

PRE-PHYSICAL THERAPY

Pathway Information

Preparation for a career as a physical therapist (PT) should involve building your credentials in scholarship, leadership, and community involvement, as well as gaining internship/shadowing experience in various settings.

There is no single required major for pre-PT students, however some majors will better align with the prerequisites for PT schools than others. Recommended GSW majors include exercise science and biology.

ADMISSIONS: GPA, EXAMS, & REQUIRED COURSES

Typical OT Pre-Requisites:

- 2 semesters of anatomy and physiology
- 2 semesters of chemistry
- 2 semesters of physics
- 1-2 semesters of biology
- 1 semester of statistics
- 1-2 semesters of psychology

Note: This is not a definitive list of the classes you will need for every school. Always check with the individual schools to see their specific requirements.

You should maintain at least a B in all pre-requisite courses. Successful applicants are likely to maintain approximately a 3.5 GPA or higher overall. Admissions committees look not only at raw numbers, but also at grade trends on your transcript. All is not lost if you stumble in your first semester or two, but then show substantial improvement each subsequent year. However, they will also notice negative trends such as if you are consistently withdrawing from or performing poorly in hard sciences, or are completing courses away from your home institution.

Most PT schools require that you take the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). The GRE consists of three sections: Quantitative, Verbal, and Essay. While there are no specific courses that you need to take prior to the GRE, you should plan to spend a couple months working on exam preparation. Students usually sit for the exam in January-May as they head into the application cycle in June.

AVERAGE MATRICULANT NUMBERS

- Overall GPA: 3.5
- Sciences GPA: 3.5
- GRE: 303+ combined and 4.0+ writing (50th percentile or higher)

GENERAL INFORMATION

Doctoral degree

Most programs are 3 years

Institutions in Georgia:

- Augusta University
- Brenau University
- Emory University
- GA-PCOM
- Georgia Southern University's Armstrong Campus
- Georgia State University
- Mercer University
- University of North Georgia

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION/EVALUATION

Though requirements will vary between schools, most will require two to three letters of evaluation. Typically, programs expect students to provide one letter from a PT, one from a faculty member, and one other of the student's choosing. This last letter could come from another PT, a research mentor, volunteer coordinator, employer, etc.

SHADOWING

PT programs require that you have experience observing or shadowing physical therapists in the field. The hours requirements vary between schools, but it is recommended to gain at least 100 hours total of shadowing hours (though some schools may require more). It is also suggested that you shadow in multiple environments—e.g. both inpatient and outpatient experiences—and no less than 20 hours per setting. The diversity of shadowing experiences is important and may consist of different types of therapies or of different populations, such as pediatrics or geriatrics. You must record your hours in a log and have the PT that you are shadowing sign off on those hours. GSW programs such as Exercise Science have these requirements built into the degree curriculum.

CAMPUS INVOLVEMENT, VOLUNTEERING, AND RESEARCH

Extracurricular activities, such as club affiliations and volunteering, are a large portion of the application that should not be neglected. PT schools are looking for students who not only demonstrate that they can manage rigorous courses while staying busy, but also those who are compassionate, enjoy working with people and are dedicated to serving the community. You should keep in mind that depth of commitment and leadership experience are also considered. As a result, it is best to focus on strong engagement in few activities rather than to spread oneself too thin. Participation in extracurricular activities should not come at the expense of academic work.

Research, although it is not required by most PT schools, is the hallmark of a curious mind and may benefit you in many ways. If you have an interest in research it can be a helpful avenue to pursue.

PHYSICAL THERAPIST CENTRALIZED APPLICATION SERVICE (PTCAS)

To apply to most PT programs, you will utilize the Physical Therapist Centralized Application Service (PTCAS). Official transcripts, GRE scores, essays, and letters of recommendation are all submitted to PTCAS. All eight of the PT programs in Georgia use this application service.

Programs differ in terms of their application deadlines. Most deadlines are in the fall for a summer start; however, you are responsible for checking the specific deadlines for the programs to which you hope to apply. Generally, you're encouraged to apply well before the deadline since many institutions participate in rolling admissions.