



PHYSICAL THERAPY

perspectives for preparation

CAREER FACTS

- Physical therapists are health care practitioners “committed to preventing or treating movement-related problems resulting from injury, disease, overuse, and sedentary behavior” (APTA).
- According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, median annual earnings of physical therapists were \$66,200 in May 2006, and employment of PTs is expected to grow by 27% from 2006 to 2016.
- PTs work in a variety of settings including private outpatient offices or group practices, hospital systems or hospital based outpatient facilities, acute care hospitals, patients’ homes/ home care, skilled nursing care facilities, school systems, inpatient rehab facilities, academic institutions, health and wellness facilities, industry, and research centers.
- Visit the APTA website (www.apta.org) to learn more about the profession of Physical Therapy (Areas of Interest: Education Programs — Student Resources — Career as PT/PTA).

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

- Degrees Offered: Master of Science (MS), Master of Physical Therapy (MPT), or Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT)
- Program Length: Approximately 2-3 years, depending on the curriculum of the program and the degree sought.
- Currently, 196 of the accredited Physical Therapy programs offer a DPT; 15 offer either MS or MPT degrees. The DPT is expected to be the degree of choice for Physical Therapists by 2020.

APPLICATION TIMELINE

- Freshman-junior years: Research PT programs, gain PT related experiences, develop leadership and communication skills through campus/community involvement, take prerequisite courses, visit target schools, and identify individuals who will write letters of evaluation.
- 1.5 to 2 years before you hope to attend PT school, take the GRE, visit school websites, and begin drafting a personal statement.
- Summer of application year begin working on PTCAS (see section on the Physical Therapist Centralized Application Service) or application materials from non-PTCAS schools. Order and send transcripts, complete and submit PTCAS and any non-PTCAS applications, possibly take/retake GRE, complete and return secondary applications, if applicable. On all applications, follow instructions closely, proofread, get feedback from others, etc. Make a good first impression!
- Application year finish any remaining applications, take/retake GRE. Submit updated transcripts, or any other updates to schools (additional activities, letters, etc.). Interview at selected schools, decide which program to attend, finish any remaining prerequisite courses, send final transcripts after graduation.
- Note: This timeline is a guideline. Program deadlines range from October to June—however, many programs have multiple deadline dates or operate on a rolling admissions basis. For PTCAS schools, be aware that PTCAS deadlines are not the same deadlines as the deadlines of participating schools. Completing applications early and well before deadline dates is strongly encouraged.

PHYSICAL THERAPIST CENTRALIZED APPLICATION SERVICE

- Many, but not all physical therapy programs participate in PTCAS, the Physical Therapist Centralized Application Service. Students who are applying to at least one participating school must fill out a PTCAS application. This application can be sent to multiple participating schools. The fee is \$120 for the first school, and \$35 for each additional school after that.
- PTCAS collects one set of materials from each applicant including an online application, transcripts, and letters of evaluation (each school determines whether they want PTCAS specific forms or will accept other letter types).
- The PTCAS website provides clear, detailed instructions for completing and submitting applications.
- Students wishing to apply to non-PTCAS schools should visit the schools’ websites for application instructions.
- The PTCAS website is www.ptcas.org. Applications are available in July of the year prior to admission.

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ADMISSIONS CRITERIA

- **Admissions Test:** GRE
- **Prerequisite Coursework:** Grades of C or better are required in all prerequisites.
- **Clinical Experience:** Most programs will want to see exposure to the field. It is recommended for students to work/volunteer/observe PTs in more than one setting. UIC requires 3 separate 15- hour experiences, and a licensed PT must document each experience. For many PT programs, PT observation hours forms must be submitted (either through PTCAS or a school application).
- **GPA:** Minimum GPA of 2.5-2.75 is required for most programs. More than 75% of programs require a minimum GPA of 3.0, and average GPA's are closer to 3.5 and up.
- **Letters of Evaluation:** Most programs require 2-3 letters of evaluation. Generally a letter from a practicing PT is required along with at least one academic performance letter (from an instructor). PTCAS or individual schools provide forms for Letters of Evaluation. Students should refer to school-specific information regarding letter requirements.
- **Interviews:** Many programs invite qualified candidates for an on campus interview.
- Most programs require CPR certification.
- The web directory of CAPTE accredited physical therapist education programs can be found on the APTA website (www.apta.org); Areas of Interest: Education Programs — Student Resources — PT programs).
- Visit school websites for specific program requirements and deadlines.

PREREQUISITE COURSEWORK

Note: Students should contact individual schools for prerequisite information. These are suggested courses based on what some schools require and/or suggest.

- 1 year Biology with lab
- 1 year Chemistry with lab
- 1 year Physics
- Anatomy
- Physiology
- Calculus
- Statistics
- Psychology (some schools require or suggest specific courses, such as Abnormal Psychology)
- Medical Terminology (either through a course or self-study)

ILLINOIS SCHOOLS

Bradley University (DPT)	www.bradley.edu/academics/grad/programs/dpt.shtml
Governors State University (DPT)	www.govst.edu/chhs/dpt/doctorate/
Midwestern University (DPT)	www.midwestern.edu/Programs_and_Admission/IL_Physical_Therapy.html
Northern Illinois University (MPT)	www.niu.edu/ahcd/graduate/pt/index.shtml
Northwestern University (DPT)	www.medschool.northwestern.edu/nupthms
Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine & Science (DPT)	www.rosalindfranklin.edu/dnn/chp/home/CHP/PhysicalTherapy/tabid/1458/Default.aspx
University of Illinois at Chicago (DPT)	www.ahs.uic.edu/pt/

RESOURCES

American Physical Therapy Association	www.apta.org
Physical Therapist Centralized Application Service	www.ptcas.org
Pre-PT Club (Registered Student Organization)	

**Majors, careers and
everything in between!**