

THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

Pre-Physical Therapy Considerations

To qualify for admission to the Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) Program, the applicant must have completed, or plan to complete before enrollment, a baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited institution in the United States.

As a pre-physical therapy student we recommend that you follow a sequence of steps to ensure that you are meeting requirements for both your baccalaureate degree and the DPT Program. We do not recommend that you take courses which just meet the physical therapy requirements, but rather that you plan your program around your past academic performance and personal goals. Regardless of what your undergraduate major is, certain prerequisites must be met to be eligible to apply to the DPT Program. All prerequisite courses must be taken for a letter grade. If you choose to complete these requirements at The University of Iowa, the recommended courses are listed below.

BIOLOGICAL SCIENCE (BIOLOGY) – 12 semester hours (sh) required

BIOL:1411 Foundations of Biology (4 sh)

BIOL:1412 Diversity of Form and Function (4 sh)

For the four semester hours beyond the above, any biology or microbiology elective course higher than BIOL:1412 will be accepted by the Physical Therapy Program.

MATHEMATICS – 3 semester hours required

Level must be at least MATH:1010 Trigonometry or higher. Credit awarded through the AP testing program may be applied to the mathematics requirement.

STATISTICS – 3 semester hours required

Possible courses include:

STAT: 1020 Elementary Statistics and Inference (3sh)

STAT:2010 Statistical Methods & Computing (3 sh)

STAT:3510 Biostatistics (3 sh)

STAT:4143 Introduction to Statistical Methods (3 sh)

This requirement may also be satisfied by completing a more advanced course. STAT:1010 will not satisfy the statistics requirement for the DPT Program.

CHEMISTRY – 8 semester hours required

CHEM:1110 Principles of Chemistry I (4 sh)

CHEM:1120 Principles of Chemistry II (4 sh)

PHYSICS – 8 semester hours required (specific courses will depend upon the student's major)

PHYS:1511 College Physics I & PHYS:1512 College Physics II

PHYS:1611 Introductory Physics I & PHYS:1612 Introductory Physics II (for Engineering Majors)

PHYS:1701 Physics I & PHYS:1702 Physics II (for Physics Majors)

HUMAN PHYSIOLOGY – 3 semester hours required

Possible courses include:

HHP:1300 Fundamentals of Human Physiology (3 sh) plus HHP:1310 Human Physiology Lab is recommended (1 sh)

HHP:3500 Human Physiology (3 sh)

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ANATOMY – 3 semester hours required

Possible courses include:

ACB:3110 Principles of Human Anatomy (3 sh)

HHP:1100 Human Anatomy (3 sh)

HHP:3105 Anatomy for Human Physiology (3 sh)

PSYCHOLOGY – 6 semester hours required

PSY:1001 Elementary Psychology (3 sh) plus an elective course of 3 or more semester hours

NOTE: For coursework in any of the above areas, consult the University General Catalog and your advisor. Pre-physical therapy students are advised by the Academic Advising Center. Prerequisite coursework required by other physical therapy programs may also influence your choice. As earlier stated, prerequisites and degree can be completed at any accredited college or university in the United States.

THE ADMISSIONS PROCESS

Grade-point Requirement:

An overall grade-point average of 3.0 (on a 4.0 scale) is the minimum for consideration for admission. In addition, a grade-point average of 3.0 or above in all prerequisite coursework (including elective basic science courses) is recommended. The mean GPA of the entering class is generally around a 3.70.

Graduate Record Examination:

Graduate Record Examination (GRE) test scores are required for admission. Arrange to take the test early to ensure receipt of the scores prior to the application deadline. GRE scores are to be submitted to PTCAS (UI PTCAS GRE Code #7566).

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

Applications are considered for the session beginning in July only. You must apply through the Physical Therapist Centralized Application Service (PTCAS) (www.ptcas.org) and may submit your application beginning July 1 for the class that begins the following July. Applicants who apply early and by September 15 will be given priority status in our admissions process, as compared to applicants who apply later. It is to the applicant's benefit to apply as soon as possible after July 1, as the Admissions Committee will begin reviewing applications in August. Final deadline to submit to PTCAS is October 1.

Selection of Applicants:

Fulfillment of the basic requirements does not guarantee admission. The Physical Therapy Admissions Committee selects the applicants it considers best qualified for the study and practice of the profession from the pool of applicants who are interviewed. Admission is based on coursework, grade-point averages, GRE scores, experience, rationale, letters of recommendation, and interviews. Because the number of students admitted into each class is limited, not all who apply for admission are interviewed or accepted. A broad exposure to physical therapy in more than one clinical setting is recommended. A suggested minimum is 50-60 hours. The students selected have strong experiential backgrounds and familiarity with the profession of physical therapy.

For more information on our DPT Program, please visit: <https://medicine.uiowa.edu/pt> or follow us on Facebook or Twitter (@UlowaPTRS).

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The University of Iowa
Department of Physical Therapy & Rehabilitation Science

Commonly Asked Questions and Answers
About the Education Needed to Become a Physical Therapist
August 2016

What academic degree is needed to become a physical therapist?

Ans: To practice physical therapy one must be a graduate of a program accredited by the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education and have satisfactorily passed the National Physical Therapy Exam for Licensure. A list of accredited and developing programs is available on the American Physical Therapy Association's website at www.apta.org/PTEducation/.

What is the best undergraduate major as preparation for the physical therapy curriculum?

Ans: There are a number of undergraduate degrees that a student can obtain to be eligible for a physical therapist program. The best advice is to follow your area of interest. No one major is looked upon more favorably than another; however, a strong background in the biological sciences is recommended. At The University of Iowa the most popular undergraduate majors of pre-PT students are Human Physiology, Biology, and Psychology.

What are some suggested elective courses to take during undergraduate years?

Ans: Courses in human anatomy, exercise physiology, neuroscience, biomechanics, genetics, kinesiology, speech/communication, public speaking, business courses, organizational leadership, and medical terminology would be helpful. Most students say that the more science they have as undergraduates, the more meaningful the professional curriculum is.

Can I specialize in one area, for example sports physical therapy, in the entry-level program?

Ans: No, the emphasis in entry level education is on training a generalist in practice. However, an introduction to the specialty areas is available during clinical internships. Formal certification as a clinical specialist requires clinical experience as a physical therapist and the passing of a specialist certification examination. Clinical specialty areas in physical therapy are: orthopaedics, geriatrics, sports, neurologic, pediatrics, cardiopulmonary, clinical electrophysiologic, and women's health.

What qualities are needed to be a good physical therapist?

Ans: As with most health professions, a practitioner should be intelligent and have an ethic of compassion and caring. Communication and interpersonal skills are vital. These traits are needed to deal both with the patient and the patient's family. Manual dexterity and physical stamina are important as is a commitment to life-long learning.

Where do physical therapists practice and what is the employment outlook?

Ans: Hospitals are the largest single employer of physical therapists, providing about a third of all jobs. Many other jobs are in rehab facilities, home health agencies, nursing homes, school systems, sports clinics, fitness centers and industry. A substantial number of physical therapists are in private practice. Some teach, conduct research, or serve as consultants. Indications are that the need for physical therapists will remain high as the population both grows and ages and as physical therapists become more involved in the areas of health and wellness promotion. Physical therapy continues to offer great opportunities.

Are physical therapists licensed?

Ans: Yes, a license is needed to practice physical therapy. The same licensing exam, the National Physical Therapy Examination, is given in all 50 states. To take the exam one must be a graduate of an accredited program in physical therapy. The purpose of licensure is to protect the public from unqualified practitioners. Other requirements for physical therapy practice vary from state to state according to physical therapy practice acts or state regulations governing physical therapy.

Commonly Asked Questions

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Are physical therapists qualified and legally able to deliver physical therapy services independent of referral?

Ans: Yes. All 50 states and the District of Columbia have some form of direct access. Iowa achieved direct access in 1988 making it legal for a physical therapist to examine, evaluate and treat a patient without referral.

How much do physical therapists earn?

Ans: In 2013 the median annual income of salaried physical therapists who worked full time in hospitals was \$92,000. Starting salaries for new graduates average around \$64,000 and vary depending on geographic regions and practice settings. Starting salaries in the Midwest range from \$65,000 - \$85,000 with 0-3 year of experience.

What can I do to enhance my chances of successful admission to a physical therapy program?

Ans: 1) Pay close attention to the admission criteria for a minimum of 3 or 4 programs to which you intend to apply. Be certain to meet their prerequisite coursework. 2) Do well academically. 3) Research the field and try to get volunteer or work experience in a health care or physical therapy setting. We recommend a broad exposure of 50-60 hours to physical therapy in more than one setting. For example an in-patient setting and an out-patient setting. 4) Develop your rationale as to why you want to be a physical therapist. 5) Meet with your undergraduate advisor and a physical therapy faculty member to discuss other strategies to improve your application.

Will I have a better chance of being admitted to the Doctor of Physical Therapy Program at the University of Iowa if I complete my undergraduate work at The University of Iowa?

Ans: No. As long as you are a graduate of an accredited college or university in the U.S. and meet the required GPA, applicants from all schools are treated equally. In 2016, the students enrolled came from 19 different colleges. Almost all colleges and universities have courses which will allow one to complete the prerequisites.

Do you give preference to residents of Iowa in admission to the DPT program?

Ans: Some preference is given to residents of Iowa. Once invited for a personal interview residents and nonresidents have an equal chance for acceptance. In 2016 we offered admission to 19 nonresidents. Twelve (12) accepted and enrolled.

2016 Applicant Pool - The University of Iowa

	Applied	Interviewed	Enrolled
Residents of Iowa	162	66	29
Nonresidents	367	37	11
Total	529	106	40

Mean cumulative GPA of the students enrolled in 2016 was 3.83 (Range 3.35-4.00). The prerequisite GPA mean was 3.78 (Range 3.19-4.00). The mean verbal GRE score was 153.8 (61%) (range 33-96%) and mean quantitative score was 156 (63.2%) (range 40-86%). The mean analytical GRE score was 4.34 (70.1%) (range 56-98%).

For further information about The University of Iowa Doctor of Physical Therapy Program, visit our website at <https://www.medicine.uiowa.edu/pt/education/doctor-physical-therapy-dpt-program>. You will find information specific to application & admission including prerequisite courses on the (PTCAS) Physical Therapy Central Application System Website at www.ptcas.org. For further information about physical therapy, you may check the APTA's website at www.apta.org.

The Doctor of Physical Therapy Program at the University of Iowa is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE), 1111 North Fairfax Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22314; telephone 703-706-3245; email accreditation@apta.org; <http://www.capteonline.org>.