

## **TECHNICAL STANDARDS: ABILITIES AND SKILLS**

Matriculation into the Doctor of Physical Therapy (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.

For purposes of this document and unless otherwise defined, the term “candidate” means candidates for admission to the physical therapy program as well as enrolled students who are candidates for promotion and graduation.

The Arkansas Colleges of Health Education School of Physical Therapy is committed to diversity and to attracting and educating students who will make the population of healthcare professionals more representative of the state and the nation.

Candidates for the Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) degree must be able to meet the minimum standards (described below), with or without reasonable accommodations, for successful completion of degree requirements.

### **I. Observation**

A candidate must be able to use observation skills in all didactic and clinical learning environments, including but not limited to, lectures, laboratory dissection of anatomical donors, clinical simulations, and demonstrations of clinical skills. Observation, includes but is not limited to, assessment of movement, gait, edema and skin changes, recorded digital and waveform readings, and other graphic or measurement images to determine a patient’s condition. Observation requires vision, hearing, and somatic sensations, or the functional equivalent.

### **II. Communication**

A candidate 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. Candidates must also be able to communicate effectively and efficiently in person, virtually, and in writing with interprofessional colleagues to convey information essential for safe and effective care.

Candidates 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. Candidates must be able to communicate effectively and efficiently in person, virtually, and in writing with all members of the health care team. 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.

III. **Motor**

A candidate must possess sufficient motor function to effectively manage the patient encounter from patient examination through intervention. Candidates must be able to provide general and therapeutic care that is safe for the patient, any caregivers, and themselves. This includes, but is not limited to, the performance, description, or direction of others to safely lift, transfer, guard, position patients, and respond to bells, alarms, and related emergencies. 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. In addition, many physical therapy interventions require advanced hands-on skills to safely perform patient care including manual therapy, wound debridement, and treatments that use accessory devices.

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. The candidate must be able to synthesize knowledge and integrate the relevant aspects of a patient's history, physical examination, and laboratory data to develop an effective plan of care. In addition, the candidate must be able to comprehend three-dimensional relationships and to understand spatial relationships of structures. 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 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.

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

A candidate must possess the psychological ability and emotional health 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, interprofessional colleagues, and other health care providers. Candidates 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 care of, and communication with, patients and their family/caregivers.

The candidate must be able to seek assistance as needed. 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. 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. Candidates must also be able to establish professional and empathetic relationships with individuals across the lifespan and from various cultures. 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 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 accept constructive feedback and respond with suitable action.

#### **VI. Ethics and Professionalism**

A candidate must maintain and display ethical and moral behaviors commensurate with the role of a physical therapist in all interactions with patients, faculty, staff, students, clinical colleagues, and the public. The candidate is expected to understand the legal and ethical aspects of the scope of physical therapy and function within the legal, ethical standards, and core values of the physical therapy profession. 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 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.

#### **Reasonable accommodations:**

- Are provided to help minimize the impact of the student's disability, provide equal access to 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.

Candidates should review the technical standards to determine if they require accommodation(s) to fully engage in the curriculum of the PT Program. Reasonable accommodations are determined by the ACHE Student Services ADA coordinator in consultation with DPT faculty. If accommodations may be needed, the candidate should contact the ACHE Student Services ADA coordinator to confidentially discuss their accommodation needs. Given the clinical nature of the PT Program, additional time may be needed to implement accommodation(s). Accommodations are never retroactive; therefore, timely requests are essential and encouraged.

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