



# Physiotherapy

Keeps a body moving

“No two patients are ever the same. At Otago, I began to develop my critical thinking skills which are essential to the work I do now. I treat whoever walks through the clinic door, so my skills are being ramped up more and more each day”

Chantelle Shatford (BPhy)

Physiotherapists are health professionals essential to the rehabilitation and maintenance of optimal physical ability and healthy lifestyles. They treat people of all ages and from all sorts of backgrounds – they might have a painful back, occupational work-related injury, cystic fibrosis, asthma, stroke, or have recently given birth or suffer from osteoarthritis or diabetes. Patients could be recovering from an accident, a sporting injury, or may have undergone heart surgery. Physiotherapists are educated to assess, treat, and prevent a wide range of physical limitations and dysfunction.

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## What is a physiotherapist?

Physiotherapists are educated to assess, treat, prevent and minimise risk for a wide range of physical limitations and bodily dysfunction. They use therapies such as exercises, manual and electrotherapeutic techniques to assist their patients to lead active and productive lives. Applying new technologies, physiotherapists also empower their patients to take a more active role in their own rehabilitation and personal healthcare. This makes physiotherapy a very rewarding career. The best physiotherapists are those with exceptional communication skills and a genuine desire to improve the wellbeing and quality of life of others.

## What will I study?

The Otago Bachelor of Physiotherapy (BPhy) is a prestigious four-year programme. It is internationally renowned for excellence because its graduates are among the best, and because it ensures its clinical teaching and research programmes are continually refined and improved, to keep in step with leading edge physiotherapy practice and informed by the latest research.

The first year comprises the University of Otago Health Sciences First Year (HSFY) programme. This is a prescribed set of papers designed to provide a broad understanding of the scientific principles and communication skills which will underpin your further studies.

In the second year, the programme focuses on the scientific knowledge you will need as a physiotherapist, including anatomy, physiology, pharmacology, and an introduction to physiotherapy science and clinical practice.

The third year builds on your understanding of the human body and introduces pathology and some of the broader issues encountered in practice, including management skills, and engagement with the community. Clinical practice is also a key element of the third year programme.

In the fourth (final) year, you will be based at one of the School's clinical centres in Dunedin, Christchurch, or Wellington. You will spend the

majority of the year undertaking supervised clinical practice around New Zealand. This means you will be able to sample many different fields of physiotherapy practice, and be better prepared to make decisions about your future career. You will also have the opportunity to undertake a research project.

## BPhy (Hons)

Top-achieving students in Year 3 of the programme are invited to undertake an honours programme in the fourth year. This qualification will enable direct entry to a research career.

## Background required

There are no subject requirements for entry into the Health Sciences First Year (HSFY) programme, but you will be better prepared if you have completed chemistry, physics, and biology at Year 13.

HSFY must be your first year of university study. If you are considering tertiary study before enrolling, you are strongly advised to contact the Health Sciences Admissions Office beforehand.

## Admission to the programme

Admission to Physiotherapy is competitive; each year approximately 85 of the 120 domestic places go to students who have completed the HSFY programme at the University of Otago. Selection depends on your grades in the HSFY papers. The minimum grade point average requirement is a B- (65%).

Applications are also considered in the Two or More Years of University Study category, the Graduate category, and the Alternative category (for allied health professionals and mature graduates).

Applicants who are of Māori or Pacific Island (Polynesian) descent may request this be taken into account as part of their application.

Single Programme Preference is available for students wishing to apply only for Physiotherapy. The Admissions Committee will select first from those applicants who are

applying under Single Programme Preference. Thereafter if domestic places are still available, the Committee will select from the group of applicants that have applied to multiple Health Sciences restricted entry programmes.

## How do I apply for admission to Physiotherapy?

Application information for admission into the Health Sciences professional programmes is available online at [otago.ac.nz/healthsciences](http://otago.ac.nz/healthsciences).

## International applications

Persons who do not hold New Zealand citizenship or permanent residency should contact the University's International Office, [otago.ac.nz/international](http://otago.ac.nz/international).

## Career opportunities

Qualified physiotherapists help patients of all ages to lead independent, healthy, and fulfilling lives.

The more we learn about how the human body operates, the greater the opportunities there are for qualified physiotherapists to practice and undertake research – throughout New Zealand and across the globe.

Physiotherapists are valued for their work in hospitals, aged care facilities, and rehabilitation centres and private practices. They are responsible for helping people maintain peak physical condition, as integral members of sports teams, fitness centres, and sports clinics. Others find employment with schools or community care organisations, and many establish their own private practices.

A growing awareness of the importance of keeping workers healthy and productive in today's workplaces has also created employment opportunities within large companies as occupational health and safety professionals and in the areas of health management and policy.

## PROFILE

### Chantelle Shatford BPhy

As a competitive Highland Dancer Chantelle Shatford sustained injuries – and needed physiotherapy well before making it her career. A long-standing passion for helping people meant that study for a Bachelor of Physiotherapy seemed a very natural career pathway.

She could stay close to home at Otago and was able to keep up her sporting connections while enjoying Dunedin's student life.

Chantelle found Health Science (HSFY) a very big year – but she was able to 'stick things out'. The Māori Centre Te Huka Mātauraka helped a lot in that demanding year.

Once through to the School of Physiotherapy she found the style of studies very different. A mix of practical and theory work meant chances to practice techniques learned in classes. Chantelle began to experience the life of a 'real' physiotherapist.

"I learned that memorising a textbook doesn't quite cut it anymore," she says.

"Studying at Otago meant that the Medical Library, Anatomy Museum and Māori Health

Workforce Development Unit were all close by. The Otago community is familiar with students so there are opportunities to interact with a variety of patient groups"

"Since graduating I have been working for Motus Health Network in Canterbury. I love working in private practice and am lucky to see a variety of patients. I am supported by a mentoring programme. The Dancing takes a lot of my spare time but I can fit my training around my work"

She notes "No two patients are the same. At Otago, I began to develop my critical thinking skills which are now so essential. I treat whoever walks through the clinic door, so my skills are improving each day"

Chantelle plans to stay with private practice for now. She may do further study related to public health, and investigation of processes that reduce health discrepancies between ethnic groups.

"It's just a plan for now - physiotherapy is a very lucky profession so who knows where my career will take me?"



For questions about  
Physiotherapy  
[otago.ac.nz/physio](http://otago.ac.nz/physio)

