PREPARING to APPLY for ADMISSION to a PHYSICAL THERAPY PROGRAM

College of Health Professions and Sciences· Office of Student Affairs

OVERVIEW

Individuals wanting to work as a physical therapist must complete a graduate degree from an accredited physical therapy program before taking the national licensure examination. All entry-level physical therapy programs are now offered at the doctoral level and award a Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) to graduates. Professional DPT programs are typically three years in duration. For most programs, applicants must complete a bachelor's degree prior to entering a graduate program in physical therapy. Visit the following site for an overview of physical therapy education: http://www.apta.org/PTEducation/Overview/.

It is important to note "pre-physical therapy" is not an undergraduate major at UWM; rather, it is a career classification that allows the College of Health Professions and Sciences to identify UWM students who may benefit from special advising services. While choosing a science undergraduate major, physical therapy programs typically do not specify or favor any particular major. Therefore, pre-physical therapy students are encouraged to select a major that is of interest to them and with which they will excel academically. Many pre-physical therapy students at UWM major in kinesiology, but others select majors in music, dance, psychology, business, and biological sciences, for example. The required pre-physical therapy courses are added into the student's undergraduate program of study.

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Applicants to doctoral programs in physical therapy must satisfy the coursework requirements and rigorous admission standards of the program(s) to which they plan to apply. Admission is highly competitive.

Because each physical therapy program has its own set of required courses for admission, it is *critical* for applicants to gather information on each program of interest. A list of accredited physical therapy programs can be found on the American Physical Therapy Association website: http://www.apta.org/ProspectiveStudents/. See page three of this packet for additional information.

Prospective DPT students are encouraged to begin their DPT program research one year before application submission (which is two years before you hope to start a program). For traditional undergraduate students, this is the summer following sophomore year.

Prerequisite Courses:

It is common for DPT programs in the United States to require the following prerequisite courses:

- General Biology I (with lab)
- General Biology II (with lab)
- Human Anatomy (with lab)
- Human Physiology (with lab)
- Statistics
- Chemistry I (with lab)
- Chemistry II (with lab)
- Physics I (with lab)
- Physics II (with lab)
- Psychology

Programs may require additional coursework in other areas, such as: sociology, math, biomechanics, and exercise physiology.

Grade Point Average (GPA):

Nationwide, most DPT programs require a minimum undergraduate cumulative GPA of **3.0** for admission, although this minimum can vary among institutions. In the most recent admission cycle, the national average undergraduate cumulative GPA of admitted students was **3.5**. Many institutions consider an applicant's lifetime GPA (including original grades in courses that are repeated), while others consider only the GPA of the last 60 credits earned. Prospective DPT applicants are advised to research the GPA requirements of each institution they may consider for application.

Prospective applicants are encouraged to calculate their undergraduate cumulative GPA, their lifetime GPA (including all courses ever completed), and their GPA for prerequisite courses by utilizing this online GPA calculator: https://web.uwm.edu/registrar/tools/gpa.

The information provided here is intended to serve as an overview for students considering a career in physical therapy. It is intended to be used as a springboard for further research and investigation into the admission requirements of individual institutions.

PHYSICAL THERAPIST CENTRALIZED APPLICATION SERVICE (PTCAS)

The PTCAS (www.ptcas.org) is a service of the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA). The PTCAS allows applicants to use a single Web-based application and one set of materials to apply to multiple PT programs. Approximately 95% of physical therapy programs in the U.S. participate in PTCAS, including UW-Milwaukee.

The PTCAS application is easily completed online using their Web-based data entry system. Applicants must submit all required materials as outlined on PTCAS for inclusion with their application. Materials should *not* be sent directly to the PT programs and will not be accepted. Please mail materials to: PTCAS, PO Box 9112, Watertown, MA 02471.

The PTCAS application cycle typically begins on or shortly after June 15th each year, at which time applicants may create an account and begin the online application process. If you have questions regarding the PTCAS application, please contact PTCAS directly at ptcasinfo@ptcas.org. Please note: if you have applied in a previous year, no applicant data is saved from previous application cycles, and you must begin an entirely new application.

Timeline	**Deadline/Recommended Action**
One year before application submission (junior)	Research DPT programs of interest
January/February in the year PRIOR to graduation (junior)	Take the Graduate Record Examination (GRE)
Spring in the year PRIOR to graduation (junior)	Prepare application materials
July in the year PRIOR to graduation (junior)	Complete the *early priority* application on the PTCAS website
August in the year PRIOR to graduation (junior)	Deadline for *early priority* application submission
October in the year PRIOR to graduation (senior)	Notification of *early priority* decision by the program
November 1 in the year PRIOR to graduation (senior)	Firm deadline for *rolling admission* applications

UWM DPT: Firm deadline is November 1

Applications to the UWM DPT program are reviewed in two phases: the *Early Priority phase and the Rolling* phase.

The *Early Priority Admission* phase applies to all qualified applications received by August 15. Competitive applicants who have weighed their options for physical therapy education and have decided UWM DPT is their top choice are encouraged to apply in *Early Priority*. *Early Priority Admission* offers will be made by October 15.

Qualified and verified applications received after August 15 will be considered in the *Rolling Admission* phase.

All qualified applications undergo a holistic review, considering all factors from the application (GPA, GRE, letters of recommendation, essay responses, leadership experiences, and extra-curricular activities, etc.).

The firm application deadline is November 1, but applicants are encouraged to apply early to assure their applications are complete and verified by the final deadline.

The program will retain a wait list for strong applicants who did not receive an offer. This list will be active until May 1st.

Important Dates (if a date below falls on a weekend, the deadline date will shift to the following Monday)**:**

- August 15th Early Priority Admission application deadline
- October 15th Early Priority offers made
- November 1st Rolling Admission application deadline

ADVISING FOR PROSPECTIVE PHYSICAL THERAPY APPLICANTS

Prospective applicants who have questions about pursuing physical therapy are encouraged to seek advising from the College of Health Professions and Sciences Office of Student Affairs by calling 414-229-2758. Prospective applicants are encouraged to carefully review the UWM DPT program website (www.dpt.uwm.edu) and the entirety of this packet prior to scheduling an advising appointment. Questions may also be directed to pt-program@uwm.edu.

Completed Baccalaureate Degree: Prospective applicants who have already completed a bachelor's degree and are interested in taking courses at UWM to satisfy DPT program prerequisites should apply for admission to UWM (http://apply.wisconsin.edu). On the application, applicants should identify their reason for applying as "Undergraduate courses as a visitor/guest student" and their "applying as" status as "Undergraduate non-degree student with a bachelor's degree." Students should apply as a second degree student *only* if they plan to complete a second bachelor's degree. Questions regarding financial aid for non-degree students should be directed to Gayla Jenkins (jenkinsg@uwm.edu) in the UWM Department of Financial Aid.

HOW TO SEARCH FOR DPT PROGRAMS OF INTEREST

One year before you will submit your application (in the summer before junior year for traditional students), begin to research physical therapy programs that are of interest to you. With over 200 programs in the United States to choose from, this can be a daunting task. The following questions can help you refine your search:

1. Geographically, where would you like to attend school?
    a. Would you prefer to attend a program in Wisconsin?
    b. Are you willing to attend a program out of state?
    c. Are you willing to attend a program out of the Midwest region?
    d. Does the size of the city/town/village in which a program is located matter to you? Would you mind living in a large city like Chicago for three years? In the country?
2. How much money are you willing to spend on tuition?
3. Do you prefer a private school or a public school?
4. Do you prefer a larger program with many students in the cohort (50+) or a smaller program with fewer students in the cohort (20-50)?
5. Do you want your program to have a focus on research?

Using your answers to the questions above as your guide, begin your research by reviewing the PTCAS Programs Directory (https://ptcasdirectory.apta.org/39/List-of-PTCAS-Programs?qst=) to identify programs that align with your preferences.

Approximately one year prior to application submission (by the start of junior year for traditional students), identify 5-10 programs that are of interest to you. Throughout the following fall, research and document the individual requirements of each program on your list. Many students find it helpful to use an Excel document to track the requirements for all programs of interest in one document for easy comparison. Consider the following as you document your findings:

1. Prerequisite coursework and required or recommended minimum grades
    a. Some programs may have additional course requirements beyond the national standard outlined on page 1.
2. Required or recommended minimum GPAs (cumulative and prerequisite courses)
3. Required or recommended minimum scores on the GRE
    a. Quantitative reasoning
    b. Verbal reasoning
    c. Analytical writing
4. Recommended co-curricular experiences, such as:
    a. Employment
    b. Student organizations
    c. Student leadership
    d. Volunteerism
    e. Undergraduate research
5. Required letters of reference, such as:
    a. Academic (instructor)
    b. Character (supervisor)
    c. Physical Therapist
6. Application essay requirements
7. Estimated tuition and associated costs of attendance
    a. Scholarship, grants, and other financial assistance

Identify the programs on your list that you are eligible to apply to or could be eligible to apply to in the future. Additionally, using each programs' minimum and competitive criteria, identify those programs to which you would be a strong applicant.

UW-MILWAUKEE DPT PROGRAM

For a complete list of requirements and detailed application information for the UWM Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) program, please visit www.dpt.uwm.edu. Additionally, the UWM Program Page on the PTCAS website contains this information for each admission cycle. The requirements for admission to the UWM DPT program include:

- Undergraduate degree and prerequisite coursework must be completed by the time the applicant plans to enroll in the DPT program. An applicant must satisfy the Graduate School requirements in addition to these program requirements to be considered for admission to the program.
- Completion of an undergraduate degree from an accredited institution with an overall cumulative grade point average (GPA) of a 3.0 (on a 4.0 scale).
- Completion of the program application on the Physical Therapist Centralized Application Service (PTCAS) website: www.ptcas.org. Narrative essays are evaluated as part of the selection process.
- Submission of scores on the General Test of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) taken within the last five years. Information about the GRE can be found here: www.ets.org/gre. See below for recommended minimum scores.
- Two letters of recommendation, one of which must be an academic reference.
- Completion of 9 prerequisite courses with a minimum grade of "C" or better and a prerequisite GPA of 3.0 (on a 4.0 scale).

The UWM DPT program reviews candidate files only after the application submission deadline. Students who do not meet the minimum criteria for any of those outlined above will not be reviewed by the admission committee. Qualified applicant files are closely reviewed by the admission committee considering *all* components of the applicant profile. No singular element of the admission criteria is weighed more heavily than another. The program receives approximately 400 applications each year and seeks to enroll 36 new students each May.

UWM PROFILE OF ADMITTED DPT APPLICANTS

On average, applicants who were admitted to the DPT program at UWM earned the following:

- cumulative GPA of 3.5
- prerequisite courses GPA of 3.5
- GRE quantitative reasoning score of 150
- GRE verbal reasoning score of 150
- GRE analytical writing score of 4.0

Applicants to UWM who satisfy the following criteria are considered competitive applicants:

- cumulative GPA of 3.3 or higher
- prerequisite courses GPA of 3.3 or higher
- prerequisite course grades not lower than B
- GRE quantitative reasoning score of 150
- GRE verbal reasoning score of 150

PREREQUISITE COURSEWORK

UWM does not permit substitutions for prerequisites. Preference will be given to applicants who have completed all prerequisite courses at the time of application submission. More than one outstanding prerequisite at the time of application submission is discouraged. Students are encouraged to complete laboratory science prerequisites at a four-year institution of higher education instead of a two-year or technical school. The program *will* accept college credits that were granted retroactively to students who achieved appropriate scores on high school advanced placement (AP) tests; however, the program will not use those credits in the calculation of the prerequisite courses GPA for admission. Students can consult the following website to determine how UWM accepts AP scores: https://uwm.edu/onestop/your-student-record/transfer-credits/transferring-non-coursework-credit/

Prerequisite Course	**UWM Course Number**
General Biology I (4 cr. with lab)	Biological Sciences 150
Human Anatomy (4 cr. with lab)*	Biological Sciences 202
Human Physiology (4 cr. with lab)*	Biological Sciences 203
Chemistry I (4 cr. with lab)	Chemistry 102
Chemistry II (4 cr. with lab)	Chemistry 104
Physics I (4 cr. with lab)	Physics 120 (lecture) and 121 (lab)
Physics II (4 cr. with lab)	Physics 122 (lecture) and 123 (lab)
Psychology (3 cr.)	Any Psychology course
Introductory Statistics (3 cr.)	Kinesiology 270
**Applicants must complete a 2-semester sequence of anatomy/physiology with lab. This can be a stand-alone anatomy course and a stand-alone physiology course, or a 2-semester combined anatomy/physiology course.*	

PREREQUISITE COURSEWORK *continued*

Non-UWM Undergraduates: Applicants completing their undergraduate degree at another institution within the UW System should refer to the Transfer Equivalency Database (TED) to evaluate courses for equivalency with UWM prerequisites (https://web.uwm.edu/registrar/tools/ted). Applicants completing prerequisite courses outside of the UW System should meet with the academic advisor at their undergraduate institution to determine appropriate equivalents to the UWM prerequisite courses.

At UWM: One or two repeated courses typically does not cause concern during application review, and repeating coursework to earn a higher grade is encouraged to increase your application's competitiveness. UWM considers both the original grade *and* the grade earned in the repeat of the course in the calculation of the overall cumulative GPA, but only the higher/highest grade is considered in the calculation of the prerequisite courses GPA. If a student demonstrates persistent struggle with prerequisite courses and needs to repeat multiple to achieve competitive grades, it should be cause to reflect on whether or not PT is the most appropriate career path.

GRADUATE RECORD EXAMINATION (GRE): www.ets.org/gre

Applicants are encouraged to complete the GRE approximately six months before the date of application submission, if not sooner. This timeframe allows an applicant to repeat the test to increase scores if desired. GRE scores can take up to 8 weeks to be delivered to PTCAS and posted to your applicant profile. Applicants are encouraged to prepare in advance for the test. Additional information (including preparation materials) is available on the GRE's website (link above).

At UWM: UWM's DPT program considers an applicant's most recent GRE scores. For UWM's program, there is no harm in repeating the GRE to increase your application's competitiveness. UWM's GRE Code for PTCAS is **2131.**

CO-CURRICULAR EXPERIENCES

A strong applicant demonstrates balance between rigorous academics, attributes consistent with PT professionals, and enriching, co-curricular experiences.

At UWM: Competitive applicants have participated in a variety of co-curricular experiences, for example, volunteer opportunities, student organizations as members and leaders, undergraduate research, employment, and other activities related to their academic and personal development.

APPLICATION ESSAYS

Applicants should respond to all required essays. Applicants are strongly encouraged to address how their academic, co-curricular, employment, and life activities are interrelated and have prepared them for the study and practice of physical therapy.

At UWM: Essays play an exceptionally important role in the consideration of an applicant.

LETTERS OF REFERENCE

On your PTCAS application, list two (2) persons submitting evaluations on your behalf – one academic reference (preferably a faculty member as opposed to a graduate student instructor) and one character reference (e.g., employment/volunteer supervisor). Evaluators complete the process via the Electronic Letters of Reference (eLORs), which is initiated by the applicant once they have begun their PTCAS application. The evaluations these individuals submit are included in your application to each program, so they should be general and not specific to one institution.