



# PRE-PHYSICAL THERAPY FACT SHEET

## BECOMING A COMPETITIVE APPLICANT

Applicants to physical therapy (PT) programs must complete a minimum of 90 credits (three years) of college coursework which includes the pre-PT prerequisites. Most pre-PT students complete a bachelor's degree prior to entering a PT program. Competitive applicants for admission have solid academic records, well-rounded profiles of co-curricular experiences, strong scores on the Graduate Record Exam (GRE), supportive letters of recommendation, and can clearly articulate their reasons for pursuing PT as a profession.

## SELECTING A MAJOR

Students are encouraged to choose a major where they can demonstrate strong overall academic performance, while also focusing on developing a solid foundation in the sciences. Ideally, a major should be based on student interests and should support an alternate career. PT schools look for students who demonstrate the academic ability to handle rigorous course loads.

## GRADES & GPA

C is an honorable grade. However, grades below B, especially within the two academic years leading up to PT school application, could interfere with admission. Faced with a likely grade below C, some students should withdraw (W) and later try for a higher grade. Students should work with advisors as they decide. More than two W's could indicate a lack of judgment or an inability to handle challenges in PT school.

GPA's calculated on PT school applications include coursework done at all colleges attended and all attempts at a course.

**Aim for GPA's of 3.3 or above.**

## CREIGHTON PRE-HEALTH RESOURCES

Pre-Health Advisors in the Center for Advising Resources & Support are available to meet with students individually about their pre-health goals and path.

The Pre-Professional Communities assist students in exploring the PT profession, gaining experience in healthcare, and preparing for the application process. Generally, students should participate in PHLC 200 in their sophomore year and in PPT 300 in their junior or senior year (depending on the student's application timeline). Students interested in beginning PT school after three years of undergraduate study should enroll in PHLC 200 as freshmen.

## PREREQUISITE & RECOMMENDED COURSES

Pre-PT students should research schools carefully to be aware of all prerequisite courses and other admissions policies, as prerequisites vary among PT programs. Students should meet with a Pre-Health Advisor to develop their timeline for application to PT school.

### PREREQUISITES FOR PT SCHOOL

The following courses are commonly required by PT schools:

- General Biology I & II w/ Labs - 8 hours - BIO 201/205 & BIO 202/206
- General Chemistry I & II w/ Labs - 8 hours - CHM 203/204 & CHM 205/206
- General Physics I & II w/ Labs - 8 hours - PHY 201/205 & PHY 202/206
- Physiology w/ Lab - 3-4 hours - EXS 320 or BIO 449/450
- Anatomy w/ Lab - 3-4 hours - EXS 331 or PHA 310/311
- Statistics - 3 hours - Many options
- Psychology - 3-6 hours - Often General Psychology and Abnormal/Lifespan
- English - 3-6 hours - Including composition

### ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS & NOTES

- For Creighton's PT program, students do not need to complete labs with their Anatomy or their Physiology courses. Creighton's PT program also requires students to have 6 hours of Theology (often completed via the Magis core Christian Tradition and Biblical Tradition).
- Some schools may not regard credit earned through examinations (AP/CLEP/IB) as being equivalent to completing required courses, but they may accept higher-level college courses as substitutes. Research individual schools for their policies regarding AP/CLEP/IB credits for prerequisite courses.

## CO-CURRICULAR EXPECTATIONS

### SHADOWING

Students must gain knowledge of the profession by shadowing current professionals in their field. It is highly recommended that students shadow physical therapists in a variety of settings. Sustained shadowing experience with one PT is also helpful, as a number of schools require a letter of recommendation from a practicing PT. PT programs often require applicants to document a minimum number of shadowing hours. Creighton's PT program requires applicants to have at least 60 hours of shadowing experience with a PT. Research individual schools to understand shadowing expectations for programs of interest.

### VOLUNTEER & SERVICE

It is important to demonstrate sustained commitment over time. Students should have service experiences in healthcare and non-healthcare settings. Check out the Schlegel Center for Service and Justice for opportunities: [blogs.creighton.edu/ccsj](https://blogs.creighton.edu/ccsj)

### LEADERSHIP & TEAMWORK

Students must demonstrate leadership and interpersonal skills. Consider initiating group projects, serving as an officer in a student organization, or working as a teaching assistant. Students must also demonstrate the ability to work collaboratively.

### HEALTHCARE EXPERIENCE

Students should seek opportunities for hands-on, direct patient care experience. Although this may be gained through volunteering, students can also gain this kind of experience through employment as a PT/OT Tech, Certified Nurse Assistant, EMT with Basic certification, rehabilitation aide, among others.

### RESEARCH

Research can help students demonstrate intellectual curiosity, communication skills and collaboration. Research also gives students an opportunity to work closely with faculty who might write letters of recommendation. See the Center for Undergraduate Research and Scholarship for opportunities: [www.creighton.edu/curas](http://www.creighton.edu/curas).

## COURSE SCHEDULING CONSIDERATIONS

Freshmen and sophomores usually take only two natural science or math subjects each semester.

**Chemistry:** General Chemistry I (CHM 203/204) and General Chemistry II (CHM 205/206) are typical choices for freshman fall and spring. To be eligible to take General Chemistry in the freshman year, students must achieve a sufficient score on the Quantitative Assessment for New Students (QANS). Students who do not achieve a sufficient QANS score will need to complete an introductory chemistry course, CHM 105, with a grade of "C" or better to progress to CHM 203.

**Biology:** General Biology I (BIO 201/205) and General Biology II (BIO 202/206) are typical choices for freshman fall and spring. Completion of either General Chemistry I (CHM 203) with a grade of "C" or better or Introductory Chemistry (CHM 105) with a grade of "B" or better is required in order to take General Biology II.

**Physics:** Students who have sufficient math and physics (a year of high school physics or a semester of college introductory physics, math through pre-calculus) are eligible to take General Physics I (PHY 201/205) and General Physics II (PHY 202/206). Prospective math, physics, and chemistry majors may take alternate sections of General Physics and additional math.

**Math:** Pre-PT students will take a Mathematical Reasoning course for the Magis Core. The math course they choose will depend on their preparation and major of choice.

**Summer:** Science courses may be taken in the summer, but only when there are good reasons for doing so (not just a vague desire to "catch up") and not at community colleges. Speak with a Pre-Health Advisor about timelines.

### Sample First Semester Schedule

\*Course sequencing may vary depending on a student's readiness\*

- General Biology I w/ Lab (4 hours)
- General Chemistry I w/ Lab (4 hours)
- Magis Core Class (3 or 4 hours) - ENG or Critical Issues & COM 101
- Magis Core Class (3 hours) - PHL or THL
- Maybe another Magis Core Class (3 hours) - PSY, SOC or Foreign Language
- RSP Class (.5 hours)

## PT SCHOOL APPLICATION PROCESS

### ADMISSION TESTS

Many PT programs require the Graduate Record Exam (GRE). Students typically take the GRE 12-15 months before they intend to start PT school. There are no specific courses students must take prior to the exam, but students should spend time preparing for the exam to ensure they earn a score that meets minimum admissions requirements for programs of interest.

### PHYSICAL THERAPY CENTRALIZED APPLICATION SERVICE (PTCAS)

Students apply to PT programs using PTCAS. Students submit information that is transmitted to all schools they are applying to, as well as program-specific materials that go to individual programs. PTCAS opens annually in July for the new application cycle.

### LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Students can submit up to four letters of recommendation within their PTCAS application. Many PT schools require at least one or two letters from professors. Some schools require one letter from a practicing physical therapist. Students should research individual schools for letter requirements.

### INTERVIEWS

Many PT programs interview promising applicants. The John P. Fahey Career Center offers interview preparation assistance, including mock interviews.

## PRE-PT GROUPS & RESOURCES

### PRE-PHYSICAL THERAPY CLUB

All pre-PT students should participate in the Pre-PT Club. This student organization provides leadership opportunities to further explore and gain experience in the PT profession. Learn more on CU Involved:  
<https://cuinvolved.creighton.edu/organization/prept>

### CU SCHOOL OF PHARMACY AND HEALTH PROFESSIONS

Make an appointment with SPAHP admissions office personnel in the spring of the year applying to personalize the application process.

### CREIGHTON PREFERENCE

The Creighton Doctor of Physical Therapy Program gives preferential admission consideration to Creighton undergraduate students who complete all prerequisite coursework at Creighton. Students who participate in PHLC 200 and PPT 300 and who have a cumulative GPA of 3.25 are guaranteed an interview.

### HELPFUL LINKS

- CU SPAHP | [creighton.edu/pharmacy-ot-pt](https://creighton.edu/pharmacy-ot-pt)
- American Physical Therapy Association | [apta.org](https://apta.org)
- Physical Therapy Centralized Application Service | [ptcas.org](https://ptcas.org)