

**Department of Physical Therapy  
School of Physical and Occupational Therapy  
Faculty of Medicine**

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**Essential Skills and Attributes  
Required for Successful Completion of the  
Physical Therapy Program at McGill University**

*McGill University, August 2022*

**Preamble**

The McGill Physical Therapy program is responsible to society for providing its students with opportunities to develop the qualifications (academic knowledge, professional behaviours, attitudes and clinical skills) to enter the profession of Physical Therapy. This document describes the skills and attributes required for successful completion of the Physical Therapy program at McGill University.

An offer of admission to the Physical Therapy program should not be interpreted as evidence that the Physical Therapy program has independently verified an applicant's skills and attributes in the domains described below. These skills and attributes, however, must be acquired through the program of study if students are to be successful in achieving the competency standards of the profession at an entry-to-practice level. Students must demonstrate progressive attainment of these skills and attributes, throughout the B.Sc. (Rehabilitation Science) program or Qualifying Year, to be admitted to the M.Sc. Applied (PT) program.

The competencies and roles for Physical Therapy are described in detail in the [Competency Profile for Physiotherapists in Canada 2017 \(Profil des compétences essentielles des physiothérapeutes au Canada, 2017\)](#). Students must be able to demonstrate sound clinical and professional judgment and demonstrate responsible decision making, in order to become graduates who are cognizant of practice accountability issues, laws, and regulations, professional codes of ethics and standards of evidence-informed practice.

The following section describes the skills and attributes required of students for their success in McGill's educational program and in the profession of physical therapy. Note that while some specific examples of the physical, mental, and emotional requirements are included, these examples are not exhaustive. This description of skills and attributes is not intended to preclude individuals with disabilities or special needs who may require reasonable accommodation.

**Reasonable Accommodation**

Students who anticipate that reasonable accommodation will enable them to meet the required standards for the listed skills and attributes are responsible for articulating their needs. Requests for accommodation need to be made as early as possible. Requests are considered on a case-by-case basis and are reviewed in collaboration with the student and the McGill [Student Accessibility and Achievement](#) office. Any information shared will remain confidential and any records generated in this regard will be kept separate from a student's file.

## **Description of the Skills and Attributes for Students in the Master's Physical Therapy Program**

All students must have the required skills and attributes, with or without reasonable accommodations. The skills and abilities are grouped in six broad areas:

- Aptitudes and attitudes
- Communication
- Information gathering
- Critical thinking skills
- Psychomotor/physical skills
- Coping and resilience

### ***Aptitudes and attitudes***

Students seeking to enter the Physical Therapy program must have an interest in promoting fitness, health, and well-being. Students in the program must demonstrate integrity, sensitivity, compassion, and concern for others. They must have the ability to understand and develop the theoretical knowledge and technical expertise to work collaboratively with their peers, clients, and colleagues. They must be respectful of individuality and diversity, build trusting relationships, demonstrate excellent interpersonal skills, engage and motivate clients and families, demonstrate creative problem-solving skills, and be able to manage multiple potentially competing demands. Students must be able to meet the expectations of the academic and clinical environments and be open to developing themselves personally and professionally through reflection and feedback.

### ***Communication skills***

Students must be able to speak, hear and observe in order to elicit information efficiently, and observe non-verbal communication and behaviour. Students will need to demonstrate the ability to communicate effectively and sensitively with fellow students, faculty, clients and families and all members of the health care team. They must be able to summarize a client's condition, assessment and intervention plan coherently, verbally and in text (handwriting and /or electronically) to maintain clear, accurate and appropriate records of client encounters and action plans that comply with regulatory and organizational record keeping standards. Students will also require the level of communication necessary to facilitate client safety, informed decision making, and fully independent and ethical interaction with clients. Additionally, students will be expected to demonstrate a high level of written and oral communication skills in order to meet the academic expectations of the Master's program.

Success within the Physical Therapy Program at McGill University is dependent on proficiency in English and French. English is the primary language of instruction and communication at McGill University. Students must demonstrate an adequate [level of proficiency in English](#) to meet the standards required of all McGill graduate students.

French is the official language in Québec and thus health and social services administered by the Ministry of Health and Social Services are bound by the Charter of the French Language. To function effectively in clinical placements (fieldwork), and to provide essential and safe care to all patients in Quebec's healthcare system, students must demonstrate at least a mid-intermediate proficiency in oral and written French ([B2](#) in the Common European Reference Framework).

**Information gathering skills**

Students must be able to gather information about a client's status that is typically acquired through visual, auditory, and tactile senses. Gathering information may include activities such as reading charts or other written documentation, listening to clients, observing body language, palpating parts of the body, and using assessment tools. Gathering information from the literature and other sources to inform PT service delivery is also required.

**Critical thinking skills**

Students must demonstrate the ability to remember, understand, and apply knowledge and skills, and to analyze, integrate, and synthesize information. In addition, students must be able to comprehend multidimensional and spatial relationships. Effective problem solving, conceptual thinking, and judgment are necessary to address client needs and to engage the client in achieving optimal function in a safe and efficient manner. Students use relevant models, frameworks, and theories of physical therapy to apply relevant and current scientific knowledge. Students must demonstrate these critical thinking skills in all learning environments, including the classroom, community, and institutional settings in order to build a foundation for evidence-informed practice. Students must also demonstrate a capacity to accurately assess and reflect on their own performance to self-direct their learning.

**Psychomotor/Physical skills**

Students must consistently demonstrate the physical capacity and skills required to provide safe, effective, and efficient service (assessment and intervention) for their clients, subject to any reasonable accommodation that may be required. Examples of physical activities include client lifts or transfers, positioning clients in bed or wheelchairs, assisting with walking activities, maneuvering in confined spaces, and generally reaching, bending, walking, or standing. Students must be able to use common assessment and intervention tools and instruments, either directly or in an adaptive form. In addition, students are expected to participate in all learning experiences of the educational program on a full-time basis (*i.e. up to 8 hours of classroom or fieldwork per day*).

**Coping and Resilience**

Students must consistently demonstrate the coping skills required to deal with everyday challenges. Students must also be able to manage the physical, emotional, and mental demands of the program, and perform effectively under stress. It is critical that students be able to adapt to changing environments, including fieldwork experiences, and function well in the face of uncertainties that are inherent in working with clients. Students must consistently demonstrate resilience and the balance required to enable them to manage difficult or ethically challenging scenarios that frequently arise in all PT practice settings.

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This policy document has been adapted from the University of Manitoba, November 2009, document entitled *Essential skills and attributes required for the study of Occupational Therapy at the University of Manitoba* and the 2009 policy document of the Ontario Council of University Programs in Rehabilitation Sciences (OCUPRS) entitled *Essential Skills and Attributes Required for the Study of Occupational Therapy*.