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Completing the PTCAS Application:
Quick Guide for Applicants to Physical Therapy Schools

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Resources
- PTCAS Instruction Manual. Your first stop for detailed answers to PTCAS esoterica. Find this and other information about PTCAS at http://www.ptcas.org/home.aspx.
- CPHA Questions Box. We're here to help, and we check our questions box every day: questions@prehealth.wisc.edu.
- PTCAS customer service. Friendly people available to help 9 am to 5 pm EASTERN time at (617) 612-2040.

Organizational Overview

APTA (American Physical Therapy Association) is a professional organization representing more than 90,000 member physical therapists (PTs), physical therapist assistants (PTAs), and students of physical therapy. APTA seeks to improve the health and quality of life of individuals in society by advancing physical therapist practice, education, and research, and by increasing the awareness and understanding of physical therapy's role in the nation's health care system.

PTCAS (Physical Therapy Centralized Application Service) is a service of the APTA and is used by most (196) but not all physical therapy schools. The application collects personal and academic information in one place and forwards this to the list of schools selected by you.

Program requirements vary from school to school. Find out and keep straight what the schools you want to apply to require in addition to your PTCAS application.

Components of the PTCAS

1. **Contact, personal, and background information**
   - Keep contact information (addresses, phone numbers) current throughout your application cycle.
   - In the Background Information section:
     You will be able to discuss your academic record and explain whether you think it reflects your capabilities or not.
     You must report academic misconduct/probation and other conduct violations (dismissal, suspension, felonies, license revocations/suspensions). Check with the Office of the Dean of Students if you're unsure whether you have anything to report from UW.

2. **Institutions attended**
   - Complete this section first. PTCAS needs it to post transcripts to your application.
   - List every school you will have attended or plan to attend by the summer of your application.

3. **Transcripts**
   - Print the PTCAS Transcript Matching Form for each United States and Canadian institution you will have attended or plan to attend by the summer of your application.
   - Arrange for official transcripts from every United States and Canadian institution you attended to be sent to PTCAS along with the request form.
   - If you have received college credit for coursework at a foreign institution as part of a non-UW or other US/Canadian school program (and if the following is required by

schools to which you apply), arrange for a course-by-course foreign transcript evaluation report from World Education Services (WES) to be sent to PTCAS. *These are not study abroad courses.* Allow 4-6 weeks for WES to complete their evaluation report.

4.   Coursework
- Enter <u>all</u> your US (and Canadian) college courses as they appear on your transcripts. *Do not do this section from memory.* Use personal copies of your transcripts to enter course information.
- PTCAS has a coursework entry service ($55 for 1-2 transcripts; $105 for 3 or more), if you want to utilize (and pay for) this.

5.   GRE
- Enter all GRE scores in PTCAS.
- Arrange for the Educational Testing Service (ETS) to send official GRE scores to PTCAS. (PTCAS does not send official score reports to programs.)
- Enter ETS code for each PT program that requires the GRE in PTCAS.

6.   Observations hours
- Enter all paid and volunteer PT observation hours in PTCAS. If you observe a PT in more than one setting, enter each separately.
- Paid PTA experiences go in this section, though paid experience may or may not be accepted by your programs as observation.
- Some programs require verification of your observation hours.

7.   Other sections
- Extracurricular (volunteer, leadership, community activities, student organizations)
- Honors and scholarships
- Work experience (any non-PT paid experiences you have had after high school)
- Professional licenses and certificates

8.   References
- You may enter up to four. See the PTCAS Directory to determine the number and types of evaluators required by each program.
- PTCAS will email evaluators once you enter your reference request, and they will email you when references are received.
- Tell evaluators to look for an email from noreply@ptcas.org with the subject heading "PTCAS Reference Request" and to look for this email in spam / junk folders if it does not come to their inbox. Paper references are not accepted by PTCAS.

9.   Essay
- The essay prompt for the 2015-2016 application cycle was, "APTA's vision for physical therapy is 'Transforming society by optimizing movement to improve the human experience.' How will you embody this as a future physical therapist?" This question may change in future cycles, but you will probably write about something similar if it does.
- Use personal experiences as a springboard to talk about the ways in which you have explored physical therapy and developed skills and other competencies necessary to be a good physical therapist.
- Your statement can be up to 4500 characters (including spaces). The Center for Pre-Health Advising and the UW Writing Center are happy to help!

10.   Supplemental application materials may include:

- Graduate school application
- Official GRE scores
- Original foreign transcripts
- School-specific essay questions
- Results of a physical, immunizations
- Fees sent directly to schools for supplemental materials

11. **Previewing and submitting:** Print a copy of your application and review it before submitting. Save a PDF version.

Application Timing

Do try to submit early, but focus on creating a document that is polished and complete. It's better to submit a stronger application in the middle of July than a sloppy one on the first day!

Planning your application year

Any time b/t summer and spring	Study for and take the GRE
Fall semester the year you apply	Talk to letter writers
Spring semester the year you apply	Talk to letter writers; apply for fee waiver; work on essay
July	Application opens
October-May	Individual school deadlines
December-February	Academic update

What happens after I submit?

- PTCAS will verify that the coursework you entered matches your transcripts, calculate PTCAS GPAs, and send your application to the schools you designate.
- Monitor your application. IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to monitor the status of your application and notify PTCAS if a school has not received something.
- Update your application.
    - New PT experiences (and new PT signatures)
    - New in-progress or planned observation hours
    - New references
    - New schools to which you want to apply
    - New test dates and scores (GRE / TOEFL)
    - Any contact information that changes during your application year
    - Academic update. Do this *once* (and only once) between December and February of your application year, if you take coursework during this year. (Also, if you are accepted to (a) program(s), you must also submit updated official transcripts *directly to schools before you enroll*.)
- Interview. Come to the Center for Pre-Health advising and do a mock interview!