



2009-2010 REPORT ON POST-PROFESSIONAL DPT (TRANSITION) PROGRAMS

This report from APTA's Department of Academic/Clinical Education Affairs provides annual data and trends on post-professional DPT (Transition) program development and growth, admissions, enrollments, graduates, minimum degree requirements of applicants for admission, number of required courses, application program requirements including US licensure, number of faculty teaching within post-professional DPT programs, and curriculum development and assessment.

Executive Summary

The 2009-2010 Report on Post-professional DPT (Transition) Programs was based on a December 2009 survey of 78 Post-professional DPT programs with an overall response rate of 69.2%. During the past 10 years, post-professional DPT programs have continued to develop however, since 2005, 16 programs reported that they no longer offer their post-professional DPT program.

An upward trend is evident in post-professional DPT program student enrollments from 2003 through 2006-2007 with declining number of students enrolled after 2007. Although the trend for new admissions reported by post-professional DPT programs was at its highest in 2006-2007, in general new admissions have remained fairly stable during the past 7 years. An estimated total 11,018 physical therapists have graduated from post-professional DPT programs as of 2009-2010.

For a majority of programs, the minimum degree required for acceptance into a post-professional DPT program is a bachelor's degree in physical therapy with US PT licensure. Application requirements and documentation for a post-professional DPT program vary with more than 50% of the programs requiring transcripts, US PT license, two or more letters of recommendation, institution application, written goal/purpose statement for the post-professional DPT, and curriculum vitae or resume respectively. Post-professional DPT programs also vary in the number of required courses ranging from 4 to 20 courses (12-46 semester credits) depending upon the earned professional physical therapist degree, highest earned degree, licensure status, prior experience and expertise, and whether the program accepts only its alumni or applicants from all physical therapist programs.

A majority of the programs indicated that they have mechanisms to either transfer applicants' graduate credits into the program and/or reduce the number of required credits earned toward the post-professional DPT degree. On average, 2 courses may be reduced in the post-professional DPT curriculum based on the applicant's expertise, experience, and educational background, recognizing there may be a set of core courses that all learners must complete as a part of the post-professional DPT curriculum.

When developing post-professional DPT curriculum, more than 50% of academic programs reported most frequently using their current professional DPT curriculum, APTA's Transition DPT Competencies, APTA Preferred Curricular Model, APTA documents such as the *Normative Model for Physical Therapist Professional Education* and Descriptions of Specialty Practice, and review of other post-professional DPT program curricula. In addition, the majority of programs indicated the DPT program content is consistent with the philosophy of a post-professional DPT program to address the knowledge gap between when a learner graduated and entered practice and where the current professional DPT graduate enters practice, and that post-professional DPT program content is congruent with professional DPT content.

A mean of 12.0 faculties teach in post-professional DPT programs of which 5.7 are hired specifically as adjunct to provide program instruction. Nearly 60% of the academic programs reported measuring/tracking outcomes of post-professional DPT graduates using varied qualitative and quantitative methods.

APTA Membership and Post-Professional DPT Graduates

Data were extracted from APTA's IMIS database and summary statistics were calculated to identify those members and non-members who reported earning the post-professional DPT degree. To date, 4,050 physical therapists reported earning the post-professional DPT (Transition) degree of which 3,274 (80.8%) are currently APTA members and 776 (19.2%) are former members. The members who report earning the post-professional DPT (Transition) degree represent approximately 26.9% of all of the current and anticipated DPT (transition) graduates through 2010, as reported by post-professional DPT programs in a December 2009 survey (Table 5.).

The summary statistics are considered estimates because 1) APTA has been tracking the number of reported persons with a DPT (transition) degree since January 2007, 2) the system relies on physical therapists to self-report a change in their highest degree status, and 3) the IMIS database includes individuals who are or formerly were APTA members so the nonmember category is estimated by only those individuals who have not reinstated their membership and, as a result, would not include updated demographic information.

Post-Professional DPT Program Survey

The Department of Academic/Clinical Education Affairs performed a survey in December 2009 of all existing post-professional DPT programs. Of seventy-eight programs, 54 responded (Response Rate: 69.2%). An additional four programs (not included in the 71 programs surveyed) are developing post-professional DPT programs but have not begun to accept students, and thus, have not been included in the data below.

Annual Program Development and Discontinuance

Annual program growth appears to have reached its peak in 2002 with 13 new programs. New programs have continued to develop and accept students in post-professional DPT programs annually since 1999, with four new programs accepting students in 2009 (Table 1.). Beginning in 2005, post-professional DPT programs reported discontinuing their programs based either on a declining number of applicants or fulfillment of the program's mission in providing the degree solely for its alumni. To date, 11 programs have been discontinued with an additional 5 programs anticipated through 2010 (Table 2.).

Table 1. Annual Program Development (Number Programs First Accepting Post-Professional DPT Applicants by Year

Year	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Number New Programs	2	7	7	13	9	11	10	5	5	1	4

Table 2. Post-professional DPT Programs Discontinued

Year	2005	2007	2008	2009	2010	2013	2014	2019
Number Programs Discontinued	1	2	5	3	5	1	1	1

Program Admissions, Enrollments, and Graduates

An upward trend is evident in post-professional DPT program student enrollments from 2003 through 2006-2007 with declining number of students enrolled after 2007 (Table 4). The trend in the number of post-professional DPT program graduates has continued to increase from 2003-208-2009 (Table 5.). Although the trend for new admissions reported by post-professional DPT programs was at its highest in 2006-2007, in general new admissions have remained fairly stable during the past 7 years (Table 3.). An estimated total 11,018 physical therapists have graduated from post-professional DPT programs as of 2009-2010. Figure 1 reflects overall comparative trends in program admissions, enrollments, and graduates from before 2003 through 2009-2010. *Please note that data for 2009-2010 are estimated projections.*

The majority (78.4%) of programs reported a 90% or higher retention rate for students successfully completing the post-professional DPT program.

Table 3. Program Admissions (Number of Students Admitted in the Post-Professional DPT Program)

Prior to 2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-1010*	Total
1,579	1,641	1,801	1,690	1,749	1,468	1,552	1,501*	12,981**

Table 4. Students Enrolled Annually (Number of Students Enrolled in the Post-Professional DPT Program)

Prior to 2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010
1,655	2,474	2,892	3,124	3,709	2,682	3,182	3,166*

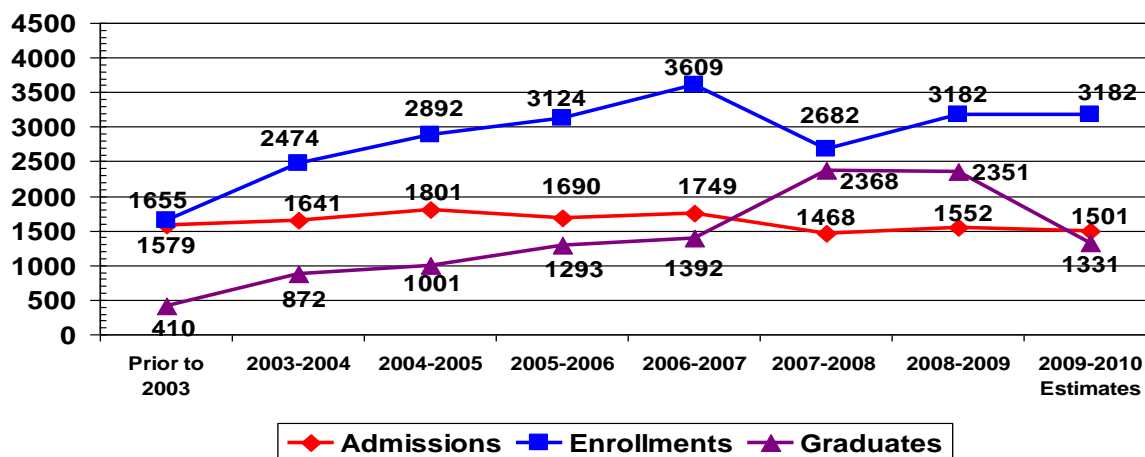
Table 5. Program Graduates (Number of Students Graduating from the Post-Professional DPT Program)

Prior to 2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	Total
410	872	1,001	1,293	1,392	2,368	2,351	1,331*	11,018**

* - Estimated numbers for 2009-2010 academic year.

** - Estimated total numbers

Figure 1. 2009-2010 Program Admissions, Enrollments, and Graduates



Program Costs

Program in-state tuition to complete the post-professional DPT program was reported to range from \$3,200 to \$30,000 with a mean cost of \$12,267. For out-of-state tuition, reported costs ranged from \$4,140 to \$30,000 with a mean cost of \$15,120. For both in-state and out-of-state tuition, costs were reported based on the

“typical” student completing the program, recognizing that in some cases the number of courses required for a learner to complete the program may vary (higher or lower) based on the applicant’s background, prior earned degree(s) and expertise with a concomitant adjustment in tuition. Some programs reported a standard tuition that is a fixed fee to complete the program ranging from \$6,761 to \$25,000 with a mean of \$13,460. This standard fixed fee does not vary based upon the number of courses or credits the learner must complete.

Although a majority of programs reported not offering scholarship or financial aid for learners in the post-professional DPT program, 39.6% of the programs indicated that they offer scholarship or financial aid for learners. Scholarships include graduate assistantships, alumni discount, clinical instructor (CI) tuition assistance for those who serve as a CI for program students, and private and federal loans.

Minimum Degree Requirements for Program Admission

With respect to the minimum entry-level physical therapist degree required for admission into the post-professional DPT program, the majority of program respondents (77.4%) accept the bachelor degree/certificate in physical therapy while 18.9% of programs require either a master’s degree in physical therapy or master’s degree in another area. In the case of a bachelor degree/certificate, several programs include additional requirements such as completion of the APTA Physical Therapist Evaluation Tool (PTET) or additional preparatory courses.

A significant majority of programs (85.2%) require applicants to be US licensed or licensure eligible. Seven programs (13.0%) reported that they will accept physical therapist applicants that are foreign-educated without US licensure.

Application Documentation

Application requirements and documentation reported by programs varied depending upon the highest professional degree earned, whether the applicant was an alumni of the institution to which he/she was applying, graduate school institutional requirements, and if US licensed or not. In order of frequency, more than 50% of programs reported required the following: transcripts – undergraduate, graduate, and professional from a CAPTE accredited physical therapist program (88.9%), US PT license (87%), two or more letters of recommendation (77.8%), institution application (74.1%), written goal/purpose statement for the post-professional DPT (61.1%), and curriculum vitae or resume (55.6%). A minority of programs required an essay or writing sample (31.5%), standardized tests including GRE or TOEFL for foreign-educated (27.8%), clinical practice of 6 months or longer (25.9%), portfolio (20.4%), written letter from the applicant’s current employer (14.8%), course descriptions (7.4%), graduate of the program (7.4%) and the PTET (6.9%).

Additional requirements reported by programs beyond those listed above included summary of prior clinical experience, 12 months of clinical practice, application fee, credentialing report for foreign-educated physical therapists, self-assessment survey, and acceptance of recent MPT graduates prior to licensure with the caveat that they must obtain licensure during the first semester to continue in the program.

Required and Waived Credits and Courses

In compiling the data for this section, programs were asked to report the total number of courses and credits required to complete the post-professional DPT degree program. The intent of this data is to provide a general picture of total courses and credits for these programs. It is important to note that post-professional DPT program credit/course requirements may vary between and within programs based upon the learner’s qualifications, professional physical therapist degree (bachelor or master), highest earned degree, licensure status, post-baccalaureate courses/credits that may transfer into the program to meet total requirements, and learner’s status as a recent alumni of the program. Thus, the total number of reported required courses for the post-professional DPT degree ranged from 4 to 20 courses and from 12 to 46 semester credits. Based on limitations in the electronic survey design, reporting a mean would be misleading, however the mode for the number of required courses and credits was 8 and 30, respectively. In addition, some programs specifically indicated a differential in the number of courses or credits required for professional bachelor’s degree prepared versus professional master’s degree prepared physical therapists.

A majority of the programs (70.4%) indicated that they have mechanisms to either transfer applicants’ graduate credits into the program and/or reduce the number of required credits earned toward the post-professional DPT

degree, depending upon the requirements of the academic institution. Sixteen programs indicated that they do not reduce any courses or credits for students enrolled in their post-professional DPT program. For those academic programs that permit a reduction in courses completed for the post-professional DPT, the most frequently reported reduction was two courses. A reduction in the number of credits is dependent upon the number of required courses in the curriculum to earn the DPT degree, the applicant's expertise, depth and breadth of experience, and prior education, recognizing there may be a set of core courses that all learners must complete as a part of the post-professional DPT program. Likewise, reduction in the number of credits is associated with the earned professional physical therapist degree and if the learner is an alumnus of the physical therapist program.

Curriculum

When developing post-professional DPT curriculum, programs reported most frequently using their current professional DPT curriculum (77.8%), [APTA's Transition DPT Competencies](#) (64.8%), [APTA Preferred Curricular Model](#) (57.4%), APTA documents such as the *Normative Model for Physical Therapist Professional Education* and Descriptions of Specialty Practice (55.6%), and review of other post-professional DPT program curricula (50.0%). To a lesser extent, programs used surveys of alumni and their needs (46.6%), faculty curriculum development advisement (40.7%), advisory board and other group input (33.3%), survey of area physical therapists (22.2%), and a survey of employer's needs (11.1%). Other considerations in developing post-professional DPT curriculum included a gap analysis between the prior MPT versus DPT curricula, Harvard and Stanford Executive Program courses, and other relevant documents.

Programs responded to six items related to post-professional DPT curriculum content with an ability to select more than one response. In order of frequency, 47 (87.0%) of programs indicated the program content is consistent with the philosophy of a post-professional DPT program to address the knowledge gap between when a learner graduated and entered practice and where the current professional DPT graduate enters practice; 42 (77.8%) programs reported that post-professional DPT program content is congruent with their professional DPT content; 24 (44.4%) reported that program content is included related to focused clinical practice (eg, pediatrics, orthopedics, etc); 13 (24.1%) programs include content that learners requested based on a survey of their needs; 8 (14.8%) programs include a clinical practice component; and 3 (5.6%) programs reported that content can be applied toward another academic doctoral degree in their institution (ie, DPTSc, DScPT, PhD, etc).

Program Faculty

The mean number of faculty teaching in the post-professional DPT program is 12.0 (range = 2 – 48; mode = 10). On average, a mean of 5.7 faculty (range = 0 – 38; mode = 0) were hired as adjunct faculty specifically to teach in a post-professional DPT program. Thus, on average, 47.5% of program faculties hired are specifically as adjunct faculty to teach in post-professional DPT programs.

Outcomes of Program Graduates

Nearly 60% of the programs measure/track outcomes of post-professional DPT program graduates. These outcomes include post-professional DPT program alumni surveys (48.1%), graduation rates (37.0%), employer and/or graduate satisfaction (24.1%), degree of achievement of program goals and objectives (22.2%), career position advancement (14.8%), publications (14.8%), presentations (13.0%), additional earned degree or credentials (13.0%), changes in how graduates' practice (ie, use of evidence-based practice) (11.1%), leadership roles (7.4%), changes in salary (7.4%), and other measures (7.4%).

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