

Bachelor of Physiotherapy Inherent Requirements

Prepared by | Paul Kemel

| Course Coordinator



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Introduction

Federation University, Institute of Health and Wellbeing, and Discipline of Physiotherapy strongly supports the rights of all people who wish to pursue a physiotherapy course to achieve their potential and career objectives. The Institute is committed to making reasonable adjustments to teaching and learning, assessment, clinical practice, and other activities to address the impact of students' disabilities, health issues, or caring responsibilities so that you can participate in your course.

Definition

Federation University defines inherent requirements for its purposes as the ability to work productively to achieve the core learning outcomes and required quality of the course while maintaining:

- academic integrity,
- the ability to work in teams, and
- the capacity to work safely

Please see <https://www.alrc.gov.au/publication/essentially-yours-the-protection-of-human-genetic-information-in-australia-alrc-report-96/31-inherent-requirements-of-the-job/the-inherent-requirements-exception/> for further information regarding the definition of inherent requirements.

Inherent requirements

Federation University Australia is committed to ensuring equality of access to all units and courses and will provide reasonable adjustments to the learning environment to meet the needs of a diverse range of students. For example, students with a disability, and students with caring responsibilities.

However, Federation University acknowledges that there are some situations where adjustment is not possible. In such cases, Federation University will provide information on these to enable students to make an informed decision about their course of study and options. This information will be in the form of inherent requirements.

Inherent requirements refer to the fundamental attributes, skills, and abilities that students must be able to achieve in order to demonstrate the essential learning outcomes of the degree. For example, such restrictions may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Inability to secure a current Working with Children Check precludes you from being able to undertake mandatory placements.
- An inability to make reasonable adjustments in the educational, clinical, or workplace environment in relation to physical, psychological, cultural, or sensory disabilities precludes you from being able to undertake mandatory placements.
- Disclosures on police checks that may preclude you from being able to undertake mandatory

Federation University also notes that successful completion of the physiotherapy qualification does not necessarily guarantee registration as a physiotherapist with the Australian Health Practitioners Registration Authority (AHPRA). Students are advised to seek information on any restrictions that might apply to them in the applicable registration process prior to making decisions on their choice of course. For example, AHPRA registration is for physiotherapy students.

To support your decision-making, a series of inherent requirement statements has been developed. These statements specify the requirements of the entry-level physiotherapy course for student admission and progression. The statements are clustered under eight domains consisting of ethical behaviour, behavioural stability, legal compliance, communication skills, cognitive skills, sensory abilities, strength and mobility, and sustainable performance. Many of the activities associated with the professional practice of a registered physiotherapist are time-sensitive, where the capacity to perform certain activities within specified time limits is required to reduce or avoid risks to client safety and wellbeing. The safety and wellbeing of you and others is always of paramount importance. In addition to the safety considerations, students will need to participate in environments that replicate expected working conditions. As a student, you are required to undertake learning activities in mixed-gender environments that reflect the Australian health care context.

The inherent requirements outlined below provide a guide for you and staff members when deciding if you meet these requirements and the types of reasonable adjustments that could be put in place to allow you to complete the physiotherapy course without compromising the academic integrity of the course.

How to read the inherent requirement statements

If you are intending to enrol in the physiotherapy course at Federation University, you should look at these Inherent Requirements statements and think about whether you may experience challenges in meeting these requirements.

If you think you may experience challenges related to your disability, chronic health condition, or any other reason, you should discuss your concerns with a campus disability liaison officer or physiotherapy staff, such as the course coordinator. These staff can work collaboratively with you to determine reasonable adjustments to assist you in meeting the inherent requirements. Where it is determined that inherent requirements cannot be met with reasonable adjustments, the university staff can provide guidance regarding other study options.

These Inherent Requirements should be read in conjunction with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) Registration Standards for Physiotherapy, as provided in the Physiotherapy Board Code of Conduct (<https://www.physiotherapyboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines/Code-of-conduct.aspx>) and Guidelines for Mandatory Notifications (<https://www.physiotherapyboard.gov.au/codes-guidelines/guidelines-for-mandatory-notifications.aspx>).

Each inherent requirement is made up of the following five levels:

- The domain for the inherent requirement
- Inherent requirement statement(s)
- Justification of the inherent requirement(s)
- The nature of any adjustments that may be made to allow you to meet the requirement
- Examples of things you must be able to demonstrate to show you've met the requirement

Ethical behaviour

Inherent requirement statements:

Physiotherapy practice is mandated by specific legal and regulatory requirements and standards to enable the safe delivery of care.

The student demonstrates knowledge and compliance with Australian law and professional regulatory requirements and standards, which dictate the scope of physiotherapy practice.

Justification of an Inherent Requirement:

Knowledge, understanding, and compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements and standards are necessary pre-requisites for clinical placements to reduce the risk of harm to oneself and others.

Compliance with Australian law and professional regulatory requirements and standards ensures that students are both responsible and accountable for their practice.

Adjustments:

Must be consistent with legislative and regulatory requirements.

Exemplars:

Complying with the requirements for student registration with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA).

Complying with the policies of clinical facilities, e.g., vaccination requirements

Communication Skills

The physiotherapy course requires effective verbal, non-verbal, and written communication skills.

Verbal Communication

Inherent Requirement Statements:

Effective and efficient verbal communication in English is an essential requirement to provide safe delivery of care.

Demonstrates:

- The ability to understand and respond to verbal communication accurately, appropriately, and in a timely manner
- The ability to provide clear instructions in the context of the situation
- Timely, clear feedback and reporting

Justification of an Inherent Requirement:

Communication may be restricted to verbal because of the limitations of the individual (e.g., injury, disease, or congenital conditions).

The speed and interactivity of communication may be critical for individual safety or treatment. Timely, accurate, and effective delivery of instructions is critical to individual safety, treatment, and management.

Adjustments

Any adjustments for impaired verbal communication, adjustments must address effectiveness, timeliness, clarity, and accuracy issues to ensure safety.

Exemplars:

- Communicating using the English language with accuracy, appropriateness, and effectiveness.
- Participating in tutorial discussions and practicing verbal communication skills during practical classes.
- Establishing rapport with clients during physiotherapy management and responding appropriately to requests from clients, supervisors, and other health professionals in the clinical setting.
- Giving clear explanations and instructions to clients, carers, or team members within the clinical setting.

Non-verbal Communication

Inherent Requirement Statements:

Effective non-verbal communication is fundamental to physiotherapy and needs to be respectful, clear, attentive, empathetic, honest, and non-judgemental.

Student demonstrates:

- The capacity to recognise, interpret, and respond appropriately to behavioural cues
- Consistent and appropriate awareness of one's own behaviours
- Sensitivity to individual differences

Justification of an Inherent Requirement:

The ability to observe and understand non-verbal cues assists with building rapport with people and gaining their trust and respect in academic and professional relationships.

Displaying consistent and appropriate facial expressions, eye contact, and being mindful of space, time boundaries, and body movements and gestures promotes trust in academic and professional relationships.

Being sensitive to individual differences displays respect and empathy for others and develops trusting relationships.

The ability to observe and understand non-verbal cues is essential for safe and effective observation of client symptoms and reactions to facilitate the assessment and treatment of clients.

Adjustments

Any adjustments must enable the recognition, initiation of, or appropriate response to effective non-verbal communication in a timely and appropriate manner.

Exemplars:

- Recognising and interpreting non-verbal cues from others and responding appropriately during activities related to the course as well as in clinical environments.
- Using appropriate facial expressions, eye contact, being mindful of personal space boundaries, and a range of body movements and gestures in both the university and clinical environments.

Written Communication

Inherent Requirement Statements:

Effective written communication is a fundamental physiotherapy responsibility with professional and legal ramifications.

The student demonstrates the capacity to construct coherent written communication appropriate to the circumstances.

Justification of an Inherent Requirement:

The construction of written text-based assessment tasks to reflect the required academic standards is necessary to convey knowledge and understanding of relevant subject matter for professional practice.

Accurate written communication, including record-keeping and client notes that meet legal requirements, is vital to providing consistent and safe client care.

Adjustments

Any adjustments must meet necessary standards of clarity, accuracy, and accessibility to ensure effective recording and transmission of information in both academic and clinical environments.

Exemplars:

Constructing an essay to academic standards.

Constructing client notes, reports, and information sheets in a timely manner that meets legal and professional standards.

Cognitive Skills

This course requires knowledge of theory and the skills of cognition, literacy, and numeracy.

Knowledge and cognitive skills

Inherent Requirement Statements:

Consistent and effective knowledge and cognitive skills must be demonstrated to provide safe, effective, and timely physiotherapy management.

Student demonstrates:

- Capacity to locate appropriate and relevant information.
- Ability to process information relevant to practice.
- Ability to integrate and implement knowledge into practice in a timely manner.

Justification of an Inherent Requirement:

Safe and effective delivery of physiotherapy management is based on comprehensive knowledge that must be sourced, understood, and applied appropriately.

Adjustments

Any adjustments must ensure that a clear demonstration of knowledge and cognitive skills is not compromised or impeded.

Exemplars:

Conceptualising and using appropriate knowledge in response to academic assessment tasks.

Appropriately applying knowledge of theory, research evidence, policies, and procedures in set timeframes in the clinical setting.

Literacy (language) skills

Inherent Requirement Statements:

Competent literacy skills are essential to providing safe, effective, and timely physiotherapy management.

Student demonstrates:

- The ability to accurately acquire information and convey appropriate, effective messages
- Ability to read and comprehend a range of literature and information
- The capacity to understand and implement academic conventions to construct written text in a scholarly manner

Justification of an inherent requirement:

The ability to acquire information and accurately convey messages is fundamental to ensuring safe and effective assessment, treatment, and delivery of care.

The ability to read, decode, interpret, and comprehend multiple sources of information is fundamental for the safe and effective delivery of care.

Adjustments

Any adjustments must address literacy issues and demonstrate a capacity to effectively acquire, comprehend, apply, and communicate accurate information.

Exemplars:

Conveying a spoken message accurately and effectively in a clinical setting.

Paraphrasing, summarising, and referencing in accordance with appropriate academic conventions in written assignments.

Producing accurate, concise, and clear physiotherapy documentation that meets legal requirements.

Numeracy Skills

Inherent Requirement Statements:

Competent and accurate numeracy skills are essential to providing safe, effective, and timely physiotherapy management.

The student interprets and correctly applies data, measurements, and numerical criteria.

Justification of an Inherent Requirement:

Competent application of numeracy skills is essential in physiotherapy to facilitate the safe and effective delivery of physiotherapy care.

Adjustments:

Any adjustments must demonstrate a capacity to interpret and apply concepts and processes appropriately in a timely, accurate, and effective manner.

Exemplars:

Demonstrating application of basic mathematics knowledge and skills when reading scientific information and equipment.

Recording accurate measurements in client notes.

Prescribing adaptive equipment that correctly meets client measurement requirements, e.g., wheelchair prescription.

Sensory Abilities

This course requires adequate visual, auditory, and tactile abilities.

Visual sensory ability

Inherent Requirement Statements:

Adequate visual acuity is required to provide safe, effective, and timely physiotherapy management.

The student demonstrates sufficient visual acuity to perform a range of skills.

Justification of an Inherent Requirement:

Sufficient visual acuity to demonstrate the required range of skills, tasks, and assessments to maintain consistent, accurate, and safe care for oneself and others.

Visual observations, examinations, and assessments are fundamental to safe and effective physiotherapy practice.

Adjustments

Any adjustment must address the need to perform the full range of tasks involved in clinical practice. Any strategies to address the effects of vision impairment must be effective, consistent, and not compromise treatment or safety.

Exemplars:

Observing and detecting subtle changes in posture, movement, and the ability to perform functional activities during assessment and treatment.

Safely operating electronic equipment

Auditory sensory ability

Inherent Requirement Statements:

Adequate auditory ability is required to provide safe, effective, and timely physiotherapy management.

The student demonstrates sufficient aural function to undertake the required range of skills.

Justification of an Inherent Requirement:

Sufficient auditory ability is necessary to monitor, assess, and manage individual health needs consistently and accurately.

Auditory assessments and observations are fundamental to safe, effective, and timely physiotherapy practice.

Adjustments

Any adjustments must address the need to perform the range of tasks involved in clinical practice. Any strategies to address the effects of hearing impairment must be effective, consistent, and not compromise safety.

Exemplars:

Detecting care requests by calls for help or activation of a call bell.

Engaging appropriately with a client's responses during an assessment.

Tactile sensory ability

Inherent Requirement Statements:

Sufficient tactile ability is required to provide safe, effective, and timely physiotherapy management.

The student demonstrates sufficient tactile function to undertake a range of skills and assessments.

Justification of an Inherent Requirement:

Sufficient tactile ability is necessary to monitor, assess, and detect clients' physical characteristics and act on any abnormalities detected to provide appropriate physiotherapy management.

Tactile assessments and observations are fundamental to competent, safe, effective, and timely physiotherapy management.

Adjustments:

Any adjustment must have the capacity to make effective assessments of physical characteristics and abnormalities within safe time frames.

Exemplars:

Detecting changes in circulation, e.g., temperature.

Palpating joints, muscles, and soft tissues, and detecting anatomical or movement abnormalities.

Strength and mobility

This course requires strength and mobility, involving fine and gross motor skills.

Gross motor skills

Inherent Requirement Statements:

Physiotherapy involves physical demands and requires gross motor function.

The student demonstrates the ability to perform gross motor skills to function within the scope of practice.

Justification of an Inherent Requirement:

Sufficient gross motor skills are necessary to perform, coordinate, and prioritise care. Tasks that involve gross motor skills include lifting, carrying, pushing, pulling, standing, twisting, and bending. Students must be able to demonstrate and perform these tasks consistently and safely to reduce the risk of harm to themselves and others.

Adjustments

Any adjustments must facilitate functional effectiveness, the safety of oneself and others, and the capacity to provide appropriate care.

Exemplars:

Maintaining one's own and the client's balance while providing client support is important when transferring and mobilising individuals in a safe manner.

Evaluating clients, in a safe and effective manner, who have varying physical capacity and who are positioned on plinths and hospital beds, on mats on the floor, on chairs, and when standing.

Fine motor skills

Inherent Requirement Statements:

Physiotherapy is a profession that requires manual dexterity and fine motor skills.

The student demonstrates the ability to use fine motor skills to function within the scope of practice.

Justification of an Inherent Requirement:

Sufficient fine-motor skills are necessary to coordinate and prioritise care. Tasks that involve fine motor skills include being able to grasp, press, push, turn, squeeze, and manipulate various objects and individuals. Students must be able to demonstrate and perform these tasks consistently and safely to reduce the risk of harm to themselves and others.

Adjustments:

Any adjustments must facilitate functional effectiveness, safety for oneself and others, and the capacity to provide appropriate care.

Exemplars:

Performing assessment techniques, e.g., evaluation of sensation and joint movement.

Performing treatment techniques, e.g., demonstrating use of adaptive equipment and demonstrating fine motor tasks during activities of daily living.

Sustainable Performance

Inherent Requirement Statements:

Physiotherapy practice requires both physical and mental performance at a consistent and sustained level to meet individual needs over time.

Student demonstrates:

- Consistent and sustained level of physical energy to complete a specific task in a timely manner and over time.
- The ability to perform repetitive activities with a level of concentration that ensures a capacity to focus on the activity until it is completed appropriately.
- The capacity to maintain consistency and quality of performance throughout the designated period of duty.

Justification of an Inherent Requirement:

Sufficient physical and mental endurance is an essential requirement needed to perform multiple tasks in an assigned period to provide safe, effective, and timely care.

Adjustments:

Must ensure that performance is consistent and sustained over a given period.

Exemplars:

Participating in tutorials and lectures throughout the day with adequate, sustained levels of physical energy and concentration.

Providing consistent physiotherapy management over a negotiated time frame while on clinical placement.

References

Bialocerkowski, A., Johnson, A., Allan, T., & Phillips, K. (2013). Development of physiotherapy inherent requirement statements – an Australian experience. BMC Medical Education, 13(1), 54. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1472-6920-13-54>