



Doctor of Physical Therapy Program

## Physical Therapy Program Essential Functions and Technical Standards

The American Physical Therapy Association describes physical therapists as “licensed doctors who examine, diagnose, and treat movement dysfunction. They improve quality of life through prescribed exercise, hands-on care, and patient education.” The Doctor of Physical Therapy Program at Bellarmine University prepares students to enter the physical therapy profession as generalist practitioners who have the knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behaviors required for safe and effective practice. Essential functions are the academic, clinical, and interpersonal aptitudes and abilities that allow physical therapy students to complete the professional curriculum. Applicants and students are to review these essential functions and the associated technical standards of each essential function and determine whether they are capable of performing the tasks.

The Program is accredited and adheres to the standards and guidelines of the Commission on Accreditation for Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE). CAPTE requires that our graduates are able to deliver entry-level clinical services. The Program is responsible for selecting and evaluating its students and determining degree recipients. Admission and retention decisions are based on both academic and non-academic factors. The Program is responsible to the public to graduate individuals who are fully competent and capable of performing the essential functions and meeting the associated technical standards.

The Bellarmine DPT Program complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act and does not discriminate against qualified individuals with disabilities. A qualified person is one who has met academic standards and is able to meet the essential functions of a physical therapist with reasonable accommodations if needed. We are committed to making reasonable accommodations for students who have disabilities to allow for equal access and opportunity to perform the essential functions. If a student determines upon admission or at any point during matriculation they are unable to meet an essential function due to a disability, the student is responsible for notifying the Program Chair and the Accessibility Resource Center of that determination and to request reasonable accommodation(s).

Students must be capable of performing the following assessments and treatment procedures, with reasonable accommodations if needed:

| <b>ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES</b> , <i>including but not limited to:</i>   | <b>TREATMENT PROCEDURES</b> , <i>including but not limited to:</i>   |
|---|--|
| Aerobic Capacity/Endurance<br>Anthropometric characteristics<br>Assistive technology<br>Balance<br>Mental Functions<br>Cranial and peripheral nerve integrity<br>Gait<br>Joint Integrity and Mobility<br>Mobility (including Locomotion)<br>Muscle performance including Strength, Power, Endurance, Length<br>Pain<br>Posture<br>Range of Motion<br>Ventilation and Respiration or Gas Exchange<br>Reflex Integrity<br>Self-Care and Civic, Community, Domestic, Education, Social and Work Life<br>Sensory Integrity<br>Circulation (arterial, venous, lymphatic) | Airway Clearance Techniques<br>Motor Function Training (balance, gait, etc.)<br>Therapeutic Exercise<br>Patient Transfers<br>Functional Training<br>Assistive Technology: Prescription, Application, and as appropriate, Fabrication or Modification<br>Manual Therapy Techniques<br>Integumentary Repair and Protection<br>Biophysical Agents<br>Functional Training in self-care<br>Patient/Client Education |

Reasonable accommodation is a strategy agreed upon by the program and in consultation with the Accessibility Resource Center that enables the student to meet a technical standard. The faculty and student will work together, within the context of the agreed upon strategy, to provide the student with the opportunity to meet the technical standard. The presence of a disability does not exempt students from completing required tasks and reasonable accommodation does not guarantee a student will be successful in meeting the requirements of a course. Accommodations may be requested by a student with a disability if it does not fundamentally alter the nature of the program offered and does not impose an undue hardship. Accommodations cannot be applied retroactively

Students must successfully participate in clinical education experiences away from campus. Students must meet the technical standards and requirements of the program and whatever standards are in place by the clinical facility. We are committed to providing reasonable accommodations for students who have disabilities to allow for equal access and opportunity to perform the essential functions in the clinical setting. If a student determines that they need accommodation in the clinical setting due to a disability, the student is responsible for notifying the Program Chair, the Director of Clinical Education, and the Accessibility Resource Center of that determination and to request reasonable accommodation(s).

## Student Responsibilities Regarding Essential Functions:

1. Upon admission to the Doctor of Physical Therapy Program at Bellarmine University, all students must sign a form acknowledging they have read and understand the essential functions described and believe they can perform these functions
2. Students must demonstrate the ability to perform, or learn to perform, the essential functions
3. Students who may have concerns about meeting these expectations are required to meet with the Program Chair
4. If a student requires reasonable accommodations due to a disability, they must contact the Accessibility Resource Center ([Accessibility Resource Center \(bellarmine.edu\)](http://bellarmine.edu)) with required documentation
5. Students who have a change in status at any point during their matriculation in the program requiring accommodation due to a disability it is recommended students begin the process at the time of the status change
6. Due to the time required to properly evaluate a student's needs and implement reasonable accommodations, it is recommended students request accommodations as early as possible (preferably 30 days before the start of a course or clinical experience)

An offer of admission may be withdrawn and/or a student may be recommended for dismissal from the program if:

1. After a student has requested and received a reasonable accommodation, they are unable to meet program qualifications including these Essential Functions
2. It becomes apparent that the student cannot meet the Essential Functions even with reasonable accommodation
3. The requested accommodation(s) would fundamentally alter the nature of the Doctor of Physical Therapy Program at Bellarmine University, or
4. The requested accommodation(s) would create a significant risk of harm to the health or safety of others

**The Essential Functions are:**

1. Affective/behavioral skills
2. Cognitive/intellectual skills
3. Communication skills
4. Observation skills
5. Sensorimotor skills

To achieve the Essential Functions of the role of the physical therapist, the student must be capable of meeting the following Technical Standards (skills and tasks) within each Essential Function:

**Affective/Behavioral Skills:** use of social and professional skills to demonstrate

- Appreciation that one's values, attitudes, beliefs, emotions, and experiences affect one's perceptions and working relationships.
- Effective coping with the mental and emotional rigors of a demanding educational program including responding appropriately to physically, emotionally, or intellectually stressful situations in the classroom and in clinical experiences that must be handled swiftly and calmly.
- Ability to adjust to changing situations and uncertainty in academic and clinical environments.
- Appreciation and respect for individual, social, and cultural differences in values and opinions to foster harmonious working relationships.
- Appropriate behavior and attitudes to not jeopardize the safety and well-being of individuals.
- Ability to be self-reflective.
- Ability to be assertive and take initiative.
- Ability to reason morally and practice physical therapy in an ethical manner.
- Ability to receive constructive feedback and modify behaviors as needed without defensiveness.
- Ability to delegate and direct others and function effectively as a member of the healthcare team.
- Possession of attributes of accountability, altruism, compassion and caring, excellence, integrity, professional duty, social responsibility, flexibility, empathy, and motivation.
- Ability to maintain mature, sensitive, and effective relationships with others in academic and clinical environments.
- Willingness to learn and abide by professional standards of practice.
- Capable of punctual, consistent and reliable attendance both in the didactic and clinical education component of the curriculum

**Cognitive/Intellectual Skills:** use of perception, attention, memory, abstract thinking, critical thinking, measurement, calculation, analysis, and/or logical reasoning to demonstrate the ability to

- Analyze, integrate, and synthesize information across the cognitive, psychomotor and affective domains to solve problems, evaluate work, and generate new ways of processing or categorizing information.
- Use computers for searching, recording, storing, and retrieving information.
- Utilize knowledge of natural, social, and clinical sciences to develop appropriate interventions in a clinical setting.
- Comprehend three-dimensional relationships and understand spatial relationships of structure.
- Gather appropriate information during patient examinations and throughout patient management to make clinical decisions.
- Appraise information and determine appropriate tests and measures during patient examinations.
- Evaluate information obtained from the patient examination to formulate diagnoses, prognoses, anticipated outcomes and plans of care.
- Provide safe, effective patient care including but not limited to making necessary referrals to other healthcare professionals and applying universal precautions.
- Prescribe therapeutic home programs utilizing appropriate instructional methods for patients and/or care-partners.
- Problem-solve and critically think quickly, especially in emergency situations.
- Reflect on one's performance to accurately self-assess strengths and opportunities to improve.
- Develop a plan to address opportunities to improve.
- Adhere to legal standards.

**Communication Skills:** use of verbal (oral and written) and nonverbal abilities to

- Communicate effectively and efficiently (e.g., clearly express one's ideas and feelings, clear and audible verbalizations, appropriate use of medical or layman's terms to others)
- Complete written assignments
- Engage in respectful, non-judgmental interactions with individuals from various lifestyles, cultures, races, socioeconomic classes, and abilities.
- Actively listen in order to receive and interpret oral communication
- Establish rapport with classmates, faculty, administrator professionals, patients, care-partners, and colleagues
- Demonstrate interpersonal skills needed for effective participation in group meetings, classroom discussions, and interactions with others to deliver and receive complex information and to respond effectively to questions from a variety of sources.
- Elicit a thorough history from patients and care-partners
- Receive and send verbal communication in emergency situations in a timely manner.

- Perceive and interpret non-verbal communication to elicit information such as mood
- Receive, write, and interpret written communication in clinical and academic settings including:
  - Communicate clearly, legibly, and timely in written records, both handwritten and electronic;
  - complete forms according to directions;
  - possess computer literacy, including keyboard skills.

**Observation Skills:** use of vision, hearing, and somatic sensations (e.g., exteroception – touch, pain, temperature; proprioception – position, pressure, movement, stereognosis, vibration) in order to

- Obtain information from patients (such as but not limited to obtaining patient history, observation of movement, posture, skin integrity, heart/breath sounds, and signs of distress) and from the practice environment (such as but not limited to dials on equipment, diagnostic instruments, environmental cues (e.g., phones, paging systems, alarms), assistive devices, furniture placement, and floor surfaces).
- Effectively perform auscultation/auditory evaluation inclusive of, but not limited to, lung, heart, apical pulse, blood pressure, and joint and prosthetic noises
- Observe changes in patient status accurately at a distance and close at hand that may require activity modification or intervention (e.g., color of skin, breathing regularity, heart rate, skin temperature, muscle tone, facial expressions)
- Appreciate tactile feedback related to safe and accurate application of procedures (e.g., palpation, manual muscle testing, joint mobilization)
- Observe audiovisual presentations, written materials, and lecture and laboratory demonstrations, and laboratory dissection of cadavers
- Read information from diagnostic tests, equipment, and patient charts such as ECG and radiographs

**Sensorimotor Skills:** use of one's sensory and motor systems to demonstrate the ability to

- Assume and maintain a variety of positions such as sitting, standing, squatting, kneeling, reaching, walking, stair climbing, and movement of the trunk and neck in all directions
- Move oneself and the patient in a three-dimensional space in order to perform motor function tests and treatments
- Balance oneself and provide support and balance to patients on a variety of surfaces
- Ensure physical safety of a patient at all times
- Utilize olfactory ability to determine patient needs (e.g., wound/skin integrity, patient personal hygiene needs)
- Safely and effectively participate in patient/client examination and therapeutic intervention.

- Safely and effectively lift and manipulate body parts, assist patients in bed mobility, transfers, gait training on level and uneven surfaces/ramps/stairs, and during other movements
  - Safely lift up to 50 lbs independently
  - Safely lift up to 200 lbs with assistance
  - Safely push and pull up to 200 lbs occasionally
- Respond quickly to emergency situations by lifting/pushing/pulling patients, applying force to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation and assist with transporting patients
- Perform a variety of endurance activities for up to 8-12 hours/day with occasional rest breaks, including the ability to:
  - Sit for 2-10 hours daily, stand for 1-2 hours daily, and walk or travel for 2 hours daily
  - Frequently lift 10 lbs and occasionally lift up to 50 lbs
  - Occasionally carry up to 25 lbs while walking up to 50 ft
  - Frequently exert up to 75 lbs of push/pull forces for up to 50 ft., and occasionally exert 200 lbs for this distance
  - Frequently turn, bend, stoop, squat
  - Occasionally crawl, reach above shoulder level, and kneel
  - Frequently change position and location at speeds that permit safe handling of patients
  - Frequently stand and walk while providing support to a patient with a disability
  - Continuously use hands repetitively with a firm grasp and manual dexterity skills
  - Occasionally wear personal protective equipment to provide safe patient care
- Coordinate both gross and fine muscular movement, equilibrium, and the integration of sensory systems (e.g., touch, vision, smell).
  - Use bilateral fine motor control to safely and effectively manipulate small objects such as equipment dials, safety pins, tweezers, writing instruments, computers, and other tools used for examination or therapeutic intervention.
  - Utilize strong bilateral grasp during joint mobilization/manipulation and manually resisted exercises
  - Engage in physical therapy procedures that involve palpating, grasping, pushing, pulling, and holding.

Questions regarding the Essential Functions and Technical Standards should be directed toward the Program Chair and/or the Dean of the School of Movement and Rehabilitation Sciences.

**Revised 9/9/2024**



Doctor of Physical Therapy Program

## Physical Therapy Program Essential Functions and Technical Standards

Please print your first and last name: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructions: After reading the Essential Functions and Technical Standards, please sign one below.

I attest that I have read and understand the Essential Functions for the Doctor of Physical Therapy Program at Bellarmine University as set forth above, and that I possess the abilities to perform the technical standards within each essential function of the Physical Therapy Program without any accommodations. I understand that if at any time during matriculation in the program I determine I am not capable of performing an essential function, it is my responsibility to notify the Program Chair and Director of the Accessibility Resource Center to determine reasonable accommodations needed.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature and Date

OR

I attest that I have read and understand the essential functions for the Doctor of Physical Therapy Program at Bellarmine University as set forth above, and that I possess the abilities to perform the technical standards within each essential function of the Physical Therapy Program with reasonable accommodations. I understand that I will be referred to the Admissions Committee, with consultation from the Bellarmine University Accessibility Resource Center, to determine if the necessary accommodations are considered reasonable and if admission into the Bellarmine University Doctor of Physical Therapy Program will be offered.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature and Date