



Texas Board of Physical Therapy Examiners

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The Education Evaluation and Remediation Process

Determining Substantial Equivalency

To be eligible for licensure in Texas, an applicant must meet several criteria established by Texas law. One of those criteria is that the applicant must have graduated from an accredited physical therapy program, or a program *equivalent* to a CAPTE-accredited physical therapy program. To determine whether a program is equivalent, a professional credentialer uses the Coursework Evaluation Tool (CWT) developed by the Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy (FSBPT). The CWT sets a standard for the education of foreign-trained physical therapists and it reflects the minimum general and professional education requirements for substantial equivalence in respect to a US entry-level degree in physical therapy. There are several versions of the CWT, called "retro tools", which correspond to changes in requirements for US PT programs in the last 50 years. The credentialer uses the version of the tool that represents program requirements in effect in the US in the year the applicant graduated from his PT program. Review the CWT at www.fsbpt.org, under Free Resources/ Regulatory Resources/ Credentials Evaluation.

The Education Evaluation Process – How to Begin

The first step in the process is to contact an approved credentialer. Contact information for our credentialers is on the Board's website, www.ptot.texas.gov. Credentialers are independent of the Board, setting their own fees and policies. However, they must all follow the Board's requirements. Before you submit your documents to a credentialer, you should check with the credentialers find out what services they offer, how much those services cost, and how long the evaluation process will take and when they will update you on the status of your evaluation.

The credentialing process takes on average 4 – 6 months. The length of time varies based on how long it takes your school to send the necessary documents, whether the documents it sends include the necessary information, as well as on the credentialer's workload. If the documents are incomplete or do not include the required information, you may be asked to contact the school to request further documentation. This can extend the processing time considerably. We suggest contacting your credentialer by email or in writing once a month for a status update on your evaluation, since it is often difficult to reach them by phone.

Once your evaluation is complete, the credentialer will send both you and the Board a copy. If there are deficiencies listed in the evaluation your next step is to research your options for making up those courses or content areas. You may have deficiencies in General Education, which is at the undergraduate level, or in Professional Education, which is your physical therapy coursework.

Deficiencies in General Education

Deficiencies in this area can be made up by taking undergraduate courses at any accredited community college or university. You may also take College Level Examination Program (CLEP) tests to prove that you have the knowledge the course is supposed to teach. (Texas sets no limits on the number of CLEP tests you may take.) BEFORE you take any course or test to make up a deficiency in General Education, contact the credentialer to make sure they will accept it.

These courses may be:

- i in a live classroom setting or online
- i in the US or another country
- i at the undergraduate level ONLY

Deficiencies in Professional Education

All deficiencies in Professional Education must be made up by taking physical therapy courses at the professional level. (The one exception to this is Medical Terminology, which may be taken at any post-secondary level, and can

be part of any health profession curriculum.) BEFORE you take any course or test to make up a deficiency in Professional Education, you must contact the credentialer to make sure they will accept it.

These courses may be:

- i in a live classroom setting or online
- i in the US or another country
- i at the entry-level or post-professional level, to include courses at transitional DPT programs

Professional Education Areas

There are four areas of professional education: Basic Health Science, Medical and Clinical Science, Clinical Education, and Related Professional Coursework. All courses taken to meet requirements in these areas, with the exception of Medical Terminology, must be physical therapy courses. No other professional courses will be accepted.

Within the Clinical Science coursework, there is a further breakdown into content areas for Examination/Evaluation and Intervention. The US physical therapy education includes specific tests and measures and interventions in the Clinical Sciences. Satisfactory evidence of these must be found in your official course curriculum or syllabus. If satisfactory evidence is not found, you must take courses that include the missing content area(s).

Finding the Professional Courses and Content you Need

The first step in making up professional education deficiencies is to locate a program that will allow you to take courses without being enrolled for a degree, and determining whether it offers the coursework or content you need. Your credentialer may be able to help you, but if they cannot, you are responsible for doing the research yourself. The Board is not staffed or trained to assist you in locating courses.

Start by contacting nearby PT programs, or go online for complete lists of onsite and online programs. (The lists of entry-level PT programs, post-professional PT programs, and transitional DPT programs are available at the American PT Association's website. There are links to these lists on the Board's PT Application page.) Discussing your missing courses or content with a faculty member knowledgeable about the curriculum content is a good idea. Often, that is the only person who will know which courses in that program include the content you are lacking. You may have to take more than one class to get the content you need, but all of the courses and content required by the Board are taught in all PT programs today.

There is an alternative to doing the research yourself. The Foreign Credentialing Commission on Physical Therapy (FCCPT) offers a fee-based service to help applicants find the courses and content they need. The FCCPT is an approved credentialer. Even if they have not done your evaluation, they can help you find a PT program that meets your needs. If you are interested in assistance in this process, contact the FCCPT by emailing them at help@fccpt.org for information about the Planned Learning and Assistance Network (PLAN).

Documentation

The credentialer will tell you which documents you must request from your university. Several rules apply to the documents you submit:

- i No documents should be submitted directly to the Board.
- i All documents must be original and be sent directly to the credentialer by the university or college.
- i No documents may be faxed or emailed.
- i All documents must be official documents, published by the university or college.
- i No additional documents from professors or instructors will be considered in the evaluation.

Disagreement with the Credentialer

If you believe the credentialer has made a mistake, contact them to make sure you have submitted all of the materials they need to accurately evaluate your transcripts. If you are unable to resolve your disagreement, you may contact the Board. The Board does not make exceptions to the requirements, but it may review materials on appeal once all documents have been reviewed by the credentialer.