

Physical Therapy Information Sheet

Basic Pre-Physical Therapy Curriculum

The following courses are required by most physical therapy schools in the United States as the minimum background needed for acceptance. Pre-physical therapy courses vary by school. Applicants seeking admission to a physical therapy program should contact the schools they are interested in attending for information on specific prerequisites and admission requirements. Students may also refer to the American Physical Therapy Association web site at www.apta.org for specific requirements for the programs in which they are interested.

Physical Therapy School Requirements

General Biology	4-8 credit hours
Anatomy and Physiology	8 credit hours
General Chemistry	8 credit hours
Physics	8 credit hours
Mathematics	0-3 credit hours
Statistics	3 credit hours
Psychology	3-6 credit hours

Mason Recommended Courses

Biology	103, 104 or 213, 303
Biology	124, 125
Chemistry	103, 104 or 211, 212
Physics	243/ 244, 245/246
Mathematics	depends on the school
Statistics	250
Psychology	100, 211 or 231

Admission to a physical therapy program generally requires 50 to 150 hours of volunteer or paid experience in a health care setting. Some schools require volunteer hours from at least two physical therapy practice settings. An undergraduate's major is not a factor in the admissions process; students may major in any area they are interested in pursuing and complete the prerequisites as either requirements or electives within their major.

Physical Therapists

Physical therapists work with people who are born with a physical disability or have been physically disabled by illness or accident. As a member of the health care team, the physical therapist works to develop and deliver appropriate treatment programs for the relief of pain, prevention of deformity, improvement of strength, development of coordination, and increase in functional ability. Treatments may involve exercise in conjunction with the application of heat, cold, water, electricity, ultrasound, traction, and/or massage.

Education

There are both masters and doctoral level programs for physical therapy. However, most schools are moving towards the Doctorate of Physical Therapy (DPT). It typically takes three years to complete a DPT depending on the requirements of the program. Physical Therapists need to be licensed to practice after graduating from an accredited physical therapy program. Each state has its own regulations and requirements for licensure in the state. Most schools require a bachelor's degree prior to starting a DPT program.

Applying to Physical Therapy School

Most Physical Therapy schools participate in the Physical Therapist Centralized Application Service (PTCAS) which allows students to use a single web-based application and one set of materials to apply to multiple PT programs. All of the schools in Virginia except Hampton University use PTCAS. Go to <http://www.ptcas.org/> for more information.

GRE

Most schools require students to take the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) which is a standardized test to gauge a student's ability to do well in a graduate program. The GRE is given year-round at computer-based test centers in the U.S., Canada, and many other countries. Appointments to take the test are scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis. For more information about the GRE visit their website at <http://www.gre.org>.

Employment Outlook and Earnings

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, employment of physical therapists is expected to grow faster than the average for all occupations through 2016. Median annual earnings of physical therapists were \$66,200 in 2006. The range was from less than \$55,030 to more than \$94,810. For more information, refer to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2008-09 Edition*, Physical Therapists at <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos080.htm>.

Further Information

American Physical Therapy Association

<http://www.apta.org/>

Accredited Schools in Virginia

Hampton University— <http://www.hamptonu.edu/academics/schools/science/pt/>

Marymount University— <http://www.marymount.edu/academic/healthprof/pt/>

Old Dominion University— <http://hs.odu.edu/physther/>

Shenandoah University— www.su.edu/pt

Virginia Commonwealth University— www.vuc.edu/pt

The Bureau of Labor and Statistic Occupation Handbook, PTCAS, and the American Physical Therapy Association website were the primary sources of information for this fact sheet.