

Essential Functions

The Department of Physical Therapy at Brenau University is committed to the education of all qualified individuals, including persons with disabilities who, with or without reasonable accommodation, are capable of performing the essential functions of the Program. It is the policy of the Physical Therapy Program to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). In accordance with federal regulations established by the ADA, Section 504 of the Civil Rights Act of 1973, and state and local requirements regarding students and applicants with disabilities, the Standards of the Essential Functions document assists each candidate/student in evaluating his/her prospects for academic and clinical success.

Procedures to ensure students understand Essential Functions:

To ensure that all students have a clear understanding of the Essential Functions document and the process for requesting reasonable accommodations, the following policy has been developed in terms of student and program responsibilities.

The Department of Physical Therapy will:

1. Send applicants admitted to the program the Essential Functions document which asks for the student to review for a need for reasonable accommodations.
2. Any requests for accommodation made by the student for clinical internships or for the classroom setting generally require documentation from a terminal degreed specialist regarding the need for accommodations. The student will be referred to the Brenau Learning Center.
3. Explain and discuss the Essential Functions document during the Student Orientation before classes begin. At this time the PT program will collect acknowledgment from each student that they have read and understand the Essential Functions document and the process for requesting reasonable accommodations.
4. Review the Essential Functions document during the student's first semester in the PT program in PT 901 Professional Issues I.
5. Provide information on the Learning Center so that students who want to access resources and/or request reasonable accommodations have the necessary information.
6. When indicated by the Learning Resource Center, implement approved reasonable accommodations.
7. Maintain classroom accessibility.

The student will:

1. Read the Essential Functions document prior to matriculation to ensure awareness of the essential functions of PT students and the resources available to them should he or she need reasonable accommodations.
2. Any requests for accommodation require documentation from terminal degreed specialist regarding need for accommodations. This documentation should be placed on file in the Brenau Learning Center.

3. Complete signature page for Acknowledgement of Review of Essential Functions and Procedure for Request for Reasonable Accommodations during Student Orientation.
4. Participate in class discussion in Professional Issues I, PT 901, about the Essential Functions of a PT student document and sign the acknowledgment form if student has not already done so.
5. Identify self to the instructor for each class in which the student is seeking accommodations via an emailed copy of the letter from the Learning Center at the beginning of the semester.
6. Identify self to the DCE for each internship in which the student is seeking accommodations via a hardship application.
7. Update any changes to status and need for accommodation as necessary with documentation to Learning Center and updates to instructors and or DCE.

Required Essential Functions:

Physical therapy students must meet the essential functions and technical standards required of the majority of physical therapy positions, unless they have special considerations that the university is able to accommodate under the “reasonable accommodations” of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). These requirements are necessary for both the didactic portion of academic courses and clinical internships. The requirements are as designated below:

Communication skills:

Students must be able to communicate effectively with faculty, peers, coworkers, clients, patients and other members of the healthcare team. Effective communication includes the ability to receive, interpret, utilize and disseminate information via verbal, non-verbal, and written communication in a manner that is comprehensible by colleagues, clients, and laypersons. It is required that students communicate in the English language at a level consistent with competent professional practice, verbally and in writing (manual and computer). Students must demonstrate the ability to sensitively and effectively communicate with individuals with disabilities and/or from different social and cultural backgrounds.

Observation skills:

Students must be able to accurately observe the client’s or patient’s activity and behavior during examinations and interventions as well as changes in status such as skin temperature and/or color, heart rate, facial expression, muscle tone, breath sounds, and breathing rate or pattern. Students must also be able to accurately observe and interpret demonstrations in the classroom, projected slides or overheads, x-rays, and monitor dials on equipment.

Psychomotor skills:

Students must be able to develop proficiency in psychomotor skills required for accurate examination, evaluation, and intervention techniques. In order to expose bony landmarks, joints, muscles, etc. for visual orientation, palpation, and manual treatment, the student must have proper laboratory attire (loose fitting shorts and sports bras or tank tops), must be willing to expose (with proper draping) the body part being treated, and be willing to evaluate and treat

properly draped body parts on fellow students. If a student requires adaptation of this policy for personal or religious reasons, the student should work with the course professors at the outset of the course and as needed on an ongoing basis during the course. The student must demonstrate adequate locomotor ability to allow them to physically maneuver to and from and within the classroom, lab, and clinical settings in a timely manner. This includes the ability to quickly respond in emergency situations such as preventing a patient's fall. Students must be able to safely and effectively manipulate or maneuver another person's body and/or body parts to perform examination and intervention techniques and emergency procedures (e.g., transfers, gait training, positioning, mobilization, exercise, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, use of tools such as goniometer, blood pressure cuff, stethoscope, etc.). Students must be able to perform physical therapy examination and intervention procedures in a manner that is consistent with the APTA's Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Professional Practice. Students must be able to perform the physical demands required by the majority of clinical settings in which physical therapists practice. These physical demands include the ability to:

- **Continuously** (67-100% of workday) utilize gross and fine motor hand coordination with repetitive motions such as simple and firm grasp tasks requiring manual dexterity.
- **Frequently** (34%-66% of workday) stand, walk, climb stairs, reach, squat, twist, bend and lift and carry items up to 30 pounds for a distance of at least 30 feet. Also, must be able to exert push/pull forces up to 24 pounds for distances up to 50 feet.
- **Occasionally** (up to 33% of workday) kneel, crawl, and reach above shoulder level, as well as lift and carry items between 10 and 40 pounds for a distance of at least 30 feet. Also must be able to exert push/pull forces of up to 30 pounds for distances up to 50 feet.

Cognitive/Intellectual skills:

Students must be able to measure, calculate, reason, analyze, synthesize, and apply large amounts of information in a short period of time. Students must be able to understand and apply principles, theory, and research to physical therapy practice. Students must demonstrate the ability to think critically and problem-solve and to accurately self-assess and reflect on their own performance.

Behavioral/Affective skills:

Students must possess and demonstrate a level of emotional health and maturity that allows the full use of their intellectual capabilities, the use of good judgment, and the ability to effectively handle physically, emotionally, or intellectually stressful situations. This includes the ability to adjust and adapt to changing situations or uncertainty in the academic or clinical environment. Students must also demonstrate a commitment to working with individuals with physical and cognitive deficits from a variety of age groups, cultures, and socioeconomic status without bias. If a student is limited or prohibited from performing the essential functions & technical standards noted above because of injury, illness, or pregnancy, the student must request that his/her healthcare provider send a letter to the Director outlining the student's current limitations and the expected timeframe of limitations. Each individual situation will be evaluated to determine whether the student is able to continue in the clinical/academic portion of the curriculum and whether reasonable accommodations (short-term and/or permanent) can be made.

Seeking Accommodations:

1. Submit current documentation of disability (permanent or temporary) to the Director of Accessibility Services by emailing the required forms found on the Accessibility Services Intranet Page to accommodations@brenau.edu or faxing them to 770-297-5883.
2. Contact the Director if you would like to make an appointment to discuss accommodations via phone/Zoom/in person at the Office of Accessibility Services. You may email accommodations@brenau.edu to request a meeting with the Director. The telephone number to call for accommodations related matters is 770-534-6134.
3. Once your documentation has been received and the Director has communicated with you regarding your requested accommodations, you will then receive a welcome email from accommodations@brenau.edu with your letter of accommodations attached and further instructions. Please read your welcome email and all attachments carefully and save a copy for your records. Your letter of accommodations is prepared based on your specific needs and medical recommendations. Letters are always emailed only to the student's Tigermail university email address. Be sure to check your Brenau email to find your letter. You are encouraged to share this letter with your professors right away upon receipt of the letter and then again at the start of each semester with your new professors. Doing so right before a test is not acceptable. You must provide one week's notice in order to make arrangements for testing appointments at the Office of Accessibility Services or to make arrangements with faculty to honor your accommodations.
4. Share your letter with each professor via email to inform them of your accommodations. Please note that the student is then responsible for sharing this letter with their professors, academic advisor, and fieldwork coordinators at the start of every new semester by email. This is an important part of self-advocacy and allows you the opportunity to discuss with each professor any testing or other arrangements that need to be made to provide your accommodations in each course. Please let your professors know what your preferences are (if you would prefer to test in the classroom or schedule appointments with the Office of Accessibility Services).