

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS FOR DOCTOR OF PHYSIAL THERAPY STUDENTS AT BRIAR CLIFF UNIVERSITY

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) program at Briar Cliff University prepares students to become competent and compassionate healthcare professionals who can provide quality patient care. The program requires students to develop a wide range of cognitive, physical, and emotional skills to perform effectively in clinical and academic settings.

These standards apply to all students in the DPT program, across didactic, laboratory, and clinical education settings. They describe the essential abilities and behaviors that students must demonstrate at the time of graduation to ensure safe, effective, and ethical physical therapy practice and to meet professional and licensure expectations. They are aligned with the Clinical Internship Evaluation Tool (CIET), APTA Clinical Performance Instrument (CPI 3.0), and the Mission, Values, and Student Outcomes of the DPT Program.

To ensure equal access to education for all students, including those with disabilities, we have outlined the essential functions necessary for successful completion of the DPT program. If you are a student with a disability and need accommodations, please reach out to Briar Cliff University's Abilities Office to begin the interactive process. Accommodation that would fundamentally change required competencies are *not* guaranteed, but reasonable accommodations will be made where it is possible to enable students with disabilities to meet these standards. Examples of reasonable accommodations may include assistive technologies, alternative formats, adapted lab or clinical tasks, where feasible.

CLINICAL PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS (ALIGNED WITH CIET & CPI)

Below is a table mapping expected performance domains. Students, clinical instructors (CIs), and faculty should use this as a guide for evaluation and self-assessment.

Domain	Key Components
Patient Management	Examination, Evaluation, Diagnosis / Prognosis, Intervention
Communication & Interpersonal Skills	Effective communication with patient, family, team; cultural competence; feedback exchange

Domain	Key Components
Clinical Reasoning	Use of evidence, judgment, adapting interventions, adjusting plan of care, patient outcomes
Ethical / Legal / Safety Standards	Understanding professional code of ethics; patient safety; confidentiality; risk management
Self-Assessment and Reflective Practice	Identifies personal strengths/weaknesses; sets goals; responds to feedback

FUNDAMENTAL TECHNICAL STANDARDS

Students must demonstrate the ability (with or without reasonable accommodation) in the following domains:

- **Observation:** Accurately see, hear, and interpret patient cues (e.g., movement, posture, nonverbal communication).
- **Motor / Physical:** Ability to execute physical tasks required of a PT, including transfers, manual therapy, gait training, sustained physical stamina.
- **Communication:** Verbal, nonverbal, written, digital communication with patients, families, interdisciplinary team.
- **Cognitive / Clinical Reasoning:** Critical thinking, decision-making, problem-solving, ability to integrate evidence and patient values.
- **Professional Behavior & Integrity:** Ethical conduct, accountability, punctuality, responsibility, self-reflection.
- **Technological / Digital Competence:** Proficiency with clinical tools, electronic documentation, telehealth tools, patient management software.

Observation Skills

Graduates must have sufficient observation skills to observe patients and perform clinical evaluations effectively. Skills including, but is not limited to:

- Visually observing patients in clinical settings, including physical changes, body posture, and alignment

- Observing non-verbal cues from patients such as facial expressions, gestures, and gait

Example Accommodations:

- Use of assistive devices (e.g., magnification tools or voice-to-text software)
- Availability of physical therapy assessment devices for students with visual or sensory impairments

Motor and Physical Skills

Graduates must have sufficient ability to perform physical tasks required for patient assessment, diagnosis, and treatment. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Lifting, transferring, moving, positioning patients safely with the assistance of devices and other personnel
- Manual dexterity to perform therapeutic techniques such as joint mobilizations, massage, manual therapy, therapeutic interventions, and application of modalities (e.g., ultrasound, electrical stimulation)
- Manipulating and adjusting therapeutic equipment safely
- Moving throughout clinical facilities, labs, home, community settings
- Maintaining stamina for full clinical rotations

Example Accommodations:

- Use of adaptive equipment or assistive technology (e.g., power mobility aids, alternative grips)
- Assistance from peers, clinical faculty, or staff to perform tasks that require significant physical exertion, provided safety and patient care are not compromised
- Adjustments to classroom settings to ensure accessibility of physical space

Communication and Interpersonal Competence Skills

Graduates must be able to effectively communicate with patients, faculty, and peers. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Speaking clearly
- Professional writing skills for documenting patient information and clinical observations.
- Clear verbal and non-verbal communication to provide information, instructions, and counseling to patients
- Listening and comprehending information provided by patients and healthcare team members
- Use of appropriate language (culturally competent, compassionate)
- Communicating through digital mediums / documentation accurately
- Receiving and responding professionally to feedback

Example Accommodations:

- Use of hearing devices or sign language interpreters for students with hearing impairments
- Use of speech-to-text software or other adaptive communication tools for students with speech impairments
- Extended time for written assignments and exams as necessary

Cognitive, Intellectual Function, Clinical Reasoning, Time Management, and Organizational Skills

Graduates must be able to demonstrate critical thinking, clinical reasoning, and judgment in patient care, as well as manage multiple responsibilities and prioritize tasks efficiently. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Learning, processing, integrating, and recalling complex information in an academic and clinical setting
- Problem-solving in dynamic situations
- Assessing patient conditions, formulating treatment plans, and understanding scientific literature to apply evidence-based interventions
- Making timely decisions and prioritize tasks effectively, particularly in patient safety contexts and high-pressure environments

- Meeting deadlines for academic assignments, clinical evaluations, and patient care.
- Organizing patient records, clinical documentation, and academic materials

Example Accommodations:

- Extended time for exams, assignments, and clinical evaluations for students with cognitive disabilities
- Use of note-takers, audiobooks, or assistive technology for accessing instructional content
- Permission for alternative methods of demonstrating knowledge (e.g., oral presentations, recorded submissions)
- Extended deadlines or flexible scheduling for students with processing delays or other disabilities
- Use of organizational tools and strategies, such as task management software or note-taking assistance

Professional Behavior, Integrity, and Ethical Standards

Graduates must be able to interact with patients and healthcare teams with empathy and professionalism, as well as uphold professional conduct and ethical standards in practice. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Adhering to APTA's Code of Ethics and institutional policies
- Demonstrating integrity, honesty, respect, reliability
- Demonstrating time management, responsibility, accountability
- Demonstrating cultural humility and sensitivity to diverse patient populations
- Providing compassionate care while maintaining professional boundaries
- Demonstrating emotional resilience to manage stress, confront challenging situations, and maintain composure in clinical environments
- Collaborating effectively with colleagues, instructors, and patients
- Consistently demonstrate professionalism, integrity, and accountability in all academic, clinical, and interpersonal interactions
- Providing safe and effective care in diverse and sometimes challenging situations.

- Respecting patient confidentiality, informed consent, and the autonomy of patients

Example Accommodations:

- Flexibility in scheduling or clinical rotations for students with mental health challenges
- Access to counseling or mental health support services
- Peer or mentor support for students experiencing emotional or psychological difficulties
- Support and resources for students to develop and maintain coping strategies for managing challenging ethical situations
- Collaboration with Disability Services for tailored accommodations regarding behavioral expectations

Technological and Digital Competence Skills

Graduates must be able to demonstrate:

- Proper use of Electronic Health Records (EHR), documentation systems
- The ability to use telehealth platforms, remote patient-monitoring tools
- The use of clinical diagnostic/treatment equipment (e.g., gait labs, motion-analysis, assistive devices)
- An understanding data privacy, ethical issues around digital health

Example Accommodations:

- Screen readers
- Speech-to-text Software
- Text-to-speech tools
- Alternative input devices
- Simplified or accessible versions of software
- Closed captioning/ transcripts for instructional videos, webinars, meetings, or online courses

EVALUATION, FEEDBACK, AND REMEDIATION

- To ensure a student has the appropriate level of cognitive knowledge and psychomotor skills to advance to third-year clinicals, students will be evaluated at the end of their second year using a comprehensive examination and a comprehensive practical.
 - Evaluations will include feedback
 - Failure to meet minimum expectations will result in opportunities to remediate and address deficiencies
- Students will be evaluated using both CIET during clinical internships / rotations (midterm & final) with self-evaluation included.
 - Incremental improvement is expected across terms.
 - If standards are not met, remediation plans will be developed.
 - Evaluations will include feedback; opportunities to address deficiencies.