Functional Standards for Graduates of the College of Optometry

Adapted from "Functional Standards for Didactic and Clinical Optometric Education", ASCO, 1998

A career in optometry requires that candidates for the OD degree be capable of attaining competence in the knowledge, skills, abilities, and personal values expected of all graduates of the College of Optometry, with or without reasonable accommodation. The functional standards in optometric education require that the candidate/student possess appropriate abilities in the following areas: 1) observation; 2) communication; 3) sensory and motor coordination; 4) intellectual –conceptual, integrative and quantitative abilities; and 5) behavioral and social attributes.

Thus an individual must be able to independently, with or without reasonable accommodation, meet the following technical standards:

OBSERVATION ABILITIES

The student must be able to acquire a defined level of require knowledge as presented through lectures, laboratories, demonstrations, patient interaction a self-study. Acquiring this body of information necessitates the functional use of visual, auditory and somatic sensation enhanced by the functional use of other sensory modalities. Examples of these observational skills in which accurate information needs to be extracted in an efficient manner include the ability to:

Visual Abilities: (as they relate to such things as visual acuity, color vision and perception of depth)

- Read information from papers, films, slides, video and computer displays
- Observe optical, anatomic, physiologic and pharmacologic demonstrations and experiments
- Discriminate microscopic images of tissue and microorganisms
- Observe a patient and note non-verbal signs
- Discriminate numbers, images, and patterns associated with diagnostic tests and instruments
- Observe specific ocular tissues in order to discern three-dimensional relationships, depth and color changes

Auditory Abilities:

- Understand verbal presentations in lecture, laboratory and patient settings
- Recognize and interpret various sounds associated with laboratory experiments as well as diagnostic and therapeutic procedures

Tactile Abilities:

- Palpate the eye and related areas to determine the integrity of the underlying structures
- Palpate and feel certain cardiovascular pulses

COMMUNICATION ABILITIES

The student must be able to communicate effectively, efficiently and sensitively with patients and their families, peers, staff, instructors and other members of the health care team. The student must be able to demonstrate established communication skills using traditional and alternative means. Examples of required communications skills include:

- Relating effectively and sensitively to patients, conveying compassion and empathy

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- Perceiving verbal and non-verbal communication such as sadness, worry, agitation and lack of comprehension from patients
- Eliciting information from patients and observing changes in mood and activity
- Communicating quickly, effectively and efficiently with patients and other members of the health care team
- Reading and legibly recording observations, test results and management plans accurately
- Completing assignments, patient records and correspondence accurately and in a timely manner
- Sufficient comprehension of written and oral English necessary to acquire and demonstrate the competencies for entry level practice as set forth within the curricular plan for the program

SENSORY AND MOTOR COORDINATION ABILITIES

Students must possess the sensory and motor skills necessary to perform an eye examination, including emergency care. In general, this requires sufficient exteroception sense (touch, pain, temperature), proprioceptive sense (position, pressure, movement, stereognosis, and vibratory) and fine motor function (significant coordination and manual dexterity using arms, wrists, hands and fingers). Examples of skill required include:

- Instillation of ocular pharmaceutical agents
- Insertion, removal and manipulation of contact lenses
- Assessment of blood pressure and pulse
- Removal of foreign objects from the cornea
- Simultaneous manipulation of lenses, instruments and therapeutic agents and devices
- Reasonable facility of movement

INTELLECTUAL-CONCEPTUAL, INTEGRATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE ABILITIES

Problem solving, a most critical skill, is essential for optometric students and must be performed quickly, especially in emergency situations. In order to be an effective problem solver, the student must be able to accurately and efficiently utilize such abilities as measurement, calculation, reasoning, analysis, judgment, investigation, memory, numerical recognition and synthesis. Examples of these abilities include being able to:

- Determine appropriate questions to be asked and clinical tests to be performed
- Identify and analyze significant findings from history, examination, and other test data
- Demonstrate good judgment and provide a reasonable assessment, diagnosis and management of patients
- Retain, recall and obtain information in an efficient manner
- Identify and communicate the limits of one's knowledge and skill

BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL ATTRIBUTES

The student must possess the necessary behavioral and social attributes for the study and practice of optometry. Examples of such attributes include:

- Satisfactory emotional health required for full utilization of one's intellectual ability
- High ethical standards and integrity
- An empathy with patients and concern for their welfare
- Commitment to the optometric profession and its standards
- Effective interpersonal relationships with patients, peers and instructors
- Professional demeanor
- Effective functioning under varying degrees of stress and workload
- Adaptability to changing environments and uncertainties

Candidates with questions or concerns about how their own conditions or disabilities might affect their ability to meet these functional standards are encouraged to meet with an advisor prior to submitting an application.

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