

USC Dornsife

Dana and David Dornsife
College of Letters, Arts and Sciences

Office of Pre-Health Advisement

PHYSICAL THERAPY

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

ADVISING SHEET

Physical Therapist's (PTs) are experts in movement and function of the body. Physical Therapists provide services that help restore function, improve mobility, relieve pain, and prevent or limit permanent physical disabilities associated with injury or disease. Patient examination in physical therapy include, but are not limited to: testing of muscle function, strength, joint flexibility, range of motion, balance and coordination, posture, respiration, skin integrity, motor function, quality of life, and activities of daily living. PTs also determine a patient's ability to reintegrate into the workforce or community after illness or injury.



All professional (entry-level) physical therapist educational programs currently award a Master's or Doctoral (DPT) degree and are usually three years long. Generally speaking, the first two years are focused on academic and clinical course work including relevant clinical rotations. The third year consists predominately of challenging clinical experiences, as well as advanced courses and seminars. All states require physical therapists to have graduated from an accredited physical therapist educational program, as well as pass a national licensure examination. Physical therapist practice is governed by state licensure law and there may be additional requirements and fees beyond the required national licensure examination.

Upon graduation, an array of opportunities are available to licensed PTs that include, but are not limited to pursuing clinical mastery in practice by completing an approved clinical residency or clinical fellowship, pursuit of clinical specialization in eight specialty areas (i.e. cardiopulmonary, clinical electrophysiology, geriatrics, neurology, orthopedics, pediatrics, sports, and women's health) through the American Board of Physical Therapy Specialties, furthering one's formal academic education.

COMMON PRE-PHYSICAL THERAPY PREREQUISITES

<u>Biology</u>	One year of coursework with lab	BISC120Lg & BISC220Lg	BISC 121Lg & BISC 221
<u>Chemistry</u>	One year of coursework with lab	CHEM 105aL & CHEM 105bL	CHEM115aL & CHEM115bL
<u>Physics</u>	One year of coursework with lab. Please note: Undergraduate major may determine physics requirement.	PHYS 135aLg & PHYS 135bL	
<u>Mathematics</u>	At least one semester of Math is generally required. Most schools require statistics, while others require calculus & statistics. Please refer to the summary of course requirements for programs participating in PTCAS.	Statistics: MATH 208x, BISC 305, HP 340, PSYC 274g or equivalent stats course MATH 125g and/or MATH 126	
<u>Anatomy</u>	One semester is generally required	HBIO 301L	
<u>Physiology</u>	One semester is generally required	BISC 307L	
<u>English</u>	One year is required for most PT schools in the U.S.	WRIT 150 and WRIT 340	
<u>Psychology</u>	At least one course in psychology is generally required. Some schools require two, preferably introductory and abnormal psychology and/or lifespan/developmental psychology. Check with individual PT school.	PSYC 100 or PSYC 336L or PSYC 360 Contact individual schools for specific requirements.	
<u>Humanities/ additional sciences</u>	Some PT schools recommend, while others require a course in public speaking and/or physiology of exercise. <i>Note: Physical Therapy requirements vary from school to school.</i>	COMM 204 General Education & elective courses	

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Physical Therapy School Selection Criteria

- ⇒ Most PT programs have minimum grade point average (**GPA**) requirements. These minimum scores vary by institution and may be low compared with the average GPA of applicants offered admission. The average overall GPA for an accepted PTCAS applicant in 2017-2018 was **3.57**.
- ⇒ Most PT programs require the Graduate Record Examination (**GRE**) for admission. Arrange for the Educational Testing Service (ETS) to send your official GRE scores directly to each of your designated PT programs by the application deadline, if required by the program. GRE at least 6-weeks before the application deadline to ensure your designated PT programs receive your scores on time. Check with the physical therapy schools you plan to apply to for more information.
- ⇒ Many physical therapy schools require 1-4 **letters of recommendation** as a factor of the physical therapy school admissions process. Schools may need you to submit letters from particular evaluators, such as a physical therapist, professor, or supervisor. If letters are essential, choose recommenders who know you well and can talk to your maturity, dependability, dedication, compassion, communication-skills, leadership, and some related experience in the field.
- ⇒ Many PT programs require applicants to have a certain number of **volunteer or paid experiences working with patients in a physical therapy clinic**. The program may specify which settings or types of experiences are required. Applicants also may be required to have a licensed physical therapist verify the number of hours and type of experience. **Not all programs require PT experience as requirements vary by program.**
- ⇒ Students seeking entry into a physical therapy program should possess attributes that include, but are not limited to, strong interpersonal, communication, problem solving, critical thinking, and leadership skills, along with a sincere desire to enter a helping health care profession.

RESOURCES

American Physical Therapy Association (APTA)	www.apta.org
Physical therapy centralized application service (PTCAS)	www.ptcas.org
List of physical therapy educational programs	http://www.ptcas.org/DirectoryProgramsList/
Prerequisite Summary Tables	http://www.ptcas.org/ProgramPrereqs/
Graduate Record Exam (GRE)	www.gre.org
Guide to Physical Therapy Practice	http://guidetoptpractice.apta.org/
Move Forward	http://www.moveforwardpt.com/

This information is not comprehensive and should not be used as your only advising tool. Research each school for a complete listing of requirements.