

**Technical Standards
University of North Dakota
Department of Physical Therapy**

The physical therapy program at the University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences has a responsibility to society to graduate the best possible future physical therapists. All graduates of the physical therapy program must have knowledge, skills, and attitudes to function in a wide variety of clinical situations and to render a wide spectrum of patient care. The Department of Physical Therapy's Technical Standards are designed to ensure the graduation of capable, well-rounded future clinicians.

It is the experience of the Department of Physical Therapy that a number of individuals with disabilities (as defined by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act) are qualified to study and practice physical therapy with the use of reasonable accommodations. To be qualified for the study of physical therapy, those individuals must be able to meet both the department's academic standards and technical standards with or without reasonable accommodation. Accommodation is viewed as a means of assisting students with disabilities to meet the standards by providing them with an equal opportunity to participate in all aspects of each course or clinical experience. Reasonable accommodation is not intended to guarantee that students will be successful in meeting the requirements of the course or the clinical experiences.

I. Overview of Technical Standards

Beyond the stated admission requirements, students must demonstrate with or without accommodations:

1. Adequate gross and fine motor ability to perform examination and intervention procedures. The physical therapy student must be able to:
 - Safely transfer individuals or equipment using proper body mechanics or instruct others in the proper procedures
 - Provide for individual's safety and well-being in all therapeutic activities
2. Adequate sensory and cognitive skills to examine, evaluate, diagnose, and implement intervention strategies as applied to physical therapy.
3. Critical thinking and problem-solving abilities leading to mature, sensitive, and effective decisions in the academic and clinical environments.
4. Effective communication with peers, faculty, patients, clients, family members, caregivers, other health care providers, consumers, and payers using verbal, nonverbal, and written formats.
5. Mature behavioral and social attributes with the ability to:
 - Prioritize, organize, and effectively manage tasks within an appropriate timeframe
 - Establish and maintain mature, sensitive, and effective relationships with peers, faculty, patients, clients, family members, caregivers, other health care providers, consumers, and payers
 - Maintain intellectual and emotional stability and maturity under stress, while also maintaining appropriate performance standards

6. Sensitivity to individual and cultural differences in all professional interactions.

II. Description of Technical Standards

These skills apply to all candidates for admission and students within the professional program. The Committee on Admissions will consider for admission applicants who demonstrate the ability to perform, or to learn to perform, the essential skills listed in the Technical Standards. The Department must ensure that patients are not placed in jeopardy by students with impaired intellectual, physical, or emotional functions. Prospective and current students will be evaluated on their academic record in addition to their physical and emotional capacities to meet the full requirements of the curricula and to graduate and practice as skilled and effective professionals.

A candidate of or student in the curriculum must have the abilities and skills to perform in a reasonably independent manner. While attempts to develop creative ways of opening the curriculum to competitive qualified individuals with a disability is possible, the Department must maintain the integrity of its curriculum and preserve those standards deemed essential to the education of a student earning a Doctor of Physical Therapy degree.

To facilitate compliance with the Technical Standards developed by the Department of Physical Therapy, the following skills are set forth as examples. These are not intended to be all inclusive, rather present a basic understanding of each standard.

1. **Motor (gross and fine):** Candidates/students must have sufficient motor function to perform evaluation, treatment, and emergency procedures without injury to the patient or self. Students must be able to use their abilities to move to successfully complete classroom requirements, perform a physical examination, and provide physical therapy intervention for standard treatment, as well as to provide care during emergency situations. Please note that the terms “frequently” (frequent repetition for 1/3 to 2/3 of a full work shift) and “occasionally” (repetition for up to 1/3 of a full work shift) have been used. The following specific movement abilities are required:
 - When not participating in clinical education, ability to sit between 2 to 10 hours daily.
 - When not participating in clinical education, ability to stand for 1 to 2 hours daily.
 - When not participating in clinical education, ability to walk intermittently for up to 2 hours daily.
 - When participating in clinical education, ability to stand or walk for at least 7 hours daily and to sit for at least 1 hour daily – modifiable according to the schedule of the specific facility to which the student is assigned.
 - Ability to relocate living arrangements outside the area in which the student customarily lives to complete 1 or more clinical rotations of up to 10 weeks in duration.
 - Frequently lift items less than 10 pounds and occasionally lift items between 10 and 50 pounds.
 - Carry up to 25 pounds while walking up to 50 feet.
 - Frequently exert 14 pounds of push/pull forces to objects up to a distance of 50 feet and occasionally exert 27 pounds of push/pull forces for distances of up to 50 feet.
 - Frequently twist, bend, stoop, and squat.

- Depending on what class is being taken, or depending on what setting a student is placed for clinical rotation, either occasionally or frequently kneel, crawl, climb stools, reach above shoulder level.
 - Frequently move from one location to another and from one position to another at a speed that permits safe handling of classmates and patients. Handling a workload efficiently and safely requires the ability to respond promptly with appropriate movement patterns.
 - In most cases, when required to travel from one floor to another in a building, a student will have access to an elevator. However, students must have the ability to negotiate stairs and uneven terrain when elevators are not available (for example, when participating in clinical assignments in patient homes) or when assisting patients to learn how to safely negotiate stairs.
 - Frequently use the hands with repetitive motions using a simple grasp and using a firm grasp and manual dexterity skills.
 - Frequently coordinate verbal and manual activities with large movement activities.
 - Ability to assess strength of patient.
 - Ambulation ability and balance sufficient to aid patients with or without assistive devices during transfers and gait training.
 - Ability to manipulate small items, dials, lines, tubes, etc. without disruption of care or injury to patient/self.
 - Upper and lower extremity strength and upright posture sufficient to perform patient evaluation/intervention, respond to emergency situations, and perform CPR.
2. **Visual Integration:** Adequate vision to be able to:
- Distinguish changes in symmetry, color, texture of body structures.
 - Determine range of motion, edema, joint effusion, etc.
 - Integrate examination and intervention techniques.
 - Read charts, graphs, instrument scales, etc. in whatever form presented.
 - Observe a patient at a distance and close at hand.
 - Observe demonstrations, experiments, laboratory exercises.
3. **Sensation:** Enhanced ability in sensory skills is essential for a physical therapist. Tactile and proprioceptive abilities are necessary to perform a complete and thorough examination of and intervention for the patient including:
- Changes in skin temperature, texture.
 - Palpation of body structures, distinguish body parts by touch.
 - Assessment of arthro- and osteokinematic joint movement.
 - Ability to provide appropriate resistance, timing, pressure, etc. during examination and intervention techniques.
4. **Cognitive Skills:** The candidate/student must have the:
- Ability to problem-solve one or more problems within specific timeframes (which are often very short).
 - Ability to function effectively using all necessary cognitive and physical skills under normal working conditions and timeframes.
 - Ability to meet deadlines.

5. **Critical Thinking and Problem Solving:** The candidate/student must possess the abilities to critically think and problem solve both in the classroom and in clinical settings. These skills include:
 - Ability to comprehend and apply mathematical principles for statistical concepts and solving clinical problems.
 - Ability to integrate examination findings into a comprehensive intervention strategy for the patient.
 - Ability to assimilate large amounts of material communicated through lecture, discussion, readings, demonstrations, and practice.
 - Ability to utilize statistical information to interpret published reports regarding efficacy of care and apply those findings in a rational manner.
 - Ability to develop research questions, collect data, perform and interpret statistical calculations, and formulate outcomes in a logical manner.

6. **Communication:** The candidate/student must be able to:
 - Speak, hear, observe to gain information, examine patients, describe status of patient, changes in mood, activity, posture, etc.
 - Perceive non-verbal communication.
 - Speak, read, and write in English in an effective and professional manner to communicate to all members of the health care team.
 - Maintain appropriate written records.

7. **Behavioral and Social:** The candidate/student must:
 - Demonstrate sufficient emotional and mental health to fully utilize his/her intellectual and motor abilities.
 - Exercise sound judgment in all situations, including under stress.
 - Be able to promptly complete all duties involved in examination, evaluation, intervention, and discharge planning.
 - Be able to develop mature/sensitive/empathetic relationships with the patient, family, caregivers, and other members of the health care team.
 - Have the ability to cope with and tolerate heavy workloads, demanding patients, life-threatening clinical situations, rapidly changing environments and conditions; display flexibility; and function appropriately with the uncertainties involved in patient care.
 - Maintain alertness and concentration during an 8- to 12-hour work period.
 - Recognize and respond appropriately to potentially hazardous situations.
 - Be able to work independently and with others under time constraints.
 - Prioritize requests and work concurrently on at least two different tasks.
 - Project image of professionalism at all times.

Students who need accommodations should contact Disability Support Services at 701-777-3425 or refer to their website at: <http://www.und.edu/dept/dss/toc.htm> for more information on the services offered at the University of North Dakota.