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# TECHNICAL STANDARDS

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Programs of Occupational and Physical Therapy



MAY 1, 2020

DEPARTMENT OF REHABILITATION SCIENCES

## TECHNICAL STANDARDS

### BACKGROUND

Pursuant to University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center (OUHSC), the Professional Programs in Occupational Therapy (OT) and Physical Therapy (PT) at OUHSC welcomes all qualified OT and PT applicants regardless of age, gender, heritage, ethnicity, race, religion, or disability. The Professional Programs in PT and OT are in compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, including changes made by the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act of 2008.

Our programs are committed to graduating high quality OTs and PTs who are safe and proficient practitioners. The training of students for the complexities of clinical OT and PT practice requires a variety of skills and aptitudes; cognitive, physical, and social emotional.

Technical Standards are the academic, clinical, and interpersonal aptitudes and abilities that allow OT and PT students to complete the professional curriculum. Technical Standards apply in the classroom, tutorial, laboratory, and fieldwork and clinical settings. Students may meet the requirements of Technical Standards with or without reasonable accommodations.

### APPLICATION OF TECHNICAL STANDARDS

The Professional Programs in OT and PT at OUHSC select applicants based on attributes and accomplishments portraying the candidate as highly likely to succeed in the academic and clinical coursework and in the profession. OUHSC must ensure that patients/clients are not placed in jeopardy by students with impaired intellectual, physical or emotional functions.

In accordance with the accreditation standards of each profession, the OT and PT programs have the prerogative and ultimate responsibility for selection and evaluation of its students, the design, implementation, and evaluation of its curriculum, and the determination of who is eligible to be awarded a degree.

Admission and retention decisions made by the faculty are based on academic achievement as well as non-academic factors. Students are evaluated to insure that they can successfully perform the Technical Standards of the academic program required for graduation.

**An offer of admission may be withdrawn and/or a student may be recommended for dismissal from the program if:**

- after a student has requested and received a reasonable accommodation, they are unable to meet program qualifications including these Technical Standards.
- it becomes apparent that the student cannot meet the Technical Standards even with reasonable accommodation.
- the requested accommodation(s) would fundamentally alter the nature of the Programs in OT or PT at OUHSC, or
- the requested accommodation(s) would create a significant risk of harm to the health or safety of others.

### TECHNICAL STANDARDS

The faculty in the OT and PT Programs at OUHSC identifies the following Technical Standards as fundamental to the curriculum and profession of OT and PT. Students must be able to perform these Technical Standards during classroom, laboratory and experiential learning activities (including but not

limited to participation in one-on-one interactions, small group discussions and presentations, large-group lectures, and patient encounters) in the academic, fieldwork, and clinical settings.

#### COGNITIVE ABILITIES

- Gather, critique, and apply relevant professional literature to clinical situations.
- Identify and solve problems in a timely manner.
- Organize and prioritize multiple tasks (projects/assignments, clinical activities)
- Attend to task completion.
- Exercise good judgment and adhere to all safety precautions during lecture, lab, and clinical experiences.
- Maintain confidentiality of client/patient information.
- Apply academic learning to clinical situations.
- Recall and retain information.
- Interpret, integrate, and analyze information (assessment data, context, OT performance, environment).
- Acknowledge limitations and obtain appropriate assistance to provide safe client care.
- Mathematic ability to understand, calculate, and interpret basic statistics tests and measures.

#### PHYSICAL ABILITIES AND SKILLS

##### *MOTOR*

- OT and PT students must possess a variety of gross and fine motor skills. These skills are reflective of the physical capacities required to perform the job of an OT therapist or physical therapist in a wide variety of settings. Students must be able to:
- Maintain and assume a variety of positions including sitting and standing for up to 3 hours continuously, frequent walking, bending, squatting, kneeling, stair climbing, reaching forward, reaching overhead, turning and movement of the trunk and neck in all directions.
- Perform manual material handling and manipulation of various sizes and weights including lifting and transferring patients, guarding patients during functional mobility training on level surfaces/uneven surfaces/ramps/stairs to assist with balance, pushing and pulling to provide resistance and to assist in maneuvering patients.
- Specific requirements include:
  - Safely lift up to 35 lbs. independently when transferring and or performing manual patient handling or when handling patient care related materials.
  - Safely push and pull up to 100 lbs.
- Demonstrate adequate bilateral grasp during patient care activities, bilateral gross and fine motor control and strength to perform therapeutic activities, transfers and facilitation of movement, fine motor control to manipulate testing instruments/equipment/ writing instruments/computers.
- Manually palpate various body structures during examination and intervention procedures.
- Balance self and provide support and balance to patients on a variety of surfaces including level and uneven ground, ramps, curbs, and stairs.
- Have sufficient endurance to continue performing a variety of exertional activities for up to 8-10 hours with occasional rest breaks.
- Respond quickly to emergency situations by lifting/pushing/pulling patients, applying force to perform CPR, assist with transporting patients.

- Manipulate objects/equipment of various sizes, shapes, temperatures, smells, and textures (e.g. dials, knobs, testing instruments, therapy balls, scissors, clamps, kitchen equipment, bathroom equipment, raw foods, etc.).

#### *SENSORY VISUAL*

- Observe patients for the purposes of eliciting information; accurately describing changes in facial expression, mood, activity, and posture; and perceiving nonverbal communication.
- Ability to observe and interpret patient/client movement, or OT performance
- Observe client safety during OT performance (ADLs and IADLs).
- Observe client physical and emotional wellbeing (e.g. bruising, rashes, facial droop, autonomic changes, changes elicited by medication, etc.).
- Ability to observe equipment that monitors patient/client functions (e.g. BP, HR, respiration, pulse Oz monitors)
- Observe changes in soft tissue with the application of thermal and electrical modalities (include but not limited to orthoses, E-stim, iontophoresis, ultrasound, hot packs, cold packs etc.)
- Ability to read and view both print and online books, articles, assessment manuals, word or PDF documents, electronic medical records, graphics, email, and or video in the classroom, lab, and or clinic.
- Observe faculty and peer demonstrations in the classroom
- Observe client behavior to ensure therapist safety (e.g. aggression, frustration, changes in environment, etc.).

#### *AUDITORY*

- Ability to hear and react to alarms, emergency signals, timers, cries for help, phones, and overhead pages.
- Ability to engage in conversation.
- Ability to hear heart rate, lung sounds, and BP

#### *OLFACTORY*

- Assessment of wound and skin integrity and presence of infection
- Assessment of client hygiene and continence.
- Ability to smell safety issues with food preparation (e.g. burning food, rotting food, etc.)

#### *TACTILE AND PROPRIOCEPTION*

- Use appropriate manual pressure when touching clients.
- Perceive touch information adequately (palpation, MMT, sensory testing, mobilization, facilitation, orthoses, tone, temperature, depth, etc.).
- Perceive gradients of temperature for safe application of client applications with orthoses, bathing, and cooking activities.

#### *VESTIBULAR*

- Ability to monitor one's own position in space to maintain balance and posture.
- Ability to tolerate changes in head position during intervention.
- Ability to tolerate changes in elevation such elevators, escalators

#### *SOCIAL EMOTIONAL APTITUDE*

- Possess the emotional stability to perform in stressful or rapidly changing environments, such as an intensive academic program, a variety of clinical situations, which may involve pain, grief,

death, stress, communicable diseases, blood and body fluids, and or toxic substances, and adverse life and community experiences.

- Possess adequate endurance to tolerate physically, emotionally, and mentally taxing workloads and to function effectively under time constraints, proactively making use of available resources to help maintain both physical and mental health.
- Accept suggestions and criticisms and, if appropriate, to respond by modifying their behavior.
- Manage stress associated with completing timed written, oral, and laboratory practical exams.
- Manage modifications in the learning environment that result from unexpected situations.
- Display professionalism through appropriate presentation of oneself.
- Interact effectively with individuals, families, and groups from diverse social, emotional, cultural, and intellectual backgrounds in a variety of settings.
- Possess attributes that include compassion, empathy, altruism, integrity, honesty, caring, fairness, responsibility, concern for others, accountability, interest, tolerance and motivation.
- Maintain general good health, self-care, and hygiene in order not to jeopardize the health and safety of self and individuals with which one interacts.
- Demonstrate the ability to be self-reflective.
- Recognize and promptly respond to emotional communications such as sadness, worry, agitation, pain and lack of comprehension of communicated message.

#### COMMUNICATION SKILLS

- Computer literacy sufficient for obtaining professional literature, classroom and clinical documentation.
- Communicate in English effectively and sensitively with peers, faculty, clinical supervisors, clients, and client families.
- Ability to produce and interpret written communication.
- Use therapeutic communication included but not limited to attending, clarifying, and coaching.
- Ability to advocate for one's role and delegate responsibilities when appropriate and collaborate within an interprofessional team.
- Listen attentively and actively in order to receive and interpret oral communication.

#### STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES REGARDING TECHNICAL STANDARDS

- Upon offer of admission into the Programs in OT and PT at OUHSC, all students must sign a form acknowledging that they have read and understand the Technical Standards described, and believe that they are capable of meeting these functions.
- If a student has concerns about meeting the Technical Standards requirements, or know they require reasonable accommodation, they must contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) by email, [drc@ou.edu](mailto:drc@ou.edu), or by calling (405) 325-3852 Voice or (405) 325-4173 TDD. Information on policies and registration with Disability Resource Center may be found on the [DRC website](#).
- Students who have a change in status at any point during their matriculation in the OT or PT program requiring accommodation must begin this process at the time of the status change.
- Due to the time it takes to properly evaluate a student's needs and to implement reasonable accommodations, it is recommended that students request accommodations as early as possible. While it is possible that the need for reasonable accommodation may arise unexpectedly, it is preferable to make a request for accommodation at least 30 days before the start of a fieldwork / clinical education course.

Individuals with disabilities (as defined by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act) may be qualified to study and practice OT or PT with the use of reasonable

accommodations. A student requesting accommodations to meet the technical standards will be required to provide documentation in the form of testing and/or medical opinions. After reviewing that documentation the university may require him/her to submit to our own testing and/or medical evaluations. To be qualified for the study of OT or PT, students must be able to meet both our academic standards and Technical Standards, with or without reasonable accommodation. Accommodation is viewed as a means of assisting students with disabilities to meet essential standards by providing them with an equal opportunity to participate in all aspects of each fieldwork/clinical education course. (Reasonable accommodation is not intended to guarantee that students will be successful in meeting the requirements of any one course or clinical education.)

#### The Use of Auxiliary Aids and Intermediaries

Qualified students with documented disabilities, who are provided with reasonable accommodations, may use an intermediary or an auxiliary aid. Such reasonable accommodations should be designed to help the student meet learning outcomes without eliminating essential program elements or fundamentally altering the OT or PT curriculum. No disability can be reasonably accommodated with an intermediary that provides cognitive support or substitutes for essential clinical skills, or supplements clinical and ethical judgment. Thus, accommodations cannot eliminate essential program elements or fundamentally alter the OT or PT curriculum.

#### References:

American's with Disabilities Act – [www.ada.org](http://www.ada.org).

APTA.org

AOTA.org

<https://www.sacredheart.edu/academics/collegeofhealthprofessions/academicprograms/OTtherapy/policies/essentialfunctions>

University of Oklahoma Accessibility and Disability Resource Center, July, 2019