



Changes Are Coming for NPTE Eligibility

This article is based on a presentation by Lorin Mueller, PhD, and Susan Layton at the 2014 FSBPT Annual Meeting.

Some changes are coming in 2016 and 2017 in the eligibility requirements to take the National Physical Therapy Exam (NPTE). This is not licensure eligibility. The eligibility is to sit for the NPTE only, although passing the exam is one part of the criteria for licensure eligibility.

At the 2011 NPTE Summit, a discussion arose about candidates taking the exam who had no chance of passing. As a result, eligibility requirements to enhance security and public protection were reviewed. The following year a background review with benchmarking and passing statistics was undertaken. Other healthcare licensure and certification programs were compared to NPTE's requirements so that NPTE's eligibility requirements would not be the most or least stringent.

In 2013, an eligibility panel made recommendations and Leadership Issues Forum (LIF) supported the new requirements. The 2013 Federation delegate assembly voted to enact the requirements.

The four requirements are to:

- Establish a lifetime limit of six attempts on the NPTE.
- Establish a lifetime limit of two very low scores on the NPTE.
- Make the current English proficiency recommendations a requirement, based on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) by meeting the minimum on sub-scale scores of all sections in one sitting.
- Require the most current Coursework Tool (CWT) for non-CAPTE graduates. There is a disparity between U.S. and non-U.S. pass rates and a variety of requirements across jurisdictions that allow candidates who are less qualified to seek the jurisdiction that will evaluate them most favorably, which then allows them to practice. The CWT is the only tool that has been validated.

In January 2016, the six-time lifetime limit plus two-time very low score limit will go into effect. In January 2017, the English language proficiency (TOEFL) and Coursework Tool (CWT) equivalency requirements will go into effect. An appeals process will be available. Check for more information at fsbpt.org/eligibility.

Notification

A full year of notice to candidates, licensing boards and schools has been given. Anyone who has been unsuccessful in testing in the past three years has 2015 to take the test three more times, because as of January 2016, the lifetime limit of six attempts will go into effect.

The first time someone receives a low score, the candidate will receive notification that explains significant remediation will be needed before another attempt is made. The jurisdiction will receive a list of its candidates, their status, and the type of letter each received.

Looking at the Current Process

The current process begins with FSBPT registration, which includes age, being 90 days from graduation, and other candidate data. There is a limit of three attempts of the past four available attempts, no open registration, no security flag, and no previous passing score. Jurisdictions may permit someone with a passing score to re-take the test, but they must notify FSBPT first.

The next step is jurisdiction approval – that requires checking the school, graduation date, Social Security number, and date of birth. That is followed by the candidate test and the FSBPT reviewing the test data.

Options for Jurisdictions in 2017

In 2017, jurisdictions can request that FSBPT be responsible for all eligibility requirements prior to testing. The jurisdiction would only handle the licensure process. This streamlines the process for jurisdictions. If a jurisdiction chooses to use this method, then candidates who want accommodations on the test would request them through the Federation only.

Schools Will Become More Involved

Schools also will verify the student's CAPTE graduation date online beginning in 2017. Schools will have to be active in this process.



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