

DIVISION OF PHYSICAL THERAPY  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SCIENCES  
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE  
THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

**DOCTORAL PROGRAM IN PHYSICAL THERAPY  
POLICIES AND GUIDELINES FOR CLINICAL EDUCATION**

Clinical Education experiences are designed to reflect authentic professional work environments. Students shall adhere to the rules, regulations, and schedule of the clinical facility and their clinical instructor. Work weeks are expected to be approximately 40 hours per week. In order to complete the experience, students must complete the full number of weeks (8 or 12 weeks) for the experience. Students with specific restrictions which prevent work at certain times of the day or days of the week should speak with the DCE before clinical sites are assigned or as soon as they become aware of these restrictions. Students should be aware that work schedules are subject to change at any time.

**WORKDAYS AND HOURS:**

The student is expected to work the workdays and hours of the assigned clinical instructor. This may include skewed work weeks (i.e. Tuesday – Saturday) and/or nontraditional hours (i.e. four 10-hour days), individual weekend days, and/or evening hours. The student should adhere to the expected number of hours (approximately 40 hours/week), understanding that responsibilities often require additional time beyond the planned clinical work hours. Students will follow the site and Clinical Instructor holiday work schedule. This means some students may work on holidays and others may have holidays off depending on the assigned clinical site policies. Many clinicians routinely stay late or arrive early to complete documentation, prepare for the day, or complete other work activities. As a result, it is common for students to be at a clinical site for more than 40 hrs/week. If available at their site, students may “bank” hours by working extra clinical care shifts or extended hours (beyond 40/week) to be used to offset planned or unplanned absences within the same clinical experience.

**PLANNED ABSENCES:**

Students are expected to avoid missing days during clinical experiences. On rare occasions students may make a request for a planned absence. Planned absences require submitting a *REQUEST FOR VOLUNTARY LEAVE FROM CLINICAL* form for approval in advance of the missed day as soon as the need is known, preferably in advance of the start of the clinical experience. DCE’s will determine the required make up time based on the duration of the absence. Make-up time should be scheduled with the clinical site and the CI before the end of the experience during which time is missed. Special consideration is given to 3<sup>rd</sup> year students who are within 90 days of graduation and DCE’s may grant limited hours missed (no more than equivalent of 1 workday) to allow for participation in residency or job interviews.

**UNPLANNED ABSENCES:**

On occasion students encounter time when they need to be away from their clinical experience for unplanned reasons including illness, inclement weather, or for other reasons. Students are expected to stay home if they do not pass wellness screens or are not feeling well. Students should also not travel to their clinical site if weather conditions prevent safe travel. If a student cannot be in clinic on a scheduled workday, they should first report the absence to their clinical instructor, and then to the DCE. Failure to report absences to the DCE’s is considered a professionalism issue and will be referred to the Promotions Committee. DCE’s will work with Clinical Instructors and clinical sites to determine a plan for make up of missed time. Considerations will be given to the number of hours missed as well as the student performance

at the time of the absence. Students who miss more than 5% of the total planned clinical experience may be expected to make up missed time. Students who miss more than 10% of the clinical experience may be expected to extend the duration of the clinical or repeat the entire clinical experience since this amount of missed time could substantially impact the student's progression in the experience.

#### **MISSED DAYS & MAKE UP TIME:**

Any missed days during the rotation should be reported to the DCEs and recorded on the Web CPI. The number of required make up days is determined by the DCEs. Make up time should have similar clinical exposure to patients as the typical day for that clinical rotation. Staying late to complete paperwork is NOT adequate to make up missed patient care time. Incomplete grades are assigned to clinicals until required hours have been completed.

#### **ACCOMMODATIONS:**

Students who cannot work a typical clinical schedule of up to 10 hours per day and 40 hours/week plus up to 1 hour of commute each way should speak with DCEs to determine if they should apply for accommodations. When possible, the DCEs will work with students to match students to clinical experiences that meet their individual needs including specific schedule and travel needs. Matching student preferences is not always possible. Students are encouraged to speak with DCEs about options that might best meet their individual needs.

#### **DRESS CODE:**

Students are expected to follow the dress code of the facility to which they are assigned. Whether the facility has a dress policy or not, the student shall dress in a professional manner and shall wear a name tag designating that he or she is a physical therapy student. Students are expected to wear personal protective equipment consistent with University and Facility policies. The clinical facility shall inform the student of said rules, regulations, schedules, and policies.

#### **STUDENT PERFORMANCE:**

Students will be evaluated using the Web CPI. The Web CPI should be completed online and should be discussed with the student at midterm and near the end of the practicum. Concerns about student performance should be reported to the DCE as soon as concerns are apparent. Most students prefer being advised of their deficiencies early so that they can work improve in those areas. The DCE will work with you to identify strategies for remediation of performance problems.

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Thank you very much for your participation in our Clinical Education program.