

# Technical Standards Document

*Technical standards are the non-academic skills and abilities necessary for the successful completion of the course of study in osteopathic medicine. The Educational Council on Osteopathic Principles has recommended the following non-academic criteria for admission and continued program participation for osteopathic medical students in programs leading to the doctor of osteopathic medical (DO) degree.*

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## **Recommended Technical Standards for Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine**

### **Introduction:**

The *college of osteopathic medicine* is committed to the admission and matriculation of all qualified students and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, gender, or disability. Regarding disabled (or physically challenged) individuals the College will not discriminate against such individuals who are otherwise qualified, but the College will expect that minimal technical standards be met by all applicants and students as set forth herein. These standards reflect what has been determined to be reasonable expectations of osteopathic medical students and physicians in performing common and important functions, keeping in mind the safety and welfare of the patients for whom our graduates will care.

### **Technical Standards:**

An osteopathic physician must have the knowledge and skills to function in a broad variety of clinical situations and to render a wide spectrum of patient care. In order to perform the activities described below, candidates for the D.O. degree must be able to quickly, accurately, and consistently learn, integrate, analyze, and synthesize data.

To facilitate the attainment of optimum care and safety, students at the *college of osteopathic medicine* must:

1. Behave in a manner exhibiting high moral and behavioral standards reflecting the position and status of an osteopathic physician.
2. Demonstrate respect for individuals and groups with consideration to the diversity of age, gender, nationality, race, religion, or disability.
3. Students of osteopathic medicine must meet minimal technical and ability standards. The practice of medicine in general and osteopathic medicine in particular, requires the ability to learn, process, and utilize a great deal of knowledge and experience. Students must have the ability to see, hear, and touch independently to optimally assess the physical, mental, and emotional status of patients. Where a deficiency occurs, it must be compensated with the aid of prosthetics to the extent that the student's functioning is equal to that of a non-impaired student. Reasonable adaptations are those that will enable the osteopathic student to function independently and when necessary in a team-like fashion with other health professionals in an unimpaired manner.

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*The college of osteopathic medicine* expects its applicants and students to meet certain minimum technical standards as outlined below. Every applicant and student of the *college of osteopathic medicine name* is expected to possess those intellectual, ethical, physical, and emotional capabilities required to undertake the full curriculum and to achieve the levels of competence required by the faculty. The holder of a doctor of osteopathic medicine degree must have the knowledge and skills to function in a broad variety of clinical situations and to render a wide spectrum of patient care. The *college of osteopathic medicine name* has adopted these standards with due consideration for the safety and well-being of the patients for whom its graduates will eventually care.

The specific technical standards recommended by the *college of osteopathic medicine name* are set forth below.

### **Observation & Visual Integration**

Applicants and students must have sufficient visual capabilities to observe demonstrations, experiments, and laboratory exercises in the basic and clinical sciences, as well as proper evaluation and treatment integration in order to assess asymmetry, range of motion, and tissue color and texture changes.

They must be able to observe a patient accurately at varying distances with the ability to determine size and depth of an object in low light at 0.3cm, and with the ability to discern non-verbal communication.

### **Communication**

Applicants and students should be able to speak, hear and observe patients in order to elicit information, examine patients, describe changes in mood, activity and posture, and perceive nonverbal communication. They must be able to communicate effectively and sensitively with patients in English.

Communication includes not only speech but also reading and writing. Applicants and students must be able to communicate effectively and efficiently in oral and written form with all members of the health care team in English.

### **Motor Function**

Applicants and students should have sufficient motor function to execute movements reasonably required to provide general care and emergency treatment to patients. Examples of movements reasonably required of physicians include, but are not limited to, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), administration of intravenous medication, the application of pressure to stop bleeding, the opening of obstructed airways, the suturing of simple wounds, the

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performance of obstetrical maneuvers and osteopathic manipulative medicine. Such actions require coordination of both gross and fine muscular movements, equilibrium and functional use of the senses of touch and vision.

### **Sensory Skills**

Applicants and students of osteopathic medicine must possess an enhanced ability to use their sensory skills. Individuals with disabilities who have significant tactile sensory or proprioceptive disabilities may require a thorough evaluation to determine if they are otherwise qualified, with or without reasonable accommodation. Such individuals may include those with significant previous burns, sensory motor deficits, cicatrix formation and malformations of the upper extremities.

### **Strength and Mobility**

Medical treatments, such as osteopathic manipulative medicine and cardio-pulmonary resuscitation, often require upright posture with sufficient upper & lower extremity and overall body strength and mobility. Individuals with disabilities who have significant limitations in these areas may require evaluation to determine if they are otherwise qualified, with or without reasonable accommodation.

### **Intellectual, Conceptual, Integrative and Quantitative Abilities**

Applicants and students must be able to concentrate, analyze and interpret data, and make decisions within areas in which there is a reasonable amount of visual and auditory distraction. They must perform these functions under a time limitation and do so under a reasonable amount of stress, as physicians are expected to be able to perform such duties in diverse clinical settings where others may be present and where there is a certain degree of noise. Applicants and students must be able to accurately write prescriptions, accurately perform basic mathematical functions, and accurately and quickly read charts with minimal error in areas where there may be distractions. They also must demonstrate ability to comprehend three-dimensional relationships, and to understand spatial relationships of structures.

### **Behavioral and Social Attributes**

Applicants and students must possess the emotional health required for full utilization of their intellectual abilities, exercise good judgment, and promptly complete all responsibilities attendant to the diagnosis and care of patients and the development of mature, sensitive and effective professional relationships with patients. Applicants and students must be able to tolerate physically taxing workloads and adapt to changing environments, display flexibility and learn to function in the face of uncertainties inherent in the clinical problems of many patients. Compassion, integrity, concern for others, interpersonal skills, interest

and motivation are all personal qualities that will be assessed during the admissions and educational processes.

**Participation in Osteopathic Manipulative Medicine Laboratory and Clinical Care Encounters**

Active participation in Osteopathic Manipulative Medicine Laboratories and Clinical Care Encounters is an admission, matriculation and graduation requirement. During Osteopathic Manipulative Medicine laboratory and clinical care encounters, it is imperative to the educational process that the body region being examined and/or treated will need to be exposed for observation, palpation and treatment. The examination and treatment must be conducted in a respectful and professional manner.

The development of palpatory skills used for diagnosis and treatment is significant and required in osteopathic medical schools. Stedman's Medical Dictionary defines "palpation" as examination with the hands and fingers, touching, feeling or perceiving by the sense of touch. Palpation in the osteopathic educational context is the use of touch to examine the body. Palpatory skills are used in all areas of osteopathic medical practice and are especially important in the evaluation and treatment of the musculoskeletal system.

The development of palpatory skills and ability to perform osteopathic treatments are initiated in the first- and second-year labs. This learning requires active participation in all laboratory sessions where students palpate and will experience palpation by their peers and instructors of both genders to enhance the development of their own palpatory skills. Each student will palpate a variety of people with different body types to simulate the diversity of patients expected in a practice setting. Fingernails must be trimmed so as not to impair palpation or cause discomfort to the person being palpated.

The osteopathic medical profession uses a variety of treatment models through which the student will learn the art, science and skills of osteopathic manipulative treatment. Psychomotor skills are developed by repetition and reinforcement. Reading and observation, while helpful in understanding the didactic concepts, do not develop the skills required to perform palpatory diagnosis and manipulative treatment. Each student is required to actively participate in all skill development sessions.

**Dress code in Osteopathic Principles and Practice Laboratories**

The dress requirement in clinical skills training sessions is designed to promote learning by providing optimal access to diagnostic observation and palpatory experience. Wearing inappropriate clothing interferes with a partner's experience of diagnosis and treatment.

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Appropriate attire must be clean and includes:

- Shorts which are several inches above the knee - (no jean shorts, cut-offs, cargo, thick-seamed shorts, spandex, short shorts or knee length shorts)
- T-shirts - both genders will be asked to remove t-shirts while acting as patients.
- Sports bras or bathing suit tops for women - these should expose the spine and ribs (not wide t-back styles).
- Students may wear scrubs (or other apparel approved by the course director) over the laboratory attire when not in the role of the patient.
- When in the role of the patient, each student is expected to remove her/his shoes (no shoes are permitted on the tables).
- Hats or head coverings (other than for religious purposes) are not permitted in lab.
- Religious head coverings must be modified when necessary to allow palpation when they would obscure the immediate area to be examined or treated (e.g., head, neck, upper back). Modifications can include: adjustment of the covering permitting unobstructed palpation beneath the covering; or substitution of a thinner material that allows for adequate evaluation and treatment.
- Each student must be appropriately attired before class begins. Failure to be appropriately attired for class impedes the educational process and will not be tolerated.

Any student with a pre-existing health problem that may preclude examination and/or treatment in a clinical skills laboratory is required to submit a written request for limitation and/or exclusion to the department chair (or designee) and present appropriate medical documentation. A physician member of the department will review this information on a case-by-case basis, and may require additional diagnostic measures. The department member reviewing the case will determine any limitation or exclusion from participation, and the student will be notified in writing of the decision.

### **Reasonable Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

It is the policy of The college of osteopathic medicine to provide equal opportunities for all applicants and students with respect to admission, financial aid, and access to education programs, services and activities, regardless of race, color, national origin, age, religion, sex, disability, or medical condition.

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and other applicable laws, the college of osteopathic medicine name provides reasonable accommodations for otherwise qualified students with verified physical, psychological and/or learning disabilities. An accommodation

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will not be provided if it would result in the fundamental alteration of the college's programs, services or activities, or if it would impose undue financial or administrative burdens on the college.

The intent of this policy is to provide each student with the opportunity to excel academically, while creating an equitable environment conducive to learning. In doing so, however, the college of osteopathic medicine name must maintain the integrity of its curriculum and preserve those elements deemed essential to the acquisition of knowledge in all areas of osteopathic medicine, including the demonstration of basic skills required for the practice of osteopathic medicine. So for example, technology-related accommodations may be made for disabled students in some of these areas, but a candidate must be able to perform in a reasonably independent manner. One or more trained intermediaries may be provided to assist the student during the educational program, but not under circumstances where the student's judgment must be mediated by someone else's power of selection and observation.

This policy will be administered consistently, fairly, and in a non-discriminatory manner in compliance with the ADA and all other applicable laws. All applicants receiving supplementary application material for admission will be asked to certify they have reviewed the college of osteopathic medicine name Technical Standards and the Participation in Osteopathic Manipulative Medicine Laboratories requirements.

Any student accepted to a college of osteopathic medicine name program who believes themselves to have a mental and/or physical disability must bring this information and all supporting documentation to the college of osteopathic medicine party responsible for ADA issues.

The college of osteopathic medicine party responsible for ADA issues is responsible for reviewing the documentation and will follow these steps:

1. In reviewing documentation that indicates mental and/or physical limitations, the party:
  - a. Investigates whether the disability is ADA-protected;
  - b. Determines if the student is otherwise qualified and is capable of completing the entire program, with or without reasonable accommodation;
  - c. Assesses the risk of the student harming self and others;
2. Reserves the right to request additional documentation;
3. May consult with any necessary health-care providers;
4. May require that the student meet with any college of osteopathic medicine name -selected health-care provider at the student's expense for further evaluation or testing;

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5. Makes a formal recommendation to the Dean of the College of Osteopathic Medicine, based on all the information received regarding a student's qualification for meeting the minimal technical standards for the program, with or without reasonable accommodation.

### Procedures for Requesting Accommodations

Requests for accommodations are made by the student according to the procedures outlined below. Applications may be submitted at any time during the academic year. An application for accommodations is a request for only the academic year in which it was submitted. If an accommodation is granted during the first academic year, a renewal application must be submitted the following year should the student desire continuation of the granted accommodations. Requests for accommodations do not signify privilege until official notice is received from the *college of osteopathic medicine party responsible for ADA issues*.

All requests for accommodations due to a physical, psychological or learning disability must contain appropriate documentation and be directed to the *college of osteopathic medicine party responsible for ADA issues*.

### The Student's Responsibilities

Submit a completed application, which can be obtained from the *college of osteopathic medicine party responsible for ADA issues*, and have all documentation forwarded (release form available in the abovementioned offices) to the *college of osteopathic medicine party responsible for ADA issues*. The application form includes the following information:

1. Name, social security number, student ID number, address and telephone number;
2. Diagnosis of the disability and the earliest date that the disability was professionally diagnosed. Supporting documentation must be forwarded (release form), including diagnosis and how it affects major life activities; results of tests that were administered and interpreted; name, address and phone number of professional(s), including physician(s) responsible for administering and interpreting tests; date(s) that the tests were administered and interpreted; and recommendations for any accommodations;
3. A personal description of how the disability affects major life activities;
4. Define the accommodation(s) that is (are) requested;
5. The applicant must indicate whether accommodations were granted in all previous educational environments; if accommodations were given, the applicant must provide:
  - a. Name of institution(s);
  - b. Name of person(s) [and respective department(s)] who granted accommodations;

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- c. Subject area(s) for which accommodations were granted;
- d. Specific description of accommodations received;
6. Signature of student;
7. Date the application is submitted.

### IMPORTANT

An application is incomplete if it does not contain documentation dated within 12 months of submission of application. The college of osteopathic medicine name may waive the 12-month requirement if additional documentation is not deemed necessary.

It is the responsibility of the student to have an evaluation and tests administered and interpreted. The college of osteopathic medicine name can refer the student to a local provider for evaluation. Any charges for an evaluation or forwarding of documentation are the student's responsibility.

### Authorization to Release Applicant Information

The Federal Privacy Act specifies that only the applicant have access to the application material and the status of their application. If the applicant wants another party or multiple parties (i.e., parent, spouse, advisor, physician, friend) to check the status of his or her application, the applicant is required to submit in writing a signed waiver giving personnel of college of osteopathic medicine name permission to discuss all details of the application with each said individual.