

**Texas Woman's University
School of Physical Therapy**

PHYSICAL THERAPY PROFESSION AND DEGREE PROGRAM "ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS"

Admission, Retention, and Graduation Standards

Introduction

The Successful completion of a professional physical therapist education program requires the acquisition of general knowledge and basic skills used to work in a variety of clinical settings, with all people, regardless of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, or disability. The education of a physical therapist requires assimilation of knowledge, acquisition of skills and development of judgment through patient care experience in preparation for independent and appropriate decisions required in practice. The current practice of physical therapy emphasizes collaboration among physical therapists, other allied health care professionals, the patient, and the patient's family.

Policy

The Texas Woman's University School of Physical Therapy endeavors to select applicants who have the ability to become highly competent physical therapists. As an accredited physical therapy program, the Texas Woman's University curriculum in Physical Therapy adheres to the standards and guidelines of the Commission on Accreditation for Physical Therapy Education. Within these guidelines, Texas Woman's University School of Physical Therapy has the freedom and ultimate responsibility for the selection and evaluation of its students, the design, implementation, and evaluation of its curriculum, and the determination of who should be awarded a degree. Admission and retention decisions are based not only on prior satisfactory academic achievement, but also on non-academic factors which serve to insure that the candidate can complete the essential functions of the academic program required for graduation.

The School has the responsibility to the public to assure that its graduates can become fully competent and caring physical therapists, capable of doing benefit and not harm. Thus, it is important the persons admitted possess the intelligence, integrity, compassion, humanitarian concern, and physical and emotional capacity necessary to practice physical therapy.

The School of Physical Therapy, as part of Texas Woman's University, is committed to the principle of equal opportunity. The School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, or disability. When requested, the University will provide reasonable accommodation to otherwise qualified students with disabilities.

Program

Technical standards, as distinguished from academic standards refer to those physical, cognitive, and behavioral abilities required for satisfactory completion of all aspects of the curriculum, and the development of professional attributes required by the faculty of all students at graduation.

The essential functions and abilities required by the curriculum are in the following areas:

motor, sensory, communication, intellectual (conceptual, integrative), and quantitative abilities for problem solving and patient assessment) and the **behavioral and social** aspects of the performance of a physical therapist.

The Texas Woman's University School of Physical Therapy curriculum requires essential abilities in information acquisition. The student must have the ability to master information presented in course work in the form of lectures, written material, and projected images.

These essential functions of physical therapy education identify the requirements for admission, retention, and graduation of applicants and students respectively at the Texas Woman's University School of Physical Therapy. Graduates are expected to be qualified to enter the field of physical therapy. It is the responsibility of the student with disabilities to request those accommodations that he/she feels are reasonable and are needed to execute the essential requirements described.

If a student anticipates the need for reasonable accommodations to meet the requirements of a course, the student must register with the office of Disability Support Services (CFO 106, 940-898-3835, dss@twu.edu) in order to obtain the required official notification of his/her accommodation needs. Students are encouraged to meet with faculty members by appointment or during office hours to discuss approved accommodations and how course requirements and activities may impact a student's ability to fully participate.

The student must have the cognitive abilities necessary to master relevant content in basic science and clinical courses at a level deemed appropriate by the faculty. These skills may be described as the ability to comprehend, memorize, analyze, and synthesize material. He/she must be able to discern and comprehend dimensional and spatial relationships of structures, and be able to develop reasoning and decision making skills appropriate to the practice of physical therapy. The School of Physical Therapy uses cadaver dissection in gross anatomy instruction and expects all students to participate in dissection as part of the learning process.

The student must have the ability to obtain information and document in a patient's record, an appropriate history, and perform a physical examination. Such tasks require the ability to communicate with the patient and family. The student must also be capable of perceiving the signs of disease, especially neuromusculoskeletal dysfunction, as manifested through the physical examination. Such information is derived from observation and palpation of the body surfaces, palpable changes in various organs and tissues, and auditory information (such as patient voice, joint, heart and lung sounds).

The student must have the ability to discern skin, subcutaneous masses, muscles, bones, joints, lymph nodes, and intra-abdominal organs (for example, liver and spleen). The student must be able to perceive the presence of abnormalities which are not within the musculoskeletal system, such as masses in the abdomen. In order to master observation and palpation techniques, students are required to complete courses with laboratory components. Labs are co-educational, and students are often required to dress in shorts and t-shirts/sports bras to allow appropriate visualization and palpation. During these courses, students are required to work with classmates of the opposite gender and of all body types.

A major component of the practice of physical therapy is the assessment and management of patients with movement disorders. Therefore, the student must have the ability, within reasonable limits, to safely assist a patient in moving, for example, from a chair to a bed, or from a wheelchair to a commode. The student must also have the ability to move him- or herself and the patient in three-dimensional space in order to perform movement function tests and treatments. Additionally, the student must be able to ensure the physical safety of a patient at all times. These activities require the ability to lift, push and pull.

The student must be able to communicate effectively with patients and family, physicians and other members of the health care team. The communication skills require the ability to assess all information, including the recognition of the significance of non-verbal communication and immediate assessment of information provided, to allow for appropriate, well-focused follow-up inquiry. The student must be capable of responsive, empathetic listening to establish rapport in a way that promotes openness on issues of concern and sensitivity to potential cultural differences.

The student must be able to process and communicate information on the patient's status with accuracy in a timely manner to physical therapist colleagues and other members of the health care team. This information then needs to be communicated in a succinct yet comprehensive manner and in settings in which time available is limited. Written or dictated patient assessments, etc., must be complete and accurate. The appropriate communication may also rely on the student's ability to make a correct judgment in seeking supervision and consultation in a timely manner.

The student must be able to understand the basis and content of ethical physical therapy practice. He/she must possess attributes which include compassion, empathy, altruism, integrity, responsibility, and tolerance. He/she must have the emotional stability to function effectively under stress and to adapt to an environment which may change rapidly without warning and/or in unpredictable ways.

This list is not intended to be exhaustive and individual course instructors may identify additional requirements for successful completion of their courses.

Procedures

In order to fully inform prospective applicants, applicants, and students matriculated into the School of Physical Therapy of the Essential Functions, the School of Physical therapy is responsible for communicating the Essential Functions to prospective and current students at regular intervals. The Essential Functions are disseminated through the following methods:

1. **Posted on website:** the Essential Functions are posted on the TWU School website under the Pre-application FAQs and within the Academic DPT Program FAQ.
2. **Mailed out with Acceptance letter:** a copy of the Essential Functions is included in the acceptance letter mailed to students accepted to the program.
3. **Included in the Professional DPT Student Handbook:** The Essential Functions are included in the DPT Student Handbook.
4. **Reviewed during Orientation:** The Essential Functions are included in the overview of the Handbook during Orientation.
5. **Student acknowledgement of receipt of Handbook (containing Essential Functions):** After reading the Student Handbook, all students sign the acknowledgement form of its receipt, and that any questions about content in the Handbook were answered.

Use of Essential Functions: The Essential Functions are in place to answer student questions about technical standards and/or performance expectations before matriculation and during enrollment in the School of Physical Therapy. Additionally, they may be used by faculty for reference during advising or counseling sessions to identify desired behavior and/or correct behavior.