



CENTER FOR PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT STUDIES

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PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROGRAM TECHNICAL STANDARDS

To participate in the Physician Assistant Program at Johnson & Wales University, each student, with or without reasonable accommodations, must be able to safely and effectively meet certain technical standards. Technical standards, as distinguished from academic standards, refer to those physical, cognitive and behavioral abilities that a student must be able to perform in order to be admitted, to progress satisfactorily and to graduate from the Physician Assistant Program and subsequently enter clinical practice.

As further detailed below, all students must possess aptitude, ability and skills in the following six (6) areas:

1. Active participation
2. Observation
3. Communication
4. Sensory and motor coordination and function
5. Intellectual, conceptualization, integration and quantitation
6. Behavioral and social skills, abilities and aptitudes

The functions described below are critically important and must be autonomously performed by the student. It should be understood that these are standards for minimum competence in the program:

ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

Students must be able to actively participate in all components of the Physician Assistant Program. This means that students must be able to

- Attend and participate in all classroom activities.
- Complete all academic requirements of the program, including but not limited to academic papers, exams, presentations, meetings and labs, etc. Some of these academic requirements, like papers and exams, will test the student's ability to receive, understand and incorporate the subject matter. Other academic requirements, like presentations and meetings, reflect industry practices that a graduate of this program will be required to demonstrate.
- Communicate effectively and appropriately with faculty, staff and fellow students in person, verbally and via written and electronic correspondence.
- Lift and transport a minimum weight of 25 lbs.
- Safely maneuvers in classroom, laboratory and clinical settings.
- Utilize industry-specific equipment.
- Maintain his or her own health and safety. This includes not posing a risk to other students, instructors and others present during all educational experiences and components of the program.
- Understand and implement all safety and security policies and procedures, including but not limited to those related to fires, evacuation proceedings, etc.
- Participate in all required components, including clinical rotations.

OBSERVATION

The student must be able to acquire a defined level of required information as presented through demonstrations and experiences in the basic sciences.

The student must also be able to directly and accurately perceive a patient at a distance and close at hand, with or without standard medical instrumentation. A student must be able to perceive a patient's demeanor, observe a patient's physical condition, obtain a medical history and perform a physical examination correctly on the patient. The student must be able to integrate the information derived from these perceptions and develop an accurate diagnostic and treatment plan.

Furthermore, a student must be able to

- Acquire information from written documents.
- Perceive and interpret information as presented in images from paper, films, slides or video.
- Interpret X-ray and other graphic images, and digital or analog representations of physiologic phenomenon (such as EKGs) with or without the use of assistive devices.
- Competently use diagnostic instruments, including, but not limited to, an otoscope, ophthalmoscope, stethoscope and microscope.

COMMUNICATION

Students must be able to relate effectively to patients while conveying compassion and empathy. They must be able to clearly communicate with patients in order to elicit information, accurately describe changes in mood, activity and posture of patients, and understand verbal as well as nonverbal communication.

Communication includes not only speech, but reading and writing. Physician assistant education presents exceptional challenges in the volume and breadth of reading required to master subject areas and impart the information to others. Students must be able to communicate quickly, effectively and efficiently in oral and written English in the classroom and with patients and all members of the healthcare team.

Students must be able to communicate in a way that achieves the following:

- Rapidly and clearly communicate with the complete healthcare team on rounds or elsewhere.
- Elicit an accurate history from patients.
- Communicate complex findings in appropriate terms to patients and to various members of the healthcare team. Students must be able to learn to recognize and promptly respond to emotional cues, such as sadness and agitation and accurately and legibly record observations and plans in legal documents, such as the patient record.
- Accurately enter patient data into an electronic, verbal medical record or other database.
- Prepare and communicate concise, complete summaries of both limited patient encounters and complex, prolonged encounters, including hospitalizations. Students must be able to complete forms, in a timely fashion and according to directions.

SENSORY AND MOTOR COORDINATION AND FUNCTION

Students must possess sufficient sensory and motor function to perform physical examinations using palpation, auscultation, percussion and other diagnostic maneuvers. This requires sufficient exteroceptive sense (visual, auditory, touch, olfactory and temperature), coordination to manipulate patients and adequate motor skills to operate diagnostic instruments.

Students must be able to

- Evaluate various components of the voice, such as pitch, intensity and timbre.
- Accurately differentiate percussive notes and auscultatory findings, including but not limited to, heart, lung and abdominal sounds.
- Accurately discern normal and abnormal findings using instruments including, but not limited to, tuning forks, stethoscopes and sphygmomanometers.
- Execute physical movements needed to provide general care and emergency treatment to patients. Students, therefore, must be able to respond promptly to emergencies within the hospital or practice setting and not hinder the ability of their co-workers to provide prompt care.
- Learn to perform basic laboratory tests such as wet mount, urinalysis, etc., as well as diagnostic/therapeutic procedures such as venipuncture or placement of catheters and tubes. The administration of intravenous medications requires a certain level of dexterity, sensation and visual acuity. Additionally, possesses the manual dexterity to safely handle needles, tongue blades, gynecologic speculum and scalpel.

- Measure angles and diameters of various body structures using a tape measure or other devices to measure blood pressure, respiration and pulse, and interpret graphs describing biologic relationships.
- Assure transportation to a variety of clinical rotation settings in a timely manner.

INTELLECTUAL, CONCEPTUALIZATION, INTEGRATION AND QUANTITATION

Problem-solving is a critical skill demanded of physician assistants that often requires rapid intellectual function, especially in emergency situations. These intellectual functions include numerical recognition, measurement, calculations, reasoning, analysis, judgment, synthesis, visual-spatial conceptualization and application. Students must be able to identify significant findings in the patient's history, physical examination and laboratory data, provide a reasoned explanation for likely diagnoses, and choose appropriate medications and therapy. Students must be able to order diagnostic laboratory and imaging modalities based on sound clinical necessity coupled with fiduciary consideration.

It is essential that the student is able to incorporate new information from many sources toward the formulation of a diagnosis, and plan and recall information in an efficient and timely manner. Professionally sound and evidence-based judgment in patient assessment and diagnostic/therapeutic planning is also essential. When appropriate, students must be able to identify and communicate the extent of their knowledge to others.

BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL SKILLS, ABILITIES AND APTITUDES

Students must possess the emotional and mental health required for full use of their intellectual abilities, the exercise of professional judgment, the prompt completion of all responsibilities associated with the diagnosis and care of patients and the development of mature, sensitive and effective relationships in the diagnosis and care of patients. Students must demonstrate the integrity, excellence, compassion, altruism, respect, empathy and service inherent to learning the practice of humanistic medicine. Students must be able to monitor and react appropriately to their own emotional needs. For example, students need to maintain balanced demeanor and good organization in the face of long hours, fatigued colleagues and dissatisfied patients.

Students must be able to develop appropriate professional relationships with their colleagues and patients, provide comfort and reassurance to patients and protect patients' dignity and confidentiality. Students must be able to monitor changes in class and rotation schedules and be on time for all scheduled classes, clinical rotations and other scheduled expectations and responsibilities. Students must possess the endurance to tolerate physically taxing workloads and to function effectively under stress. All students are, at times, required to work for extended periods of time, occasionally with rotating schedules. Students must be able to adapt to changing environments, to display flexibility and to learn to function in the face of uncertainties inherent in the practice of medicine. Students must be able to accept suggestions and criticisms, and if necessary, to respond by modifying their behavior.

The above technical standards are essential to the Physician Assistant Program and also reflect industry requirements and standards. Completion of this program requires that each student independently demonstrates these capabilities continuously throughout enrollment. Surrogates cannot be used to accomplish the essential requirements. Students may not have undue dependence on technology or trained intermediaries.