

## Essential Functions of Doctor of Physical Therapy

Faulkner University is dedicated to graduating highly competent physical therapists who are knowledgeable and proficient to practice physical therapy in all healthcare settings at entry level. To accomplish this goal, the program has been designed to prepare students to treat individuals across the lifespan, with conditions affecting all body systems, in a variety of settings, independently or as part of a healthcare team. The program is an intensive course of study that includes didactic and clinical preparation. In order to function in complex and diverse environments, students must integrate knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors to make effective and safe clinical decisions. There are certain required abilities, standards and qualifications necessary to achieve satisfactory competence to practice physical therapy. These essential functions are not achieved solely by gaining academic knowledge. In addition to academic knowledge, the student must meet a combination of cognitive, psychomotor, affective, sensory, and communication skills that are required for entry level competency.

The Doctor of Physical Therapy Program at Faulkner University, is in compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504 subpart E, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act of 2008. The DPT Program at Faulkner University does not discriminate against qualified individuals with disabilities. The Essential Functions document allows each candidate/ student to evaluate his or her ability to successfully perform the specified tasks and complete the program.

The DPT program at Faulkner University requires students to demonstrate essential functions that are expected of all physical therapists. These functions are required to ensure the safety and wellbeing of patients/ clients, colleagues, faculty, and other health care professionals. In order to be admitted to and successfully complete the requirements for a doctorate degree in physical therapy, students must be able to perform, with or without reasonable accommodations, the essential functions listed below. These skills are performed in the learning environment such as classrooms and laboratories as well as community settings such as schools, hospitals and skilled nursing facilities. . The presence of a disability will not exempt students from completing required tasks and a reasonable accommodation will not guarantee that a student will be successful in meeting the requirements of any one course. During matriculation, if it becomes apparent to DPT faculty and staff that the student cannot perform these essential functions with reasonable accommodations; or the accommodations are not reasonable and would put an undue hardship on the university; or that the performance of these functions would significantly increase the risk the harm or jeopardize the safety of others, the program may withdraw the offer of admission to DPT program or dismiss the student from the program. The university cannot guarantee that the clinical education facility will be able to offer the same reasonable accommodations that are made available to the University.

### Cognitive Functions

The student must have the intellectual ability to solve problems by integrating a variety of complex information from different sources in a safe, appropriate, effective and timely manner.

1. Measure, calculate, analyze, comprehend, integrate, recall, retain and synthesize a large body of knowledge under time constraints.
2. Gather appropriate information from a variety of sources during patient encounters, including medical records, past medical history, interviews and examinations to make effective clinical decisions that consider the individual patient and their unique needs.
3. Critically analyze information from a variety of sources including research literature, textbooks, lectures, class discussions, patient demonstrations, medical history and laboratory classes in order to make effective clinical decisions.
4. Evaluate and assess information gathered during a patient encounter to formulate a diagnosis, prognosis, and plan of care and modify if appropriate.
5. Assess limitations of one's own knowledge and/or performance in order to provide safe, effective patient care and acknowledge the need to refer the patient/client to other healthcare professionals.
6. Select and disseminate appropriate, clear and concise information to all stakeholders, including patient/client, family, health care professionals, researchers, and payers.
7. Demonstrate ability to plan, organize, supervise and delegate in order to accomplish tasks and goals.
8. Effectively utilize technology such as computers and equipment for research, classroom assignments and clinical experiences, including electronic medical records.

### Motor Function

Students must have sufficient gross and fine motor skills, coordination and mobility to safely, accurately and efficiently perform all responsibilities of a physical therapist in all settings. This includes patients/clients across the lifespan and conditions involving all body systems.

1. Assume and maintain for extended periods a variety of positions and movements, including but not limited to sitting, standing, squatting, kneeling, reaching, walking, stair climbing and pushing and pulling.
2. Demonstrate appropriate and safe body mechanics and respond safely and effectively to sudden or unexpected movements of patients and/or colleagues.
3. Respond quickly to emergency situations and perform procedures such as lifting, pulling, or pushing patients/clients, transporting patients and applying force to perform CPR.
4. Safely, reliably, and efficiently perform required physical therapy screenings, examinations, and intervention procedures in order to evaluate and treat movement dysfunction and promote health and wellness.
5. Safely and reliably operate physical therapy related equipment, patient monitoring devices and therapeutic devices.
6. Demonstrate the required neuromuscular control and eye-hand coordination required to perform all physical therapy skills and procedures safely, reliably, and efficiently.

### Communication

Students must be able to communicate effectively utilizing the appropriate verbal and nonverbal, written and electronic communication that is professional and meets the needs of the target audience including but limited to: colleagues, health care professionals, patients/ clients, caregivers, faculty, policy makers and payers.

1. Comprehend and interpret the verbal, non-verbal, and written communications of others and respond in an appropriate, professional manner.
2. Gather a thorough history from patients and caregivers.
3. Communicate clearly, effectively and with sensitivity both verbally and non-verbally in English with a variety of audiences.
4. Demonstrate the ability to give and receive constructive feedback.
5. Actively listen to others and modify communication style to meet the needs of the audience.
6. Communicate complex information in an appropriate, efficient and clear manner to a variety of stakeholders, including but not limited to patients, caregivers, health care professionals and third party payers.
7. Demonstrate interpersonal skills as needed for productive classroom discussion, respectful interaction with classmates and faculty, and development of professional relationships with others.
8. Educate others by applying teaching and learning theories and methods in health care and community environments.
9. Complete reading and written assignments, document and maintain written records, participate in group activities, present oral and written reports and provide constructive feedback.

### Sensory

Students must be able to perceive all information necessary to provide effective patient care. Students will be required to utilize their visual, auditory and tactile sensations in order to assess patient status and detect any changes.

1. Observe audiovisual presentations, written materials, demonstrations and physical therapy procedures.
2. Observe activity and behavior as well as changes in patient/ client status from a distance as well as closely, in order to make clinical decisions.
3. Accurately monitor and interpret results from equipment and patient monitoring systems, including therapeutic exercise equipment, therapeutic modalities, EKGs and radiographs.
4. Ability to perform auscultation and auditory evaluation including but not limited to lungs, heart, pulse, blood pressure, joint noises and prostheses.
5. Appreciate tactile feedback related to safe and accurate application of procedures such as palpation, manual muscle testing, and joint mobilization.
6. Demonstrate ability to discern changes in body structures through observations and palpation of body surfaces.
7. Perceiving appropriate tactile feedback in order to perform examinations, procedures and skills that require application of various pressures, such as joint mobilization, palpation and manual muscle testing.
8. Recognize the signs of disease and impairments through the use of multiple senses simultaneously including observation, palpation, smell (signs of infection or poor hygiene) auditory information (voice, lungs and heart sounds)

## Affective

Students must be able to demonstrate emotional intelligence, maturity and respect for others and their differences. Students must be able to maintain effective, professional relationships with others, and be able to engage with sensitivity, honesty, compassion, and integrity.

1. Act in an ethical, legal, and responsible manner consistent with the Core Values and Professional Behaviors outlined by the American Physical Therapy Association.
2. Recognize and demonstrate respect for cultural, ethnic, ethical, and value differences among students, faculty, staff, patients, caregivers, and other health care professionals
3. Develop professional, empathic relationships with individuals from a variety of backgrounds, ages, and needs, based on mutual trust.
4. Develop and maintain effective, respectful working relationships with professional colleagues, peers, patients, families, and the general public.
5. Work effectively as part of a team, whether at school, in the community or as part of an interdisciplinary team.
6. Demonstrate flexibility and adaptability to changing situations and uncertainty.
7. Maintain personal hygiene at all times.
8. Recognize the impact of their own personal values, beliefs, emotions and experiences affect perceptions and relationships with others.
9. Respond appropriately to stressful situations in the classroom and clinic.
10. Value the importance of the interprofessional team to the health and function of individual and society.
11. Effectively manage multiple demands and deadlines effectively both in the academic, clinical and personal arena.
12. Accept responsibility for all actions, reactions and inactions.
13. Value the importance of personal, emotional, spiritual and professional development in professional practice.
14. Discern important environmental cues in a complex and distracting environment.

## Professional Conduct

Students must possess the ability to practice in an ethical, legal and responsible manner. Students must be willing to learn and adopt professional standards of conduct as well as the Code of Conduct for the University. Students must abide by the core values of the profession including: compassion, integrity, altruism, professional duty, excellence, accountability, and social responsibility. Students must be able to engage in the care of all patients, in all settings.

## Resources

1. American Physical Therapy Association. Guide to Physical Therapist Practice. Alexandria, Virginia, 2008.
2. American Physical Therapy Association. Minimum Required Skills of Physical Therapist Graduates at Entry Level. BOD G11-05-20-449.
3. Ingram, D. (1997) Opinions of physical therapy education program directors on essential functions. Physical Therapy. 77: 37-45.

4. Rangel A, Wittry A, Boucher B, Sanders B. A survey of essential functions and reasonable accommodations in physical therapist education programs. (2001) Journal of Physical Therapy Education. 15: 11-19.