

# COLLEGE OF SAINT MARY

## Doctor of Physical Therapy Program Essential Functions Policy

The Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) program at College of Saint Mary (CSM) is committed to developing and preparing future physical therapists for a professional career treating people across the lifespan with conditions affecting all body systems. Through clinical experiences, the DPT program expects graduate students to assimilate knowledge and skills and to develop clinical reasoning skills in preparation for autonomous or collaborative practice.

The DPT program requires students to engage in physical therapy experiences that are complex, diverse, and specialized in order to reach competency in the essential physical therapy skills and function. For successful completion of the DPT program, it is required that DPT students satisfactorily perform functions related to a combination of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor abilities. The DPT program complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, with the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act of 1990, and with the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act of 2008. The DPT program does not discriminate against qualified individuals with disability.

Essential functions apply to the students' performance throughout didactic coursework, including labs, and clinical education. If it becomes apparent to DPT faculty and staff that a student cannot perform the essential functions even with reasonable accommodations; or that the required accommodations are not reasonable and would cause undue hardship to the University; or that fulfilling the functions would create a significant risk of harm to the health or safety of others, then the DPT program may withdraw an offer of admission or may dismiss a student from the program. Clinical education sites may or may not be able to offer the same reasonable accommodations that are made available by the University.

### ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS

Qualifications that are essential to demonstrate competence in physical therapy--with or without reasonable accommodations--also are needed for successful admission and academic continuance by candidates, in addition to the College Code of Conduct. These expected demonstrable qualifications include but are not limited to the following:

#### **Psychomotor Skills**

*Students shall have sufficient psychomotor function so that they are able to execute physical therapy skills competently and safely perform all aspects of patient care across the lifespan and conditions involving all body systems. Expected demonstrable qualifications include but are not limited to:*

1. Performing CPR and first aid;
2. Responding appropriately to emergency and unexpected situations;
3. Safely, reliably, and efficiently performing required physical therapy screens, examinations, and intervention procedures in order to evaluate and treat functional limitations;
4. Possessing the physical capacity to sustain required performance in all patient-care tasks that do not compromise patient safety; and
5. Possessing the required neuromuscular control and eye-hand coordination required to perform all physical therapy skills and procedures safely, reliably, and efficiently.

#### **Affective Skills**

*Students shall possess the emotional health and intellectual abilities to ensure good judgment, maintain safe and appropriate responses in the clinical environment, and responsibly manage patient care. Expected demonstrable qualifications include but are not limited to:*

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1. Receiving constructive feedback without being defensive and responding to challenging situations professionally;
2. Maintaining mature, sensitive, and effective relationships with patients, students, faculty, staff, and other professionals in academic and clinical environments.
3. Effectively collaborate and participate within interdisciplinary teams;
4. Possessing the mental capacity and emotional stability to sustain performance under stress and adaptability to changing environments;
5. Practicing physical therapy ethically and reasoning morally;
6. Possessing the ability to be self-reflective; and
7. Respecting individuals from a variety of social, lifestyle, emotional, cultural, and intellectual backgrounds regardless of setting.

## **Cognitive Skills**

*Students shall possess the intellectual ability to make safe, appropriate and effective judgments about patient care through demonstrating analytical, integrative, and problem-solving abilities. Expected demonstrable qualifications include but are not limited to:*

1. Recalling and retaining necessary information to support safe and effective physical-therapy services;
2. Conducting effective clinical examinations in order to make appropriate clinical decisions related to diagnosis, prognosis, and plans of care;
3. Performing examination and intervention skills accurately, consistently, and appropriately; and
4. Effectively determining safety concerns, knowledge limitations, or red flags to treatment and responding appropriately.

## **Sensory Abilities**

*Students shall have the ability to perceive all information required to provide effective patient care including functional use of hearing, tactile sensations, vision, and olfaction. Multi-sensory processing is necessary to respond effectively to challenges in the clinical environment with quick decision-making. Expected demonstrable qualifications include but are not limited to:*

### **Auditory**

1. Maintaining conversation with individuals;
2. Effectively managing auditory evaluation including but not limited to auscultation of heart and lungs, blood pressure, and joint noises; and
3. Hearing environmental cues including but not limited to phones/pagers, overhead pages, and monitor alarms.

### **Tactile**

1. Perceiving appropriate tactile feedback in order to safely perform physical therapy skills that require the application of gradient pressures during examination and intervention, including but not limited to joint mobilizations, manual muscle testing, and palpation; and
2. Perceiving appropriate tactile feedback in order to manage therapeutic equipment safely and effectively.

### **Visual**

1. Seeing and participating effectively in didactic courses; and
2. Effectively managing patients and requirements for clinical operation both near and from a distance.

### **Olfaction**

1. Assessing skin integrity and presence of infection during wound-care assessment; and
2. Assessing the needs of the patient related to hygiene and overall welfare.

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## **Communication Skills**

*Students shall have the communication skills, both written, verbal and non-verbal, that support success in professional behaviors, patient management, and patient safety. Expected demonstrable qualifications include but are not limited to:*

1. Developing rapport and awareness of others' needs;
2. Actively listening and modifying communication to meet the needs of the audience;
3. Appropriately interpreting and responding to verbal and non-verbal messages;
4. Using appropriate grammar, spelling, and punctuation in written communication; and
5. Communicating effectively and appropriately within a team.

## **Questions**

If you have any questions about this document, please notify:

Program Director, Dr. Kimberly Varnado (402-399-2305 or [kvarnado@csm.edu](mailto:kvarnado@csm.edu))

or

Director of Clinical Education, Dr. Andrea Kessler (402-399-2335 or [akessler@csm.edu](mailto:akessler@csm.edu)).

## **References**

American Physical Therapy Association. Minimum Required Skills of Physical Therapist Graduates at Entry Level. BOD G11-05-20-449.

American Physical Therapy Association. Guide to Physical Therapist Practice. Alexandria, Virginia, 2008.