

Doctor of Physical Therapy, DPT

The Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) is the entry-level professional degree for physical therapists. Based on the number of outstanding applicants, approximately 48 students are annually enrolled in the DPT program.

Technical Standards

Physical therapy is a profession that requires physical, mental, and emotional fitness. In the program, students obtain the foundation of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors that are necessary for a successful career as a physical therapist. Technical standards reflect the abilities that a physical therapist must possess for safe and effective clinical practice. Prospective and current students must meet the following technical standards.

General Abilities

Students are expected to possess the intellectual ability to learn, integrate, analyze, and synthesize data. They must have functional use of the senses of vision, hearing, and smell, as well as unimpaired equilibrium. Their exteroceptive senses (touch, movement, stereognosis, and vibratory) must be sufficiently intact to perform activities required for a complete physical therapy education. Students must have motor function capabilities, physical endurance, and the emotional health to meet the demands of entry-level physical therapy education and the demands of total patient care, which may include extended hours of instruction and time in clinic (evenings, nights, and weekends). Students must be capable of punctual, consistent, and reliable attendance in the didactic and clinical education component of the curriculum.

Observation

The ability to observe is required for demonstrations, visual presentations in lectures, and laboratories. Observation requires the functional use of vision, hearing, smell, somatic sensations, and the use of common sense. Students must be able to observe patients accurately and completely, both at a distance and up close, attending to both verbal and nonverbal communication.

Communication

Students must be able to speak and listen to patients in order to elicit information, perceive nonverbal communication, describe changes in mood, communicate effectively and sensitively with patients and their families, as well as instruct patients and their families. Communication in oral, written, and electronic form with the health care team must be effective, efficient, and timely.

Motor/Psychomotor Function

Students are required to have sufficient motor function to ascertain information from patients by auscultation, percussion, palpation, and movement facilitation. Intervention methods may include exercising, lifting, transferring of patients, and assisting during ambulation. These methods must be completed in a manner that assures the safety of a patient as well as the safety of the student. Students must have motor function sufficient to perform the movements required to provide both nonurgent and emergent treatment.

Such skills require coordination of gross and fine muscular movements, equilibrium, sensation, and muscle strength.

Intellectual—Conceptual, Integrative, and Qualitative Abilities

Problem solving is a critical skill demanded of physical therapists, and requires conceptual, integrative, and qualitative thinking abilities. Students must be able to synthesize knowledge and integrate the relevant aspects of a patient's history, laboratory results, and physical examination to provide an explanation for intervention by recalling and retaining information in an efficient and timely manner. They must have the ability to incorporate new information from peers, teachers, and research to formulate intervention plans. Students must be able to comprehend three-dimensional relationships, the spatial and functional relationships of structures, and analyze and apply this information for problem-solving and decision-making purposes. They must be able to organize, prioritize, analyze, and evaluate detailed and complex information individually, in small groups, and in clinical settings, and do so within a limited time frame.

Behavioral/Interpersonal Skills/ Professionalism

It is necessary that students have the emotional health to maximize their intellectual ability, exercise good judgment, and complete all responsibilities required for the evaluation and treatment of patients. They must be able to self-assess, accept criticism, and assume responsibility for maintaining professional behavior. Students must be able to develop mature, sensitive, and effective relationships with patients, families, caregivers, and colleagues. They must be able to tolerate physical and emotional stress and continue to function effectively. Students must possess qualities of adaptability and flexibility and be able to function in an atmosphere of uncertainty. They must be motivated to serve and demonstrate a high level of compassion for others. Students are required to demonstrate integrity and act in a manner that demonstrates consciousness of the profession's core values. They must possess sufficient interpersonal skills to interact positively with people from all levels of society, ethnic backgrounds, and belief systems.

Learning Outcomes

Graduates will be prepared to:

- examine, evaluate, treat, and prevent impairments, functional limitations, and disabilities;
- maintain and promote fitness, health, and quality of life; and
- ensure availability, accessibility, and excellence in the delivery of physical therapy services to patients/clients.

As essential participants in the health care delivery system, graduates will be:

- prepared to assume leadership roles in prevention and health maintenance programs, in the provision of rehabilitation services, and in professional and community organizations; and
- able to play important roles in developing health policy and appropriate standards as well as assessing clinical outcomes for the various elements of physical therapy practice.

Requirements

The Doctor of Physical Therapy requires a minimum of 104 s.h. and is completed in two and a half years. Students must maintain a program grade-point average of at least 3.00.

The program is fully accredited by the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education. Satisfactory completion of the professional program qualifies candidates to take the National Physical Therapy Exam for licensure to practice. The minimum passing score on the exam is the same in all jurisdictions.

The Doctor of Physical Therapy degree requires the following coursework.

First Year, Summer

Course #	Title	Hours
PTRS:5101	Introduction to Physical Therapy Practice	2
PTRS:5102	Principles of Physical Therapy I	2
PTRS:5205	Health Promotion and Wellness	3

First Year, Fall

Course #	Title	Hours
PTRS:5100	Professional Issues and Ethics	1
PTRS:5103	Principles of Physical Therapy II	2
PTRS:5144	Interprofessional Education I: Team-Based Approach to Health Care	1
PTRS:5209	Surface Anatomy	1
PTRS:5210	Kinesiology and Pathomechanics	4
PTRS:5212	Human Pathology for the Physical Therapist	3
PTRS:5235	Case-Based Learning I	1
PTRS:5790	Integrated Clinical Education in Physical Therapy I	1
ACB:5108	Human Anatomy	5

First Year, Spring

Course #	Title	Hours
PTRS:5131	Therapeutic Physical Agents	2
PTRS:5201	Musculoskeletal Therapeutics I	3
PTRS:5206	Cardiopulmonary Therapeutics	3
PTRS:5215	Applied Clinical Medicine	2
PTRS:5236	Case-Based Learning II	1
PTRS:5791	Integrated Clinical Education in Physical Therapy II	1
PTRS:6253	Functional Neuroanatomy	4

Second Year, Summer

Course #	Title	Hours
PTRS:6120	Physical Therapy Management and Administration I	2

PTRS:6143	Selected Topics in Physical Therapy Practice	2
PTRS:6176	Pharmacology for Physical Therapists	3
PTRS:6793	Integrated Clinical Education in Physical Therapy III	3

Second Year, Fall

Course #	Title	Hours
PTRS:6122	Psychosocial Aspects of Patient Care	1
PTRS:6134	Physical Therapy Management of Integumentary System	2
PTRS:6145	Interprofessional Education II: Teaching Neural and Musculoskeletal Evaluation Principles	1
PTRS:6170	Management of People with Prosthetic and Orthotic Needs	2
PTRS:6200	Pediatric Physical Therapy	2
PTRS:6202	Musculoskeletal Therapeutics II	3
PTRS:6224	Activity-Based Neural and Musculoskeletal Plasticity in Health Care	4
PTRS:6237	Community Outreach and Engagement I	1
PTRS:6250	Critical Inquiry I: Evidence-Based Practice	2
One of these (with advisor approval):		1
PTRS:7930	Critical Thinking in Neuro-Mechanical Systems	
PTRS:7931	Critical Thinking in Pain	
PTRS:7932	Critical Thinking in Biomechanics and Human Performance Assessment	
PTRS:7933	Critical Thinking in Activity-Based Plasticity	
PTRS:7934	Critical Thinking in Neural Plasticity	
PTRS:7935	Critical Thinking in Movement Science	
PTRS:7936	Critical Thinking in Cardiovascular Physiology	

Second Year, Spring

Course #	Title	Hours
PTRS:6121	Physical Therapy Management and Administration II	1
PTRS:6133	Pain Mechanisms and Treatment	2
PTRS:6172	Radiology/Imaging for Physical Therapists	2
PTRS:6173	Differential Diagnosis in Physical Therapy	2
PTRS:6203	Musculoskeletal Therapeutics III	4

PTRS:6204	Progressive Functional Exercise	2
PTRS:6225	Neuromuscular Therapeutics	3
PTRS:6238	Community Outreach and Engagement II	1
PTRS:6251	Critical Inquiry II: Rehabilitation Research	2
PTRS:6792	Integrated Clinical Education in Physical Therapy IV	1

Third Year, Summer

Course #	Title	Hours
PTRS:6794	Terminal Clinical Education in Physical Therapy I	4

Third Year, Fall

Course #	Title	Hours
PTRS:6252	Critical Inquiry III: Clinical Application	1
PTRS:6795	Terminal Clinical Education in Physical Therapy II	4
PTRS:6796	Terminal Clinical Education in Physical Therapy III	4

Admission

Applicants must meet the admission requirements of the Graduate College; see the Manual of Rules and Regulations on the Graduate College website. They must have completed a baccalaureate degree and all prerequisite coursework from an accredited institution in the United States, or anticipate completing the degree before enrolling in the DPT program. They must have a cumulative grade-point average (GPA) of at least 3.00 and must have completed the following prerequisite coursework, preferably with a GPA of at least 3.00.

All applicants must take the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) General Test. They must take the test early enough for their scores to be received prior to the application deadline.

Prerequisite Science Courses

All science courses must include the appropriate laboratory instruction. The prerequisite courses must have been taken for a letter grade. Credit awarded through advanced placement testing may be applied only to the mathematics requirement.

Biological Sciences

A complete introductory series of courses in principles of general biology or zoology and advanced coursework in biology or zoology (for which an introductory course is prerequisite) equivalent to 12 s.h.

Anatomy

Human or comparative vertebrate anatomy, preferably with a lab component, equivalent to 3 s.h.

Physiology

A systemic human physiology course equivalent to 3 s.h.

A two-course sequence of anatomy and physiology equivalent to 6 s.h., preferably with a lab component, can fulfill the physiology and anatomy prerequisites.

Physics

A complete introductory series equivalent to 8 s.h.

Chemistry

A complete introductory series equivalent to 8 s.h.

Psychology

Courses equivalent to 6 s.h.

Mathematics

A college-level mathematics course, at the level of trigonometry or higher, equivalent to 3 s.h.

Statistics

A statistical methods course equivalent to 3 s.h.

Applications

Applications are submitted online through the Physical Therapist Centralized Application Service (PTCAS). PTCAS allows applicants to use a single application and one set of materials to apply to multiple physical therapy programs. Once the application portfolio is complete with PTCAS, they will forward it to the University of Iowa.

Applications are accepted beginning June 15 for entry into the DPT program the following summer. Applicants who apply early and by Sept. 15 will be given priority status in the admissions process. It is to an applicant's benefit to apply as soon as possible after June 15 as the admissions committee will begin the application review process to select those for interviews. Priority status application deadline is Sept. 15, mid-application deadline is Oct. 1, and final application deadline is Dec. 1.

The physical therapy admissions committee requires personal, on-campus interviews. Since the number of students admitted into each class is limited, not all who apply for admission are invited for an interview.

Background Checks

Enrollment in the Doctor of Physical Therapy program is contingent on a successful criminal background check. Drug screening may be required for some clinical rotations.

Expenses

Applicants admitted to the DPT program must make an advance tuition payment which is forfeited if the applicant does not enroll. In addition to paying University of Iowa tuition and fees plus departmental fees, students are assessed laboratory fees for the human anatomy and neuroanatomy courses and are responsible for purchasing supplies, such as lab coats. Students also are responsible for all costs associated with professional development and clinical experiences.

All students are required to comply with the pre-entry and periodic health screening program developed by Student Health in cooperation with University of Iowa Hospitals & Clinics. All costs incurred for the health screenings are the student's responsibility. Students also are required to have health insurance.

Financial Support

Many academic and professional development scholarship opportunities are available to DPT students matriculating

within the department; view the awards on the Department of Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Science website.

Entering physical therapy students are eligible for financial aid as determined on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Students must sustain a strong academic performance in order to qualify for funds.

Career Advancement

The employment outlook for physical therapy graduates is strong. Opportunities exist for professional practice in inpatient, outpatient, and community-based organizations. These include general or specialized hospitals, programs for children with disabilities, private physical therapy clinics, extended care facilities, nursing homes, community and governmental agencies, rehabilitation centers, the armed forces, foreign service, home health agencies, school systems, fitness centers, and athletic facilities. Teaching and research positions also are available as well as options for successful self-employment.

Physical therapists report a very high level of job satisfaction, driven both by prevalent employment opportunities and social interaction.