

Doctor of Clinical Physiotherapy

1. Background

The School of Physiotherapy proposes to establish a professional doctoral program by coursework to be referred to as Doctor of Clinical Physiotherapy (D Clin Physio) which will be equivalent of 3 years full-time study. Coursework masters degrees have been offered by the School of Physiotherapy since 1996 and research masters and PhD since the early 1990's, so the professional doctorate program is seen as a natural inclusion for the School.

The program is aimed at clinicians who wish to further their theoretical knowledge and clinical skills as well as their proficiency in research. This will be achieved with a combination of clinical, theoretical and research components and by providing the opportunity for candidates to major in their field of specialty: Musculoskeletal, Sports, Neurological, Cardiothoracic and Paediatric Physiotherapy and Women's Health, or broaden their clinical skills within a General Stream.

The proposed doctoral program builds on the Master of Physiotherapy, an existing program of study within the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences and will closely resemble the doctoral programs in Psychology. It should be noted that the coursework masters degree will continue to be offered to physiotherapists who do not wish to pursue more advanced clinical or theoretical study or more advanced research.

Masters degrees in the aforementioned specialty streams are in strong demand at the School of Physiotherapy both from local and international applicants. Local applicants complete the Master of Physiotherapy as a way of improving their clinical skills and also as a means of obtaining titled membership, also referred to as tier 2 status of a 3 tier professional development framework within the profession. In the field of Sports Physiotherapy and Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy, the Masters degree has served as a basis for eligibility for our local graduates to be titled members of the Australian Physiotherapy Association, allowing them to advertise their field of expertise. Titled status is rapidly becoming a requirement among customer organizations. For example, the International Olympic Committee requires physiotherapists working with the Australian Olympic team to be Sports Physiotherapists. The Victorian WorkCover Authority and the Transport Accident Commission use the post-graduate qualification as one of the criteria when appointing physiotherapists as independent assessors. Furthermore some interstate government compensable bodies use the post-graduate qualification as a means of differentiating remuneration within the profession.

To remain competitive both nationally and internationally, the School of Physiotherapy needs to offer a three year full-time Doctor of Clinical Physiotherapy. With the commencement of entry level masters physiotherapy programs in Australian universities, it is timely for the University of Melbourne to award a higher qualification to those physiotherapists who have completed professional studies at this level in order to attract them to pursue their studies at our School.

In addition, the professional doctorate could also have the potential to serve as the basis for eligible physiotherapists to attain tier 3 status (specialist or consultant physiotherapist) of the Australian Physiotherapy Association/College of Physiotherapy.

Australian universities including the University of Sydney, The University of Western Australia and Curtin University of Technology offer professional doctorates in physiotherapy. The School of Physiotherapy at LaTrobe University, our major source of competition for students seeking to take up further study, is currently offering a doctoral program. This however is more closely aligned to a PhD as it entails at least two full time years of research and 1 year coursework.

Several universities in the United States, one of the target countries for recruitment of higher degree students, are offering entry level doctorates in physiotherapy which are equivalent to our undergraduate course. Our post-graduate courses would appear less appealing to these physiotherapists if they are offered as masters degrees. A doctorate in a specialized area of practice is more likely to attract this market.

Australia is considered to be a world leader in physiotherapy education and the School of Physiotherapy at The University of Melbourne is acknowledged as one of the best institutions. It recently gained the seven year accreditation from Australian Council of Physiotherapy Regulating Authorities.(ACOPRA), a first in this country. We believe that we will remain a leader locally and internationally, and competitive in higher education, by offering the Doctor of Clinical Physiotherapy degree.

In keeping with the strategic and operational goals of the University, the School of Physiotherapy continues to attract local and international students to complete their coursework higher degrees at the University. A professional doctorate would attract another strata of students (quality people) as it would give them the option of completing a higher degree with a greater focus on clinical practice.

Professional doctorates are increasingly important in the Health Service area where there is an increased demand to practice evidence based physiotherapy. The program addresses this by providing advanced skills in analysing and synthesizing research into clinical practice. A significant number of clinicians strive to improve their knowledge and clinical skills. This degree is designed to enable them to incorporate some of their studies within their clinical practice. A qualification that is comparable to the PhD yet recognizes the different requirements of the practising clinician.

The proposed course will significantly enhance the contribution of the School of Physiotherapy to the achievement of the strategic and operational goals of the University of Melbourne and its affiliated institutions. In particular, the course will be able to take advantage of the world-class facilities of the School of Physiotherapy, including the Centre for Health, Exercise and Sports Medicine and the Rehabilitation Sciences Research Centre (resource quality). Thus it will reflect both the research expertise (quality research) and the high quality educational programs (quality learning) available. As a result it will serve to make the University increasingly the preferred destination for outstanding students (quality people), both nationally and internationally. This new course recognizes the priority for teaching and research facilities to meet international “best practice” standards and matches infrastructure development to strategic priorities of the University.

Evidence based practice is a requirement in all health disciplines. In line with this area of “best practice” a clinical profession needs underpinning of practice with research as well as expertise of a clinical nature. The professional doctorate would show the community and other stakeholders that graduates of this program have advanced skills and knowledge in their specialized field and are well equipped as competent researchers.

In the United Kingdom, which is well respected in physiotherapy education and practice, some universities have already moved to introduce professional doctorates as have other Australian universities. This is evidence of an increasing demand for higher education within physiotherapy around the world and reinforces the need for us to remain competitive and to benchmark ourselves against other similar universities.

2. Entry Requirements

1. The Selection Committee will evaluate the applicant’s ability to pursue successfully the course using the following criteria –
 - a Bachelor of Physiotherapy (Honours) with a minimum grade average of at least H2B (70%) across the degree which allows the applicant to practice as a physiotherapist in Australia and at least 2 years of full time, documented post graduate clinical experience, including for specialist streams one year in the area of specialization, or equivalent; or
 - a Master of Physiotherapy by coursework with at least a minimum grade average of H2B (70%), or equivalent, (students enrolling through this entry pathway will be granted advanced standing of 100 credit points); or
 - a Master of Physiotherapy by research with at least a minimum grade average of H2B (70%), or equivalent.

2. To proceed to the second year of the degree candidates must achieve a grade average of 70%. Students who do not meet this performance requirement, but otherwise successfully complete the first year of the course, will receive a Masters of Physiotherapy degree.
3. The Selection Committee may conduct interviews and tests and call for referee reports and employer references to elucidate any of the matters referred to above. The Selection Committee may also consider documented evidence that applicants have continued to update knowledge and skills in the discipline.

3. Course/Program Structure

Full time program

Students undertaking the program on a full-time basis must comply with the regulations governing full-time candidature as set out by the School of Graduate Studies. The proposed Doctor of Clinical Physiotherapy is the equivalent of a 3 year full-time course. Over the time, 46% of the time will be devoted to research related topics, 33% to clinical education and 21% to coursework. Table 1 presents a breakdown of credit points accrued per year in the different elements of the doctorate over the 3 years full time.

Table 1

Average credit point per component per year

Year	Coursework	Clinical	Research	TOTAL
1	37.5	50	12.5	100
2	25	50	25	100
3	-	-	100	100
TOTAL	62.5	100	137.5	300

Year 1

The first year of the course is the current Master of Physiotherapy by coursework with eight 12.5 subjects. Some modifications have been made to ensure a more equitable distribution of workload throughout the two semesters than is currently experienced and the proposal for these changes has been submitted concurrently to APC. Students will be required to complete 3 core subjects as well as 4 stream specific subjects relevant to their specialty stream. As well students enrolled in the Sports Physiotherapy or Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy streams will be required to complete the subject 513-XXX Clinical Anatomy whilst all other students may choose from a list of elective subjects for the remainder of their credit points for the year. Students who pass the first year with an average of 70% become eligible to continue their doctoral studies.

Legend:

- * Coursework subject
- ** Clinical subjects
- *** Research Subjects
- 513-XXX – New subjects

All students must complete the following 2 coursework, 1 research core subjects and either 1 elective subject or 513-XXX Clinical Anatomy:

Subj No	Subject title	Type	Semester	Points
***513-660	Graduate Research Methods	Core	1	12.5
*513-680	Professional Issues	Core	1	12.5
*513-661	Applied Physiology	Core	2	12.5

Plus**1 elective subject:**

*513-XXX	Elective - See appendix A.1	Elective	2	12.5
OR		OR		
**513-XXX	Clinical Anatomy	Stream Specific	2	12.5

Students in each specialty stream must complete 4 stream specific subjects:

Subj No	Subject title	Type	Semester	Points
<i>Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy (MP) – subject to approval</i>				
**513-XXX	Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy A	Stream Specific	1	12.5
**513-XXX	Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy B	Stream Specific	2	12.5
**513-XXX	Clinical Musculo Physiotherapy A	Stream Specific	1	12.5
**513-XXX	Clinical Musculo Physiotherapy B	Stream Specific	2	12.5
<i>Sports Physiotherapy (SP) – subject to approval</i>				
**513-XXX	Sports Physiotherapy A	Stream Specific	1	12.5
**513-XXX	Sports Physiotherapy B	Stream Specific	2	12.5
**513-XXX	Clinical Sports Physiotherapy A	Stream Specific	1	12.5
**513-XXX	Clinical Sports Physiotherapy B	Stream Specific	2	12.5
<i>Advanced Practice (AP) – subject to approval</i>				
**513-XXX	Differential Diagnosis and CDM	Stream Specific	1	12.5
**513-XXX	Radiology-Imaging	Stream Specific	1	12.5
**513-XXX	Clinical Pharmacology	Stream Specific	2	12.5
**513-XXX	Advanced Clinical Practice	Stream Specific	2	12.5
<i>Cardiorespiratory Physiotherapy (CP)</i>				
**513-662	Cardiorespiratory Science	Stream Specific	1	12.5
**513-663	Acute Cardiorespiratory Practice	Stream Specific	1	12.5
**513-682	Cardiorespiratory Rehabilitation	Stream Specific	2	12.5
**513-683	Cardiorespiratory Elective	Stream Specific	2	12.5
<i>Women's Health (WH)</i>				
**513-640	Pelvic Floor & Continence Management	Stream Specific	1	12.5
**513-642	Continence in the Community	Stream Specific	1	12.5
**513-642	Exercise for Women	Stream Specific	2	12.5
**513-643	Continence & Women's Health Clinic	Stream Specific	2	12.5
<i>Neurological Physiotherapy (NP)</i>				
**513-664	Anatomy for Neurological Physiotherapy	Stream Specific	1	12.5
**513-665	Advanced Neurological Topics	Stream Specific	1	12.5
**513-684	Neurosciences	Stream Specific	2	12.5
**513-685	Clinical Neurology	Stream Specific	2	12.5
<i>Paediatric Physiotherapy (PP)</i>				
**513-669	Paediatric Physiotherapy Theory	Stream Specific	1	12.5
**513-688	Clinical Paediatric Physiotherapy	Stream Specific	1	12.5
**513-668	Paediatric Biosciences	Stream Specific	2	12.5
**513-689	Advanced Clinical Paediatrics	Stream Specific	2	12.5

In the general stream, students must select 4 stream specific subjects plus 1 elective subject:

Subj No	Subject title	Type	Semester	Points
<i>General Physiotherapy</i>				
**513-640	Pelvic Floor & Continence Management	N/A	1	12.5
**513-642	Continence in the Community	N/A	1	12.5
**513-663	Acute Cardiorespiratory Practice	N/A	1	12.5
**513-662	Cardiorespiratory Science	N/A	1	12.5
**513-669	Paediatric Physiotherapy Theory	N/A	1	12.5

**513-664	Anatomy for Neurological Physiotherapy	N/A	1	12.5
**513-688	Clinical Paediatric Physiotherapy	N/A	1	12.5
**513-XXX	Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy A	N/A	1	12.5
**513-XXX	Sports Physiotherapy A	N/A	1	12.5
**513-XXX	Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy B	N/A	2	12.5
**513-XXX	Sports Physiotherapy B	N/A	2	12.5
**513-XXX	Clinical Anatomy	N/A	2	12.5
**513-XXX	Differential Diagnosis	N/A	1	12.5
**513-XXX	Radiology-Imaging	N/A	1	12.5
**513-XXX	Clinical Pharmacology	N/A	2	12.5
**513-668	Paediatric Biosciences	N/A	2	12.5
**513-684	Neurosciences	N/A	2	12.5
**513-642	Exercise for Women	N/A	2	12.5
**513-682	Cardiorespiratory Rehabilitation	N/A	2	12.5
*513-XXX	Professional Development Elective	N/A	1 and 2	12.5
*513-XXX	Elective - See appendix A	N/A	2	12.5

(EXIT POINT – Master of Physiotherapy – Specialty or General stream)

Year 2

The second year of study provides the opportunity to deepen and broaden clinical knowledge and research skills with selection of elective subjects. Students must enrol in the subjects 513-XXX Thesis Design (12.5 points) and 513-XXX Thesis Proposal (12.5 points) and may choose from a list of clinically based subjects (50 points) and non-clinical subjects (25 points).

Subj No	Subject title	Type	Semester	Points
***513-XXX	Thesis Design	Core	1	12.5
***513-XXX	Thesis Proposal	Core	2	12.5

Plus

Subjects chosen from the Masters and Doctoral Elective Approved Lists 50
Appendix A.1 & A.2

Non Clinical subjects chosen from the Masters Elective Approved List 25
Appendix A.1

TOTAL 100 POINTS

Year 3

In the third year of study, students work independently on an original research project. The written report (thesis) must not exceed 30,000 words.

Subj No	Subject title	Type	Semester	Points
***513-XXX	Thesis	Core	1 & 2	100

TOTAL 100 POINTS

4. Availability of course

The course will be available to CSP, domestic and international students on a full and part time basis, commencing Semester 1, 2006