The UCSF/SFSU Admissions Response to COVID-19

UCSF/SFSU Graduate Program in Physical Therapy is committed to continued use of a more holistic admissions process. Many of our admission requirements serve not only to help us better understand our applicants, but also to give our future students the educational and experiential foundation that leads to their success in our program and their career as Physical Therapists.

In this unprecedented time, we understand that our prospective applicants are working through and responding to a multitude of changes in their daily lives and academic journeys. We will periodically revisit our admissions requirements and processes to best respond to these changes and support our applicants. Please find below recent updates to our policies.

July 24, 2020
Updates from our April 17, 2020 announcement are included below. Please read in full.

Optional PTCAS Essay Question

PTCAS is including an optional question to allow applicants to share how the COVID-19 pandemic has specifically impacted their journey toward DPT education, either personally or educationally. We strongly encourage you to respond to this question to help the admissions committee better understand your application and experiences.

Prerequisite Coursework

For prerequisite courses taken in Spring 2020, Summer 2020, and throughout the 2020-21 Academic Year, we will waive the letter grade requirement. We will accept courses that meet the unit and content requirements as listed on our Prerequisite Coursework page, but are graded on a Pass/No Pass or Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory basis. If your institution offers these prerequisite courses for a letter grade, our program strongly encourages that you receive a letter grade for any prerequisite coursework.
Additionally, for these courses we will also waive the requirement that labs are completed in-person. Our program strongly recommends that, when safe, these labs should be taken in-person. However, we understand the constraints of remote learning and the importance of social distancing during this time.

We maintain that applicants should complete all prerequisite courses prior to the October 1 application deadline. Two prerequisites may be in progress or planned after the October 1 deadline, but they must be completed by enrollment in the program. The required prerequisite courses were selected for their ability to prepare students for the academic rigors of graduate study in the UCSF/SFSU PT Program. They are foundational to our DPT curriculum. A student’s performance in these courses contributes to the overall strength of an application.

**GRE Testing**

With testing facilities closing in parts of the country and scheduled test dates being canceled or postponed, we acknowledge the additional difficulty of taking or re-taking the GRE test. We will accept the new at-home GRE testing being offered by ETS in place of in-person exams. More information on the home GRE testing is available on the ETS website [1]. Additionally, this year we will not disqualify an application for missing GRE test scores, however we strongly encourage applicants to take the at-home GRE test if at all possible.

**Transcripts**

PTCAS had made the decision to accept applicant-supplied, unofficial transcripts for the remainder of the 2019-20 application cycle for applicants who are unable to obtain an official transcript from their registrar’s office due to campus closures. Unofficial transcripts will be accepted for purposes of application processing and verification only. Official transcripts will still be required later on for purposes of making final offers of admissions and prior to matriculation into the program. Note that the COVID-19 Transcript Hardships [2] process will no longer be available starting on August 15, 2020. You must send official transcripts for all institutions. See Sending Official Transcripts to PTCAS [3] for more information.

**PT Observation Hours (Volunteer or Paid Experience)**

Since applicants may have difficulty obtaining or completing shadowing experiences as facilities adjust to providing care during this public health crisis, we will still consider applications that do not meet the minimum number of observation hours (100). We recognize that many clinics currently may not provide observation hours, or it may be difficult to obtain a variety of observation experiences. If it is possible for you to complete observation hours, we encourage you to do so as we feel these hours are important for understanding the breadth and depth of the field, and to ensure that you are selecting a profession that is the best fit for you. If you are unable to meet the minimum number of observation hours due to the pandemic, we still encourage you to find creative solutions for connecting with a licensed PT, whether the physical therapist is a practicing clinician or working in management, research, education, association leadership, or another capacity. This type of resourcefulness in connecting with a physical therapist may still contribute to improving your understanding of the profession, ensuring you are selecting a profession that is the best fit for you, in addition to connecting you with a potential contact for a letter of recommendation.
Letters of Recommendation

With our increased flexibility around the PT Observation Hours requirement due to the pandemic, we understand that applicants may have difficulty obtaining a meaningful letter from a licensed PT. We strongly encourage that you include a recommendation letter from a licensed PT among your references. We will not disqualify an applicant who is unable to meet this requirement, but we encourage applicants who may be struggling with this requirement to consider alternative options for connecting with a licensed PT to better understand the profession and provide that assessment. A licensed PT can still provide a letter of recommendation even if the therapist did not observe you in the clinical setting. References from various backgrounds, from an academic professor to a licensed PT, can offer unique perspectives that provide more insight into you as an applicant, a student, and a colleague. This diversity in perspectives is a key component of a holistic admissions process, as student success relies not only in academic performance, but also professionalism, collaboration, and other non-quantitative attributes.

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