

PRIOR TO ENTRANCE INTO THE PROGRAM, IT IS THE STUDENT'S RESPONSIBILITY TO NOTIFY THE PHYSICAL THERAPY PROGRAM IF THEY ARE UNABLE TO MEET THE TECHNICAL STANDARDS.

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO SCHOOL OF MEDICINE PHYSICAL THERAPY PROGRAM POLICY ON TECHNICAL STANDARDS FOR ADMISSIONS, CONTINUATION, AND GRADUATION

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA: <http://www.ada.gov/pubs/ada.htm>), the University of New Mexico School of Medicine, Physical Therapy Program will implement policy and procedures both in the spirit and the letter of the law to ensure equal access to educational opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Applicants for admission to the Physical Therapy Program and current students must possess the capability to complete, with or without reasonable accommodations, the entire curriculum and achieve the DPT degree.

TECHNICAL STANDARDS REQUIRED TO PERFORM THE ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS OF THE PHYSICAL THERAPY PROGRAM CURRICULUM

The curriculum requires demonstrated proficiency in a variety of cognitive, problem-solving, manipulative, communicative and interpersonal skills. To achieve these proficiencies, the Physical Therapy Program requires that each student be able to meet the following Technical Standards.* (Complete procedures are available upon request)

1. Motor Skills:

Candidates must have the gross motor, fine motor and equilibrium functions required to carry out assessments and to provide physical therapy intervention. Task requirements will vary over a large range from gross motor to fine motor requiring adequate strength and coordination. Examples are: transferring a child or adult from a wheelchair or cart to a bed, mat or treatment table; managing a large patient with motor and/or sensory deficits during a mat based treatment program; manipulation of the spine using your hands; mobilization of the joints using your body and/or your hands; manipulation of a goniometer using your hands; manipulation of small materials needed to administer a fine motor exam and perform accurate assessment and treatment techniques by correct applications of forces with precise hand techniques. Errors in technique application may result in inaccurate information being obtained during assessment or ineffective treatment being delivered to the patient. Some activities may be supervised by the physical therapist and carried out by others. In those situations where a therapist could successfully verbally coach and monitor a family member or other individual through a task (such as a transfer from one surface to another), a student will be given the opportunity to demonstrate competency in this type of directive role as well.

Quick, accurate motor and cognitive reactions are necessary, not only for safety of the person receiving service, but also for the therapist (e.g. a patient may lose balance during a training

technique and start to fall or may have an adverse effect from a given treatment requiring appropriate and timely decisions and intervention.)

2. Sensory skills:

Physical therapy students will learn and demonstrate competency in a variety of settings. Their senses must be at a level of functioning to allow them to perceive objects in the environment and to observe human behavior and performance. Examples include, but are not limited to the following: the student must be able to visually assess activities such as joint range of motion and postural alignment; to make auditory assessment of auscultation and breath sounds; as well as to perform palpation in order to assess changes in skin temperature or application of manual pressure. The student must also discriminate between a safe and an unsafe environment, and between therapeutic and non-therapeutic behaviors and contexts. For example, the student must be able to assess whether use of therapeutic equipment may jeopardize the health and well-being of him/herself or others, whether an object being thrown by a child is potentially dangerous for others, or whether a conversation between two individuals in a group indicates that they are angry at one another.

3. Communication:

- a. **Written:** The physical therapy student must be able to comprehend and assimilate information from a variety of written sources including texts, journals, medical records, course syllabi, etc. In addition, the student must be able to acquire written information from a variety of sources including Medline, CINAHL, and other computer-search programs, the Internet, journal and text libraries, etc. The student must be able to produce written materials that are constructed in a discernible and organized fashion, using proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation. This includes both handwriting and typing/word processing skills.
- b. **Verbal and Nonverbal:** The physical therapy student must be able to impart information so that others can understand it. The student must be able to elicit information from patients, family members, supervisors, and peers. The students must note and respond to factual information provided by others as well as to cues of mood, temperament, and social responses. The student must be aware of and responsive to cultural differences in verbal and nonverbal communication. Communication with patients and all members of the intervention team must be accurate, sensitive, effective, and efficient. Communication must be timely and situationally appropriate.

4. Cognitive skills

The physical therapy student must have the mental capacity to assimilate and learn large volumes of complex information. They must be able to comprehend three-dimensional relationships and to understand the spatial relationships of structures.

- a. **Problem solving:** To be able to make appropriate clinical decisions, a physical therapy student must be able to make correct observations and have the skills of measurement, calculation, reasoning, analysis and synthesis. For example, the student must have the skills to conduct assessments accurately, compute test scores, analyze results and

determine the impact of this information on intervention. The student must synthesize a variety of information from many sources, and make a decision in a timely manner.

- b. Judgment: The physical therapy student will be expected to demonstrate judgment in classroom, laboratory and clinical setting which shows an ability to make mature, sensitive and effective decisions in the following areas:
 - i. Relationships with persons being served and family members. For example: the student demonstrates professional interactions in all situations.
 - ii. Relationships with supervisors and peers. For example: when provided with constructive feedback from an instructor or supervisor, the student will adapt behavior accordingly.
 - iii. Demonstration of professional behaviors, such as timeliness, regular attendance, and completion of assignments.
 - iv. Ability to determine effectiveness of intervention strategies, and modify the program accordingly.

5. Behavioral/Social Skills:

The physical therapy student is expected to exhibit appropriate professional attitudes and conduct during participation in the classroom and in clinical experiences. This includes, but is not limited to: use of appropriate language and communication, flexibility toward change, the ability to fulfill commitments and to be accountable for actions and outcomes, and the ability to self-assess, self-correct and self-direct and to identify needs and sources of learning.

The student must also demonstrate the ability to work as an effective team member by sharing knowledge, eliciting and accepting input from others, helping others as appropriate in the learning process, taking responsibility for tasks required in group work, and by acting with sensitivity and empathy towards others.

The determination of whether an applicant or current student meets the standards will be done on an individual, case by case basis utilizing the existing committee structure of the Physical Therapy Program (Admissions Committee, Student Performance Committee)

* Technical Standards shall mean those minimum standards for physical therapists that must be examined and enforced in the admissions process and in the determination whether a degree in Physical Therapy may be awarded.