

GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS
DOCTORATE IN PHYSICAL THERAPY
ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS

Successful completion of the Doctorate in Physical Therapy degree at Grand Valley State University requires that students demonstrate specific intellectual, technical and behavioral abilities. These specific abilities are called the “essential functions” of the profession, and apply to the professional course of study, clinical experiences students have while in that course of study and in the actual practice of the profession.

Essential functions in higher education health care programs are constructed in accordance with the legal requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. The ADA requirements exist to ensure that academic programs judge individuals on the basis of ability to complete the course of study and practice effectively.

In accordance with the ADA, the Grand Valley State University Physical Therapy Program has adopted the following essential functions for all applicants seeking admission to the program.

- **MOTOR SKILLS:** Physical therapy program candidates must demonstrate sufficient motor function to perform physical evaluation of the client, including palpation. Candidates must also demonstrate the physical ability to perform all parts of the physical treatment of clients. Physical strength and balance are needed to perform transfers from all levels and to assist in the ambulation training of clients with assistive devices. Candidates also must have the strength and endurance to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation.
- **MOBILITY:** Physical therapy program candidates must be able to perform duties while standing, lifting, reaching, bending, stretching or assuming any other posture that provides support and assistance, and ensures the safety of each individual client. Candidates must be able to move in rapid succession from the floor to upright and , in an emergency situation, must be able to move quickly to again ensure client safety.
- **COORDINATION:** Physical therapy program candidates must have the sensorimotor function, manipulative skills, and eye/hand coordination to permit appropriate grasp and provide assistance with therapeutic activities.
- **SENSORY:** Physical therapy program candidates must have adequate sensory skills. Sensory skills are needed to continually observe the client, take a client’s history, detect changes that are occurring in the client and to ensure the client’s safety. The candidate must also be able to obtain information from written documents, videotaped data, graphic images and equipment quickly and accurately. These skills necessitate the functional use of vision, hearing and other sensory modalities. The candidate must have functional visual acuity, the ability to hear or to lip read and the ability to sense light touch and proprioceptive changes.
- **COMMUNICATION:** Candidates for admission to the Physical Therapy program must be able to communicate in English for both oral and written communication with faculty, other students and clients. Candidates must recognize the significance of verbal and non-verbal communication in academic and clinical settings. They 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. Candidates must also be able to read and understand English written communication as well as produce communication which is accurate, timely and complete.
- **COGNITIVE:** Physical therapy candidates must have the intellectual capacity to measure, calculate, reason, analyze and synthesize information specific to client care. Cognitive skills in problem solving, as well as the integration of theory with practice, is critical to the determination of appropriate evaluation and treatment decisions in all areas of practice.
- **BEHAVIORAL/SOCIAL SKILLS AND PROFESSIONALISM:** Physical Therapy candidates must have the stability of emotional health required to exercise sound judgment, complete their responsibilities and develop and maintain effective appropriate relationships in the health care setting, *with* clients and members of the Health care team. They must possess attributes that include compassion, empathy, altruism, integrity, honesty, responsibility and tolerance. Candidates must demonstrate graceful tolerance of a wide variety of encounters and environments that may be stressful, boring, emotionally taxing and subject to rapid and unpredictable alteration, consistent with the uncertainties present in a rapidly changing health care system. Candidates must possess the ability to reason morally and practice physical therapy in an ethical manner.

The Physical Therapy Program Admissions committee will carefully evaluate each candidate’s application and performance in meeting the admission criteria including demonstration of ability to perform the skills described in this document. The student with disabilities has the responsibility to request those accommodations that s/he feels are reasonable and are needed to execute the essential functions described.