

PHYSIOTHERAPIST

WHAT DOES A PHYSIOTHERAPIST DO?

Physiotherapists treat patients with physical difficulties resulting from illness, injury, disability or ageing. They treat people of all ages including children, the elderly, stroke patients and people with sports injuries.

Physiotherapists work with patients to identify and improve their movement and function. They help promote their patients' health and wellbeing, and assist the rehabilitation process by developing and restoring body systems, in particular the neuromuscular, musculoskeletal, cardiovascular and respiratory systems. They devise and review treatment programmes, comprising manual therapy, movement, therapeutic exercise and the application of technological equipment, e.g. ultrasound. Physiotherapists also provide advice on how people can avoid injury.

SKILLS REQUIRED

Applicants for Physiotherapy courses and jobs will need to demonstrate that they have:

- good communication skills
- problem solving skills
- initiative, patience, sensitivity and tact
- excellent organisational and administrative skills
- an ability to be firm, encouraging and empathetic
- an ability to establish a rapport with patients and their families
- a genuine concern for the wellbeing and health of patients
- a real interest in anatomy and physiology
- an ability to work under pressure and manage their time effectively

QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED

- A physiotherapy degree, approved by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC): check the HCPC website for a full list of approved physiotherapy courses: <http://www.hpc-uk.org/>
- Applicants with a 1st class or 2:1 undergraduate degree in a relevant subject (e.g. a Biological Science, Psychology or Sports Science) could qualify as a Physiotherapist by taking a fast-track postgraduate course. Check the HCPC website for a full list of approved physiotherapy courses: <http://www.hpc-uk.org/>
- Registration with the Health & Care Professions Council (HCPC) on completion of an approved degree/ postgraduate course in Physiotherapy.
- Applicants will need to pass a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.
- Check entry requirements and course content with individual course providers.

UNDERGRADUATE COURSES

There are 4 HPC-approved undergraduate degrees in the West Midlands.

BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy: University of Worcester (<http://www.worcester.ac.uk/>)

Length of study: 3 years full-time

Entry requirements - qualifications: A minimum of 5 GCSEs A*-C including Maths, Science and English Language. Applicants with an *Access to HE Diploma* (Health and Science preferred) need to obtain 60 credits in total, including a minimum of 45 credits at Level 3 - with at least 30 credits at Merit or Distinction, with at least 15 of those in Biological Science-related subjects. *BTEC* entry requirements are shown on the university's webpage for this course.

Entry requirements - work experience: Applicants must gain some work experience, shadowing a Physiotherapist and have thoroughly researched the breadth of the physiotherapy profession. They must be aware of the core areas of practice and where Physiotherapists work, within and outside the NHS. The diversity of the profession cannot be understood from one workplace visit and further research will be needed. Applicants should access information about the profession from the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy and Health and Care Professions Council, plus <http://www.stepintothens.nhs.uk/> and <http://www.nhs-careers.nhs.uk/>

BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy: Coventry University (<http://www.coventry.ac.uk/>)

Length of study: 3 years full-time

Entry requirements - qualifications: 7 GCSEs at grade A*–C taken at a single sitting, including English Language, Mathematics and Science at grade B or above. Applicants with a BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma must have D*D*D* in a Biological Science or a health related course plus additional AS Biology (minimum grade B). At the time of writing this leaflet, no information was available for applicants with an Access to HE Diploma, so please contact Coventry University for further information if you are interested in this course.

Entry requirements - work experience: None specified.

BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy: Keele University (<https://www.keele.ac.uk/>)

Length of study: 3 years full-time

Entry requirements - qualifications: 6 GCSEs at C or above including English Language, Maths and a Science subject (or equivalent). Applicants must already possess these qualifications before applying. Applicants with an Access to HE Diploma need to have a Pass, with a minimum of 30 Level 3 credits at Distinction and 15 Level 3 credits at Merit. 15 Level 3 credits to include topics relating to human biology/ anatomy/ physiology. Please contact Keele University to check the acceptable topics/ units. The university is only able to consider Access applicants who have been out of full-time education for 3+ years before starting their Access course. Applicants with an Access to HE Diploma need to have obtained GCSE grade C or above in Maths and English Language prior to making their application. Applicants with a BTEC qualification can see the BTEC entry requirements on the UCAS webpage for this course.

Entry requirements - work experience: None specified.

BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy: University of Birmingham (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/>)

Length of study: 3 years full-time

Entry requirements - qualifications: Applicants with an Access to HE Diploma in Science, Health Science or Physiotherapy will need a minimum of 60 credits overall including 45 at Level 3, all with Distinctions. 36 Science credits at Level 3 (with 18 in Biology). If you don't have GCSE English and Maths at grade B or above, you will need 12 credits at Level 2 in English and Maths in order to meet minimum University requirements. Applicants with a BTEC in Applied Science, Health Studies or Sport and Exercise Science will need to obtain D*D*D* overall and Distinctions in all units. Certain units are required in these BTECs. Other subjects may be considered with 'A' level Biology or PE at grade A. All BTEC students should contact the university before submitting an application.

Entry requirements - work experience: Applicants **must have gained** insight into the breadth of physiotherapy work prior to application. This should include shadowing (observing) a Physiotherapist and visiting websites related to Physiotherapy e.g. the CSP, HCPC and NHS. University open days also provide opportunities to explore the scope of Physiotherapy practice, meet current Physiotherapy students and gain an outline of the Physiotherapy degree programme.

NB Please check entry requirements with individual course providers.

POSTGRADUATE COURSES

There is 1 HCPC-approved postgraduate course in the West Midlands.

MSc Physiotherapy: University of Birmingham (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/>)

Length of study: 2 years full-time

Entry requirements - qualifications: Applicants should have evidence of health-related study and will normally be expected to possess an honours degree in a relevant discipline (e.g. Physiology, Psychology) at 1st or 2:1 classification.

Entry requirements - work experience: Applicants should provide evidence of physiotherapy work experience (at least in the form of visits and observation), and can demonstrate the NHS Constitution values.

NB Please check entry requirements with individual course providers.

NHS FINANCIAL SUPPORT WHILST STUDYING

Candidates can apply for NHS funding for an approved course. Where this is available, tuition fees will be met in full and successful applicants will receive a non-means tested bursary to help towards living expenses. For details, check with individual universities and the NHS Business Services Authority:

<http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/Students.aspx>.

EMPLOYMENT SECTORS

Within the NHS, Physiotherapists may be based in hospitals, health centres, clinics or GP surgeries. Physiotherapists are also required in other areas such as education, leisure and sport, and industry. This means they could be based in a variety of settings including schools, nursing homes or sports centres. Physiotherapists working in the community may be required to visit patients in their own home.

WORKING CONDITIONS

Physiotherapists typically work 37.5 hours a week. The hours are usually worked daytimes from Monday to Friday. Some weekend and night duty, on a rota basis, may be required and newly qualified staff are not exempt from this.

Some Physiotherapists have a variety of part-time contracts: for example, they might work part-time at a sports injury clinic and part-time within the NHS or a private hospital. Self-employment is possible, as is working in a private clinic, but the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP) advises 2 years of experience and further training before this move is made. Locum and part-time work are also possible.

SALARY

In the NHS, Physiotherapists earn from £21,692 to £41,000. Salaries in the private sector are generally similar to those in the NHS.

NB These figures are only a guideline: see NHS pay scales, and job advertisements, for up-to-date information

LABOUR MARKET DATA

In February 2016, there were 51,726 Physiotherapists registered with the HCPC. The majority of Physiotherapists in the UK are employed within NHS Acute and Primary Care Trusts.

There has been a shortage of job opportunities for Physiotherapists at junior level, although the Chartered Society of Physiotherapists reports that the situation is improving and that newly qualified Physiotherapists are now in a better position than those who graduated a few years ago. Some graduates have taken up other posts such as Therapy Assistant/ Physiotherapy Assistant, Teaching Assistant (Physiotherapy), Educational Support Worker and Care Assistant. On graduation, it may be necessary to accept a temporary contract or find imaginative ways of starting a career, for example: casual work as a 'bank' Physiotherapist; voluntary work; working abroad.

PROFILE OF CURRENT WORKFORCE (Figures are for the whole healthcare sector)

Full-time (54%); Part-time (31%); Self-employed (15%)

INFORMATION SOURCES

- Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP): <http://www.csp.org.uk/>
- Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC): <http://www.hpc-uk.org/>
- Health Learning and Skills Advice Line: 08000 150850
- National Careers Service: <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/>
- NHS Business Authority: <http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/students>
- NHS Careers: <http://www.nhs-careers.nhs.uk/>
- Prospects: <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/>
- UCAS: <https://www.ucas.com/>

VIDEO CLIPS

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JmsiTVozm9k>
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LdhDIEBQPC0> (this clip focuses upon arthritis)

ASSOCIATED ROLE: SPORTS PHYSIOTHERAPIST

Role: A Sports Physiotherapist works with professional sports people, amateurs and people who are involved in sport as a leisure activity. Their work would include: examining and diagnosing injuries; planning treatment programmes; using treatment methods such as manipulation, massage, heat treatment, electrotherapy and hydrotherapy; keeping a record of patients' treatment and progress. They may specialise in a particular sport, or in a particular aspect of physiotherapy e.g. rehabilitation.

Entry requirements: Following completion of a Physiotherapy degree, and starting work in general physiotherapy, Physiotherapists can begin to specialise in treating sports injuries.

Physiotherapy degrees do not usually include sports work. It is therefore common to combine taking specialist courses with doing unpaid sports-related work alongside more experienced therapists. This enables a Physiotherapist to develop their expertise and confidence in treating sports injuries, until they are skilled enough to work independently.

Many Sports Physiotherapists study for a postgraduate diploma or Masters degree in Sports Physiotherapy, Sports Exercise and Medicine, Sports Injury or Rehabilitation Science. The content of courses varies, so it is important to check with the university or college that the course will meet your needs.

Video clip: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=taXSXxYHX9c>

ASSOCIATED ROLE: SPORTS THERAPIST

Role: Sports therapists give advice to sport and exercise participants on how to train and compete safely, as well as treat injuries and assist with rehabilitation. Their aim is to prevent injuries and to help those who are injured to return to full fitness.

Sports therapy and rehabilitation is concerned with musculoskeletal conditions arising from sporting activity, not with general healthcare. It focuses on understanding and preventing sports injuries and dealing with the effects of physical and emotional trauma due to sports and exercise related injuries. Sports therapists may work in sports injury clinics or may work directly with a sports club or sportsperson, either professional or amateur, or both. Many therapists combine working in this discipline with other sports-related roles. They may have a range of clients and workplaces, rather than being employed by one organisation.

Entry requirements: At present, Sports Therapy is not a statutorily regulated profession. Anyone who has taken a Sports Therapy course (ranging from a weekend course to a three-year degree) can, in theory, call themselves a Sports Therapist and offer treatments and advice. In practice, however, the type and range of treatments that individual therapists are qualified and insured to provide should depend very much on the courses they have undertaken.

The Society of Sports Therapists (SST) (<http://www.society-of-sports-therapists.org/>) continues to work towards Sports Therapists becoming statutorily regulated. This would mean that only practitioners with an approved qualification in Sports Therapy would be eligible to register and call themselves Sports Therapists.

The SST has recommended that the minimum level for registration, under statutory regulation, will be with a degree or postgraduate qualification in Sports Therapy. The University of Worcester (<http://www.worcester.ac.uk/>) offers a BSc (Hons) in Sports Therapy.

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