

DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICAL THERAPY TECHNICAL STANDARDS AND ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS

Seton Hall University School of Health and Medical Sciences is committed to providing equal educational opportunity to all qualified individuals. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA), and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the School does not discriminate on the basis of disability in the administration of its programs.

Consistent with federal law and accreditation standards, including those of the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE), Seton Hall University has established technical standards that describe the essential functions students must be able to perform, with or without reasonable accommodation, to successfully complete the curriculum and meet professional competencies.

Nothing in these standards is intended to deter or exclude otherwise qualified applicants or students with disabilities. Seton Hall University engages in an individualized, interactive process to determine reasonable accommodations that do not fundamentally alter the program or impose an undue burden.

The purpose of these Technical Standards is to describe the essential competencies required to complete the Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) curriculum and to prepare for entry-level practice, consistent with accreditation standards and professional expectations. These standards are applied in a nondiscriminatory manner.

In addition, these standards reflect the professional roles, responsibilities, and expectations of physical therapists as outlined in the American Physical Therapy Association *Code of Ethics for the Physical Therapy Profession: The Ethical Commitments and Standards of Conduct* (available at: <https://www.apta.org/apta-and-you/leadership-and-governance/policies/code-of-ethics-for-the-physical-therapy-profession>) and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics *Occupational Outlook Handbook – Physical Therapists* (available at: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/physical-therapists.htm#tab-1>). These resources describe the essential cognitive, physical, behavioral, and interpersonal demands of the profession and reinforce expectations related to ethical practice, clinical reasoning, communication, professionalism, and the delivery of patient-centered care across diverse populations and practice settings.

1. Observation and Information Acquisition

Students must be able to obtain, interpret, and integrate information necessary for safe and effective patient care and academic participation. This includes the ability to:

- Access and interpret information presented in lectures, demonstrations, laboratories, simulations, and clinical environments
- Accurately observe patient presentations, movement patterns, posture, and functional performance
- Interpret written, electronic, auditory, and visual clinical data

Observation and information acquisition may be accomplished through a variety of methods, including assistive technology or other reasonable accommodations.

2. Communication

Students must be able to communicate effectively, respectfully, and professionally with patients, families, faculty, peers, clinical instructors, and interprofessional team members.

This includes the ability to:

- Elicit, receive, and convey information accurately in oral, written, and electronic formats
- Document clinical findings and plans in a clear and timely manner
- Adapt communication to individuals of diverse backgrounds, cultures, identities, and health literacy levels
- Engage in collaborative dialogue and respond constructively to feedback

Communication competencies may be met using appropriate accommodations or assistive technology when applicable.

3. Cognitive and Clinical Reasoning Abilities

Students must demonstrate the intellectual and conceptual abilities necessary to:

- Gather, analyze, and synthesize clinical information
- Engage in critical thinking and sound clinical decision-making
- Apply principles of anatomy, physiology, neuroscience, biomechanics, and evidence-based practice
- Integrate ethical and legal standards into professional practice
- Solve problems in dynamic and sometimes time-sensitive environments

Students must be able to perform these functions in classroom, laboratory, and clinical settings, with or without reasonable accommodation.

4. Psychomotor and Clinical Skills

Physical therapy education requires students to learn and perform examination and intervention techniques essential to entry-level practice.

Students must be able to:

- Participate in the safe performance of physical therapy procedures
- Execute or direct therapeutic interventions
- Provide or coordinate safe patient handling and movement
- Respond appropriately in urgent or emergent situations

The method by which a student demonstrates competence may vary. The program will consider reasonable accommodations that enable the student to achieve required outcomes without fundamentally altering the curriculum, lowering academic standards, or compromising patient safety. The focus of this standard is on the ability to achieve required competencies, not on any specific physical attribute.

5. Behavioral, Professional, and Interpersonal Competencies

Students must demonstrate professional behaviors consistent with physical therapy practice, including:

- Ethical conduct and integrity

- Respect for diverse populations
- Cultural humility and inclusive practice
- Accountability and reliability
- Appropriate emotional regulation
- Ability to manage stress and adapt to changing clinical environments
- Receptiveness to supervision and feedback

Students must be able to engage in professional interactions that support safe, effective patient care and collaborative teamwork.

6. Professional Responsibility and Safety

Students must be able to:

- Adhere to University, program, and clinical site policies
- Maintain required certifications (e.g., CPR/AED, infection control training)
- Meet attendance and participation requirements essential to the curriculum
- Travel to and participate in assigned clinical education experiences

Clinical education is an essential component of the DPT program. While the University will work with students to explore reasonable accommodations, placement is subject to availability and clinical site requirements.

Accommodation Process

Students seeking accommodation should contact the Disability Support Services office.

Determinations of reasonable accommodation are made through an individualized assessment and interactive process.

An accommodation is not reasonable if it:

- Fundamentally alters the nature of the program
- Lowers academic or clinical standards
- Compromises patient safety
- Imposes an undue financial or administrative burden

Seton Hall University remains committed to ensuring equal access while maintaining the integrity of its academic programs and compliance with accreditation requirements.

Adopted – 5/15/2026