



Physician Assistant Program Technical Standards

In keeping with the goals of the Physician Assistant Program, the highest priority is placed upon developing graduates who are competent, caring physician assistants possessing the skills of life-long learning needed to incorporate new knowledge and methods into their practices and to adapt to a changing medical environment. The faculty has determined that certain technical standards are requisite for admission, progression, and graduation from the PA Program.

All prospective candidates for the Physician Assistant Program must be able to meet the following technical standards of observation; communication; motor; intellectual, conceptual, integrative, and quantitative abilities; as well as essential behavioral and social attributes. Individuals who are unable to perform to these standards are encouraged to seek another educational degree and career path.

General Abilities: The student is expected to possess functional use of the senses of vision, touch, hearing, taste and smell, so that data received by the senses may be integrated, analyzed, and synthesized in a consistent and accurate manner. The student must also possess the ability to perceive pain, pressure, temperature, position, vibration, position equilibrium, and movement that are important to the student's ability to gather significant information needed to effectively evaluate patients.

Observational Ability: The student must have sufficient capacity to accurately observe and participate in the lecture hall, the laboratory and with patients at a distance and close at hand, including nonverbal and verbal signals, to assess health and illness alterations in the outpatient and inpatient clinical settings. Inherent in the observational process is the use of the senses to elicit information through procedures regularly required in physical examination, such as inspection, palpation, percussion, and auscultation.

Communication Ability: The student must communicate effectively verbally and nonverbally to elicit information; describe changes in mood, activity and posture; and perceive nonverbal communications from patients and others. Each student must have the ability to read and write, comprehend and speak the English language to facilitate communication with patients, their family members, and other professionals in health care settings where written medical records, verbal presentations, and patient counseling and instruction are integral to effective medical practice and patient care. The student must communicate effectively verbally and in writing with instructors and other students in the classroom setting as well.

Motor Ability: The student must be able to perform gross and fine motor movements with sufficient coordination needed to perform complete physical examinations utilizing the techniques of inspection, palpation, percussion, and auscultation, and other diagnostic maneuvers. The student must develop the psychomotor skills reasonably needed to perform or assist with procedures, treatments, administration of medication, management and operation of diagnostic and therapeutic medical equipment utilized in the general and emergent care of patients required in practice as a physician assistant. The student must be able to maintain consciousness and equilibrium; have sufficient levels of postural control, neuromuscular control, and eye-to-hand coordination; and to possess the physical and mental stamina to meet the demands associated with extended periods of sitting, standing, moving and physical exertion required for satisfactory performance in the clinical and classroom settings.

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Intellectual, Conceptual, Integrative, and Quantitative Abilities: The student must be able to develop and refine problem-solving skills that are crucial to practice as a physician assistant. Problem solving involves the abilities to comprehend three-dimensional relationships and understand the spatial relationships of structures; to measure, calculate, reason, analyze and synthesize objective and subjective data; and to make decisions that reflect consistent and thoughtful deliberation and sound clinical judgment. A student must have the capacity to read and comprehend medical literature. Each student must demonstrate mastery of these skills and the ability to incorporate new information from peers, teachers and the medical literature to formulate sound judgment in patient assessment and diagnostic and therapeutic planning.

Behavioral and Social Attributes: Flexibility, compassion, integrity, motivation, effective interpersonal skills and concern for others are personal attributes required of those in physician assistant practice. Personal comfort and acceptance of the role of a dependent practitioner functioning under supervision is essential for training and practice as a physician assistant. The student must possess the emotional health required for full utilization of the student's intellectual abilities; the exercise of good judgment; the prompt completion of all responsibilities in the classroom setting, as well as those in the clinical setting attendant to the diagnosis and care of patients; and the development of mature, sensitive and effective relationships with patients and other members of the health care team. Each student must have the emotional stability required to exercise stable, sound judgment and to complete assessment and interventional activities. The ability to establish rapport and maintain sensitive, interpersonal relationships with individuals, families, and groups from a variety of social, emotional, cultural and intellectual backgrounds is critical for practice as a physician assistant. The student must be able to tolerate physically taxing loads and still function effectively under stress; adapt to changing environments; display flexibility; graciously accept constructive criticism; manage difficult interpersonal relationships during training; and learn to function cooperatively and efficiently in the face of uncertainties inherent in clinical practice.