

## Inherent Requirements for Physiotherapy Courses

To assist students to make informed choices about their study, we have identified and set out below the Inherent Requirements for coursework award courses in Physiotherapy.

The University of Sydney welcomes and encourages applications from students with disabilities, and from diverse social and cultural backgrounds. Where there are physical, intellectual, cultural, religious or other factors that impact on a student's ability to meet the Inherent Requirements, the University will make reasonable adjustments to assist the student to meet the requirements.

To successfully complete their award course, students must meet the academic requirements set out in the Faculty and course resolutions – these are set out in the Faculty handbook ([Undergraduate](#) and [Postgraduate](#)). In addition, students in all courses are required to comply with Australian laws and University rules and policies, including the [Student Charter 2020](#). The University of Sydney upholds the academic standards of each degree and discipline so that all students graduate with the skills and knowledge expected of a graduate of the award conferred.

**With appropriate supports and reasonable accommodations, students must be able to carry out the list of Inherent Requirements described below, in order to successfully complete physiotherapy courses.**

### Communication tasks

1. Comprehend spoken English delivered at conversational speed  
*E.g. in noisy environments, such as hospital wards, gyms and classrooms.*
2. Understand and respond to verbal communications accurately, appropriately and in a timely manner.  
*E.g. respond appropriately to a patient's question while walking them along a noisy hospital corridor.*
3. Communicate clearly, audibly and intelligibly in English.
4. Actively participate in group discussions.  
*E.g. participate in patient based group discussion in class and clinic.*
5. Read and comprehend information presented in a variety of standard formats.  
*E.g. hand written and electronic medical records, scientific articles, pathology reports.*
6. Record information accurately and make coherent notes.  
*E.g. record results of a physiotherapy tests and write a referral letter or report.*
7. Perceive non-verbal communication from others and respond appropriately (in context).  
*E.g. recognising and responding to patient facial expressions and emotional states when experiencing pain or distress.*
8. Communicate respectfully with people of all genders, sexuality and age, and from diverse cultural, religious, socio-economic and educational backgrounds.  
*E.g. physiotherapy students treat and interact with patients across the lifespan and from a wide range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds.*

### Observation / Sensory tasks

1. Assess patient appearance, behaviour, posture, movement and speech.  
*E.g. perform a physical examination of a newly referred patient with an acute stroke.*
2. Monitor the broader practice environment (including observing multiple patients and events simultaneously).  
*E.g. safely conduct an exercise class for patients with low back pain.*

### Physical tasks

1. Gather and interpret information through touch.  
*E.g. manipulate the joints of the cervical spine in a patient with neck stiffness.*
2. Physically examine people of all genders.  
*E.g. physiotherapy students treat patients of all genders.*
3. Assist with client or patient transfers and provide physical assistance to patients of all genders.  
*E.g. following hip replacement physiotherapy student assists patients to get in and out of a chair safely.*
4. Acquire and hold a Cardio-pulmonary Resuscitation Certificate from a registered training organisation.
5. Cleanse hands and forearms using disinfecting products.  
*E.g. in every clinical environment and in the classroom students are required to wash their*

*hands between patient /student contact.*

6. Wear clothing and masks designed to minimise the spread of infection and protect the wearer.  
*E.g. students will be required to wear protective gowns and masks when treating patients with infectious diseases or low immunity.*
7. Meet ongoing immunisation requirements, including those introduced after commencement in the course or program.  
*Detail is available at <https://sydney.edu.au/students/clinical-placement-checks.html>.*
8. Independently carry and manipulate instruments, materials and equipment necessary for clinical care.  
*E.g. physiotherapy students are required to collect and fit walking aids for patients with orthopaedic problems, for example walking frames and crutches.*
9. Effectively manipulate small objects.  
*E.g. physiotherapy students use small measurement tools to measure joint range of students and patients.*
10. Maintain a standing position while using both upper limbs to perform a task.  
*E.g. perform chest percussion on a patient or student who is lying on a plinth.*
11. Attend clinical or practicum placements in a range of physical settings (E.g. urban, rural, hospitals, clinics) and for the required number of hours, within a reasonable period.

### **Intellectual tasks**

1. Gather, comprehend and organise information.  
*E.g. take a history from a patient and perform a physical examination and formulate a provisional diagnosis and a treatment plan.*
2. Integrate theory and knowledge from various sources.  
*E.g. use knowledge of anatomy and biomechanics to diagnose a ruptured anterior cruciate ligament.*
3. Develop options and assess and compare their respective merits.  
*E.g. use evidence-based practice knowledge to prioritise treatment options for a patient with cystic fibrosis.*
4. Accurately recall information without reference.  
*E.g. perform a patient handover to a senior colleague.*
5. Accurately undertake arithmetic calculations.  
*E.g. calculate the intensity required for exercise training adaptation based on the findings of a six-minute walk test.*
6. Engage in scientific and clinical reasoning.  
*E.g. differentially diagnose causes of dizziness in an elderly patient.*
7. Engage in rational and ethical reasoning.  
*E.g. give consideration to patient autonomy and preferences in palliative care treatment.*
8. Understand another person's perspective.  
*E.g. negotiate return to sport plan for an injured athlete with team coach or trainer.*
9. Complete clinical tasks in a safe and reasonable time frame.  
*E.g. plan the management of a weekend ward list to ensure that each patient receives adequate care.*
10. Maintain a sufficient level of concentration to focus on an activity to completion.  
*E.g. plan and implement long term goals and treatment for a patient with an acquired brain injury over the course of 3 months.*

### **Interpersonal and social interactions**

1. Control the expression of your own emotions.  
*E.g. maintain a professional empathy and objectivity in the context of a death of an infant or child or a dying patient.*
2. Be able to work effectively in the face of uncertainty and adapt to changing environments.  
*E.g. demonstrate resilience and competence when randomly allocated a patient case during a viva examination.*
3. Accept and fulfill responsibilities you are given for patient/client care.  
*E.g. assess a new patient and report findings to the clinical supervisor prior to commencing treatment.*
4. Manage your own physical and mental health effectively.
5. Respect personal and professional boundaries.  
*E.g. students are assessed on their knowledge of professional practice as applied to complex clinical situations and in their dealings with colleagues and staff.*

6. Dress appropriately and safely for the clinical workplace.  
*E.g. students are required to wear a clinical uniform and closed-in shoes in the clinic and for practical examinations.*

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### ***Why have a list of Inherent Requirements for Physiotherapy Courses***

We think it's important for students to be aware of the Inherent Requirements they will need to meet in university subjects and courses. This information enables prospective students to make informed decisions about their subject and career choices. In the case of Physiotherapy and other health professional degrees, many of the Inherent Requirements relate to patient contact. This contact increases with each year of the course and we believe it's important to be clear from the beginning about what is required to be able to successfully complete the course.

The Inherent Requirements are likely to be particularly helpful for students with disabilities. Many students successfully manage their disabilities with external support, and opt not to notify the University. However, the University's Disability Services assists hundreds of current students with a disability, and provides prospective students with advice about the support services offered at the University. Where necessary, after confidential registration of a disability, Disability Services negotiates reasonable adjustments for students with the relevant Faculty. Adjustments to coursework and assessments may also be made for students with carer's responsibilities, or cultural or religious needs. These adjustments may include such things as building and timetabling modifications, recording teaching material and special examination provisions. For fieldwork placements, it may include negotiating with supervisors in advance of the placement for reasonable adjustments. Adjustments must be reasonable and cannot compromise the academic integrity of a course. Reasonable adjustments are provided to assist students to achieve the inherent requirements, not as a substitute for them.

### ***How are lists of Inherent Requirements developed?***

They are developed from the required learning outcomes of the courses. Course structure and content, including learning outcomes, are designed to ensure that the course meets required standards. In addition to meeting general higher education standards, the health professional courses are accredited (inspected and approved) by specialist groups. There are 14 health professions regulated by the Australian Health Practitioner Agency (AHPRA) and profession specific boards or councils are responsible for assessing programs of study and education providers against accreditation standards.

In the case of many university subjects, the Inherent Requirements are purely cognitive. However, the health professional courses, in addition to teaching cognitive skills, train students to diagnose and treat clients and patients. Students' abilities to do this are assessed in structured examinations and students are required to perform supervised care of clients and patients satisfactorily when on placement. Patient and client safety must be ensured at all times and the healthcare institutions, the registered practitioners supervising, and, the University have a duty of care to these patients and clients. Students are required to comply with relevant requirements for placement organisations (e.g. NSW health). The health placement requirements are at: <https://sydney.edu.au/students/clinical-placement-checks.html>

### ***Do I have to disclose any disability I believe I may have? Is there an assessment?***

No, the information on Inherent Requirements is provided for your guidance. While registration with Disability Services is necessary for you to obtain reasonable adjustments, you are not otherwise required to disclose your disability to the University, unless it poses a risk to your health or safety or to that of others.

### ***What should I do if I am worried about my ability to successfully undertake a listed essential requirement?***

You can make initial contact with a course advisor via the Education Support team or with Disability Services to discuss your specific issue. Liaison will occur, if necessary, with appropriate protection of your privacy. The Education Support team can be contacted on [shs.ltadmin@sydney.edu.au](mailto:shs.ltadmin@sydney.edu.au). The Disability Services Team can be contacted on +61 2 86278422 or [disability.services@sydney.edu.au](mailto:disability.services@sydney.edu.au).

### ***What is an adjustment?***

These are modifications or accommodations made by the University that have the effect of assisting a student with a disability to participate or access something on the same basis as someone without a disability. Common accommodations include aids to vision or hearing (which many people of course wear every day). Disability Services at the University works to support students with disabilities, including negotiating reasonable adjustments for students. These adjustments are frequently related to assessment, e.g. extra time in

examinations, allowing students to type instead of handwrite, or may relate to such issues as timetabling or access. Other assistance for fieldwork may include adjusting hours of work and the allocation of the type of placement may also be adjusted where needed to ensure the psychological safety of the student.

The University of Sydney has obligations under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth), the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977* (NSW) and the *Disability Standards for Education 2005* (Cth) to ensure that reasonable adjustments are available. Adjustments must be reasonable and cannot compromise the academic integrity of a course. Reasonable adjustments are provided to assist students to achieve the Inherent Requirements, not as a substitute for them.

***Can I enrol even if I am not sure I will be able to carry out some of the Inherent Requirements?***

Yes. In fact, it will usually be unlawful for the University to restrict enrolment on the basis of disability, or to discriminate against students with a disability in other ways.

***What happens if I do enrol and I am unable to carry out some of the Inherent Requirements?***

Assessment is carried out with approved reasonable adjustments. If, even with reasonable adjustments, you are unable to carry out some of the Inherent Requirements, you may fail an essential component of the course. In this event, you will be unable to graduate with the health professional degree.