



UNIVERSITY
OF MANITOBA

Faculty of Medicine
School of Medical Rehabilitation

R106-771 McDermot Ave.
Wpg. MB R3E 0T6
Telephone (204) 789-3897
Fax (204) 789-3927
Department of Occupational Therapy
Department of Physical Therapy
Department of Respiratory Therapy

ESSENTIAL SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES REQUIRED FOR THE STUDY OF PHYSICAL THERAPY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

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Preamble

The University of Manitoba program in Physical Therapy is responsible to society to provide enrolled students with opportunities to develop the qualifications (academic knowledge, professional behaviours, attitudes and clinical skills) to enter the profession of Physical Therapy. The purpose of this document is to describe the skills and attributes required for success in completing the university program in Physical Therapy. Students interested in pursuing a degree in Physical Therapy are encouraged to review the following document that outlines the requisite skills and attributes for the profession.

An offer of admission to the Physical Therapy program should not be interpreted as evidence that the Physical Therapy program has independently verified an applicant's skills and attributes in the domains described below. These skills and attributes are essential if students are to be successful in achieving the competency standards of the profession.

The competency standards for Physical Therapy are described in the [*Essential Competency Profile for Physiotherapists in Canada*](#).¹ For this reason, students admitted to the Physical Therapy program must possess the skills and abilities described below in order to be able to develop the competencies required of an entry-to-practice Physical Therapist. Students must be able to demonstrate sound clinical and professional judgment and demonstrate responsible decision making to become graduates who are cognizant of practice accountability issues, laws, regulations, professional codes of ethics and standards of practice.

In addition to obtaining a degree in Physical Therapy, an individual must pass the [*Canadian Physiotherapy Competency Examination*](#) (PCE) in order to obtain registration/licensure as a Physiotherapist in most jurisdictions in Canada. The PCE has two components: a Written Component and a Clinical Component. Prospective candidates should be aware that the Clinical Component requires candidates to demonstrate knowledge, skills and behaviours in communication, physical examination, analysis, evaluation, intervention planning and execution all in timed simulations of patient encounters.

¹ The *Essential Competency Profile for Physiotherapists in Canada* was published in July 2004 by a partnership of the Accreditation Council for Canadian Physiotherapy Academic Programs, the Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators, the Canadian Physiotherapy Association and the Canadian Universities Physical Therapy Academic Council.



The following section elaborates on the skills and abilities required of students in the educational program and in the profession of physical therapy. The descriptors are not exhaustive but rather illustrative of the demonstrable skills and abilities required for success in the program and profession. This description of skills and attributes is not intended to preclude individuals with disabilities or special needs.

Description of the Skills and Attributes for Students in the Physical Therapy program

All students must have the required skills and attributes, with or without reasonable accommodations. The skills and abilities are grouped in six broad areas:

- Aptitude and attitude
- Communication skills
- Information gathering skills
- Critical thinking skills
- Psychomotor/physical skills
- Emotional health

Aptitude and attitude

Students seeking to enter a Physical Therapy program must have an interest in human movement, health and a desire to assist individuals to maximize their mobility, function and life participation. They must demonstrate sensitivity, compassion, integrity, and concern for others. Students must have the cognitive abilities to understand and develop the theoretical knowledge and technical expertise to work collaboratively with their peers, patients, and colleagues. They must be respectful of individuality and diversity, be able to build trusting relationships, demonstrate excellent interpersonal skills to engage and motivate patients and families, demonstrate creative problem solving skills and be able to manage multiple, potentially competing demands. Students must be able to deal with the academic rigor of classroom and fieldwork curriculum and must be open to developing themselves personally and professionally via reflection and feedback.

Communication skills

Students must be able to (aided or unaided) speak, hear and observe patients in order to effectively and efficiently elicit information, describe mood, activity, posture and perceive non-verbal communication and behaviour. Students must be able to communicate effectively and sensitively with fellow students, patients, families and any member of the health care team. Students must be able to coherently summarize a patient's condition, assessment and intervention plan verbally and in text (handwritten or electronic) to comply with regulatory and organizational record-keeping standards.

Students should note that the level of communication fluency is higher than is generally assessed in standard tests of language fluency. Students with less than full fluency in English, the principal language of the Physical Therapy program, are responsible for achieving the high level of communication ability that is required for patient safety, informed consent and fully independent and ethical interaction with patients.

Information gathering skills

Students must be able to participate in learning situations that require skill in gathering information about a patient in the course of an assessment and/or treatment. This information is normally acquired through observing, listening and palpating parts of the body. Gathering information may include activities such as reading charts or other written documentation, listening to clients, observing body language, palpating parts of the body, and use of

assessment tools. Students, who have limitations in any of vision, hearing or touch senses, or perceptual integration of information from those senses, need to be able to seek out and use adaptive methods and/or technology to compensate for their limitations.

Critical thinking skills

Students must demonstrate the cognitive skills and memory necessary to measure, calculate, and reason in order to interpret, analyze, integrate and synthesize information. In addition, students must be able to comprehend multidimensional and spatial relationships. These comprehensive problem solving activities must be done in an acceptable timeframe relative to their peers. Effective problem solving and judgment are necessary to address patient needs, and engage the patient in a safe and efficient manner. Students must have critical appraisal skills in order to build a foundation for evidence-based practice. Students must demonstrate these critical thinking skills in their course work both at the University and in the clinical environment. Students also need to be able to demonstrate the ability to accurately assess their performance to further direct their learning.

Psychomotor/ Physical skills

Students must demonstrate sufficient motor function to safely perform initial and ongoing assessments and interventions on a patient, including collecting data and assessment measures. Students must be able to use common diagnostic aids or instruments either directly or in an adaptive form (e.g. sphygmomanometer, stethoscope, goniometer) and provide the necessary physical guidance for exercise and/or functional movement by instruction or demonstration. Students must be able to execute motor movements reasonably required to ensure patient safety and treatment effectiveness, either through the students' own movement or through their ability to guide or direct the movement of others. Sample situations that require such movement include positioning patients in bed; balance, gait or transfer training; mobilization techniques; therapeutic exercise; or maneuvering in confined spaces. In addition, students are expected to have the energy to be able to participate in all learning experiences of the educational program (e.g., for clinical skills laboratory work) and therefore should be able to sit, bend, reach and/or walk or stand for most of the day (i.e. up to 8 hours of classroom or clinical experience per day), five days a week.

Emotional Health

Students must consistently demonstrate the emotional health required for full utilization of their intellectual abilities. Students must also be able to tolerate the physical, emotional, and mental demands of the program and perform effectively under stress. It is critical that students be able to develop mature, sensitive and effective relationships with patients, families and other members of the health care team and with fellow students. Students must consistently demonstrate the emotional resilience and balance to manage a myriad of emotionally charged or ethically challenging scenarios that frequently arise in all work settings.

Accommodations

Students who anticipate that reasonable accommodation will enable them to meet the required standards for the listed skills and abilities are responsible for articulating their requirements. Requests for accommodation need to be made as early as possible, and preferably in the pre-admission or admission phase. Requests are considered on a case-by-case basis and are reviewed in collaboration with the student and with [University of Manitoba Disability Services](#). Applicants may direct their requests to the [Department Head](#) or [Chair of Admissions](#). Information shared pre-admission will be confidential and independent of the admissions

process, any records generated in this regard shall be retained independently from a student's application file.

Applicants seeking reasonable accommodation are strongly encouraged to seek out and review the applicable University of Manitoba, faculty and departmental policies, regulations and procedures regarding accommodation. If admitted to the program, students will be required to follow the policies and procedures of the University, the School of Medical Rehabilitation and the Department of Physical Therapy.