FEATURE

Guidelines for Technical Standards for Entry-Level Athletic Training Education

Technical standards were developed by the Entry-Level Education Committee and released in October. Following is the committee's document, available on the Education Council home page at www.cewl.com.

History and Rationale

The landmark Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, P.L. 101-336 ("ADA" or "the Act"), enacted on July 26, 1990, provides comprehensive civil rights protections to qualified individuals with disabilities. The ADA was modeled after Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which marked the beginning of equal opportunity for persons with disabilities. As amended, Section 504 "prohibits all programs or activities receiving federal financial assistance from discrimination against individuals with disabilities who are 'otherwise qualified' to participate in those programs." With respect to post-secondary educational services, an "otherwise qualified" individual is a person with a disability "who meets the academic and technical standards requisite to admission or participation in the recipient's education program or activity."

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, Title II and Title III are applicable to students with disabilities and their requests for accommodations. Title II covers state colleges and universities. Title III pertains to private educational institutions; it prohibits discrimination based on disability in places of "public accommodation," including undergraduate and postgraduate schools.

Given the intent of Section 504 and the ADA, the development of standards of practice for a profession, and the establishment of essential requirements to the student's program of study, or directly related to licensing requirements, is allowable under these laws. In applying Section 504 regulations, which require individuals to meet the "academic and technical standards for admission," the Supreme Court has stated that physical qualifications could lawfully be considered "technical standard(s) for admission."

Institutions may not, however, exclude an "otherwise qualified" applicant or student merely because of a disability, if the institution can reasonably modify its program or facilities to accommodate the applicant or student with a disability. However, an institution need not provide accommodations or modify its program of study or facilities such that (a) would "fundamentally alter" and/or (b) place an "undue burden on" the educational program or academic requirements and technical standards which are essential to the program of study.

Use of the Guidelines

The following Guidelines embody the physical, cognitive, and attitudinal abilities an Entry-Level Athletic Trainer must be able to demonstrate in order to function in a broad variety of clinical situations; and to render a wide spectrum of care to athletes and individuals engaged in physical activity. The Guidelines serve to recognize abilities essential to the development of these Entry-Level abilities. Further, the Guidelines reflect the necessary and required skills and abilities identified for the Entry-Level Athletic Trainer as detailed in the NATA Athletic Training Educational Competencies and the NATABOC, Inc., Role Delineation Study.

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Institutions and programs should use these Guidelines as a reference point in the development of specific requirements, "technical standards," for admission to, and completion of, their educational program. Requirements should be objective, measurable, and should be applied to student admission to the program.

Institutions and programs should provide their students with the applicable technical standards in a timely fashion. This could be prior to admission to the institution (for those programs that admit students directly to the program) or soon after the student has entered the institution (for those programs that admit students through a secondary admission process).

While technical standards should be applied to student admission to the institution and/or program, some programs may, additionally, apply technical standards as the student moves through the program, and/or use technical standards as a measure of the student's attainment of criteria for graduation.

Entry-Level Athletic Training Education Programs must contact and work with their institution's ADA Compliance Officer, Office of Affirmative Action, or appropriate institutional office in the development and implementation of technical standards specific to their institution. This document is only intended as a guide or reference point for the development and implementation of technical standards. The ADA Compliance Officer (or appropriate person) at your institution is a valuable resource in the development and implementation of technical standards. It is strongly encouraged that programs not develop and implement technical standards without this important advice and counsel.

Sample Technical Standards

The following sample technical standards are presented in three sections. The introduction explains the rationale for the technical standards and how they may be used by the program. The main section includes the technical standards. The final section includes a statement that the student has read the technical standards and, by their signature, acknowledges an understanding of the implications of the standards.

Institutions and programs should use these sample technical standards as a reference point in the development of more detailed and/or specific standards for their program.

Compliance with technical standards does not guarantee a student's eligibility for the NATABOC certification exam.

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ATEP TECHNICAL STANDARDS FOR ADMISSION

The Athletic Training Educational Program at ___ is a rigorous and intense program that places specific requirements and demands on the students enrolled in the program. An objective of this program is to prepare graduates to enter a variety of employment settings and to render care to a wide spectrum of individuals engaged in physical activity. The technical standards set forth by the Athletic Training Educational Program establish the essential qualities considered necessary for students admitted to this program to achieve the knowledge, skills, and competencies of an entry-level athletic trainer, as well as meet the expectations of the program's accrediting agency (Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs [CAAHEP]). The following abilities and expectations must be met by all students admitted to the Athletic Training Educational Program. In the event a student is unable to fulfill these technical standards, with or without reasonable accommodation, the student will not be admitted into the program.

Compliance with the program's technical standards does not guarantee a student's eligibility for the NATABOC certification exam.

Candidates for selection to the Athletic Training Educational Program must demonstrate:

1. The mental capacity to assimilate, analyze, synthesize, integrate concepts and problem solve to formulate assessment and therapeutic judgments and to be able to distinguish deviations from the norm.
2. *Sufficient postural and neuromuscular control, sensory function and coordination to perform appropriate physical examinations using accepted techniques; and accurately, safely and efficiently use equipment and materials during the assessment and treatment of patients*.
3. The ability to communicate effectively and sensitively with patients and colleagues, including individuals from different cultural and social back grounds; this includes, but is not limit ed to, the ability to establish rapport with patients and communicate judgements and treatment information effectively. Students must be able to under stand and speak the English language at a level consistent with competent professional practice.
4. The ability to record the physical examination results and a treatment plan clearly and accurately.
5. The capacity to maintain composure and continue to function well during periods of high stress.
6. The perseverance, diligence and commitment to complete the athletic training education program as outlined and sequenced.
7. Flexibility and the ability to adjust to changing situations and uncertainty in clinical situations.
8. Affective skills and appropriate demeanor and rapport that relate to professional education and quality patient care.

Candidates for selection to the athletic training educational program will be required to verify they understand and meet these technical standards or that they believe that, with certain accommodations, they can meet the standards.

The (insert name of institution's students with disabilities department) will evaluate a student who states s/he could meet the program's technical standards with accommodation and confirm that the stated condition qualifies as a disability under applicable laws.

If a student states s/he can meet the technical standards with accommodation, then the University will determine whether it agrees that the student can meet the technical standards with reasonable accommodation; this includes a review a whether the accommodations requested are reasonable, taking into account whether accommodation would jeopardize clinician/patient safety, or the educational process of the student or the institution, including all coursework, clinical experiences and internships deemed essential to graduation.

I certify that I have read and understand the technical standards for selection listed above, and I believe to the best of my knowledge that I meet each of these standards without accommodation. I understand that if I am unable to meet these standards I will not be admitted into the program.

Signature of Applicant Date

Alternative statement for students requesting accommodations.

I certify that I have read and understand the technical standards of selection listed above and I believe to the best of my knowledge that I can meet each of these standards with certain accommodations. I will contact the (insert name of institution's students with disabilities department) to determine what accommodations may be available. I understand that if I am unable to meet these standards with or without accommodations, I will not be admitted into the program.

Signature of Applicant Date