



Assessing the general physical fitness of First-Year students of Saigon University before participating in Physical Education Course I

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Abstract

To objectively and comprehensively determine the initial physical condition of first-year students before participating in the Physical Education course (I), the research team selected a suitable physical fitness test system. The determination of the tests was carried out according to the standardized regulations in Decision No. 53/2008/QĐ-BGDĐT dated September 18, 2008, of the Minister of Education and Training on physical fitness assessment standards for students. This will serve as a basis for the general physical fitness development of university students, as well as contribute to improving professional qualifications in physical fitness development for students and contributing to physical development as a foundation for comprehensive human development.

Keywords: Physical education, General physical fitness, Students

Introduction

Comprehensive human development, encompassing physical strength, intelligence, moral qualities, and social skills, has long been a key goal in national education strategies. The Party and State of Vietnam have long identified physical education and sports as an important part of comprehensive education. This is consistently expressed in major guiding documents such as Resolution No. 29-NQ/TW dated November 4, 2013, on "Fundamental and comprehensive innovation of education and training," which emphasizes: "Developing physical strength and stature of Vietnamese people is associated with physical education, primary health care and physical education and sports activities inside and outside of school".

This is a major orientation to help form a healthy, dynamic young generation with the capacity to actively contribute to the cause of building and defending the country. Particularly at Saigon University, physical education is organized in accordance with the regulations of the Ministry of Education and Training, with compulsory courses for full-time students, in which Physical Education (I) is a fundamental subject for first-year students.

However, to date, there has been no official research project that has conducted a systematic and scientific survey and assessment of the general physical development level of students after completing the Physical Education (I) course. This is a clear gap in both theory and practice at Saigon University, particularly in the context of significant differences in students' physical conditions resulting from regional diversity and uneven training conditions prior to university entry.

Material and Methods

This study employed a cross-sectional design to assess the baseline physical fitness of first-year students at Saigon University. The sample consisted of 700 first-year full-time students, including 265 male students and 435 female

students, before their participation in the mandatory Physical Education (I) course.

Physical fitness was evaluated using the standardized test battery stipulated in Decision No. 53/2008/QĐ-BGDĐT, issued on September 18, 2008, by the Minister of Education and Training of Vietnam. The assessment included the following tests:

- Dominant grip strength (kg)
- Lying on back, sit-ups (times/30 seconds)
- Standing long jump (cm)
- 30 m high start run (seconds)
- Shuttle run 4 x 10 m (seconds)
- Run at your own pace for 5 minutes (m)

Student performance on each test and their overall physical fitness were classified into three categories based on the national standards: "Good," "Pass," and "Not Pass." Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, presenting frequencies (n) and percentages (%) for each category to determine the general physical condition of the student cohort.

Results

The assessment of 700 first-year students revealed significant limitations in their baseline physical fitness levels when compared to the national standards set by the Ministry of Education and Training.

Overall physical fitness classification

The overall physical condition of the students is summarized in Table 1. For male students (n=265), only 9.43% achieved a "Good" rating, while the majority (70.94%) were rated as "Pass." A concerning 19.62% of male students did not meet the minimum standard ("Not Pass"). Among female students (n=435), the "Good" rating was slightly higher at 14.94%. However, the "Not Pass" rate

was substantially higher, with 28.74% of female students failing to meet the minimum physical fitness criteria.

Table 1: General physical condition of first-year full-time students of Saigon University

Sex	Good n (%)	Pass n (%)	Not Pass n (%)
Male	25 (9.43%)	188 (70.94%)	52 (19.62%)
Female	65 (14.94%)	245 (56.32%)	125 (28.74%)

Performance on specific fitness tests

A detailed analysis of individual test components, presented in Table 2, further highlights specific areas of weakness. Across all twelve tests for both genders, the percentage of

students achieving a "Good" rating was exceptionally low, consistently falling below 3.3%. The most significant weaknesses were observed in tests measuring endurance, strength, and power.

For male students, the 5-minute endurance run had the lowest "Good" rating at just 0.75%, with 6.42% not passing. For female students, the 5-minute run was also a major weakness, with only 1.15% achieving a "Good" rating and 7.36% not meeting the standard. Other areas of concern for both genders included dominant grip strength, abdominal strength (sit-ups), and explosive power (standing long jump), where the "Not Pass" rates were notable and "Good" rates were minimal.

Table 2: Comparison of student physical fitness with national standards (Decision No. 53/2008/QD-BGDDT)

No	Test/Object	Classification	Standard	n	%
Male				n=265	
1	Dominant grip strength (kg)	Good	> 47.5	5	1.89%
		Passed	≥ 41.4	33	12.45%
		Not Passed	< 41.4	4	1.51%
2	Lying on back, sit-ups (times/30 seconds)	Good	> 22	4	1.51%
		Passed	≥ 17	35	13.21%
		Not Passed	<17	6	2.26%
3	Long-Jump on the spot (cm)	Good	> 225	4	1.51%
		Passed	≥ 207	36	13.58%
		Not Passed	<207	10	3.77%
4	30m high start run (seconds)	Good	< 4.70	5	1.89%
		Passed	≤ 5.70	29	10.94%
		Not Passed	<5.70	7	2.64%
5	Shuttle run 4 x 10m (seconds)	Good	< 11.75	5	1.89%
		Passed	≤ 12.40	30	11.32%
		Not Passed	<12.40	8	3.02%
6	Run at your own pace for 5 minutes (m)	Good	> 1060	2	0.75%
		Passed	≥ 950	25	9.43%
		Not Passed	<950	17	6.42%
Female				n=435	
7	Dominant grip strength (kg)	Good	> 31,6	13	2.99%
		Pass	≥ 26.7	47	10.80%
		Not Pass	<26.7	18	4.14%
8	Lying on back, sit-ups (times/30 seconds)	Good	> 19	12	2.76%
		Pass	≥ 16	43	9.89%
		Not Pass	<16	19	4.37%
9	Long-Jump on the spot (cm)	Good	> 169	9	2.07%
		Pass	≥ 153	42	9.66%
		Not Pass	<153	20	4.60%
10	30m high start run (seconds)	Good	< 5.70	12	2.76%
		Pass	≤ 6.70	45	10.34%
		Not Pass	<6.70	18	4.14%
11	Shuttle run 4 x 10m (seconds)	Good	< 12.00	14	3.22%
		Pass	≤ 13.00	48	11.03%
		Not Pass	<13.00	18	4.14%
12	Run at your own pace for 5 minutes (m)	Good	> 940	5	1.15%
		Pass	≥ 870	20	4.60%
		Not Pass	<870	32	7.36%

Discussion

The results of this study indicate a generally low level of physical fitness among first-year students entering Saigon University. The overall analysis shows that while the majority of students meet the minimum "Pass" threshold,

the proportion achieving a "Good" level of fitness is very limited, particularly among male students (9.43%). Furthermore, the rate of students who do not meet the minimum standards is at a worrying level, especially for female students, where nearly one-third (28.74%) were

classified as "Not Pass".

This uneven physical condition suggests a lack of endurance, strength, and basic movement ability in a significant portion of the incoming student body. The detailed breakdown of individual tests confirms this, with endurance (5-minute run), arm strength (grip strength), and abdominal strength (sit-ups) emerging as prominent weaknesses. The fact that fewer than 3% of students achieved a "Good" rating in most individual tests underscores the extent of this physical fitness deficit.

These findings highlight the critical role and urgency of the Physical Education (I) course. Given the baseline physical condition of the students, a curriculum focused on the comprehensive development of these weak physical qualities is essential. Such a program is necessary to help students improve their physical fitness effectively, meet the requirements of university education, and build a foundation for lifelong health and well-being.

Conclusion

The survey of 700 first-year full-time students at Saigon University revealed that their entry-level physical fitness is quite low compared to the assessment standards of the Ministry of Education and Training (Decision 53/2008/QĐ-BGDĐT). The percentage of students achieving the "Good" level was low for both males (9.43%) and females (14.94%). Most students achieved a "Pass" level (70.94% for males, 56.32% for females), but a significant percentage failed to meet the standard, with rates of 19.62% for males and 28.74% for females.

When comparing performance on specific tests, a clear gap exists between the students' actual abilities and the required criteria, especially in tests of arm strength, endurance (5-minute run), abdominal strength, and jumping ability. The percentage of students achieving "Good" in these areas was only 1-3%. This reflects that the general physical foundation of students is weak compared to the standards for Vietnamese youth of the same age.

Based on this analysis, the organization of the Physical Education (I) course is of great importance and urgency. It plays a crucial role in addressing the uneven physical condition of students and helping to improve their overall health, particularly by enhancing weak qualities such as strength, endurance, and mobility.

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