



Technical Standards

Prior to entrance into the program, it is the student's responsibility to notify the Physical Therapy Program if they are unable to meet the Technical Standards.

Applicants for admission to the Physical Therapy Program and current students must possess the capability to complete, with or without reasonable accommodations, the entire curriculum and achieve the DPT degree. The use of a trained intermediary, a person trained to perform essential skills on behalf of the student, or a person used so that a student's judgement is mediated by someone else's power of selection is not permitted.

Technical Standards Required to Perform the Essential Functions of the Physical Therapy Curriculum

The curriculum requires demonstrated proficiency in a variety of cognitive, problem-solving, manipulative, communicative and interpersonal skills. To achieve these proficiencies, the Physical Therapy Program requires that each student be able to meet the following Technical Standards with or without reasonable accommodations.

The determination of whether an applicant or current student meets the standards will be done on an individual, case-by-case basis utilizing the existing committee structure of the Physical Therapy Program (Admissions Committee, Academic Progress Committee).

Motor Skills:

Candidates must have the gross motor, fine motor and equilibrium functions required to carry out assessments and to provide physical therapy intervention. Task requirements will vary over a large range from gross motor to fine motor requiring adequate strength and coordination. Examples are: transferring a child or adult from a wheelchair to a bed, mat or treatment table; managing a large patient with motor and/or sensory deficits during a mat based treatment program; manipulation of the spine using your hands; mobilization of the joints using your body and/or your hands; manipulation of a goniometer using your hands; manipulation of small materials needed to administer a fine motor exam and perform accurate assessment and treatment techniques by correct applications of forces with precise hand techniques. Errors in application may result in inaccurate information being obtained during assessment or ineffective treatment being delivered to the patient.

Quick, accurate motor and cognitive reactions are necessary, not only for safety of the person receiving service, but also for the therapist (e.g. a patient may lose balance during a training technique and start to fall or may have an adverse effect from a given treatment requiring appropriate and timely decisions and intervention.)

Students will be expected to perform palpation, manual techniques and other handling skills on all gender students and patients. During laboratory sessions, students will be expected to expose certain body parts. Proper decorum and draping are followed. Students seeking lab accommodations for cultural reasons should provide such requests, in writing, to the Division Chief at the start of the term for consideration.

Some courses in the DPT program intermittently or regularly require specific levels of physical handling and guarding in order to meet course objectives. Weight requirements of these assist levels will vary based on the body composition of the lab partner or simulated patient. Students can refer to the following descriptions of physical participation:

- Contact Guard Assistance: The patient may require up to 10% physical assistance for balance during the task.
 - Example: if the lab partner or simulated patient weighs 150 lbs, the learner may be required to manage up to 15 lbs.
- Minimal Assistance: The patient may require up to 25% physical assistance to aid in the task.
 - Example: if the lab partner or simulated patient weighs 150 lbs, the learner may be required to manage up to 37.5 lbs.
- Moderate Assistance: The patient may require up to 50% physical assistance to aid in the task.
 - Example: if the lab partner or simulated patient weighs 150 lbs, the learner may be required to manage up to 75lbs.
- Maximum Assistance: The patient may require up to 75% physical assistance to aid in the task.
 - Example: if the lab partner or simulated patient weighs 150lbs, the learner may be required to manage up to 112.5 lbs.
- Dependent: The patient requires more than 75% physical assistance to aid in the task. The learner must decide if assistance from another person is required for the task, and in some situations may need to use a mechanical lift system.
 - Example: if the lab partner or simulated patient weighs 150lbs, the learner may be required to manage up to 150 lbs.

Sensory Skills:

Physical therapy students will learn and demonstrate competency in a variety of settings. Their senses must be at a level of functioning to allow them to perceive objects in the environment and to observe human behavior and performance. Examples include, but are not limited to the following: the student must be able to visually assess activities such as joint range of motion and postural alignment; to make auditory assessment of auscultation and breath sounds; as well as to perform palpation in order to assess changes in skin temperature or application of manual pressure. The student must also discriminate between a safe and an unsafe environment, and between therapeutic and non-therapeutic behaviors and contexts. For example, the student must be able to assess whether use of therapeutic equipment may jeopardize the health and well-being of themselves or others, whether an object being thrown by a child is potentially dangerous for others, or whether a conversation between two individuals in a group indicates that they are angry at one another.

Communication:

Written:

The physical therapy student must be able to comprehend and assimilate information from a variety of written sources including texts, journals, medical records, course syllabi, etc. In addition, the student must be able to acquire written information from a variety of sources including Medline, CINAHL, and other computer-search programs, the Internet, journal and text libraries, etc. The student must be able to produce written materials that are constructed in a discernible and organized fashion, using proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation. This includes both handwriting and typing/word processing skills.

Verbal and Nonverbal:

The physical therapy student must be able to impart information so that others can understand it. The student must be able to elicit information from patients, family members, supervisors, and peers. The students must note and respond to factual information provided by others as well as to cues of mood, temperament, and social responses. The student must be aware of and responsive to cultural differences in verbal and nonverbal communication. Communication with patients and all members of the intervention team must be accurate, sensitive, effective, and efficient. Communication must be timely and situationally appropriate.

Cognitive skills:

The physical therapy student must have the mental capacity to assimilate and learn large volumes of complex information. They must be able to comprehend three-dimensional relationships and to understand the spatial relationships of structures.

Problem Solving:

To be able to make appropriate clinical decisions, a physical therapy student must be able to make correct observations and have the skills of measurement, calculation, reasoning, analysis and synthesis. For example, the student must have the skills to conduct assessments accurately, compute test scores, analyze results and determine the impact of this information on intervention. The student must synthesize a variety of information from many sources, and make a decision in a timely manner.

Judgment:

The physical therapy student will be expected to demonstrate judgment in classroom, laboratory and clinical setting which shows an ability to make mature, sensitive and effective decisions in the following areas:

1. Relationships with persons being served and family members. For example: the student demonstrates professional interactions in all situations.
2. Relationships with supervisors and peers. For example: when provided with constructive feedback from an instructor or supervisor, the student will adapt behavior accordingly.
3. Demonstration of professional behaviors, such as timeliness, regular attendance, and completion of assignments.
4. Ability to determine effectiveness of intervention strategies, and modify the program accordingly.

Behavioral/Social Skills:

The physical therapy student is expected to exhibit appropriate professional attitudes and conduct during participation in the classroom and in clinical experiences. This includes, but is not limited to: use of appropriate language and communication, flexibility toward change, the ability to fulfill commitments and to be accountable for actions and outcomes, and the ability to self-assess, self-correct and self-direct and to identify needs and sources of learning.

The student must also demonstrate the ability to work as an effective team member by sharing knowledge, eliciting and accepting input from others, helping others as appropriate in the learning process, taking responsibility for tasks required in group work, and by acting with sensitivity and empathy towards others.

The student must demonstrate a willingness to participate as a subject for teaching of clinical skills by faculty and for the practice of competence of skills by peer students unless a strict contraindication to such treatment is reported to the faculty member or Division Chief at the time of the class.

Procedures for Administering the Technical Standards for Admissions, Continuance and Graduation

Admissions

Process Notification of Technical Standards

The Physical Therapy Program shall inform each applicant that, in order to be admitted and to complete the DPT at the University of New Mexico, they must be able to meet, with or without reasonable accommodations, all of the Physical Therapy Program's technical standards. The technical standards will be available upon request from the Physical Therapy Program.

Admissions Committee

The Admissions Committee shall consider each applicant with the assumption that each can meet the technical standards.

Offers of Acceptance

Upon recommendation from the Admissions Committee, the Physical Therapy Program shall send each selected applicant a letter of acceptance. The letter shall indicate that the acceptance is contingent upon:

- a. Receipt of a statement from the selected applicant stating that the applicant is able to meet the Physical Therapy Program's Technical Standards without accommodation; if accommodations are needed the applicant should refer to <https://policy.unm.edu/university-policies/2000/2310.html> for associated processes.
- b. In the event that the Admissions Committee has a reasonable belief that any selected applicant has a disability that would prevent them from completing all technical standards, the committee may request that the selected applicant demonstrate or explain how they can meet a particular standard or set of technical standards. <https://policy.unm.edu/university-policies/2000/2310.html>

Continuance Throughout the Curriculum

- a. All students must fulfill the Technical Standards for completion of a Physical Therapist Doctorate. Therefore, in the event that during training a student becomes unable to fulfill those technical standards and believes they may require an accommodation, please follow the policy as outlined at: <https://policy.unm.edu/university-policies/2000/2310.html>
- b. If the student is unable to fulfill one or more technical standards, with or without accommodation, the matter may be referred to the Academic Progress Committee.

- c. If the inability to fulfill one or more technical standards appears by the faculty and the Academic Progress Committee of the Physical Therapy Program to be the result of a disability, the matter will be referred to ARC.
- d. If, for any reason, the Division of Physical Therapy has a reasonable indication that the student may not be able to meet the technical standards, the Physical Therapy Program may discuss the technical standards and the student's abilities with the student, and if appropriate, the Academic Progress Committee.

Change in Technical Standards Due to an Injury/Temporary Change in Health Status

The student must be able to meet the Technical Standards of the program and the objectives of the curriculum with or without a reasonable accommodation. Inability to do so could warrant postponement of the curriculum until the student is medically cleared for participation by a physician or healthcare provider, followed by the development of an Individual Learning Plan to address missed time and course content. If a student has any health issues, religious or cultural directives that restrict their ability to meet these technical standards, they must notify the course instructor as soon as possible.

A student must notify the Division Chief (or designee) of any disability, impairment or condition that has the potential to jeopardize the safety of students, faculty, or patients or which prohibits full participation in classroom, laboratory or clinical activities (injury, prolonged illness, pregnancy, etc.) as soon as possible. Failure to notify the Division Chief (or designee) may jeopardize the student's standing within the program and ability to progress toward degree completion.

Eligibility for Services

<https://arc.unm.edu/students/who-is-eligible-for-arc-services.html>

To be eligible for services from Accessibility Resource Center (ARC), the student must be admitted to UNM, and they must have a documented disability. ARC understands that many people do not readily identify with the term "disability" and prefer to use other terminology to describe their situation, and we respect that choice. At the same time, the term "disability" is the language used in both the federal laws and the UNM policies that protect students with disabilities from unlawful discrimination and provide for them to receive reasonable accommodations. This is why the word disability is used frequently throughout our website.

As defined in federal law, a person with a disability is someone who has a serious medical condition or a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

Major life activities are those functions that are important to most people's daily lives. They include but are not limited to the following:

- Caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, and working.
- **Major Bodily Functions, such as** functions of the immune system, normal cell growth, digestive, bowel, bladder, neurological, brain, respiratory, circulatory, endocrine, and reproductive functions."

Temporary or change in Health status

<https://arc.unm.edu/students/temporary-disabilities.html>

While the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) does not recognize temporary injuries as a disability for which accommodation is legally mandated, the appropriate departments will assist to direct students to where they can find resources for such situations. Students will be expected to show verification of their temporary injury to the appropriate faculty or staff member at UNM.

Should this type of injury occur, you should contact your course instructor of the courses you are enrolled in and inform them of your situation. By contacting the faculty member, they can work with you on your course assignments and with potential absences or tardiness that result from your temporary disability/injury. Please refer to your syllabus for the appropriate e-mail or phone contact information for your faculty member.

Temporary Injury or Change in Health Status

If a student experiences a temporary injury or temporary change in health status while enrolled in the UNM DPT program that impacts their participation or safety in course work or lab activities, the student must inform the course instructor(s) of their situation in writing, including physician documentation of their restrictions.

The student must provide a written statement from their licensed healthcare professional detailing the limitations/restrictions. The student will also need to provide a written statement from their licensed healthcare professional when limitations/restrictions have been lifted. The course instructor(s), along with the Division Chief (or designee) and the APC, will determine if course objectives can be met by the end of the semester under the terms of restrictions from the medical provider. The APC and Division Chief (or designee) will determine if any restrictions or modifications of coursework or clinical experiences are necessary in order to ensure a quality educational experience and the safety of all concerned.

In the event that there is no reasonable modification for the student to participate under their medical restrictions and meet course objectives before the start of the next semester, the Division Chief (or designee) and the APC will work with the student to determine if an Incomplete or Withdraw is the best option for their current courses. If accommodations cannot be made, the student may be required to alter or postpone progression through the program or withdraw from the program.

Long Term Change

If a student sustains an injury while enrolled in the UNM DPT program, and there is concern that this injury will affect safe long-term participation in any aspect of the curriculum, the student shall contact the Accessibility Resource Center to determine if the student qualifies for an accommodation.

In an event such as this, the Program and Accessibility Resource Center will work together to determine next steps for the student and to determine if a reasonable accommodation is available for the student. In the event that there is no reasonable accommodation for the student, the Program will work with the student to determine if an Incomplete or Withdraw is the best option for their current courses.

I certify that I have read the above Technical Standards and affirm that: (Only check 1 option)

I am able to meet the Technical Standards without accommodation.

I will require accommodation to meet the Technical Standards. I understand that it is my responsibility to contact the Accessibility Resource Center (<https://arc.unm.edu/students/who-is-eligible-for-arc-services.html>) and provide the appropriate documentation according to UNM policy.