

HEALTH PROFESSIONS OFFICE

PHYSICAL THERAPY

Physical therapists (P.T.'s) plan, administer, and conduct physical therapy treatment for patients referred to them by other health care practitioners in order to restore functioning, relieve pain, and prevent disability following disease, injury, or loss of a body part. The level of responsibilities of P.T.'s depends on their experience, specialization, and advanced education. They evaluate muscular and related functions and use heat, ultrasound, cold, water, light, electricity, massage, and therapeutic exercise for treatment. They usually work under the supervision of a physician, but can be independent practitioners. Their duties depend also on the setting in which they work.

The physical therapy profession has developed certified clinical specialties in the areas of sports medicine, orthopedics, pediatrics, clinical electrophysiological testing, geriatrics, neurology, and cardiopulmonary. Physical therapists may be engaged actively in research, teaching, consultation, administration, or community health. They may work in private and public hospitals, clinics, rehabilitation centers, physicians' offices, schools for the handicapped, colleges and universities, research laboratories or in private offices.

The field of physical therapy is very closely associated with the profession of Occupational Therapy. Occupational therapists conduct and direct specialized therapeutic programs to help people with physical, psychological, or developmental problems regain their abilities or adjust to their handicaps. The scope and objective of each treatment program varies according to the individual patient's needs and capabilities. For further information regarding this field you should contact:

American Occupational Therapy Association
1383 Piccard Dr., Ste. 300
Rockville, MD 20850

Education Required

There are currently about 189 programs in physical therapy accredited by the American Physical Therapy Association. Some of them are Bachelors Programs (24) and others offer the Masters Degree (157) and often the Doctoral Degree (8). Master's degree programs will generally take 2 years, while Doctoral programs will take 3-4 years. One CANNOT be licensed in California with a Bachelor's Degree in physical therapy; one must have a Master's or Doctoral degree from an approved physical therapy educational program. To practice the profession, the physical therapist must secure a license by successfully completing the licensure examination and must comply with the legal requirements for the practice established by the state in which the P.T. practices. Each year the American Physical Therapy Association publishes a Directory of Physical Therapy Education Programs.

The factors that will most affect your chances of being admitted to P.T. programs are: state of residency (for state supported schools); your undergraduate GPA (particularly in prerequisite courses); extensive work or volunteer experience in a physical therapy setting, interview, and letters of evaluation. Minimum GPA requirements range from 2.0 to 3.0 in all prerequisite courses but because admission to the programs is limited and competition is strong, a realistic GPA for applying is 3.0. In some schools the average GPA is as high as 3.4. It is not easy to get into a Physical Therapy program. Also important are good scores on the GRE (Graduate Record Exam).

There is no centralized application service for schools of Physical Therapy. You will have to contact the schools individually to obtain their application materials. Be sure to check deadlines for application at the schools to which you are interested in applying. In general, you should submit your applications as early as possible. Application deadlines vary from November of the year prior to matriculation to February.

Unlike many other professional school programs, schools of physical therapy do not have a common series of courses that all programs require. There are a number of courses that you may take at UCSB that are

required by most programs, and they are detailed below. However, it is most important for you to carefully review the requirements at all the schools you are interested in to ensure that you meet the minimum courses needed for that program.

Specific Course Requirements

The following are general courses required at most physical therapy programs. **Be sure to check the requirements at the schools to which you intend to apply to see if they require any other specific courses.**

General Chemistry w/ lab	Chemistry 1A-B-C/1AL-BL-CL (or Chem 2 equivalents)
Physics w/ lab	Physics 6A-B-C/6AL-BL-CL
Biology w/ lab	MCDB 1A/AL, 1B, EEMB2, MCDB 1L or EEMB 2L, EEMB 3/3L
Human Anatomy w/lab	Not offered at UCSB (BIOMD 107 at SBCC)
Human Physiology w/ lab	Not offered at UCSB (BIOMD 108 at SBCC)
Psychology	Psychology 1 (some schools also recommend Psy 103 or 105)
Statistics	PSTAT 5A (or equivalent) **higher math may be needed – check with individual schools

The following courses are recommended at many schools and required at others:

Kinesiology	ESS 149 (required at UCSF)
Exercise Physiology	ESS 101

Physical Therapy Programs

To find a physical therapy program, please use the following website: www.apta.org. California has 13 schools that have been accredited in the field of physical therapy by the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE):

Azusa Pacific University
 California State University, Fresno
 California State University, Long Beach
 California State University, Northridge
 California State University, Sacramento
 Chapman University
 Loma Linda University
 Mt. Saint Mary's College
 Samuel Merritt College
 University of California, San Francisco/San Francisco State University
 University of Southern California
 University of the Pacific
 Western University of Health Sciences