Gannon University
Physical Therapy Program

Essential Functions of the Student Physical Therapist

Essential functions are the activities that a student physical therapist must be able to perform in partial fulfillment of the requirements for successful completion of the professional curriculum. Every student must be able to perform these essential functions, with or without reasonable accommodations, while practicing safely, ethically, and in a legal manner. Reasonable accommodations are based on individual need, program essential requirements, public safety, and no undue hardship on the University or clinical sites.

If a student is unable to perform these essential functions, **it is the student's responsibility to:**

1. Reveal a need for reasonable accommodations prior to entering the professional curriculum.
2. Obtain diagnostic data to substantiate a claim of need for reasonable accommodations.
3. Provide the diagnostic data to the institution prior to entering the professional curriculum.

The ability to perform essential functions is expected of students in the classroom, labs, simulated clinical settings, and while on clinical education assignments. The Physical Therapy Program's essential functions are described below by: 1) category and 2) examples. **The examples are for clarity and do not represent an exhaustive list of all possible activities.**

CATEGORY	EXAMPLE
Behavior – ability to act in a professional manner	• Practice safely, ethically, legally • Demonstrate responsibility for lifelong professional growth and development
Critical thinking – ability to make clinical judgments	• Identify cause/effect relationships • Develop patient outcomes/goals/interventions • Respond to emergencies • Apply standard precautions • Apply teaching and learning theories in clinical practice • Participate in scientific inquiry
Communication – ability to verbalize and write	• Explain treatment interventions • Initiate health teaching • Document and interpret physical therapist actions and patient responses
Coping – ability to perform in stressful environments or under deadlines	• Maintain professional demeanor in all situations • Accept constructive feedback • Prioritize multiple commitments • Recognize problems and apply stress management techniques
Hearing – auditory ability sufficient to monitor and assess health needs	• Monitor alarms and emergency signals • Respond to a timer

Interpersonal – ability to interact with groups from a variety of backgrounds	• Establish rapport with patients, clients, and colleagues • Recognize psychosocial impact of dysfunction/disability • Demonstrate respect for the needs of the patient and family • Demonstrate respect for diversity
Motor Skill – gross and fine motor abilities sufficient to provide safe and effective physical therapy	• Calibrate and operate equipment • Maneuver in patients' rooms and treatment spaces • Guard patients and perform facilitation techniques during gait training • Perform physical therapy assessment and treatment activities such as ROM, MMT, debridement, or use of physical agents
Tactile – ability to use touch to monitor and assess health needs	• Palpate • Apply resistance during examinations or interventions
Visual – visual ability sufficient to monitor and assess health needs	• Observe patients' responses • Monitor vital signs • Read medical records • Observe integumentary integrity