Technical Standards & Professional Behaviors

Technical Standards

The following skills and standards are the technical standards considered necessary for completion of the entry-level doctor of physical therapy degree program. These technical standards enable each graduate to subsequently enter clinical practice as an entry-level physical therapist. Students must also be in compliance with legal and ethical standards as set forth by the APTA Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice.

Students must be capable to meet these minimal standards, with or without reasonable accommodation, for successful completion of the program:

Observation
Observation requires the functional use of vision, hearing and somatic senses. A student must be able to observe lectures, laboratory dissection of cadavers, class demonstrations and clinical patients. Specifically, a student must be able to observe a patient’s movements accurately; anatomic structures; and numbers and patterns associated with diagnostic instruments and tests. Examples in which these observational skills are required include: palpation of peripheral pulses, bony prominences and ligamentous structures, visual and tactile evaluation for areas of inflammation and presence and degree of edema, and use of a stethoscope, sphygmomanometer and goniometer.

Communication
Communication includes speech, language, reading, writing and computer literacy. Students
must be able to relate and communicate effectively and sensitively with patients in order to elicit information regarding mood, activity, and posture, as well as to perceive non-verbal communications. Students must also be able to communicate effectively and efficiently with other members of the health care community to convey information essential for safe and effective care. Students must learn to recognize and respond promptly to emotional communications such as sadness, worry, agitation, and lack of comprehension of communication. Each student must be able to read and record observations and plans legibly, efficiently, and accurately in documents such as the patient record. Students must be able to prepare and communicate concise but complete summaries of individual encounters and complex, prolonged encounters, including hospitalizations. Student must be able to complete forms according to directions in a complete and timely fashion. Students must also have the ability to complete reading assignments and search and evaluate literature.

Sensory and Motor Function
Students must have sufficient motor function to elicit information from the patient examination by palpation, auscultation, percussion, manual positioning of body segments and other examination procedures. A student must be able to perform a basic screening and examination (physiological measures such as heart rate and respiration), diagnostic procedures (including but not limited to palpation, manual muscle testing, goniometry, sensory evaluation, gait analysis, and balance assessment), and evaluate EKGs and radiographic images. Students must be able to execute motor movements required to provide general care and emergency treatment to patients. Students are required to possess coordination of both gross and fine muscular movement, equilibrium, and the integrated use of touch and vision.

Intellectual, Conceptual, Integrative and Quantitative Abilities
A student must be able to effectively solve problems, and measure, calculate, reason, analyze, integrate and synthesize information in a timely fashion. Problem solving is a critical skill demanded of a physical therapist that requires all of these intellectual abilities. For example, the student must be able to synthesize knowledge and integrate the relevant aspects of a patient's history and examination findings to develop an effective treatment program in an efficient and timely manner. Good judgment in patient assessment, diagnostic and therapeutic planning is essential; students must be able to identify and communicate the limits of their knowledge to others when appropriate. Students must be able to interpret graphs and spatial relationships.

Behavioral and Social Skills and Attributes
A student must possess the emotional skills required for the full utilization of their intellectual abilities, the exercise of good judgment, and the prompt completion of all responsibilities as an entry-level physical therapist. Students must demonstrate the development of mature, sensitive and effective relationships with patients. They must demonstrate empathy, integrity, honesty, concern for others, good interpersonal skills, interest and motivation skills. Students must be able to tolerate physically and mentally taxing workloads and function effectively under stress. They must be able to adapt to a changing environment, display flexibility and learn to function in the face of uncertainties inherent in the clinical problems of patients, tired colleagues and personal fatigue. Students are expected to accept appropriate suggestions and criticism and, if necessary, respond by modification of behavior. As a component of their education, students must demonstrate ethical behavior in both the clinical and classroom setting.

It is our experience that a number of individuals with disabilities (as defined by Section 504 of
the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, as amended) are qualified to study and practice physical therapy with the use of reasonable accommodations. To be qualified for the UCSF|SFSU Physical Therapy program, those individuals must be able to meet both the academic standards and the technical standards of the program, with or without reasonable accommodations. We encourage students to engage in a conversation early with Student Disability Services and the PT program to discuss what accommodations might be possible given the program requirements. For further information regarding services and resources for students with disabilities and/or to request accommodations, please contact UCSF Student Disability Services at (415) 476-6595 or studentdisability@ucsf.edu.

Professional Behaviors

Students enrolled in the DPT program understand and accept the importance of professional behavior; ethical standards; honesty; commitment to learning; good interpersonal communication skills; respect for classmates, faculty, community educators and guest speakers; effective use of time and resources; constructive integration of feedback; problem solving; critical thinking; and stress management. Students are expected to accept responsibility for learning these standards and being held accountable for their actions. These professional behaviors will be emphasized and expected of all students throughout their graduate studies in the classroom, the clinic, and the community. Students will be asked to perform a self-assessment of professional behaviors during each year of the program. Evaluation of professional behaviors will also be integrated into the clinical evaluation process.

General professional behaviors expected of students include:

1. Demonstrates a receptive attitude towards suggestions, feedback and constructive criticism.

2. Uses suggestions to make appropriate changes in performance and/or behavior.

3. Uses discretion when discussing confidential information.

4. Demonstrates flexibility in accommodating unforeseen conditions or circumstances.

5. Offers assistance to others when appropriate.

6. 
Conveys appropriate self-confidence through verbal and nonverbal behavior.

7. Recognizes own limitations by asking for guidance and assistance when needed.

8. Demonstrates initiative to increase skills and knowledge by using appropriate resources.

9. Manages personal affairs in a manner that does not interfere with professional responsibilities.

10. Uses appropriate verbal and nonverbal communication skills with others.

11. Demonstrates respect, courtesy, and consideration for the rights and dignity of others.

12. Maintains a professional appearance and demeanor.

13. Manages and prioritizes tasks to meet responsibilities.

14. Accepts responsibility for personal mistakes and does not blame others or continually offer excuses.

Professional behaviors are demonstrated by:

1. Complying with University and PT program policies and procedures.

2. Exhibiting professional behaviors in accordance with the APTA Code of Ethics.

3. Meeting the requirements of all course instructors.

4. Solving problems through appropriate channels in an efficient and congenial manner.

5. Demonstrating professional behavior during all clinical affiliations.

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