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Physiotherapist

You'll help people improve their mobility and regain their independence after an injury or operation, or as a result of ageing or a disability.

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Working life

As a physiotherapist, you'll focus on identifying and maximising movement to improve the health and wellbeing of your patients.

Your role is vital in treating a variety of conditions such as:

- neurological ([stroke](#) ^[4], multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's).
- neuromusculoskeletal (back pain, whiplash associated disorder, sports injuries, arthritis).
- cardiovascular ^[5] (chronic heart disease, rehabilitation after heart attack).
- respiratory ^[6] (asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, cystic fibrosis).

You'll work with people on a daily basis, recommending exercise, carrying out massage, and using high-tech [ultrasound](#) ^[7] equipment or even hydrotherapy pools, depending on your patients' needs.

Once a patient's movement problem has been diagnosed, you'll work with them to determine a treatment plan. You'll also promote good health and advise people on how to avoid injury.

You may work alone, or as part of a team, and you'll have plenty of choice when it comes to places to work. In the NHS, you're needed in nearly every hospital department such as outpatients, women's health, paediatrics and occupational health. Physiotherapy is also provided in the local community, so you could be based in health centres or treat patients in their own homes, day centres, nursing homes or schools.

Real-life story - David Williams

Rotational physiotherapist

A highlight was walking a Covid-19 survivor off the ward, to a guard of honour. He had spent over ten weeks in hospital and could now return home to his family.

Real-life story - David Williams ^[8]

Entry requirements

A university degree is the most popular way to become a physiotherapist. A full-time degree can take three years and a part-time course will take six years. A two-year accelerated Masters course is also an option if you already have a relevant degree. Once you've successfully completed your degree you'll need to register with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC ^[9]) before you can start practising. The other option is to apply for a degree apprenticeship.

Entry requirements for an undergraduate course are typically:

- two or three A levels, including a biological science and/or PE.
- five GCSEs (grades A-C ^[10]), including English language, maths and at least one science.

Or the equivalent qualifications:

Apprenticeships logo

- a BTEC, HND or HNC, including biological science.
- a relevant T level.
- a relevant NVQ.
- a science-based access course.
- equivalent Scottish or Irish qualifications.
- a previous degree or a full practicing qualification in a related area.

Each university sets its own entry requirements, so it's important to check with them directly. In most cases, the results of an interview and other selection processes are taken into account as well as academic qualifications. It's also a good idea to spend some time with a registered physiotherapist to get some firsthand experience of what the role's really like.

When applying for a physiotherapy degree, you'll be asked to show how you think the NHS values apply in your everyday work.

Annual payments

If you're eligible, you'll receive at least £5,000 a year to help fund your studies while at university. Your personal circumstances may mean you could receive more. And the good news? You'll never have to pay it back. Find out more. ^[11]

Degree apprenticeship

A degree apprenticeship with a healthcare provider is another way to become a physiotherapist. Apprenticeships give you the chance to earn a living while gaining your qualification. Your employer and the government will pay the tuition fees, so apprenticeships aren't eligible for student grants.

Must-have skills

Whichever route you take, you'll also need to be a good communicator who can be hands-on and explain conditions and treatments easily to clients. Having a caring and calm nature is equally important. Physiotherapy can be physically and mentally strenuous so you should also be physically fit with strong organisational and planning skills too.

Training and career development

Once you've qualified, you'll have annual Continuing Professional Development (CPD) check-ins, where we'll discuss your career aspirations and plan how we can help you to achieve them, so you're always moving forward. You'll also be encouraged to join the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy where you'll be able to continually update your skills and training.

As a physiotherapist, you could specialise in a particular area such as sports injuries, critical care, or work with the elderly, children or cancer patients. Teaching, research and management roles are other options.

Outside the NHS, you could work with sports coaches or personal trainers, be based in a clinic or open your own practice.

Pay and benefits

Your standard working week will be around 37.5 hours and may include a mix of shifts, such as nights, early starts, evenings and weekends. As a physiotherapist, you'll be paid on the Agenda for Change (AFC) pay system ^[12], typically starting on band 5.

You'll also have access to our generous pension scheme and health service discounts, as well as 27 days of annual leave plus bank holidays.

• Find your course to become a physiotherapist

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Physiotherapy (pre-registration)

Birmingham City University

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- Qualification
MSc
- Study mode
Full-time
- Duration of the course
2 years
- Leading to a career in
Physiotherapy
- Contact details
courseenquiries@bcu.ac.uk ^[14]
01213316295
- Region
West Midlands
- Admissions address
Admissions Office
City South Campus
Seacole Building
Westbourne Road
Birmingham
B15 3TN

Doctorate of physiotherapy

Robert Gordon University

[View course](#) ^[15] Opens in a new window

- Qualification
Doctorate of physiotherapy
- Study mode
Full-time
- Duration of the course
3.5 years
- Leading to a career in
Physiotherapy
- Contact details
researchdegrees@rgu.ac.uk ^[16]
01224 262728
- Region
Scotland
- Admissions address
Garthdee Road
Garthdee
Aberdeen
AB10 7QG

Physiotherapy (pre-registration)

Robert Gordon University

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- Qualification
MSc
- Study mode
Full-time
- Duration of the course
2 years
- Leading to a career in
Physiotherapy
- Contact details
admissions@rgu.ac.uk ^[18]
01224 262728
- Region
Scotland
- Admissions address
Garthdee Road
Garthdee
Aberdeen
AB10 7QG

Physiotherapy (pre-registration)

Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh

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- Qualification
MSc
- Study mode
Full-time
- Duration of the course
2 years
- Leading to a career in
Physiotherapy
- Contact details
admissions@qmu.ac.uk ^[20]
0131 474 0000
- Region
Scotland
- Admissions address
Queen Margaret University Drive
Musselburgh
EH21 6UU

Physiotherapy (pre-registration)

University of Cumbria

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- Qualification
MSc
- Study mode
Full-time
- Duration of the course
2 years
- Leading to a career in
Physiotherapy
- Contact details
enquirycentre@cumbria.ac.uk ^[22]
0333 920 5559
- Region
North West
- Admissions address
Fusehill Street
Carlisle
Cumbria
CA1 2HH
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Register for your guide to becoming a physiotherapist

We'll email you a step-by-step guide to help you on your way to joining us

[Sign up](#) ^[24]

Other roles that may interest you

- [Physiotherapy assistants/support workers](#) ^[25]
- [Occupational therapist](#) ^[26]
- [Osteopath](#) ^[27]

- Occupational therapy support worker [28]

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