

**Changes to the Interpretive Guidelines for the FSBPT Coursework Tool:  
Eliminating the distinction between General Education and Professional Education**

In March, the Board of Directors passed a motion to modify the Interpretive Guidelines for the FSBPT Coursework Tool to eliminate the distinction between General Education and Professional Education. The Coursework Tool (CWT) is accepted by all member boards to evaluate whether a foreign educated PT or PTA's education is substantially equivalent to a US PT or PTA education. This change will be implemented November 1, 2014.

The Board of Directors did not approve this change lightly. They have been discussing the issue for several years and it was a topic at the 2012 and 2013 Leadership Issues Forums. In addition, it came forward as a formal recommendation from FSBPT's Foreign Educated Standards Committee.

In order to understand the rationale for this decision, it is important to understand why the distinction between General Education and Professional Education was developed in the first place.

The term General Education was created by FSBPT during the development of the CWT to attempt to incorporate the concept of prerequisites and to represent the entry requirements into a US physical therapy program.

However, within US education and within the criteria developed by the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE), there is no such term as general education. CAPTE does not have a requirement for prerequisites, but they do make recommendations. The specific courses required within General Education in the CWT are based on these recommendations as well as an analysis of actual prerequisites within programs.

The current CWT requires 150 total credits which is comparable to what is needed for a post-baccalaureate degree. Within this 150 total credits, 90 credits must be Professional Education and 60 credits must be General Education. There are a number of specific courses required in each category.

This does not to eliminate the required courses within General Education. What the motion does, however, is eliminate the artificial distinction between Professional Education and General Education.

This will address the issue with otherwise-qualified individuals who were being required to take additional general courses at the baccalaureate level in order to be found substantially equivalent. In many international PT programs these general courses are embedded into the PT professional courses, not completed ahead of entry. The current model would not allow the evaluator to give credit as a general course since it was taken as part of their professional coursework. In addition, to ask an applicant to complete a prerequisite after completing professional curriculum seems counterintuitive, and sets up an unreasonable barrier to licensure.

Jurisdictions that have specific language in rules or regulations regarding general education requirements may want to revise them in anticipation of this change. They should also notify credentialing agencies of their individual requirements so that final reports can be customized to meet those requirements.