

Physical Therapy

The study of Physical therapy involves the treatment of an injury, impairment or disease and prevention of a disability linked to the musculoskeletal, neuromuscular and cardiopulmonary functions of the human body. Physical therapists are health care professionals who serve people of all ages; restore mobility, functional independence and help patients with acute and chronic conditions to overcome discomfort and pain and resume regular activities of daily life.

Education:

Admission requirements and procedures for study and entry into professions in the US vary from those in home countries of international students. In the United States, education in Physical Therapy (PT) is a professional program offered at the graduate level. Degrees offered are the entry level professional Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT), Master of Physical Therapy (MPT) or Master of Science in Physical Therapy (MSPT). Most master's programs are in transition and will be phased out in the near future since the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE) requires all physical therapy programs to offer the DPT degree effective December 31, 2015.

The professional Doctor of Physical Therapy program can be pursued in two ways:

Option 1: Some institutions offer a 3+3 combined undergraduate/graduate (pre-professional/professional) PT program where students take pre-professional physical therapy courses for three years at the undergraduate level to gain entry into the three-year DPT program. According to the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA), very few programs admit high school students directly into the freshmen year. Such students are assured entry into the professional track of the physical therapy program only upon meeting specific eligibility requirements.

Option 2: Pursue a four-year bachelor's degree and seek admission to the DPT or MPT program. Undergraduate pre-requisite courses include biology, chemistry, physiology, statistics, and physics among other requirements.

The Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) degree is an entry level professional program preparing students for professional practice in physical therapy. The 3-year clinical doctorate program encompasses intensive academic, clinical, and research study experiences followed by internships. The curricular content includes, but is not limited to biology, anatomy, physiology, exercise physiology, biomechanics, kinesiology, neuroscience, pharmacology, pathology, imaging, behavioral sciences, communication, management, sociology, musculoskeletal and cardiopulmonary interventions, clinical reasoning and evidence-based practice. Students interested in research or teaching may move on to pursue the PhD degree.

Transitional DPT degree: Considering the evolving nature of this profession, some programs offer the transition post-professional DPT degree designed for licensed PTs who hold a bachelor's, master's degree at the professional level.

Note: Students are advised to browse through individual physical therapy programs to determine eligibility and requirements for admission.

Choosing a professional Physical Therapy degree program: All entry level (professional) Physical Therapy education programs at the master's and doctoral level must be accredited by the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE) www.capteonline.org/.

Seeking admission to physical therapy programs is a competitive process. Learn the admissions requirements, trends, current developments in the profession and identify programs that meet your preferences and goals. Volunteer experience or practical work in a physical therapy setting is required by most programs. International students must check in advance the prospects of acceptability and recognition of such programs in the home country.

Physical Therapist Centralized Application Service (PTCAS) is a web-based application for students interested in pursuing the entry level professional physical therapy program. For more details and application procedures, please go to www.ptcas.org. **Note: Students are also advised to look up websites of individual programs to determine eligibility and admissions requirements. If the school of your choice is not among those participating in the PTCAS, then apply directly to the respective school.** EducationUSA Centers provide advising services and a diverse collection of materials to assist students in their search for appropriate programs. To find the nearest EducationUSA Advising Center, visit www.educationusa.info/centers.php



Occupations in Physical Therapy: Physical therapists work in varied settings such as hospitals, rehabilitation centers, nursing care facilities, orthopedic clinics, offices of physicians or other health care practitioners, home/school/industrial health care centers. Some engage in private practice while others may consider teaching in academic institutions or pursue research.

Physical Therapist Licensure: Students must take the National Physical Therapy Examination (NPTE) through the licensing board of the state in which they wish to practice, following completion of an accredited physical therapy program. Since requirements for physical therapy practice vary from state to state, students need to contact the relevant state licensing board to meet specific requirements for licensure. Foreign-educated Physical Therapists need to have their educational credentials evaluated from the Foreign Credentialing Commission on Physical Therapy (FCCPT) www.fccpt.org to meet the requirements stipulated by the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education's (CAPTE). For information on individual state board requirements and licensure procedures, please look up the website of the Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy <https://www.fsbpt.org/ForCandidatesAndLicensees/NonUSEducated/index.asp>

Post-professional pursuits: Licensed physical therapists can move on to advance their clinical knowledge, skills and practice through clinical residency, fellowships and specialty certification programs. For more information, look up www.abpts.org and www.apta.org/ResidencyFellowship/ProgramDirectory/

Associations & organizations affiliated with study of Physical Therapy:

- American Physical Therapy Association www.apta.org
- Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education www.capteonline.org/About/
- American Board of Physical Therapy Specialties www.abpts.org/
- The Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy www.fsbpt.org/
- Foreign Credentialing Commission on Physical Therapy www.fccpt.org/

Some journals related to the study of Physical Therapy:

- Journal of the American Physical Therapy Association
- Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation
- North American Journal of Sports Physical Therapy
- Journal of Physiotherapy
- Journal of Orthopedic & Sports Physical Therapy
- Journal of Geriatric Physical Therapy
- Pediatric Physical Therapy
- Cardiopulmonary Physical Therapy Journal
- Journal of Neurologic Physical Therapy
- Journal of Physical Therapy Science

Undergraduate program search print and online resources

- College Board, www.collegeboard.com (Search for schools with the College Board's online "College Maker")
- Read about specific majors and careers using the "Majors and Career Profiles" search http://www.collegeboard.com/csearch/majors_careers/profiles/careers/106617.html
- Peterson's Four-Year Colleges

Graduate program search print and online resources

- Peterson's www.petersons.com
- Peterson's Graduate Programs in Business, Education, Health, Information Studies, Law & Social Work; Book # 6
- American Physical Therapy Association (Find a PT program) <http://www.apta.org/ProspectiveStudents/>

Find scholarships to study Physical Therapy:

- EducationUSA Financial Aid links www.educationusa.info/pages/students/finance.php
- Funding for US Study www.fundingusstudy.org
- The Fulbright Program <http://fulbright.state.gov>
- Listing of scholarships, awards and grants on the APTA website: <http://www.apta.org/CurrentStudents/ScholarshipsAwards/>

International students need to check with individual programs and funding institutions to ascertain eligibility for scholarships and financial aid.

References: www.apta.org www.bls.gov/oco/ocos080.htm