

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

Matriculation into the ACHE School of Physical Therapy 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 be able to utilize these functions at a sufficient level for completion of all required class/lab requirements as well as clinical hours. Observation modalities are essential for working with clients near or at a distance, in a busy clinical environment, while deciphering verbal, nonverbal and written communication. The candidate must have adequate vision, hearing, and touch to detect patient/client needs. The candidate must be able to read and interpret equipment, electrical modalities, patient charts, and diagnostic tests used in treatment of patients.

### **II. Communication**

Communication includes speech, language, reading, writing and computer literacy. Candidates must be able to demonstrate sufficient communication skills to effectively train others. Candidates must be able to respond appropriately to verbal and non-verbal communication through speech and written text on paper and/or on-line forms. Candidates must be able to communicate effectively, sensitively, and compassionately with patients and their families while appreciating cultural and ethnic diversity in order to elicit accurate information, give appropriate instruction, and document needed health care data.

Physical therapy education presents exceptional challenges in the volume and breadth of required reading and the necessity to impart information to others quickly, effectively, and efficiently in oral and written English. Candidates must be able to deliver and receive complex information both formally and informally in one-on-one and group settings, respond to questions from a variety of sources, and complete assignments according to directions in a complete and timely fashion.

### **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 required tasks in the clinic and academic settings including the ability to respond to and perform emergency procedures in a timely manner. Long periods of sitting/standing, pushing/pulling, twisting, kneeling, stooping/bending, lifting/carrying heavy objects and moving on a variety of surfaces/elevations are required in academic and clinical experiences. The candidate must demonstrate sufficient balance, coordination, freedom of movement, and fine motor skills to be able to participate in all classroom and clinical activities.

**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. These characteristics—with the ability to incorporate new information from peers, teachers, and the medical literature—are fundamental for the candidate in understanding theory, research literature, and principles that apply to physical therapy practice; thus enabling the candidate to apply inductive and deductive clinical reasoning to analyze and solve complex patient problems and/or formulate intervention plans in clinical settings.

In addition, the candidate must be able to comprehend three-dimensional and spatial relationships of structures; have sufficient computers skills; effectively engage in self-assessment of performance and constructive assessments of peers/faculty/clients; and identify significant findings based upon history, physical examination, interpretation of laboratory and diagnostic imaging data in a timely manner.

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

The candidate must be: dependable, punctual, and ethical; maintain professional demeanor in all situations; respect individuals across the lifespan and from various cultures; demonstrate integrity; recognize stressors and seek assistance as needed. Candidates must possess the emotional health required for full utilization of their intellectual abilities. They must exercise good judgment, develop effective relationships, and promptly complete all responsibilities attendant to the care of patients. The candidate must 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, accept constructive feedback and respond with suitable action, adapt to changing environments and function effectively under stress with time limitations.

The candidate must follow the APTA Code of Ethics, the Standards of Physical Therapy Practice, and the Core Values, located on the American Physical Therapy Association website at [www.apta.org](http://www.apta.org).

### **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.
- Ability to perform tasks under appropriate time limitations.
- 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.