Physical Therapy Requirements

EDUCATION AND TRAINING
Physical therapists should have strong interpersonal skills to successfully educate patients about their physical therapy treatments. They should also be compassionate and possess a desire to help patients. Similar traits are also needed to interact with the patient's family.

Pre-physical therapy students must complete specific undergraduate coursework. Most programs require a student to have at least a 3.0 cumulative and prerequisite GPA, although competitive GPA's may be higher. Increasingly, programs are also requiring applicants to have paid or volunteer experience in one or more physical therapy settings and may ask that a student have adult CPR certification.

According to the American Physical Therapy Association, there were 189 accredited physical therapist programs. All states require physical therapists to pass a licensure exam after graduating from an accredited physical therapist educational program before they can practice. Physical therapists are expected to continue professional development by participating in continuing education courses and workshops. A number of states require continuing education to maintain licensure.

ADMISSIONS AND APPLICATION
Admission to entry-level physical therapy programs is extremely competitive due to a large number of qualified applicants. Admissions committees are very selective and are looking for specific prerequisites courses, strong academic records, good scores on the Graduate Record Exam (GRE), quality letters of recommendation, and work or volunteer experience in the field as indicators of potential to succeed.

Application deadlines vary from November of the year prior to matriculation to February. Most programs require a bachelor’s degree; however some universities, such as Loma Linda University and Cal State Northridge, encourage students to apply after completing two years of college level work. If admitted, students enter a three-year Masters program and are awarded a BS in life science in addition to the master's degree at the completion of the program.

MAJORS AND EXTRA CURRICULAR
Students can major in almost any discipline provided the required courses are completed in order to be competitive when applying to physical therapy programs. Students are encouraged to participate in an internship, volunteer, or work experience in a physical therapy setting in order to become acquainted with the field prior to making formal application to selected professional programs.

PREPARATION COURSEWORK
* The following list of UCLA courses is recommended for pre-physical therapy students. This list is not a comprehensive list of prerequisites for all masters programs in physical therapy. Requirements can vary widely from program to program. Students maintain responsibility for verifying course selection with individual PT programs.

- One year of **BIOLOGY** with lab
  - Taking the Life Sciences series 1-4 can satisfy this.
- Two years of **CHEMISTRY** (through Organic Chemistry and Biochemistry)
  - The 14 series (through 14D) or the 20/30 series (through 30C) and Biochemistry 153A & 153L can satisfy this requirement. As you will notice, the 20/30 series is actually the equivalent of two and a half years, this is due to the curriculum of each series taught at a different pace.
- One year of **PHYSICS**
  - Taking the Physics series 6ABC or 6AH, BH, CH or 1ABC, 4AL, 4BL can satisfy this. One year with labs is generally required which is included in any of the
series. Trigonometry-based physics can also satisfy this requirement, but UCLA only offers calculus-based courses and these are required for the various science majors.

- **One year of MATH**
  - Taking Math 3ABC or Math 31AB, 32A can satisfy this. This is your preparation for calculus-based physics. One year of math can include Statistics 10, M11, M12, 13, Biostatistics or Biomath, Psychology 100A* and computer programming classes (PIC 10A, 10B, 10C). *Check with individual schools for acceptability of classes offered outside of the Statistics department.

- **HUMAN ANATOMY**
  - Phy Sci 13 or 107 (upper division PS courses are generally restricted to PS majors). Phy Sci 13 through UCLA Extension is another good option.

- **HUMAN PHYSIOLOGY**
  - Phy Sci 3 or 5 or 111A-C (upper division PS courses are generally restricted to PS majors). *Phy Sci 166 may not be acceptable for schools that will not take Animal Physiology prerequisites. Phy Sci 3 does not have a lab component effective Summer 04. Any offerings before Summer 04 did NOT have a lab. One course from a community college with lab may also be acceptable.

- **One course in PSYCHOLOGY**
  - Psychology 10 (or the equivalent). One course in this area is sufficient, but more coursework is helpful.

The following course work is **STRONGLY RECOMMENDED** for most schools:

- **One year of ENGLISH**
  - One year of college level literature and composition. Writing I and Writing II courses, select general education literature courses, and any upper division English literature or English Composition courses will satisfy this requirement. Please see the “English requirement for health professions schools” sheet for a complete list of suggested courses. These courses will prepare you for the Verbal Reasoning and Writing Sample sections of the MCAT. A list of English courses that will satisfy this requirement can be found at [http://career.ucla.edu/gradschool/health/englishreq.asp](http://career.ucla.edu/gradschool/health/englishreq.asp).

- **Other BIOLOGY**
  - Neurobiology - Any upper division neuroscience or psychobiology course. Check course restrictions. Kinesiology - **Phy Sci C150 and C152**. Upper division Phy Sci classes are generally restricted to Phy Sci majors. These courses can also be found at the CSU level. Exercise Physiology - **Phy Sci 133, 136 and C137**. Upper division Phy Sci classes are generally restricted to Phy Sci majors. These courses can also be found at the CSU level. Check with individual department counselors for availability of upper division courses.

- **STATISTICS**
  - Statistics 10, M11, M12, 13, Biostatistics or Biomath, Psychology 100A (Check with individual schools for acceptability of classes offered outside of the Statistics department). These courses prepare you for the Quantitative Reasoning section of the OAT.

- **Knowledge and cultural competency of at least one FOREIGN LANGUAGE**
  - This need not have been taken at the college level. If your future plans include working in California or the southwestern states, Spanish is highly valued and somewhat expected. Ask yourself: Can I walk into a hospital room and get a patient history in another language? If the answer is no, then consider taking college level foreign language classes to brush up on your skills.

- **HUMANITIES and SOCIAL SCIENCE** courses
  - The non-science GPA is an important component to your overall academic record, and liberal arts education. Courses in the following can enhance your
communication skills and overall understanding of the world: Anthropology, Communication Studies, Economics, any ethnic studies area (e.g. Women’s Studies, LGBT Studies, Afro-American Studies, Chicana/Chicano Studies, Near Eastern Studies), Philosophy, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology, and Speech to name a few. It is important to look at individual school sites to find if they recommend any courses in particular.

- **COMPUTER SKILLS** are highly recommended
  - Many programs have incorporated computers and electronic media into their curriculum. It is not necessary to take computer courses if you feel you have sufficient knowledge. Several programs are strongly recommending that students own a computer. Other programs have indicated that they will soon have to purchase a computer as part of the requirements of their program.

**UCLA is not responsible for coursework being accepted by recipient schools.**

**Useful Websites:**
Students can obtain more information by visiting the web site address: [www.apta.org](http://www.apta.org) or writing to: American Physical Therapy Association, 111 North Fairfax Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22314-1488, (703) 684-2782.

More information on a career as a physical therapist and a list of accredited educational programs in physical therapy are available from American Physical Therapy Association, 111 North Fairfax Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22314-1488, (703) 684-2782, [www.apta.org](http://www.apta.org).