an impairment, or
- Is regarded as having such an impairment

The ADA Handbook published by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the Department of Justice states: “Examples of physical or mental impairments include, but are not limited to, such contagious and non-contagious diseases and conditions as orthopedic, visual, speech, and hearing impairments; cerebral palsy; epilepsy, muscular dystrophy, HIV disease (whether symptomatic or asymptomatic), tuberculosis, drug addiction, and alcoholism. Homosexuality and bisexuality are not physical or mental impairments under the ADA.”

“Major life activities” include functions such as caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning and working. Individuals who are currently engaged in the illegal use of drugs are not protected by the ADA when an action is taken on the basis of their current illegal drug use.

“Qualified” individuals are defined as follows:

- A “qualified” individual with a disability is one who meets the essential eligibility requirements for the program or activity offered.
- The “essential eligibility requirements” will depend on the type of service or activity involved.

Please refer to Appendix B for a detail of the essential functions.

Essential Functions

Applicants admitted to the physical therapist education program must demonstrate the ability to perform, or learn to perform, the essential functions/skills listed in this document. Regis University must ensure that patients/clients are not placed in jeopardy by students with impaired intellectual, physical or emotional functions. The essential skills listed in this document can be accomplished through direct student response, or the use of prosthetic or orthotic devices, or through personal assistance (e.g., readers, signers, note-takers). Upon admission a student who discloses a properly certified disability will receive reasonable accommodation, but must be able to perform the essential functions of the program and meet the standards described. Reasonable accommodations must be

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arranged through Disability Services, as noted in the Course Syllabus “Equal Access to Classes and Learning Accommodations”.

Observational Skills

Students require the functional use of vision, hearing and somatic sensations. A student must be able to observe lectures, laboratory dissection of cadavers, lecture and laboratory demonstrations, and observe microscopic studies of tissues, or images through the use of technology, including graphics, slides, films, DVD and internet resources. The student must be able to observe a patient accurately, observe digital and waveform readings, and other graphic images to determine a patient’s/client’s condition. Examples in which these observational skills are required include, but are not limited to: palpation of peripheral pulses, bony landmarks and ligamentous structures: auscultation/auditory evaluations of the heart and lungs; visual and tactile examination of areas of inflammation: visual and tactile assessment of the presence and degree of edema: and observation of the patient/client during interview and history taking.

Communication Skills

Students must be able to communicate in many forms; these include: speech, language, reading, writing and computer literacy (including keyboarding skills). Students must be able to communicate in English in oral and written form with faculty and peers in classroom and laboratory settings that include the ability to demonstrate skills needed for productive classroom discussion. Students must be able to communicate effectively and sensitively with patients/clients, maintain written records, elicit information regarding mood and activities, as well as perceive non-verbal communications. Students must also be able to communicate effectively and efficiently with other members of the health care community to convey information for safe and effective care.

Psychomotor Skills

Students, in the classroom, must have the ability to sit, stand, and/or walk, for up to 10 hours daily. In the clinical setting, students must have the ability to sit, stand or walk for at least eight hours daily—modified according to the schedule of the specific facility to which a student is assigned. Students must possess sufficient motor function to elicit information from the patient/client examination, by palpation, auscultation, percussing, and other examination maneuvers. Students must be able to execute movements (including twist, bend, stoop and/or squat) required to provide general and therapeutic care, such as positioning, lifting, or moving immobile and/or bariatric patients; gait training using therapeutic aids and orthotics; positioning and performing manual therapy/manipulation techniques; performing non-surgical wound debridement; and inserting electromyographic needle electrodes. These skills require coordination of both gross and fine muscular movement, equilibrium, and the integrated use of touch and vision.

Cognitive Skills

Students must demonstrate the ability to receive, interpret, remember, measure, calculate, reproduce and use; to reason, analyze, integrate and synthesize information across the cognitive, psychomotor and affective domains in order to solve problems, evaluate work, and generate new ways of processing or categorizing similar information in a timely fashion as listed in course objectives. In addition, students must be able to comprehend the three-dimensional relationships and to understand spatial relationships of structures. Examples in which cognitive skills are essential include: participation in the process of scientific inquiry, performance of a physical therapy evaluations, including extracting and analyzing physiological, biomechanical, behavioral, and environmental factors in a timely manner; use of examination data to formulate and execute a plan of physical therapy management in a timely manner, appropriate to the problems identified; and the reassessment and revision of plans as needed for effective and efficient management of physical therapy problems in a timely manner. All of these must be consistent within the acceptable norms of clinical settings.

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Behavioral and Social Attributes

Students must possess the psychological ability required for the utilization of their intellectual abilities, for the exercise of good judgment, for the prompt completion of responsibilities inherent to the diagnosis and care of patients/clients, and for the development of mature, sensitive, and effective relationships with patients. Students must be able to tolerate physically and mentally taxing workloads and function effectively under stress. They must be able to tolerate and adapt to a changing, unfamiliar (and perhaps, uncomfortable) environment, display flexibility, respect individual differences, and learn to function in the face of ambiguities inherent in the clinical problems of patients/clients. As a component of their education, students must demonstrate ethical behavior that complies with the ethical standards of the American Physical Therapy Associations Code of Ethics.. Examples include: recognizing and appropriately reacting to one's own immediate emotional responses to situations while maintaining a professional demeanor, reflecting on one's abilities and establishing mechanisms to establish life-long learning..

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