

## ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS

### **Purpose**

This document is intended to prepare candidates for the Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) learning environment and for practice as a DPT. This learning environment is fast-paced and requires learners to keep current, continually integrating new material with what is known. In addition to the academic standards necessary for admission to and retention within the program, a candidate must be able to perform the functions described below for admittance to the DPT program, satisfactory progression within the program, and to graduate.

Please review these requirements and sign if you are able and willing to meet these standards with or without reasonable accommodation. For applicants who believe they may not be able to perform one or more of the essential functions, please contact the Student Services Office for a confidential discussion of accommodations that we may provide for your success here at SCU prior to signing. The University will provide reasonable accommodation for any otherwise qualified candidate. Early self-disclosure of the need for accommodation is encouraged to assure safety and success of students.

### **Observational Skills**

Learners observe and analyze the spectrum of human movement in states of wellness and dysfunction. These skills are used in classroom and clinical settings, as observation skills provide a foundation on which selection and prioritization of diagnostic tests and measures may be based. Consistent observation of function is further required for effective treatment delivery and reassessment of the therapeutic plan.

Observation also involves situational awareness of the surrounding environment to maintain safety of patients and staff under evolving circumstances. Situational awareness is critical for ongoing revision of decisions surrounding patient care.

### **Communication Skills**

Communication (verbal, non-verbal, paraverbal and written with and without technology) is required. Communication occurs between members of the faculty, healthcare team, patients/clients, caregivers, and others involved in the business or care of patients. Thus, learners should be comfortable in oral and written communication for the recipient to provide, receive, and clarify information as needed. Recipients may vary in their understanding, age, health status, background or other characteristics. Learners will develop therapeutic relationships and rapport to help others achieve their health care goals. Alternative forms of communication will be required for those with a loss or disorders involving communication. Communication in alternate languages is celebrated and essential for optimum realization of health care goals in patients/clients who share your language skills.

### **Examination, Differential Diagnosis, and Treatment/Intervention Skills**

Learners in physical therapy will work with patients/clients in a variety of ways, including the ability to provide mobility assistance, such as from bed to standing or chair to wheelchair. Furthermore, tests and measures for patient examination or treatment often involve physical mobility of the patient or a body part. This means there are physical requirements for managing patient lifting, guarding patients for balance and safety, learning, demonstrating and teaching exercises, balance assessments and or other patient education needs, and many

other situational skills. These skills may need to be applied to a wide range of patient/client ages, body types, sizes, as well as levels of injury, illness or other involvement related to movement dysfunction. While aids, such as slide boards or lifts are available as appropriate, they are not a substitute for all needs. Sufficient motor function is required to elicit diagnostic information from patients, provide general physical therapy care, and perform basic life support measures if needed.

### **Clinical Reasoning and Critical thinking skills**

Learners must have the skill and desire to absorb and integrate new information to advance knowledge, skills, and attitudes. In addition, as everyone is unique, application of critical thinking skills may be different for each person and situation encountered. This requires consistent reflection and revision with each new circumstance. Learners must be able to independently and collectively problem solve while incorporating new information and current evidence in practice to optimize diagnostic, assessment, and therapeutic planning within physical therapy.

### **Professional Expectations**

Doctors of Physical Therapy are professionals with responsibility for the management of the care and well-being of the public. This responsibility includes decisions affecting quality of life, ethical, and trust dimensions that patients/clients rely on. Developing a professional identity requires accepting and developing characteristics such as personal accountability, integrity, professional behavior, altruism, compassion and caring (empathy), social responsibility, and a desire to continue to learn. Ultimately, students must abide by the American Physical Therapy Association's Code of Ethics and align with its Core Values.

I understand that education to become a Doctor of Physical Therapy requires the essential functions that appear in this document. By signing below, I agree that I have the capacity (with or without reasonable accommodation) and desire to demonstrate and further develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are an integral part of the Southern California University of Health Sciences DPT Program.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_