

# Technical Standards for Admission and Continued Enrollment to Arkansas Colleges of Health Education School of Physical Therapy

## ABILITIES AND SKILLS

Matriculation into the DPT Program assumes certain essential cognitive, emotional, and technical skills. Reflected in the standards that follow are those abilities and skills that degree candidates must possess to engage safely and competently in required learning activities. The abilities and skills are described in five domains, including observation skills; communication skills; motor skills (fine and gross); intellectual-conceptual, integrative and quantitative abilities; and behavioral and social/emotional attributes.

### I. **Observation**

Observation requires the functional use of vision, hearing, touch, and the use of common sense. Candidates must have visual perception, which includes depth and acuity. A candidate must be able to observe lectures, laboratory dissection of cadavers, and lecture and laboratory demonstrations. The candidate must be able to observe a patient accurately and obtain an appropriate medical history directly from the patient or guardian. Examples in which these observational skills are required include: observation of skin color; breathing regularity; temperature of skin; muscle tone; facial expressions; palpation of peripheral pulses, bony prominences and ligaments; visual and tactile evaluation for areas of inflammation; and visual and tactile assessment of the presence and degree of swelling. A candidate must be able to observe a patient accurately at a distance and close at hand, noting nonverbal as well as verbal signals. The candidate must have sufficient vision, hearing, and touch to detect patient/client needs in a busy clinical environment. The candidate must be able to read and interpret equipment, patient charts, and diagnostic tests. The candidate must also be able to accurately monitor dials, displays, and equipment used in treatment of patients including exercise equipment and electrical modalities.

### II. **Communication**

Communication includes speech, language, reading, writing and computer literacy. Students must be able to communicate effectively, sensitively, and convey a sense of compassion and empathy with patients and their families, as well as perceive non-verbal communications, and to deal effectively with cultural and ethnic diversity. Physical therapy education presents exceptional challenges in the volume and breadth of required reading and the necessity to impart information to others. Candidates must be able to communicate quickly, effectively and efficiently in oral and written English with all members of the health care team. Candidates must be able to complete forms according to directions in a complete and timely fashion. The candidate must be able to demonstrate the ability to deliver and receive complex information in one-on-one and group settings, respond to questions from a variety of sources and respond appropriately to verbal and non-verbal communication, as well as explain complex information according to the listener's needs and abilities, both formally and informally. A candidate must be able to complete paper and/or on-line forms and documentation according to directions in a timely fashion, accurately elicit

information and describe a patient's change in mood, thought, activity and posture. Candidates must be able to demonstrate sufficient communication skills to effectively train other DPT candidates, patients, family and support personnel.

### **III. Motor**

The candidate must have sufficient strength, endurance and motor skills to effectuate the coordination of both gross and fine muscular movement, equilibrium, and the integrated use of touch and vision. Sufficient physical stamina is required to complete the rigorous course of didactic and clinical study. The candidate must be able to access and negotiate laboratories, classrooms and workstations, attend clinical internships, and accomplish required tasks in the clinic and academic settings. The candidate must be able to perform emergency procedures such as: cardiopulmonary resuscitation; safely lift, transfer and position patients; safely assist and guard patients during gait training; safely and effectively administer exercise and examination procedures that require resistance or facilitation; perform non-surgical wound debridement, and manually adjust exercise equipment and assistive devices. Long periods of sitting, standing, and moving are required in classroom, laboratory and clinical experiences. The candidate must demonstrate: sufficient balance, coordination and ability to accompany and detect loss of balance in patients who are walking; the ability to support and guard patients who lose their balance during walking on level surfaces, as well as on stairs and uneven terrains/ramps; sufficient freedom of movement to be able to participate in all classroom and clinical activities; and the ability to lift and carry heavy objects. Required movements may include: pushing; pulling; standing; sitting for long periods of time with and without back support; twisting; kneeling; stooping and bending. The candidate must be able to use motor skills to accurately assess changes in: muscle tone, tissue and skin temperature, joint position, chest sounds and peripheral pulses, joint play and other examination tests. The candidate must also be able to: effectively apply compression, traction, resistance, and percussion; and demonstrate sufficient fine motor skills to be able to manipulate small objects and write legibly. The candidate must be able to respond to bells and alarms related to emergencies. At all times the ability to administer care to patients in a safe manner is paramount.

### **IV. Intellectual-Conceptual, Integrative and Quantitative Abilities**

To effectively solve problems, the candidate must be able to: measure, calculate, reason, analyze, comprehend, integrate and synthesize information from the clinical, natural, and social sciences in a timely fashion. For example, the candidate must be able to synthesize knowledge and integrate the relevant aspects of a patient's history, physical examination, and laboratory data. The candidate must be able to: provide a reasoned explanation for likely therapy, recalling and retaining information in an efficient and timely manner. The ability to incorporate new information from peers, teachers, and the medical literature in formulating treatment plans is essential. In

addition, the candidate must be able to comprehend three-dimensional relationships and to understand spatial relationships of structures. The candidate must have the ability to use computers for searching, recording, storing, and retrieving information. The candidate must be able to understand theory, research literature, and principles that apply to physical therapy practice, and analyze and solve complex patient problems. The candidate must be able to utilize knowledge of natural, clinical, and social sciences to develop appropriate interventions in a clinical setting. The ability to use critical analysis to understand theory, research literature, and principles that apply to physical therapy practice and to apply inductive and deductive clinical reasoning to solve complex patient problems is necessary. The candidate must be able to effectively engage in self-assessment of performance, as well as provide objective and constructive assessments of peers and faculty. The candidate must be able to identify significant findings based upon history and physical examination and interpret laboratory and diagnostic imaging data. The candidate must utilize sufficient judgment to ensure safe encounters with peers and patients and to effectively delegate to support personnel.

**V. Behavioral and Social/Emotional Attribute**

The candidate must be: dependable, punctual, ethical, and reliable; maintain professional demeanor in all situations; recognize stressors and be able to seek assistance as needed. Candidates must possess the emotional health required for full utilization of their intellectual abilities. They must: exercise good judgment, promptly complete all responsibilities attendant to the care of patients, and develop mature, sensitive and effective relationships with patients. The candidate must also demonstrate a commitment to learning by seeking new knowledge and understanding, formulating their own thoughts and ideas, and taking ownership of their educational advancement. Candidates must be able to tolerate physically taxing workloads and to function effectively under stress. They must be able to: adapt to changing environments, display flexibility and function in the face of uncertainties inherent in clinical practice. They must be able to measure, calculate, reason, analyze and synthesize information effectively in the limited time demanded by a given clinical setting, while under stress, and in an environment in which other distractions may be present. The candidate must be able to abide by the APTA Code of Ethics, the Standards of Physical Therapy Practice, and the Core Values, which can be found on the American Physical Therapy Association website at [www.apta.org](http://www.apta.org). Candidates must also be able to establish professional and empathetic relationships with individuals across the lifespan and from various cultures. Candidates must demonstrate integrity and honesty in the academic and clinical environment, as well as being able to engage in respectful interactions with individuals from various lifestyles, cultures, races, socioeconomic classes and abilities. They must be able to develop and maintain respectful working relationships with peers, faculty, professional colleagues, patients, family members and the general public and to recognize the psychosocial impact of movement dysfunction and disability on clients

and families. The candidate must be able to accept constructive feedback and respond with suitable action.

### **Specific Examples of Technical Skills (Essential Functions) and Abilities**

Specifically, candidates must be able to:

- Attend and participate in classes for 30 or more hours per week during each academic semester. Classes consist of a combination of lecture, discussion, laboratory, and clinical activities.
- Use auditory, tactile, and visual senses to receive classroom instruction and to evaluate and treat patients.
- Read, write, speak, and understand English at a level consistent with successful course completion and development of positive patient-therapist relationships.
- Complete readings, assignments, and other activities outside of class hours.
- Apply critical thinking processes to their work in the classroom and the clinic.
- Exercise sound judgment in class and in the clinic.
- Participate in clinical experiences, which typically require students to be present 40 or more hours per week on a schedule that corresponds to the operating hours of the clinic.
- Gather decision-making pieces of information during patient assessment activities in class or in the clinical setting without the use of an intermediary (classmate, aide, etc).
- Perform treatment activities in class or in the clinical setting by direct performance.
- Sit for two to 10 hours at a time, stand for at least one to two hours at a time, and walk or travel for at least two hours at a time
- Frequently lift weights less than 10 pounds and occasionally lift weights between 10 and 100 pounds.
- Occasionally carry up to 25 pounds while walking up to 50 feet.
- Frequently exert 75 pounds of push/pull forces up to 50 feet and occasionally exert 150 pounds of push/pull forces for this distance.
- Frequently twist, bend and stoop.
- Occasionally squat, crawl, reach above shoulder level, and kneel.
- Frequently move from place to place and position to position at a speed that permits safe handling of classmates and patients.
- Frequently stand and walk while providing support to a classmate simulating a disability or while supporting a patient with a disability.
- Occasionally climb stairs and negotiate uneven terrain.
- Frequently use hands repetitively with a simple grasp and frequently with a firm grasp.
- Frequently perform tasks requiring manual dexterity skills.
- Frequently coordinate activities with gross motor and communication skills.

### **Reasonable accommodations:**

- Are provided to help minimize the impact of the student's disability, provide equal access to the ACHE's programs and services while upholding the academic, clinical, and technical standards of the DPT Program.

- Are provided to assist the student in learning, performing and satisfying the fundamental standards, so long as the student provides comprehensive documentation establishing his/her disability status prior to the need for reasonable accommodation.
- Are provided only to the extent that such accommodation does not fundamentally alter the academic and/or technical standards of the School of Physical Therapy or interfering with the rights of other students.
- Do not exempt DPT candidates from completing certain tasks deemed essential.
- Do not include reliance on peers-when a candidate's ability to function is compromised (with or without accommodation) the candidate must demonstrate alternative means and/or abilities to acquire essential information and demonstrate essential tasks without reliance upon another person to help perform that essential task.
- Are determined by the ACHE Student Services ADA coordinator in consultation with DPT faculty.

See Arkansas Colleges of Health Education Policy Manual for full details on the reasonable accommodations process.