



## Technical Standards for Admission, Promotion and Graduation

### Introduction

In September 2009, the University of Colorado Physical Therapy Program, Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, School of Medicine adopted the following technical standards for admission, promotion and graduation for its entry-level professional program. Physical Therapy is an intellectually, physically, and psychologically demanding profession. It is during the rigorous three year curriculum that the student begins to develop the qualities necessary for the practice of physical therapy. Students acquire the foundation of knowledge, attitudes, skills and behaviors needed throughout the physical therapist's professional career. Those abilities that physical therapists must possess to practice safely are reflected in the technical standards that follow. Candidates for the degree must be able to meet these minimum standards, with or without reasonable accommodation, for successful completion of degree requirements.

### Standards

#### Observation

Observation requires 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. The student must be able to observe a patient accurately, observe digital and waveform readings and other graphic images to determine a patient's condition. Examples in which these observational skills are required include: palpation of peripheral pulses, bony prominences and ligamentous structures; visual and tactile evaluation for areas of inflammation and visual and tactile assessment of the presence and degree of edema or other changes in the skin and underlying tissues.

#### Communication

Communication includes: speech, language, reading, writing and computer literacy. Students must be able to communicate effectively and sensitively with patients to elicit information regarding affect and functional 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 essential for safe and effective care.

#### Motor

Students must possess sufficient motor function to elicit information from the patient examination, by palpation, auscultation, tapping, manual muscle testing, and other examination maneuvers. Students must be able to execute movements required to provide general and therapeutic care, such as safely lifting, transferring and positioning large or immobile patients and guard during gait training using assistive devices and orthotics. Students must also be able to position and perform manual mobilization techniques, perform non-surgical wound debridement, and place electromyographic electrodes. These skills require coordination of both gross and fine muscular movement, strength, balance, proper body mechanics and the integrated use of touch and vision.

During the curriculum, students are required to perform motor skills representative of licensed physical therapists working with patients in a variety of settings. The percentages listed are reflective of the amount of time that this activity may occur in any given day. However, at times, these skills may be called upon more or less often than indicated.

Key: R=Rarely (1-5%); O = Occasionally (6-33%); F= Frequently (34-66%); C= Continuously (67-100%)

- Lift less than 10 pounds: F
- Lift 10-50 pounds: O
- Lift more than 50 pounds: R

- Bend/ Squat/ Kneel: F
- Reach above shoulder level: O
- Use standing balance: F
- Push/Pull: F
- Climb Stairs: R
- Perform fine motor manipulations: F
- Physically react to urgent situations: O

### **Intellectual- conceptual, integrative and quantitative abilities**

To effectively solve problems, students must be able to measure, calculate, reason, analyze, integrate and synthesize information in a timely fashion. For example, the student must be able to synthesize knowledge and integrate the relevant aspects of a patient's history and examination findings to develop an effective treatment program. In addition, students must be able to comprehend three dimensional relationships and to understand spatial relationships of structures.

### **Behavioral and Social Attributes**

A student must possess the psychological ability required for the full utilization of their intellectual abilities, for the exercise of good judgment, for the prompt completion of all responsibilities inherent to diagnosis and care of patients, and for the development of mature, sensitive, and effective relationships with patients, colleagues and other health care providers. Students must be able to tolerate physically and mentally taxing workloads and function effectively under stress. They must be able to adapt to a changing environment, display flexibility and learn to function in the face of uncertainties inherent in the clinical problems of patients. As a component of their education, students must demonstrate ethical behavior.

### **Curriculum Requirements**

In addition to the abilities specified above, students must be able to successfully complete, with or without reasonable accommodation, all required components of the curriculum.

### **Tests and Evaluations**

In order to evaluate competence, the Physical Therapy Program employs periodic examinations, both written and practical, as an essential component of the curriculum. Successful completion of these examinations is required of all students as a condition for continued progress through the curriculum. Reasonable accommodation will be made in the form of administration of the evaluation where necessary; documented and requested in advance.

### **Clinical Performance**

The process of evaluation of the clinical performance of the student is an integral and essential component of the curriculum. The Clinical Performance Instrument (CPI)<sup>1</sup> is the evaluation tool used to assess clinical competence. Students must meet program expectations for each clinical experience.

### **Reasonable Accommodation**

It is the policy of the University of Colorado Physical Therapy Program to provide reasonable accommodation to qualified students with a disability who can perform the essential functions as outlined in the above technical standards. Reasonable accommodation may be made in the form of administration of the evaluation where necessary; documented and requested in advance in accord with standards and requirements of the ADA. Whether or not a requested accommodation is reasonable will be determined on an individual basis. Determining what is a reasonable accommodation is an interactive process which the candidate/student should initiate with the PT Program Director, in conjunction with the [Office of Disability Resources and Services](#) prior to and/or during the physical therapy education program.

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<sup>1</sup> CPI. American Physical Therapy Association, 2006