

Physical Therapy

What do Physical Therapists do?

Physical Therapists are health care professionals whose work centers around movement ability, rehabilitation from injury or chronic physical limitation, pain reduction and prevention of disability due to disease or injury.

How do I become a Physical Therapist?

All programs for PT education are Doctorate of Physical Therapy (DPT) degrees and must be fully accredited through CAPTE. A bachelor's degree and strong science curriculum provides the basic entry requirements to a DPT program. The DPT curriculum typical is three years and includes classroom studies (~80%) and clinical practice (~20%). Once you have completed your final clinical experience or with the last 90 days prior to earning your degree, you will need to sit for a licensure exam.

What are the pre-requisite courses for entering a DPT program?

Schools will have a large number of pre-reqs in common, but each school may vary slightly in the number of terms they require, or have some program specific courses. In general, students should plan on competing a full year of General Chemistry (121 -123 is adequate), Human Anatomy and Physiology, General Biology and General Physics. Additionally, one to two courses in Statistics, and two to four terms of Psychology, including Developmental and/or Abnormal Psychology are often requested. Courses in Kinesiology, Biomechanics and Motor Development are helpful, but not required.

Do I need any experience in the field?

It is imperative that for any professional field you want to enter, you understand the work and the day-to-day flow of the profession. Most DPT programs will expect a minimum of 100 hours observing PT, in both inpatient and outpatient settings. A few schools do not require hours, but they are highly recommended. Schools vary on how these hours are to be documented.

How competitive are DPT programs to get into?

In 2015-16, there were 18,475 applicants for 201 DPT programs who participate in the PTCAS (Computer Application System). The average national GPA for students accepted into DPT programs was 3.59, and their combined science /math GPA was 3.44. The primary majors of applicants accepted were in the field of Human Movement and included Athletic Training, Exercise Physiology, Exercise Science and Kinesiology.

For Pacific University in Oregon, the profile of the incoming class of 2016-17 are as follows: 900+ applications for 50 seats; cumulative GPA 3.64, science/math GPA 3.63, last 90 credits GPA 3.76; average number of hours PT experience (shadowing etc.) 400-600.

Do I need the GRE (Graduate Records Examination)?

Not all DPT programs require the GRE, so it will be important to research the schools you are interested in to know their specifics. Some schools that require it have a minimum score, while others do not use it in ranking applicants.

How much does it cost to attend a DPT educational program?

Typically, in-state residents will pay much lower tuition at public institutions. Pacific in Forest Grove is ~ \$33,000 a year. USC in California is upwards of \$75,000 a year.

What is an average salary of a licensed DPT?

A full time, new PT could expect to enter the field at a minimum salary of ~\$56,800, and the median annual salary in 2014 was \$82, 390 (bls.gov/ooh).

What is the projected job outlook for PTs?

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the rate of growth between 2014 -2024 is 34%. This is much faster than average for all occupations combined. Driving this growth is the increasing population of aging adults (bls.gov/ooh).

Where can I get more information?

For physical therapy specific information, go to American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) www.apta.org or Physical Therapy Centralized Computer Application Service (PTCAS) - www.ptcas.org