

Clinical Education Program Overview



The University of Utah, Department of Physical Therapy and Athletic Training Clinical Education Program provides an environment for integrating the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to provide quality patient care.

The Program focuses on the common process of physical therapy practice involving professional behavior, communication, patient examination, and interventions, graduating entry-level, generalist practitioners.

Clinical Education, as an essential component of the overall curriculum, is comprised of part-time (45 hours) and full-time (11-12 week) clinical experiences. Students also have the opportunity to participate in additional optional part-time clinical experiences.

Clinical Education is scheduled in a variety of practice settings representing the scope of physical therapy practice and occurs under the direct supervision of licensed physical therapists with a minimum of one-year of professional experience.

Each clinical education course is designed to correlate with the student's academic preparation by increasing the number of skills and complexity of problem solving. In the final clinical experience, the student is expected to integrate all knowledge and skills learned in the classroom, laboratory and prior clinical experiences, achieving entry-level performance and behaviors. Students must exhibit a satisfactory level of performance for each clinical education course to progress in the DPT program. Performance expectations for all experiences are explained and distributed to students and clinical sites in advance.

Each student is expected to actively participate in the clinical education process, sharing in the planning and evaluation of learning experiences. The Department is committed to evaluating the quality of all Program activities. The Clinical Education Program incorporates a system of evaluation designed to assess the quality of student performance, clinical instructor performance, and activities of the Directors of Clinical Education.

The clinical instructor faculty is regarded as an integral part of the collegial environment in which our students are educated. The Program is committed to a plan for clinical instructor development which is designed to incorporate a variety of elements leading to professional growth. This exchange of services by the academic and clinical faculty promotes a cooperative attitude among all involved in the preparation of our future professional colleagues in physical therapy. The University of Utah offers at a minimum an annual opportunity for clinical instructors to become APTA Level 1 and Level 2 Credentialed Clinical Instructors. **As a clinical faculty privilege, the course fee for each course is co-sponsored by the Department of Physical Therapy and Athletic Training for clinical site coordinators of clinical education (SCCE) and clinical instructors.**

The physical therapy program is a rigorous three-year program. Students are required to complete a total of four full-time clinical experiences, each eleven (11) to twelve (12) weeks in length. The first full-time clinical experience is completed during Summer Term of the second year, the second, third and final full-time clinical experiences occur in the third year. The standard University schedule is modified during the Fall and Spring terms in order to accommodate the final three full-time clinical experiences. Students are also required to complete one part-time clinical experience during the first academic year. This consists of student clinical participation within a physical therapy clinic 4 hours per week during the Spring Semester first year. Additional optional part-time clinical experiences are available.

Full-time clinical experiences are coordinated with the DCEs while taking student desire, student need for a particular experience, and availability of clinical sites into account. Since the student is being prepared as a "general practitioner of physical therapy," the student fulfills requirements within the following practice settings:

1. Inpatient acute care hospital (or mixed settings with at least a 50% inpatient acute care component)
2. Outpatient general orthopedic/musculoskeletal practice
3. Neurological rehabilitation (pediatric or adult / inpatient or outpatient)

4. Geriatrics or optional* based on student preference and learning needs

*An optional site can only be chosen if the student can account for significant geriatric experiences within other previous or planned full-time experiences.

Students are strongly encouraged to complete at least one of their full-time clinical experiences outside the State of Utah. In some cases, if enough in-state sites to fulfill a student's needs are lacking, then the student may be placed outside the state.

The Clinical Education Program uses the CIET (Clinical Internship Evaluation Tool) to evaluate student clinical performance. The CIET is a valid & reliable measurement tool developed at the University of Pittsburgh and is accepted by our accrediting body (CAPTE).

Both clinical instructor and the student use this tool to evaluate student performance and to collaborate to achieve a successful clinical experience. The student is primarily responsible to ensure timely and appropriate completion of the tool and is responsible to submit all necessary materials to the DCEs in order to receive credit/grade for the course. Overall, the Clinical Education Program provides students a structured clinical mentorship throughout the DPT program, leading to competent entry-level practice.

Students must exhibit a satisfactory level of performance for each clinical experience. Grading expectations for the clinical experiences are explained and distributed to students and clinical instructors in advance (note the Quick Reference and Course Syllabi). At any time during the clinical experience, if safety issues, clinical performance, or professional behavior become a major concern, a student may be immediately withdrawn from the site and the experience.

Clinical Education Sites

Clinical site selection and development is the responsibility of the Directors of Clinical Education. The University of Utah presently has tremendous support for on-going clinical experiences in Utah and throughout the United States. Clinical sites are chosen on the basis of their reputation, their philosophy of clinical education, the type of facility, unique opportunities offered to students, and the clinical expertise or experience of the clinical instructors. Clinical sites provide facility information via the APTA Clinical Site Information Forms, which are available for student review via PT CSIF Web, along with former student site evaluations in Exxat. Clinical sites placements are planned 12-18 months in advance and finalized on an ongoing basis. Selected placement requests are sent to the site SCCE via Exxat or email. Requests for the next calendar year's placements are distributed on March 1 of each year according to the national voluntary mailing date, and are requested back on or before April 30th.

The Clinical Education component is the key integrative aspect for physical therapy practice within the Doctor of Physical Therapy program and the site clinical coordinators/instructors are central to the student's attainment of entry-level skills. Thank you for the extensive time and energy you contribute to our students' development!

Overall Clinical Education Experience Requests & Placement Schedule

January-February	• Students review possible site opportunities
March 1	• Placement requests sent to students' top-choice clinical sites
March-April	• Interviews conducted PRN per clinical sites
On or before April 30	• Confirmations/denials of placements returned from sites
May-January	• Ongoing placement process

Clinical Experiences – Part-Time

Year	Clinical Experiences
Year 1	PHTH 6800 (1) Part-Time Integrated Clinical Experience (ICE) I Required
Year 2	PHTH 6820 (1) Part-Time Integrated Clinical Experience (ICE) II Optional
Year 2	PHTH 6830 (1) Part-Time Integrated Clinical Experience (ICE) III Optional
Year 3	PHTH 6850 (1) Part-Time Integrated Clinical Experience (ICE) IV Optional
Year 3	PHTH 7960 (1-5) Independent Study Optional

Clinical Experiences – Full-Time

Year	Full-Time Clinical Experiences (Required)
Year 2	PHTH 7810 (7) 11 weeks, Typically May-July Full-Time Clinical Experience: I
Year 3	PHTH 7840 (7) 11 weeks, Typically August-October Terminal Full-Time Clinical Experience: II
Year 3	PHTH 7860 (7) 11 weeks, Typically November-January Terminal Full-Time Clinical Experience: III
Year 3	PHTH 7880 (7) 12 weeks, Typically January-April Terminal Full-Time Clinical Experience: IV