

Technical Standards & Essential Functions

Physical therapy is a profession that requires physical, mental, and emotional fitness. The program that you are entering is a generalist program. In the DPT curriculum, students will obtain the foundation of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors that are necessary for a successful career as a physical therapist. Technical standards reflect the abilities that a physical therapist must possess for safe and effective clinical practice, to effectively interpret information, and contribute to person-centered decisions across a broad spectrum of clinical situations in all settings.

The following technical standards, in conjunction with the academic standards with or without reasonable accommodation, are requirements for admission, promotion, and graduation. The term "candidate" refers to candidates for admission to the DPT program as well as current DPT students who are candidates for retention, promotion, and graduation from the University of Montana Physical Therapy program.

These technical standards are designed to ensure that graduates of the program are qualified as entry-level generalists in order to enter the field of physical therapy.

General Abilities:

Candidates are expected to possess the intellectual ability to learn, integrate, analyze, and synthesize data. They must be able to observe, listen, and distinguish scents, as well as have unimpaired equilibrium in order to perform essential tasks such as evaluation and treatment of patients. Their exteroceptive (touch, olfaction, movement, stereognosis, and vibratory) skills must be sufficient to perform activities required for a complete physical therapy education. Candidates must have motor function capabilities, physical endurance, and the emotional health to meet the demands of a generalist entry-level physical therapy education and the demands of total patient care. Candidates must be capable of punctual, consistent, and reliable attendance both in the didactic and clinical education component of the curriculum.

Observation:

The ability to observe is required for lectures, laboratory dissection of cadavers, and laboratory demonstrations. Observation requires the ability to observe, listen, and distinguish scents, as well as have unimpaired equilibrium, either through one's senses or alternative means, and the use of situational awareness as it relates to what is occurring. Candidates must be able to observe patients accurately and completely, both at a distance and up close, attending to both verbal and nonverbal communications. The candidate must be able to observe a patient accurately, observe digital and waveform digital and printed readings and other graphic images to assess and determine a patient's condition. Examples in which these observational skills are required include palpation of peripheral pulses, palpation of bony prominences and ligamentous structures, olfactory observation of patient for assessment of incontinence as well as infection of wounds, 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:

Candidates must be able to communicate with patients in order to elicit information, perceive nonverbal communications, describe changes in mood, communicate effectively and sensitively with patients and their families, as well as instruct patients and their families. Communication in oral, written, and electronic form with the health care team must be effective, efficient, and timely in order to communicate information that is critical for safe, appropriate, and time-sensitive care for patients.

Motor/Psycho-motor Function:

Candidates are required to have sufficient motor function to ascertain information from patients by auscultation, percussion, palpation, and movement facilitation. Intervention methods may include exercising, lifting, transferring of patients, and assisting during ambulation. These methods must be completed in a manner that assures the safety of the patient as well as the safety of the candidate. Candidates must have motor function sufficient to perform the movements required to provide both non-emergent and emergent treatment. Such skills require coordination of gross and fine muscular movements, equilibrium, sensation, and muscle strength.

Intellectual-conceptual, Integrative, and Quantitative Abilities:

Problem solving is a critical skill demanded of physical therapists, and requires conceptual, integrative, and quantitative thinking abilities. Candidates must be able to synthesize knowledge and integrate the relevant aspects of a patient's history, laboratory results and physical examination to provide an explanation for intervention by recalling and retaining information in an efficient and timely manner. Candidates need the ability to incorporate new information from peers, teachers, and research in formulating intervention plans. Candidates must be able to comprehend three-dimensional relationships and the spatial and functional relationships of structures, and to analyze and apply this information for problem solving and decision-making. They must be able to organize, prioritize, analyze, and evaluate detailed and complex information individually, in small groups, and in clinical settings, and do so within a limited timeframe. This must be completed in a timely fashion in order to ensure patients, their caregivers, and the healthcare team have the necessary information to address health issues that can, at times, be urgent or emergent.

Behavioral/Interpersonal Skills/Professionalism:

Candidates must have the emotional health to maximize their intellectual ability, exercise good judgment, and complete all responsibilities required for the evaluation and treatment of patients. They must be able to self-assess, accept criticism, and assume responsibility for maintaining professional behavior. Candidates must be able to develop mature, sensitive, and effective relationships with patients, families, caregivers, and colleagues in order to engage in effective interprofessional collaborative practice and provide training and support for families/caregivers. Candidates must be able to tolerate physical and emotional stress and continue to function effectively. Candidates must possess qualities of adaptability and flexibility and be able to function in an atmosphere of uncertainty. They must be motivated to serve and demonstrate a high level of compassion for others. Candidates are required to demonstrate integrity and act in a manner that demonstrates consciousness of the profession's core values. Candidates must possess sufficient interpersonal skills to interact positively with people from all levels of society, ethnic backgrounds, and belief systems.

All candidates for the Doctor of Physical Therapy program will have access to supportive services throughout the duration of the program. These supportive services include but are not limited to mental and physical healthcare services at the [Curry Health Center](#), disability-related services, support, and information at the [Office of Disability Equity](#), and student support through the [Student Advocacy Resource Center](#). Faculty and staff are able to provide direction to available resources on campus. However, it is the responsibility of the candidate to seek support from those resources if they are needed to meet the Technical Standards for the program.

All candidates for the Doctor of Physical Therapy program at the University of Montana will be required to sign a Technical Standards and Essential Functions agreement verifying that they understand and meet the technical standards listed above. Identifying the possession of such skills as outlined above does not guarantee successful completion of the physical therapy educational program.



Technical Standards & Essential Functions Agreement

Candidates who have been accepted into the University of Montana School of Physical Therapy Program must complete this form in order to officially enroll in the program. Enrollment in the professional phase of the program is contingent on receipt of this document. Please return this verification agreement to Caitlin Malinak along with your acceptance form.

I, _____ certify that I have read and understand the Technical Standards and Essential Functions for admission, progression, retention, and graduation in the Physical Therapy Program. I believe to the best of my knowledge that **I can meet each of these standards with or without accommodation**. I understand that successful completion of the DPT program is contingent upon my ability to perform all the skills, with or without accommodations, listed in the document.

I understand that if the need arises, I will contact the [Office for Disability Equity](#) (ODE) to submit documentation and have my request for accommodation reviewed.

Signature: _____

Date: _____