



Physical therapists use different forms of treatment called "modalities" depending on the type of patient they are caring for. Physical therapists, sometimes referred to as PTs, help people who have injuries or illnesses improve their movement and manage their pain. They are often an important part of rehabilitation and treatment of patients with chronic conditions or injuries. Physical therapists typically do the following:

- Diagnose patients' dysfunctional movements by watching them stand or walk and by listening to their concerns, among other methods
- Set up a plan for their patients, outlining the patient's goals and the planned treatments
- Use exercises, stretching maneuvers, hands-on therapy, and equipment to ease patients' pain and to help them increase their ability to move
- Evaluate a patient's progress, modifying a treatment plan and trying new treatments as needed
- Educate patients and their families about what to expect during recovery from injury and illness and how best to cope with what happens

Physical therapists provide care to people of all ages who have functional problems resulting from back and neck injuries; sprains, strains, and fractures; arthritis; amputations; stroke; birth conditions, such as cerebral palsy; injuries related to work and sports; and other conditions. Physical therapists are trained to use a variety of different techniques—sometimes called modalities—to care for their patients. These techniques include applying heat and cold, hands-on stimulation or massage, and using assistive and adaptive devices and equipment. The work of physical therapists varies with the type of patients they serve. For example, a patient suffering from loss of mobility due to Parkinson's disease needs different care than an athlete recovering from an injury. Some physical therapists specialize in one type of care, such as pediatrics (treating children) or sports physical therapy. Physical therapists work as part of a healthcare team, overseeing the work of physical therapist assistants and aides and consulting with physicians and surgeons and other specialists. Physical therapists also work at preventing loss of mobility by developing fitness and wellness-oriented programs to encourage healthier and more active lifestyles. (*Occupational Outlook Handbook*)

The educational requirements for admission to a physical therapy program vary from school to school. Many programs require a bachelor's degree; some will accept applicants after 90 credit hours of undergraduate education. However, the majority of students entering physical therapy school have a baccalaureate degree. Therefore, students pursuing a pre-physical therapy curriculum are expected to choose a major so that they can be working towards a baccalaureate degree concurrently with the pre-physical therapy program. This requires a major/minor combination or a comprehensive major as well as completion of the UNK general studies requirements and other degree requirements as set forth in the college catalog. Physical therapy schools do not specify which major a student should pursue in conjunction with his/her pre-physical therapy studies. **Gaining acceptance into a physical therapy school is a very competitive process. Completion of the pre-requisite courses does not automatically guarantee admission.**

The following courses are those required by the **University of Nebraska Medical Center's** Division of Physical Therapy Education. Courses also meet the requirements for entry into the **Creighton University** Program in Physical Therapy.

**A. Required Courses:**

**Take all of the following:**

BIOL 225	Anatomy and Physiology	4
BIOL 226	Anatomy and Physiology	4
CHEM 160	General Chemistry	4
CHEM 161	General Chemistry	4
ENG 101	Introduction to Academic Writing	3
ENG 102	Academic Writing and Research	3
PHYS 205	General Physics	5
PHYS 206	General Physics	5

**Take TWO of the following biology courses:**

BIOL 103	General Biology	4
BIOL 105	Biology I	4
BIOL 106	Biology II	4
BIOL 211	Human Microbiology	4

**Take ONE of the following:**

BIOL 305	Biostatistics	3
PSY 250	Behavioral Statistics	3
STAT 241	Elementary Statistics	3

**Take two courses in the Social Sciences (total of 6 hours):**

**Must take one of the following (may take both):**

PSY 230	Human Development	3
PSY 231	Abnormal Behavior	3

**Take any Social Science elective** **3**

**Recommended course:**

**A writing intensive course in any area.**

**B. Additional Requirements:**

- **University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) requires a Bachelor's Degree for admission.**
- **Creighton University does not require a Bachelor's Degree. Students must identify their major emphasis of study and satisfactorily complete 9 upper level (300/400) credit hours towards that emphasis prior to matriculation.**
- **Shadowing Observation Requirements: Creighton University requires a minimum of 60 hours of observation supervised by a physical therapist. UNMC has no formal requirements for volunteer, observation or employment experiences in the field of physical therapy. However, broad exposure to the field is to the applicant's personal benefit and is encouraged.**
- **UNMC and Creighton University require students to submit scores from the Graduate Record Exam (GRE).**
- **Students applying to schools of Physical Therapy outside Nebraska should check with these schools to ensure that other requirements are fulfilled.**

**Academic Guidelines**

An overall GPA of 3.5 or above (on a 4.0 scale) is preferred, however a higher GPA will result in the student being a more competitive applicant. Each required course must be passed with a grade of "C" or better. A grade of "C-" will not be accepted. Students must take enough hours to reach a total of at least 90 credit hrs. Students are strongly encouraged to consult with their advisor to ensure that electives are applicable towards a specific major in the discipline of their choice. Creighton University strongly encourages psychology electives.

Students searching for electives outside their major requirements should consider courses from the following areas: biology, chemistry, mathematics, sociology, psychology, business administration, healthcare management, and healthcare economics. See your advisor for suggestions. Students should be aware of prerequisites on all courses and plan their coursework accordingly.

**Non-Academic Guidelines**

There is no magic formula for acceptance in to professional school. Admission is based on GPA, test scores, shadowing and medical experiences, community involvement and volunteerism, leadership qualities, the interview, the essay, and letters of recommendation. Other important non-academic factors include good moral character, excellent interpersonal skills, a deep commitment to healthcare, evidence of leadership potential and service to others. Research

experience is not required, but will be looked upon favorably. Students should plan to be involved in these types of activities and experiences throughout their undergraduate career.

**The Application Process**

Many U.S. physical therapy schools require applicants to take the Graduate Record Exam (GRE). Students will make application to most physical therapy schools through a centralized application service called the Physical Therapy Centralized Application Service (PTCAS). The centralized application service allows students to fill out one application to apply to multiple schools. The application and additional information may be access at [www.ptcas.org](http://www.ptcas.org). The application becomes open for students in early summer and deadlines for both the PTCAS application and supplemental application materials vary depending on the program. Early application is strongly encouraged. Students should make application in the summer or early fall of the calendar year proceeding the year in which they hope to enroll in professional school. Applicants need not wait for GRE scores, transcripts, or other application materials before applying through PTCAS. Check with the schools to which you are applying to verify their policies and procedures regarding supplemental applications.

**Entrance Examination Requirement (GRE)**

It is preferred that the GRE is taken no later than August of the calendar year preceding the year in which the applicant wishes to enroll in a physical therapy program. Students register online at [www.gre.org](http://www.gre.org). The test consists of three sections: verbal reasoning, quantitative reasoning, and analytical writing.

**Letters of Evaluation/Recommendation**

Letters of evaluation will be required of applicants. Letters from a faculty member, physical therapist, academic advisor, or employer would be appropriate. Information about the non-academic character of a student would be most useful as academic information is already in the application. Students should have their evaluation letters submitted directly through PTCAS.

**Interviews**

Most schools screen applicants with some form of personal interview. The format of the interview may vary depending on the schools to which students are applying.

**Criminal Background Checks**

Prerequisite for enrollment into any health science professional program is consent for an external background check. This check includes, but is not limited to, past criminal offenses and registry information. If there is evidence of arrest for a crime(s), conviction for a crime(s), presence on an abuse registry, or other information which reasonably suggests that patient safety might be compromised, the student will be asked to provide additional information.

**Citizenship/International Students**

Professional schools in the health sciences vary as to whether they accept non-U.S. citizens. Some schools that do accept non-citizens require a substantial financial commitment up front. Since not all schools accept non-citizens and since the financial commitment of those that do may be substantial, students should thoroughly research and carefully consider such a decision and discuss it with their pre-health advisors early in their undergraduate years.

**Websites**

American Physical Therapy Association  
 UNK Health Sciences

[www.apta.org](http://www.apta.org)  
[www.unk.edu/healthsciences](http://www.unk.edu/healthsciences)

**Suggested Sequence of Key Courses**

	Fall	Spring
<b>Year 1</b>	<b>CHEM 160</b> Biology Course: See your advisor for suggestions. MATH: See advisor for appropriate course placement.	<b>CHEM 161</b> Biology Course: See your advisor for suggestions.
<b>Year 2</b>	<b>BIOL 225</b> Loper7 (Social Science) Statistics Course	<b>BIOL 226</b> PSY 230 or 231
<b>Year 3</b>	<b>PHYS 205</b>	<b>PHYS 206</b> <i>Register to take the GRE in late spring or early summer. Prepare to complete PTCAS application.</i>
<b>Year 4</b>	Complete final major courses.	Complete final major courses.

- A MATH ACT score of 22 or prior completion of College Algebra (MATH 102) or higher is a pre-requisite for CHEM 160.
- A minimum MATH ACT score of 20 or prior completion of College Algebra (MATH 102) (Grade of B+ or better) or higher is required for entry into PHYS 205.
- Completion of one semester of chemistry is a pre-requisite for BIOL 225.
- Additional upper level science courses would also be beneficial.

**Students who are accepted into physical therapy school prior to completing a baccalaureate degree at UNK may be eligible to receive a Bachelor of Science degree in Applied Health Sciences if they have completed all general studies requirements and other graduation requirements as set forth in the UNK catalog and have at least 85 semester hours completed in pre-physical therapy studies.**