

PRE-PHYSICAL THERAPY

JMU Pre-Professional Health Programs



GENERAL INFORMATION

Physical therapy (PT) is a health care profession designed to enhance the quality of life through the assessment, evaluation and rehabilitation of a variety of anatomical and neuromuscular functions. Licensed physical therapists commonly provide services in a variety of settings, including but not limited to hospitals, private clinics, school systems, rehabilitation centers, nursing homes and community health centers. There are currently 213 physical therapy programs at colleges and universities in the U.S. and Puerto Rico accredited by the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE). It is the vision of the profession that by the year 2020, physical therapy will be provided by doctors of physical therapy (DPT), recognized by consumers and other health care professionals as practitioners of choice to whom consumers have direct access for the diagnosis of, interventions for, and prevention of impairments, functional limitations, and disabilities related to movement, function, and health. Further information can be found at the **American Physical Therapy Association (APTA)** web site (www.apta.org).

CHOOSING A MAJOR

There is no specific major that is required to apply to physical therapy programs. Admissions committees are most concerned with the overall scope and quality of a student's undergraduate performance and it is important that students select a major based on their interests and aptitudes. Some majors include prerequisites commonly associated with physical therapy programs. Choosing such a major may reduce the number of courses needed to complete a baccalaureate degree program and meet the requirements for applying to DPT programs.

PREREQUISITES

All physical therapy programs have a set of prerequisite courses and experiences that vary and may be unique to the particular program. James Madison University offers a pre-physical therapy program that contains many of the prerequisites commonly required by physical therapy schools. It is important for students to confirm admissions requirements for each individual PT school.

General requirements for admission to physical therapy school can be met at JMU with the following coursework:

BIO 270 Human Physiology (4 credit hours)

GPSYC 101 General Psychology (3 credit hours)

BIO 290 Human Anatomy (4 credit hours)

GPSYC 160 Life Span Human Development (3 credit hours)

CHEM 131/132 General Chemistry I-II

PSYC 250 Abnormal Psychology (3 credit hours)

(8 credit hours; including laboratory 131L-132L)

GSOC 110 Social Issues in a Global Context (3 credit hours)

PHYS 140/150 College Physics I-II

ENGLISH (literature, composition or scientific writing: ENG, GENG,

(8 credit hours; including laboratory 140L-150L)

GHUM200, or GWRIT) (6 credit hours)

MATH (calculus and statistics) (6-7 credit hours)

DPT programs have varying requirements for admission. Many physical therapy programs require **4-8 additional credit hours in biology** (BIO 114 & BIO 214 recommended); some programs require additional chemistry, and/or social and behavioral science coursework.

JMU has articulation agreements with several physical therapy programs (detailed information available at www.ihhs.jmu.edu/preprofessional/preparticulation.html).

ACADEMIC RECORD

Students will, as part of the application process, be asked to submit a transcript of all university course work. Overall grade point average (GPA), as well as the GPA in math and science courses, will often be used in the review of the application. Most physical therapy programs require a minimum GPA in order to make application (>2.7). Please refer to individual program prerequisites for further details.

PREPARATION TIMELINE

Most applications for physical therapy programs will need to be completed during the early fall semester of the student's senior year. Students should have all of the prerequisites completed by the time of application. Both the

chemistry and physics requirements involve yearlong sequences. Other required courses, such as psychology, have sequencing requirements. Students need to carefully plan each semester to ensure that all requirements can be met within the chosen time frame. Should you choose to pursue this preparation timeline, you will experience a very highly structured and challenging sequence of courses. Some students choose to increase their preparation timeline to allow for greater flexibility in scheduling.

Many physical therapy schools utilize the Physical Therapist Centralized Application Service (PTCAS). Information about participating schools, admission requirements, and the application process are available at the PTCAS website (www.ptcas.org).

REQUIRED STANDARDIZED TESTS

A vast majority of physical therapy programs require the completion of the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) as part of the application. Please refer to individual program requirements for additional standardized tests that may be required. Information about the GRE is available at www.ets.org/gre.

EXPERIENCE

Students are encouraged to begin accumulating volunteer experience and observation hours in a physical therapy setting early in their college years. Physical therapy programs require as much as 200 hours of experience. Some physical therapy programs require verification of observation hours as part of the application process.

EVALUATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

All physical therapy programs require letters of recommendation/evaluation. Establishing mentoring relationships with professors in the university setting as well as work place settings is important. Most Physical Therapy programs have requirements regarding who completes recommendations. Many require at least one from a Professor and from a Physical Therapist.

JMU ADVISORY RESOURCES

The Institute for Innovation in Health and Human Services (IIHHS) and its staff of dedicated coordinators function to assist pre-professional students in their health career endeavors and help them realize their aspirations by providing the specific information, advice and assistance that is unique to the health professions and critical to their success. **Dr. Louise Gilchrist** is the **Pre-Physical Therapy Program Advisor** (pph@jmu.edu, HHS 2134, (540)568-6652).

PRE-PT SOCIETY

The JMU Pre-PT society is a student organization consisting of JMU students interested in physical therapy as a career. This organization meets once a month, usually in the evenings. Activities include field trips to DPT programs, guest speakers, and information sharing. A faculty member knowledgeable in the area of physical therapy serves as club advisor. Students interested in physical therapy are encouraged to become a member of the Pre-PT Society. The Pre-PT Society sponsors an annual PT School Expo.

Note: Students planning professional health careers should discuss these goals with their pre-professional health coordinator and undergraduate major advisors. It is important to begin this planning process when students' studies are initiated; it is imperative that students plan career options. The admissions requirement information presented above should be used only as a guide when planning students' pre-professional health curriculum. It is important that students do not interpret these guidelines as definitive statements regarding the admission requirements or policies of the individual schools and colleges of professional health. Each institution specifies its own requirements and procedures. It is essential that students become familiar with these requirements and make appropriate course selections in consultation with their pre-professional health advisor. Absolute admission requirements are limited to provide necessary flexibility in the undergraduate program. The course requirements for most professional health programs are similar and usually specify minimum credits in biology, chemistry, mathematics, and physics. Schools of professional health recognize the desirability of students having a variety of interests and diverse backgrounds. Applicants are urged to obtain a broad cultural background in such fields as literature, social science, psychology and the fine arts.

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