

Pre-Physical Therapy Advising Guide

You can use the outline feature to jump to sections

Overview of Career

Physical Therapists (PT) are healthcare professionals who diagnose and treat patients of all ages who have medical problems or other health-related conditions that might inhibit their mobility and/or perform functional activities during their daily lives. Treatment plans often focus on improving mobility, relieving pain, reducing the need for surgery, and/or prescription medication, while allowing the patient to be an active member of the recovery plan. In addition, physical therapists work with patients to prevent loss of mobility before it occurs by developing and tailoring fitness and wellness programs for healthier and active lifestyles.

Physical therapists work in a variety of settings including hospitals, private practices, outpatient offices/clinics, home health agencies, schools, sport/fitness facilities, and nursing homes. State licensure is required in each state in which a physical therapist practices.

You can learn more about the career through [Explore Health Careers](#) or the [Occupational Outlook Handbook from the Bureau of Labor Statistics](#).

Major Map

Major maps combine academic-planning with strategic career-planning while developing skills and social networks that will lead to the greatest success in a student's career or professional goals, following graduation.

- ☐ Review the Pre-Physical Therapy (Pre-PT) [Major Map](#).

Academic Requirements & Declaring a Pre-Physical Therapy Minor

Students can pursue any major at VCU while completing the academic prerequisites for admission to physical therapy school. Admissions committees do not give preference for any specific major. It is highly recommended that students take all prerequisite courses at VCU or a 4-year institution as well as completing 2-3 recommended science and math courses each semester within a full course load.

- ☐ To declare a Pre-Physical Therapy minor while at VCU:
 - Complete a minimum of 12 graded credit hours
 - Obtain a minimum cumulative VCU GPA of 3.0
 - Complete BIOL 151 and BIOZ 151 with minimum grades of C
- ☐ Review the [VCU Bulletin](#) for a detailed overview of the academic requirements for each of the pre-professional health minors.
- ☐ After completing the declaration requirements students must complete the [Change of Minor Form](#). You must indicate which pre-professional health minor you wish to declare. Students are strongly encouraged to **declare one**

APPOINTMENT HOURS

Monday - Friday, 8 A.M. - 5 P.M.
Schedule on Handshake.
Log in at careers.vcu.edu.

OFFICE LOCATION

University Student Commons,
1st Floor, Rm. 143

CONTACT INFORMATION

careers.vcu.edu
careers@vcu.edu
(804) 828-1645

pre-professional health minor at a time. Please consult with your Academic Advisor if you have any questions regarding completing the Change of Minor Form.

- ☐ Establish a partnership with your Pre-Professional Health and STEM Career Advisor. [Schedule an appointment now.](#)

Pre-Professional Health Hub

Join the [Pre-Professional Health Hub in Canvas](#) to access resources specifically for pre-professional health students. Joining the PPH Hub as a student will enable you to continue to have access after graduation. Resources available to students who declare a Pre-Professional Health minor include:

- Pre-Professional Health Journal - track your shadowing, volunteering, research, and other opportunities
- GPA Calculator
- Pre-Professional Health Admissions & Application Resources
- Pre-Professional Health Admissions Program Tracker

Application Process and Timeline

Students will want to complete all academic and experiential requirements at least a year before starting a PT program. So if the goal is to begin a PT program in Summer/Fall 2022, then all requirements should be completed by Summer 2021 when the application for that cycle opens.

- ☐ Review the centralized [PT program application process](#) (PTCAS) to gain insight into what to expect when applying.
- ☐ Establish a partnership with your Pre-Professional Health and STEM Career Advisor. [Schedule an appointment now.](#)

Considering & Navigating a Gap Year(s)

"Gap year" reflects the year(s) after graduation before beginning health professions school. The term gap year is often misunderstood or misleading. While it does refer to the gap in time between graduation and matriculation, you should still use the year(s) to engage in experiences and opportunities to strengthen your application. It is important to use this time to explore, grow, and develop yourself as a future healthcare professional.

Students and alumni that are considering taking a gap year or more before applying to professional health programs should view our [Gap Year Planning Resource](#) to learn more about the reasons, advantages, various educational options, and timelines to consider before starting your gap period. The [Gap Year Planning Resource](#) includes links and information about the popular admissions exam tests that professional health programs require or recommend. We encourage each person to do their research on what test preparation resources are a good fit based on cost, time, or any other personal preferences.

Informational Resources

- ☐ Review the American Physical Therapy Association's [website](#).
- ☐ Visit the Explore Health Careers [website](#) to learn about the field.
- ☐ Visit VCU's DPT program [website](#).

APPOINTMENT HOURS

Monday - Friday, 8 A.M. - 5 P.M.
Schedule on Handshake.
Log in at careers.vcu.edu.

OFFICE LOCATION

University Student Commons,
1st Floor, Rm. 143

CONTACT INFORMATION

careers.vcu.edu
careers@vcu.edu
(804) 828-1645

- ☐ Visit the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education [website](#) to begin researching accredited programs.
- ☐ [Vault Guides](#) – A sample of careers in healthcare. Each guide gives, among other valuable information, an overview of the job and entry-level requirements.
- ☐ Explore the career summary for a physical therapist on [O*Net Online](#).
- ☐ Use VCU's online community, [VCU LINK](#), which connects students, alumni, and friends of the university for career advice, industry contacts, and meaningful professional relationships.

Gaining Experiences

- ☐ Review [Explore Health Careers Enrichment Programs](#).
- ☐ Review our [Summer Research Guide](#).
- ☐ Review our [Healthcare Opportunities Guide](#).
- ☐ Review our [Health & Research Opportunities Spreadsheet](#) (updated throughout the year).
- ☐ Review our [Volunteering with Vulnerable Populations in RVA resource](#).
- ☐ Visit our Undergraduate Research Office's [website](#).

Professional Organizations

- ☐ Follow and/ or join the [American Physical Therapy Association and related orgs](#) to build up your knowledge and professional network.
- ☐ Follow and/or join the [Virginia Physical Therapy Association](#).

**Find more professional organizations using the [CareerOneStop Association Finder Tool](#)!*

Student Organizations

The VCU student body offers a variety of organizations designed to help you build your student-based network. We strongly recommend joining both career-interest and personal-interest specific groups using [RamsConnect](#).

- ☐ Join one or more student groups.
 - Utilize the keyword function to narrow down groups. Good ones to start with would be “healthcare” or “physical therapy”.

Appointments

If you are interested in making an appointment with one of our Career Advisors to review your resume or discuss any other career-related topics/questions, [see which advisor advises your industry of interest](#).

We recommend that first appointments with our office are with a career advisor. In addition, we offer several different appointment mediums to better meet your needs. Choose the medium that best fits your needs.

You can [schedule an appointment](#) by logging into Handshake and selecting the time that works best for you.

Events and Career Fairs

To see our upcoming events and career fairs you can check our [website](#) or log into [Handshake](#).

APPOINTMENT HOURS

Monday - Friday, 8 A.M. - 5 P.M.
Schedule on Handshake.
Log in at careers.vcu.edu.

OFFICE LOCATION

University Student Commons,
1st Floor, Rm. 143

CONTACT INFORMATION

careers.vcu.edu
careers@vcu.edu
(804) 828-1645

Questions

If you have any questions, call our front desk at (804) 828-1645, or email us at careers.vcu.edu

Follow Us

@VCUCareers

