

Essential Functions
Doctor of Physical Therapy Program
Department of Physical Therapy
School of Allied Health Professions
Loma Linda University

Based on the philosophy of the Department of Physical Therapy in the School of Allied Health Professions, the intent of the professional program is to educate competent generalist physical therapists who can evaluate, manage, and treat the general population of acute and rehabilitation clients in current health care settings. Enrolled students are expected to complete the academic and clinical requirements of the professional DPT program.

The following “essential functions” specify those attributes that the faculty consider necessary for completing the professional education enabling each graduate to subsequently enter clinical practice. The Department of Physical Therapy, School of Allied Health Professions will consider for admission any qualified applicant who demonstrates the ability to perform or to learn to perform the “essential functions” specified in this document. Applicants are not required to disclose the nature of any disability(ies) to the physical therapy department; however, any applicant with questions about these “essential functions” is strongly encouraged to discuss the issue with the program director prior to the interview process. If appropriate, and upon the request of the applicant/student, reasonable accommodations may be provided.

Certain chronic or recurrent illnesses and problems that interfere with patient care or safety may be incompatible with physical therapy training or clinical practice. Other illnesses may lead to a high likelihood of student absenteeism and should be carefully considered. Deficiencies in knowledge, judgment, integrity, character, or professional attitude or demeanor which may jeopardize patient care may be grounds for course/rotation failure and possible dismissal from the program.

The purpose of this document is to delineate the cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills deemed essential for completion of this program and to perform as a competent generalist physical therapist.

Cognitive Learning Skills

The student must demonstrate the ability to:

1. Receive, interpret, remember, reproduce and use information in the cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domains of learning to solve problems, evaluate work, and generate new ways of processing or categorizing similar information listed in course objectives.
2. Perform a physical therapy evaluation of a patient’s posture and movement including analysis of physiological, biomechanical, behavioral, and environmental factors in a timely manner, consistent with the acceptable norms of clinical settings.
3. Use evaluation data to formulate and execute a plan of physical therapy management in a timely manner, appropriate to the problems identified consistent with acceptable norms of clinical settings.
4. Reassess and revise plans as needed for effective and efficient management of physical therapy problems, in a timely manner and consistent with the acceptable norms of clinical settings.

Psychomotor Skills

The student must demonstrate the following skills.

1. Locomotion ability to:
 1. Get to lecture, lab and clinical locations, and move within rooms as needed for changing groups, partners and work stations.
 2. Physically maneuver in required clinical settings, to accomplish assigned tasks.
 3. Move quickly in an emergency situation to protect the patient (eg. from falling).
2. Manual tasks:
 1. Maneuver another person's body parts to effectively perform evaluation techniques.
 2. Manipulate common tools used for screening tests of the cranial nerves, sensation, range of motion, blood pressure, e.g., cotton balls, safety pins, goniometers, Q-tips, sphygmomanometer.
 3. Safely and effectively guide, facilitate, inhibit, and resist movement and motor patterns through physical facilitation and inhibition techniques (including ability to give time urgent verbal feedback).
 4. Manipulate another person's body in transfers, gait, positioning, exercise, and mobilization techniques. (Lifting weights between 10-100+ lbs)
 5. Manipulate evaluation and treatment equipment safely and accurately apply to clients.
 6. Manipulate bolsters, pillows, plinths, mats, gait assistive devices, and other supports or chairs to aid in positioning, moving, or treating a patient effectively. (Lifting, pushing/pulling weights between 10-100 lbs)
 7. Competently perform and supervise cardiopulmonary resuscitation (C.P.R.) Using guidelines issued by the American Heart Association or the American Red Cross.
3. Small motor/hand skills:
 1. Legibly record thoughts for written assignments and tests.
 2. Legibly record/document evaluations, patient care notes, referrals, etc. in standard medical charts in hospital/clinical settings in a timely manner and consistent with the acceptable norms of clinical settings.
 3. Detect changes in an individual's muscle tone, skin quality, joint play, kinesthesia, and temperature to gather accurate objective evaluative information in a timely manner and sense that individual's response to environmental changes and treatment.
 4. Safely apply and adjust the dials or controls of therapeutic modalities
 5. Safely and effectively position hands and apply mobilization techniques
 6. Use a telephone
4. Visual acuity to:
 1. Read written and illustrated material in the English language, in the form of lecture handouts, textbooks, literature and patient's chart.
 2. Observe active demonstrations in the classroom.
 3. Visualize training videos, projected slides/overheads, X-ray pictures, and notes written on a blackboard/whiteboard.
 4. Receive visual information from clients, e.g., movement, posture, body mechanics, and gait necessary for comparison to normal standards for purposes of evaluation of movement dysfunctions.
 5. Receive visual information from treatment environment, e.g., dials on modalities and monitors, assistive devices, furniture, flooring, structures, etc.
 6. Receive visual clues as to the patient's tolerance of the intervention procedures. These may include facial grimaces, muscle twitching, withdrawal etc.

5. Auditory acuity to:
 1. Hear lectures and discussion in an academic and clinical setting.
 2. Distinguish between normal and abnormal breathing, lung and heart sounds using a stethoscope.
6. Communication:
 1. Effectively communicate information and safety concerns with other students, teachers, patients, peers, staff and personnel by asking questions, giving information, explaining conditions and procedures, or teaching home programs. These all need to be done in a timely manner and within the acceptable norms of academic and clinical settings.
 2. Receive and interpret written communication in both academic and clinical settings in a timely manner.
 3. Receive and send verbal communication in life threatening situations in a timely manner within the acceptable norms of clinical settings.
 4. Physical Therapy education presents exceptional challenges in the volume and breadth of required reading and the necessity to impart information to others. Students must be able to communicate quickly, effectively and efficiently in oral and written English with all members of the health care team.
7. Self care:
 1. Maintain general good health and self care in order to not jeopardize the health and safety of self and individuals with whom one interacts in the academic and clinical settings.
 2. Arrange transportation and living accommodations to foster timely reporting to the classroom and clinical assignments.

Affective learning skills

The student must be able to:

1. Demonstrate respect to all people, including students, teachers, patients and medical personnel, without showing bias or preference on the grounds of age, race, gender, sexual preference, disease, mental status, lifestyle, opinions or personal values.
2. Demonstrate appropriate affective behaviors and mental attitudes in order not to jeopardize the emotional, physical, mental, and behavioral safety of clients and other individuals with whom one interacts in the academic and clinical settings and to be in compliance with the ethical standards of the American Physical Therapy Association.
3. Sustain the mental and emotional rigors of a demanding educational program in physical therapy which includes academic and clinical components that occur within set time constraints, and often concurrently.
4. Acknowledge and respect individual values and opinions in order to foster harmonious working relationships with colleagues, peers, and patients/clients.