

Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy

Credentials Evaluation Standards

Revised and approved by the FSBPT Board of Directors 2015-10

Although the licensing of physical therapists (and physical therapist assistants) in the US is a right and responsibility of each jurisdiction, foreign educated individuals must undergo an educational credentials assessment for substantial equivalency to the first professional degree in the US. The Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy (FSBPT) is committed to protect the public and to provide leadership within the field and practice of physical therapy.

The Federation has developed standards that represent “best practices” in evaluation services. These standards were developed with input from the physical therapy credentialing agencies that are licensed to use FSBPT’s Coursework Tool (CWT).

A questionnaire has been developed based on this document and each credentialing agency has been offered the chance to provide answers and documentation to the Federation based on the questionnaire. It is intended that this document and the questionnaire be used by the jurisdictions as a tool to help verify the quality of credential evaluation services.

The questionnaire responses are maintained by the Federation and are available to FSBPT member jurisdictions by requesting (in writing or via email) copies of agency responses to professionalstandards@fsbpt.org.

Policies and Procedures

Standard 1.

There are written policies and procedures to maintain consistency in credentials review procedures, guidelines and outcomes.

- 1.1. Procedures and interpretive guidelines should be developed and used.
- 1.2. Past evaluation decisions can serve as guidelines for current evaluation processes. If substantial modifications of practice in reviewing credentials have occurred, such changes of practice should be justified and documented.

Standard 2.

Mechanisms are in place for ongoing review of procedures and processes to assure quality.

- 2.1. There should be a documented, systematic plan developed to assure quality.
- 2.2. Reliability studies should be conducted on a periodic basis.
- 2.3. There should be mechanisms in place to obtain feedback from customers and stakeholders.
- 2.4. Outcome measures related to consistency and accuracy should be established and monitored.

Standard 3.

Parameters have been established for credit determination that accurately reflects the US education system , which include methods for conversion of credits from other systems into the US system.

- 3.1. Formulas for conversion should accurately reflect the credit load of a US student in a comparable program of study such that foreign contact hours or credits are converted to US credits.

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3.2. Formulas for conversion should be used consistently.

Resources

Standard 4.

Credentials evaluations services should have access to pertinent information sources on current and historical foreign and US educational systems, programs, and earned credentials.

- 4.1. A resource library should be maintained on educational systems and programs that include current as well as relevant historical information.
- 4.2. A process for obtaining updates on changes and revisions to changes in national educational systems should be established.
- 4.3. Printed materials, online resources and databases pertaining to legitimacy of institutions, curricula, ongoing country reforms (or lack thereof) should be part of the available resources.
- 4.4. A list of references used in the report should be available on request.

The Evaluation Process

Standard 5.

The mapping tools developed and used to identify the contents of US education should be based on education in the US.

- 5.1. Mapping tools should be based on CAPTE Evaluation Criteria.
- 5.2. Mapping tools should be valid and reliable.
- 5.3. Mapping tools should have clear interpretive guidelines.

Standard 6.

The evaluation process should include an application that provides complete and standardized information and specifies the required documents.

- 6.1. Applicant must submit documentation of post-secondary school studies completed in their home country. The secondary school leaving document (certifying completion of studies and eligibility for university admission) for university may be needed to substantiate authenticity.
- 6.2. Higher education / post-secondary studies: all US and non-US education completed after secondary school must be listed and submitted from the original source for review, including non-physical therapy study.
- 6.3. Applications should be thorough and complete, requiring enough information to do a thorough review and determine with reasonable certainty that the documents are valid and the applicant is the person represented by the documents.

Standard 7.

Mechanisms should be in place to ensure the existence and authenticity of foreign academic programs.

- 7.1. Verify the existence, recognition and status of the institution/academic program awarding the credential.

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- 7.2. Verify that the institution offers the curriculum specified on the documents.
- 7.3. Determine whether the credentials submitted (course descriptions, syllabi, transcripts etc.) provide enough information to compare the program to a US accredited program.
- 7.4. Determine the entry requirements into the program under review, and that the program is at least post secondary.

Standard 8.

Documents must be received in the official language in which the documents were issued by the institution.

- 8.1. Original language credentials must be accompanied by official English translation unless the original documents are provided in English by the issuing institution.
- 8.2. The translation should be evaluated for accuracy. Key words and numbers, such as dates, grades and names should be checked to insure that the translation is accurate.

Standard 9.

Documents received should be original, complete and include relevant information.

- 9.1. Original documents or documents certified by educational authorities of the country should be received by the credentialing agency directly from issuing institution.
- 9.2. Document(s) must reflect the exact title of original language document, accompanied by a translation into English by a professional translator.
- 9.3. Credentials must clearly indicate progress in a program and completion, if applicable.
- 9.4. Documents must be examined for evidence of tampering.
- 9.5. A comparison should be made of the applicant's biographical and educational data with the credential to assure that the credential in question actually belongs to the applicant.
- 9.6. In case there is a suspicion of falsification, the credential must be verified by the issuing institution.

Standard 10.

Mechanisms should be in place to ensure the authenticity of foreign academic records and to identify fraudulent or altered documents.

- 10.1. Academic documents should be deemed acceptable only if they are issued by legitimate governmental or institutional authorities. Key points to be noted in the review process are:
 - 10.1.1. A credential should be issued by an institution, an examination board or other legal entity which is approved to issue academic documents.
 - 10.1.2. An official transcript must be received directly from an institution.
 - 10.1.3. Verification of academic credentials by embassies, consulates, public notaries or other non-academic officials should not be deemed acceptable.
- 10.2. Adequate procedures should be in place to identify fraudulent documents.
- 10.3. Fraudulent or altered credentials should constitute cause for refusal to issue an evaluation report.
- 10.4. If fraud has been detected and confirmed by the issuing source, credentials evaluation agencies should release this information to other legitimate parties as warranted.

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Administration

Standard 11.

Evaluators of foreign academic documents should be qualified to collect data, review credentials and make decisions based on pertinent credentials and informed source materials.

- 11.1. Evaluators have a thorough knowledge of the educational systems outside the US, their legitimacy, structure and ongoing amendments.
- 11.2. Evaluators have a thorough knowledge of the educational system of the US, its legitimacy, structure and ongoing amendments.
- 11.3. Evaluators have a thorough knowledge of assessing the comparability of education across systems worldwide and are skilled in providing placement, transfer credits, and other recommendations according to established standards in the field of credentials evaluation.
- 11.4. Training of foreign evaluators must evolve under oversight and supervision of an experienced evaluation professional.
- 11.5. Credential evaluators should have opportunities for professional development and ongoing training in global education systems, the components of physical therapy education and training in the US, use of credential evaluation tools and performing credential evaluations.

Standard 12.

Administrative services exist to support customers, including the maintenance of files.

- 12.1. Processes should be in place for candidates to be able to challenge the review outcome.
- 12.2. Once all required documents have been received, the evaluation should be completed within a reasonable timeframe.
- 12.3. Procedures should maintain the privacy of the applicant and personal information should not be shared with others without the express consent of the applicant. However, per Standard 10.4, if fraud has been detected and confirmed by issuing source, credentials evaluation agencies may release this information to other legitimate parties as warranted.
- 12.4. There will be written retention policies for applicant reports and supporting documents.