

UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA MEDICAL CENTER  
COLLEGE OF ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSIONS

PHYSICAL THERAPY EDUCATION

**ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS**

The functions are presented in two sections: 1) Physical Therapy knowledge, skills and abilities, and 2) Generic Abilities.

It is the expectation of the Division of Physical Therapy Education that physical therapy students must be able to perform, with or without reasonable accommodations, each of these expected essential functions in order to fully participate in our program and successfully complete the graduation requirements for a Doctor of Physical Therapy degree. Reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities will be provided so they can meet these essential functions. Whether or not a requested accommodation is reasonable will be determined on an individual basis in consultation with the UNMC Coordinator, Services for Students with Disabilities, Counseling and Student Development Center.

**SECTION I PHYSICAL THERAPY KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ABILITIES**

**A. APPLICATION OF ACADEMIC KNOWLEDGE (Cognitive Skills)**

**Performance** *The student possesses the appropriate didactic knowledge and demonstrates the ability to effectively transfer this knowledge to the clinical practice of physical therapy.*  
**Outcome:** *The student demonstrates a system for acquiring and using new knowledge from clinical experiences.*

**Performance Components:**

1. Comprehend, retain, synthesize, integrate and retrieve complex information from written materials, demonstration, lectures, class discussion, laboratory practice sessions, simulated patients, and clinical experiences.
2. Applies knowledge by demonstrating effective clinical decision-making skills, including clinical reasoning, clinical judgment, and reflective practice, while considering the patient/client perspective.
3. Effectively demonstrates and/or verbalizes the integration of newly learned theories and techniques with previously acquired knowledge.
4. Demonstrates ability to generalize to solve new clinical problems by integrating practical experience and didactic knowledge.

**B. PLAN OF CARE/INTERVENTION**

**Performance** *The student collaborates with patients, family members, payers and other professionals to determine a plan of care that is realistic, acceptable, safe, and effective. The plan defines achievable patient outcomes within available resources and incorporates appropriate functional goals with specific time frames. The plan is adjusted appropriately based on the patient's response.*

### **Performance Components:**

1. Appropriately considers etiology and clinical course of patient's condition in physical therapy plan of care.
2. Demonstrates sound clinical decision making when planning physical therapy plan of care, with appreciation of known indications and contraindications.
3. Plans physical therapy plan of care for patient/client/colleague based on appropriate examination, evaluation, diagnosis and prognosis history, evaluation findings, problem list and goals.
4. Sets appropriate and realistic short term goals collaboratively with the patient/client/colleague with objective measures and specific time frames.
5. Sets appropriate and realistic long term goals collaboratively with the patient/client/colleague with objective measures and specific time frames.
6. Relates short term goals to long term goals.
7. Re-evaluates goals and physical therapy plan-of-care on a timely basis, making appropriate modifications.
8. Conducts discharge planning, including proper patient/client instructions and education, arranging for equipment and home needs, follow-up and referral.

### **C. EXAMINATION PROCEDURES**

**Performance** *The student is able to examine and re-examine patients by obtaining pertinent history from the patient or other relevant sources and by selecting and conducting relevant and appropriate tests and measures. The student is able to demonstrate clinical decision making skills in expressing an evaluation, probable diagnosis and prognosis related to examination findings.*

**Outcome:** *The student is able to examine and re-examine patients by obtaining pertinent history from the patient or other relevant sources and by selecting and conducting relevant and appropriate tests and measures. The student is able to demonstrate clinical decision making skills in expressing an evaluation, probable diagnosis and prognosis related to examination findings.*

### **Performance Components:**

1. Takes appropriate history (content and length).
2. Chooses appropriate examination procedures based on referral, chart review, history and initial observations.
3. Prepares and positions patient appropriately.
4. Explains procedure(s) and instructs the patient at their level of understanding.
5. Assesses appropriate gross function prior to specific testing.
6. Palpates appropriate areas.
7. Utilizes appropriate hand and body placement and movement.
8. Chooses and utilizes appropriate equipment in evaluation procedures.
9. Modifies procedure as the patient's condition warrants.
10. Performs the necessary components of the evaluation.
11. Assesses/compares affected and unaffected body segments (left & right or proximal & distal).
12. Accurately assesses or grades the patient's response.
13. Completes procedure within a reasonable length of time.
14. Accurately interprets evaluation findings to determine probable diagnosis, prognosis and plan of care.
15. Safely, reliably and efficiently examines a patient, client or other student by obtaining a relevant history, by performing relevant systems reviews, and by performing appropriate tests and measures that include, but are not limited to:
  - a) aerobic capacity and endurance
  - b) anthropometric characteristics
  - c) arousal, mentation and cognition
  - d) assistive and adaptive devices
  - e) community and work reintegration
  - f) cranial nerve integrity
  - g) environmental, home and work barriers
  - h) ergonomics and body mechanics
  - i) gait, assisted locomotion and balance

- j) integumentary integrity
- k) joint integrity and mobility
- l) motor function
- m) muscle performance (including strength, power and endurance)
- n) neuromotor development and sensory integration
- o) orthotic, protective and supportive devices
- p) pain
- q) posture
- r) prosthetic requirements
- s) range-of-motion
- t) reflex integrity
- u) activities of daily living and instrumental activities of daily living
- v) sensory integrity
- w) ventilation, respiration and circulation (vital signs)

#### D. INTERVENTIONS

**Performance** *The student provides direct physical therapy intervention in a safe, efficient manner, to achieve patient outcomes based on examination findings and on the impairment, functional limitations and disability of the patient. The physical therapy intervention is adjusted appropriately based on the patient's response. Treatment intervention includes the provision of patient appropriate instruction.*

##### **Performance Components:**

1. Prepares and positions patient appropriately.
2. Explains and instructs the patient regarding treatment procedure to his/her level of understanding (including frequency, duration and intensity if necessary).
3. Administers intervention procedures within the tolerance of the patient.
4. Chooses and utilizes appropriate hand placement/or body position to obtain desired results.
5. Chooses and utilizes appropriate equipment according to established guidelines.
6. Chooses and utilizes appropriate stimuli to enhance patient response or learning (i.e., voice intonation, tactile, and visual cues, feedback and practice schedule).
7. Varies treatment procedure as the patient's condition progresses.
8. Routinely assesses or grades the patient's response to treatment, progressing or modifying treatment accordingly.
9. Completes procedure within a reasonable length of time.
10. Prepares and assesses home program exercises and instructions in accordance with patient's ability to understand and perform and based on the home environment.
11. Safely, reliably and efficiently provides a specific physical therapy intervention that includes but is not limited to:
  - a) airway clearance techniques
  - b) debridement and wound care
  - c) electrotherapeutic modalities
  - d) functional training in community and work (job, school or play) reintegration (including instrumental activities of daily living, work hardening, and work conditioning)
  - e) functional training in self care and home management (including activities of daily living and instrumental activities of daily living)
  - f) manual therapy techniques
  - g) patient-related instruction
  - h) physical agents and mechanical modalities
  - i) prescription, application, and as appropriate fabrication of adaptive, assistive, orthotic, protective and supportive devices and equipment
  - j) therapeutic exercise (including aerobic conditioning)

## **SECTION II GENERIC ABILITIES**

### **A. INTERPERSONAL SKILLS**

1. Shows respect for and interest in others by listening actively and receptively.
2. Interacts tactfully with patients and health care personnel.
3. Remains open minded to diverse opinions and views.
4. Attempts to reach a compromise when there is disagreement.
5. Maintains composure with new or difficult situations.
6. Demonstrates appropriate self confidence and assertiveness as appropriate.
7. Establishes appropriate rapport/trust with patients, care givers and colleagues.
8. Demonstrates flexibility and adaptability.

### **B. PROFESSIONAL/ETHICAL**

1. Maintains professional demeanor (i.e., appearance, tact, interactive style, mannerism).
2. Abides by the APTA code of ethics.
3. Abides by facility policies and procedures.
4. Understands and maintains appropriate relationships to patients, support personnel, and other health care professionals.
5. Maintains confidentiality.
6. Does not discriminate in the provision of quality care to all patients.

### **C. COMMITMENT TO LEARNING**

1. Takes personal responsibility for learning.
2. Routinely formulates appropriate questions and researches answers independently.
3. Identifies and utilizes available learning resources.
4. Demonstrates the desire to learn the rationale behind the facts.
5. Is open to new perspectives for interpretation of theories/situations.
6. Demonstrates the ability to think critically about problems, treatment approaches, etc..

### **D. COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

1. Speaks at patients' communication level, assessing patients' level of understanding and adjusting if necessary for effective communication/education.
2. Verbally communicates knowledge, ideas and views in a clear, effective manner.
3. Responds appropriately (not defensively) to questioning/confrontations.
4. Allows others to complete their thoughts before speaking.
5. Demonstrates appropriate non-verbal cues and is alert to and responds to the non-verbal cues of others.
6. Written work is grammatically correct (i.e., spelling, punctuation, sentence structure).
7. Writes notes that are accurate, complete (in format and content), informative and consistent with the expectations of the clinical site.

### **E. SUPPORTIVE PERSONNEL**

1. Appropriately utilizes clerical assistance.
2. Assigns appropriate tasks to supportive personnel and provides instructions as necessary.
3. Provides effective feedback to supportive personnel regarding their task performance.
4. Works in collaboration with supportive personnel.

## **F. EFFECTIVE USE OF TIME AND RESOURCES**

1. Completes assigned tasks in a timely fashion.
2. Organizes time appropriately/effectively sets priorities.
3. Sets realistic goals of self.
4. Coordinates scheduling to be most effective for patients, and/or other disciplines involved in patients' care.
5. Uses limited resources creatively and effectively.

## **G. RESPONSIBILITY**

1. Demonstrates initiative in performing routine tasks.
2. Demonstrates dependability.
3. Demonstrates punctuality.
4. Provides safe and secure environment for patients.
5. Assumes additional responsibility as assigned in the event of unforeseen circumstances.

## **H. USE OF CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK**

1. Receptive and open to feedback, not defensive, appropriately responds to and utilizes feedback from patients, supervisors and other professionals.
2. Actively seeks feedback and help.
3. Demonstrates self-reflective behaviors as evidenced by ability to critique own performance and outline plan for change as necessary.
4. Establishes personal goals based on feedback.
5. Provides appropriate and timely feedback to patients and clinical instructor(s).

## **I. JUDGMENT/DECISION MAKING/PROBLEM SOLVING**

1. Gathers all available data necessary to make a decision, before making a decision.
2. Analyzes the gathered data prior to making a decision.
3. Makes a decision based on gathered facts.
4. Is able to verbally describe the thought process used in making a decision.
5. Recognizes and differentiates among facts, opinions and assumptions.
6. Distinguishes relevant from the irrelevant to see relationships and patterns.

Physical Therapy Education  
Performance Standards (1998); modified (2004, 2010)

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Any student who wishes to obtain further information regarding disability accommodations, please contact:

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Services for Students with Disabilities  
984255 Nebraska Medical Center  
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