

Essential Functions

(Technical Performance Standards of the PA Program)

Preface

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is the primary non-discrimination law applicable to the admission and post-secondary education of disabled persons. Section 504 of this statute prohibits discrimination solely on the basis of the disability of an "otherwise qualified" person who seeks admission to any college, university, or other institution of higher education. As far as schools are concerned, the purpose of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 assures that individuals with disabilities may compete with other applicants on the basis of their ability to perform essential academic and clinical functions without being eliminated solely based on disability. The ADA defines "disability" as a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more of a person's life activities. The definition includes any person who has a record of such an impairment, or who is regarded as having such an impairment. The ADA requires that:

- schools judge persons on the basis of ability to complete the educational program rather than on status as disabled person;
- persons seeking admission be able to perform the "essential functions" of the program in spite of the disability;
- the "essential functions" of the educational program are matters for each school to determine; and
- pre-admission inquiry as to disability is not permitted. However, a school may seek as much information as needed to make a determination that an individual can perform the "essential functions" of a student in the program.

Accordingly, the Physician Assistant Program has adapted and implemented the following technical performance standards for all applicants in accordance with legal requirements.

Introduction

The granting of post-graduate certificate and a Master's of Science in Health Science with a concentration in Physician Assistant Science from the Cuyahoga Community College Physician Assistant (PA) Program, in collaboration with Cleveland State University, signifies that the graduate is well prepared for employment as a physician assistant (PA). In his/her professional role, the PA provides medical care under a physician's (MD or DO) supervision in accordance with applicable state law. For the safety and welfare of all patients the quality of medical care provided by the PA must be the same as the supervising physician. The PA has the knowledge and skill to function in a wide variety of clinical situations and to render comprehensive patient care.

Therefore, technical performance standards/essential functions (distinguished from academic standards for admission) consist of the minimum physical, cognitive, and emotional requirements to provide reasonable assurance that students can complete the entire course of study and participate competently in training and practice. Acquisition of competence is a lengthy and complex process, and can be compromised by significant limitations on a student's ability to fully participate in the spectrum of experiences required in the program's curriculum

Cuyahoga Community College and Cleveland State University consider the well being of patients with whom the student will come into contact (both before and after graduation) of utmost importance.

This well being must never be compromised by any policy of the collaborative PA Program between Cuyahoga Community College and Cleveland State University. Therefore patient care is a major

concern for establishing requirements for physical, cognitive, and emotional capabilities of candidates for admission.

Technical Performance Standards/Essential Functions

A candidate for the PA profession must have the following abilities and skills: visual (observation); oral-auditory (communication); motor, cognitive (intellectual-conceptual, integrative and quantitative); and behavioral/social attributes. Accommodation can be made on a reasonable basis for individuals with documented disabilities, and they certainly will be considered, but students should be able to perform in a reasonably independent manner.

- **Visual (Observation):** Students must be able to observe and participate in experiments in the basic sciences. (For example, physiologic and pharmacological demonstrations and microscopic studies of micro-organisms and tissues.) In order to make proper clinical decisions, students must be able to observe a patient accurately at a distance and/or close at hand. Students must be able to acquire information from written documents, films, slides or videos. Students must also be able to interpret X-Rays and other graphic images, and digital or analog representations of physiologic phenomena, such as EKG's, with or without the use of assistive devices. Functional use of vision and somatic sensation is necessary. It is enhanced by the functional use of the sense of smell. Consistent with the ability to assess asymmetry, range of motion and tissue texture changes, it is necessary for students to have adequate visual capabilities for proper evaluation and treatment integration.
- **Oral-Auditory (Communication):** Students must be able to communicate effectively in both the academic setting and in routine and emergency situations in the clinical health care setting. Throughout the program, the student must show evidence of effective written and verbal English communication skills. Communication includes not only speech, but reading and writing. Students must be able to communicate effectively and sensitively with patients. Students must also be able to communicate effectively and efficiently with other members of the health care team. In emergency situations, students must be able to understand and convey information essential for the safe and effective care of patients in a clear, unambiguous and rapid fashion. In addition, students must have the ability to relate information to and receive information from patients in a caring and confidential manner.
- **Motor:** The student should possess enough physical stamina to sufficiently complete the rigorous course of didactic and clinical study as is required. Long periods of sitting, standing, lifting or moving are required in the classroom, laboratory, and clinical experiences. Such strength and mobility are needed to assist in surgery, emergency situations, and activities associated with daily practice as a PA. Students must possess the motor skills necessary to perform palpation, percussion, auscultation, and other diagnostic maneuvers. Students must be able to execute motor movements reasonably required to provide general and emergency medical care such as airway management, placement of intravenous catheters, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, wound closure, and application of pressure to control bleeding. These skills require coordination of both gross and fine muscular movements, equilibrium and integrated use of the senses of touch and vision.
- **Cognitive (Intellectual-Conceptual, Integrative and Quantitative Abilities):** In order to effectively problem solve in the clinical setting, and based upon the critical skills demanded of physician assistants, students must be able to measure, calculate, reason, analyze, integrate and synthesize in a timely fashion. In addition, they must be able to comprehend three dimensional relationships and understand the spatial relationships of structures. All students must be able to read and understand medical literature. In order to successfully complete the PA Program, students must be able to demonstrate mastery of these skills and the ability to use them in a timely fashion in medical and surgical problem solving and patient care.

- **Behavioral and Social:** Students must possess the emotional health and stability required for the full utilization of their intellectual abilities, for the exercise of good judgment, for the prompt completion of all responsibilities attendant to the diagnosis and care of patients, and for the development of mature, sensitive and effective relationships with patients. Students must be able to tolerate physically taxing workloads and function effectively under stress. They must be able to adapt to changing environments, display flexibility, compassion, integrity, motivation, interpersonal skills, and learn to function in the face of uncertainties inherent in the clinical problems of patients.
- **Curriculum Requirements:** In addition to the abilities specified above, students must be able to successfully complete, with or without accommodation, all required components of the curriculum.
- **Tests and Evaluations:** In order to evaluate the competence and quality of students, the Cuyahoga Community College PA Program employs periodic examinations as an essential component of the curriculum. Successful completion of these examinations is required of all students as a condition for continued progress through the curriculum. Reasonable accommodation will be made in the form or manner of administration of these evaluations where necessary.
- **Clinical Assessments:** Demonstration of clinical competence is also of fundamental importance to the career and curriculum progression of the students. Therefore, the process of staff and clinical preceptor evaluation of the clinical performance of students is an integral and essential part of the curriculum. Although reasonable accommodation will be made, participation in clinical experiences and the evaluation of that participation is required.
- **Attendance:** Class attendance is deemed an important component of the educational experience. Reasonable accommodation will be provided, but attendance requirements must be satisfied for successful completion of these courses.

Cuyahoga Community College and Cleveland State University are fully committed to policies of equal opportunity and nondiscrimination. College policy prohibits any form of discrimination, harassment, or prejudicial treatment on the basis of age, race, sex, sexual orientation, color, national origin, religion, political beliefs, disability, status of a disabled veteran or veteran of the Vietnam era.

If an applicant or student believes he/she has been discriminated against, that individual should contact the College Office of Affirmative Action/Diversity at 987-4772.

The College Access office at the Western Campus, 987-5106, provides resources and support services for students with documented physical or learning disabilities.

The following represents the policy of the Cuyahoga Community College PA Program with regard to the identification of students with disabilities. Although a student's self-identification as a person with a disability is voluntary, the Cuyahoga Community College PA Program can only accommodate known disabilities.

1. For purposes of this policy, the definition of disability will be that used in the Americans with Disabilities Act, with the exclusions as referenced in the Act. That definition is as follows, "an individual is disabled if he or she, 1) has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the individual's major life activities; or 2) has a record of such an impairment; or 3) is regarded as having such an impairment."
2. In order to establish the existence of a disability and to request accommodation, a student must provide appropriate notice to the PA Program Director, detailing the existence and nature of the disability and the requested accommodation.

3. The student must then, at his/her own expense, provide documentation of the disability in the form of an evaluation by a qualified examiner. The report of the examiner must state the qualifications of the examiner and describe the physical or mental impairment and associated limitations. It must also contain the objective information on which the diagnosis is founded, such as psychoeducational testing, neuropsychiatric testing or neuropsychological testing in the case of a learning or mental disability or physical examination results or laboratory testing in the case of a physical disability. The documentation should also identify a reasonable accommodation(s) that will assist the student.