



# **Coursework Tool For Foreign Educated Physical Therapist Assistants**

## **PTA Tool 2007**

**Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy**  
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## INTRODUCTION

The Coursework Tool for Foreign Educated Physical Therapist Assistants (PTA Tool 2007) was developed by the Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy (FSBPT) in response to the 2008 published regulation number CMS-1385 by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) for Medicare reimbursement. This CMS regulation requires a foreign educated physical therapist assistant to show certification of education which is substantially equivalent to an entry-level physical therapist assistant's education in the United States. PTA Tool 2007 reflects the minimum foundational studies and applied science and technical education for substantial equivalence with respect to a US first degree for a physical therapist assistant. Coursework Tools should not be interpreted as the sole determinant of an individual's educational preparation or competence to work as a physical therapist assistant. CWT PTA 2007 is validated against the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education's (CAPTE) *Evaluative Criteria for Accreditation of Education Programs for the Preparation of Physical Therapist Assistants* adopted April 2006 and effective July 1, 2007.

PTA Tool 2007 may be used by credentialing organizations and educational programs. In addition, it may be used as a self-evaluation method to guide foreign educated physical therapist assistants in comparing their education to US standards.

## THE USE OF THE COURSEWORK TOOL

The PTA Tool 2007 is to be used to assess those candidates who are applying for licensure or certification as PTAs in a US jurisdiction, or who are working in a setting providing services to clients who qualify for CMS funding. Finding substantial equivalency alone does not qualify an individual to work as a PTA. The finding of equivalency, however, may be a determinant in allowing a candidate to sit for the PTA National Physical Therapy Examination.

The role of the physical therapist assistant has historically been identified and labeled in the US as one of a paraprofessional who is uniquely educated to assist the physical therapist in the provision of physical therapy services. PTA education in the US is at the post-secondary level of education, and results in an Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S.), Associate of Science (A.S.) or an Associate of Arts (A.A.) degree. Programs are generally two years in length. The emphasis of PTA education is in the area of intervention.

US PTA curriculum consists of Foundational Studies and Applied Sciences and Technical Education. Foundational Studies include 15 semester credits in humanities, natural sciences, social/behavioral sciences and mathematics/logic. The Applied Sciences and Technical Education include a minimum of 49 semester credits to address basic health science, medical science, data collection techniques, therapeutic interventions, supervised clinical work and related technical coursework.

At the time of this publication, FSBPT has identified at least seven foreign PTA programs, located primarily in Canada and Europe.

# OVERVIEW

## Summary

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The applicant must meet the requirement of not less than sixty-four semester credit hours; 15 in foundational studies and 49 in applied science and technical education. The minimum coursework requirements, in and of themselves, do not necessarily satisfy the requirements of the entry-level physical therapist assistant degree. The applicant must have completed sufficient credits to satisfy the requirement for at least two years of post-secondary education. The applicant must also meet any jurisdiction-specific requirements.

## Foundational Studies

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Fifteen semester credits is the minimum number required in foundational studies. Foundational studies include the areas of English composition, physical/natural & biological science, social/ behavioral science, and mathematics/logic. A minimum of a one-semester course must be successfully completed in each area of foundational studies unless otherwise noted. The physical/natural/biological science content may be imbedded in the technical coursework.

Some jurisdictions may require more than 15 semester credits. The applicant must meet the specific requirements in the jurisdiction where they are seeking licensure.

### 1. Humanities

- |  |               |
|--|---------------|
| a. English                                       | e. Literature |
| b. English composition*                          | f. Art        |
| c. Speech or oral communication                  | g. Music      |
| d. Foreign language (other than native language) |               |

\*required

### 2. Physical/Natural/Biological Sciences

- |               |                 |
|---------------|-----------------|
| a. Chemistry  | f. Physics      |
| b. Biology    | g. Kinesiology  |
| c. Anatomy    | h. Neuroscience |
| d. Physiology | i. Genetics     |
| e. Zoology    | j. Astronomy    |

### 3. Social/Behavioral Science

- |                 |                      |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| a. History      | f. Economics         |
| b. Geography    | g. Political science |
| c. Sociology    | h. Religion          |
| d. Psychology   | i. Philosophy        |
| e. Anthropology | j. Ethics            |

### 4. Mathematics/Logic

- |                 |                 |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| a. Statistics   | d. Calculus     |
| b. Algebra      | e. Trigonometry |
| c. Pre-calculus | f. Geometry     |

## Applied Science & Technical Education

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Forty-nine semester credits shall be the minimum required in applied science and technical education.

### 1. Basic Health Science

Coursework is required in each topic listed below.

- a. Human anatomy (specific to physical therapy)
- b. Human physiology (specific to physical therapy)
- c. Kinesiology or functional anatomy
- d. Pathology

### 2. Medical and Clinical Science

- a. Medical science pertinent to physical therapy. This must include but not be limited to:
  1. Neurology
  2. Orthopedics
  3. Cardiopulmonary
- b. Physical therapist assistant coursework must include but not be limited to:

<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Integumentary System<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Data Collection</li></ol></li><li>2. Musculoskeletal System<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Data Collection</li></ol></li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>3. Neuromuscular System<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Data Collection</li></ol></li><li>4. Cardiopulmonary System<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Data Collection</li></ol></li></ol>
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- c. Physical therapist assistant coursework must include but is not limited to:
  1. Integumentary Interventions
  2. Musculoskeletal Interventions
  3. Neuromuscular Interventions
  4. Cardiopulmonary Interventions
  5. Physical Agents/Electrotherapy
  6. First Aid/Emergency Care

### 3. Clinical Education

The clinical education component includes organized and sequential experiences coordinated with the didactic component of the curriculum, which may include integrated and full-time experiences. The applicant must have full-time clinical experiences with a minimum of two clinical areas of work, for no less than 520 hours total, which are supervised by a clinical supervisor who is a physical therapist or physical therapist assistant. The maximum number of full-time clinical education credits is 15.

### 4. Related Technical Coursework

Content is required in the following seven areas:

- a. Role of the PTA
- b. Professional Ethics, Behaviors & Issues
- c. Administration
- d. Educational Techniques
- e. Communication (related to client/patient care)
- f. Medical Legal Issues and Healthcare Delivery
- g. Psychosocial Aspects in Physical Therapy Work

## PTA EVALUATION CHECKLIST

### Foundational Studies

Fifteen semester credits are required in this area.

A. <b>HUMANITIES:</b> One course minimum.	Credit	Transcript Reference	Comments
1. English			
2. English Composition*			
3. Speech or Oral Communication			
4. Foreign Language (other than native language)			
5. Literature			
6. Art			
7. Music			

\* Required

B. <b>NATURAL SCIENCE: Physical Sciences &amp; Biological Sciences</b> This content area may be imbedded in Applied Sciences.	Credit	Transcript Reference	Comments
1. Physics			
2. Biology			
3. Anatomy			
4. Physiology			

C. <b>SOCIAL /BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE:</b> At least one course - from any area.	Credit	Transcript Reference	Comments
A. History			
B. Sociology			
C. Economics			
D. Religion			
E. Political Science			
F. Psychology			
G. Philosophy			
H. Ethics			

<b>D. MATHEMATICS/LOGIC:</b> At least one course - from any area.	Credit	Transcript Reference	Comments
1. Statistics			
2. Algebra			
3. Pre-Calculus			
4. Calculus			
5. Trigonometry			
6. Geometry			
7. General Mathematics			

**SUB-TOTAL FOUNDATIONAL STUDIES CREDITS:** \_\_\_\_\_ (15 minimum)

### Applied Sciences & Technical Education

Forty-nine semester credits are required in this area.

<b>A. BASIC HEALTH SCIENCE:</b> Coursework is required in each area (1-4).	Credit	Transcript Reference	Comments
1. Human Anatomy			
2. Human Physiology			
3. Kinesiology or Functional Anatomy			
4. Pathology			

<b>B. MEDICAL SCIENCE:</b> <b>General Medical Knowledge</b> Coursework must include but is not limited to 1-3.	Credit	Transcript Reference	Comments
1. Neurology			
2. Orthopedics			
3. Cardiopulmonary			

<b>C. CLINICAL SCIENCE:</b> <b>Data Collection</b> PTA coursework must include but is not limited to areas 1-4.	Credit	Transcript Reference	Comments
1. Integumentary System Data Collection			
2. Musculoskeletal System Data Collection			



3. Neuromuscular System Data Collection			
4. Cardiopulmonary System Data Collection			

### Data Collection Skills Content Area Summary

Within the credit hours assigned above, indicate content area which you found evidence for items 1 – 14.

Data collection skills content areas include but are not limited to the following:	Present = √ Absent = Ø	Transcript Reference
1. Aerobic capacity		
2. Anthropometric characteristics		
3. Arousal, mentation, and cognition		
4. Assistive and adaptive devices		
5. Gait, assisted locomotion, and balance		
6. Integumentary integrity		
7. Joint integrity and mobility		
8. Muscle performance (including strength, power, and endurance)		
9. Neuromotor development		
10. Pain		
11. Posture		
12. Range of motion		
13. Self-care and home management (including activities of daily living and instrumental activities of daily living)		
14. Ventilation, respiration, and circulation		

Adapted from the *Evaluative Criteria for Accreditation of Education Programs for the Preparation of Physical Therapist Assistants*, Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education; 2007; Appendix A1-31.

<b>D. CLINICAL SCIENCE: INTERVENTIONS</b> PTA coursework must include but is not limited to areas 1 – 6.	Credit	Transcript Reference	Comments
1. Integumentary Interventions			
2. Musculoskeletal Interventions			
3. Neuromuscular Interventions			
4. Cardiopulmonary Interventions			
5. Physical Agents/Electro			
6. First Aid/ Emergency Care			

## Intervention Content Area Summary

Within the credit hours assigned above, indicate the content area for which you found evidence for items 1-5.

<b>Intervention content areas include, but are not limited to, the following:</b>	Present = √ Absent = Ø	Transcript Reference
<b>1. Wound Management</b>		
A. Application and removal of dressing agents		
B. Identification of precautions for dressing removal		
<b>2. Functional Training</b>		
A. Activities of Daily Living		
B. Assistive /Adaptive Devices		
C. Body Mechanics		
D. Developmental Activities		
E. Gait and Locomotion Training		
F. Prosthetics and Orthotics		
G. Wheelchair Management Skills		
H. Infection Control Procedures		
I. Isolation Techniques		
J. Sterile Technique		
<b>3. Patient-related instruction</b>		
<b>4. Physical agents and mechanical modalities</b>		
A. Athermal Agents		
B. Biofeedback		
C. Compression Therapies		
D. Cryotherapy		
E. Electrotherapeutic Agents		
F. Hydrotherapy		
G. Superficial and Deep Thermal Agents		
H. Traction		
<b>5. Therapeutic exercise (including aerobic conditioning)</b>		
A. Aerobic Exercise		
B. Balance and Coordination Training		
C. Breathing Exercises and Coughing Techniques		
D. Conditioning and reconditioning		
E. Posture Awareness training		
F. Range of Motion Exercises		
G. Stretching Exercises		
H. Strengthening Exercises		

Adapted from the *Evaluative Criteria for Accreditation of Education Programs for the Preparation of Physical Therapist Assistants*.

Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education; 2007; Appendix A1 30 - 31.

<b>E. CLINICAL EDUCATION</b>	HOURS*	Transcript reference	Comments
Two clinical internships. Total clinic hours = 520 hours			

**Note:** The clinical education component includes organized and sequential experiences coordinated with the didactic component of the curriculum, which may include integrated and full time experiences. The applicant must have full-time clinical experiences with a minimum of two clinical areas of work, which are supervised by a clinical supervisor who is a physical therapist or physical therapist assistant.

\*Maximum number of full time clinical education credits is 15. Forty-eight clock hours equal one semester credit.

<b>F. RELATED TECHNICAL COURSEWORK:</b> Coursework is required in areas 1-7.	Credit	Transcript Reference	Comments
1. Role of the PTA			
2. Professional Ethics, Behaviors & Issues			
3. Administration			
4. Educational Techniques			
5. Communication (related to client/patient care)			
6. Medical Legal Issues and Healthcare Delivery			
7. Psychosocial Aspects in Physical Therapy Work			

**SUB-TOTAL TECHNICAL EDUCATION CREDITS: \_\_\_\_\_ (49 minimum)**

## ACADEMIC INSTITUTION

<b>Describe the academic level of the educational program and the institution within the context of the country's educational system:</b>
1. Status (recognition/accreditation) within the country's educational system:
2. Entry requirements (minimum of secondary education):
3. Degree equivalence (Associate of Science, etc.):
4. Other (CAPTE accreditation, etc.):

## Summary

	Number of Credits
Total Foundational Studies Credits (15 minimum):	
Total Technical Education Credits (49 minimum):	
Total Credits (64 minimum):	

64 credits = Two years of study

## DEFINITIONS

**Adequate:** Coursework satisfies the requirement that the level of complexity and scope of the content in a course or courses meets established standards necessary for the entry-level associate's degree.

**Clinical Education:** That portion of a physical therapy program that is conducted in the health care environment rather than the academic environment. (*A Normative Model of Physical Therapist Assistant Education: Version 2007, p 12*)

**Clinical Sciences:** Content includes both diseases that require direct intervention of a physical therapist for management and diseases that affect conditions being managed by physical therapists across systems. (*A Normative Model of Physical Therapist Assistant Education: Version 2007; p. 159*)

**Clock Hour:** Fifty to sixty minutes or as determined by the policy of the institution.

**Comments:** Validation of transcript references. Identifies specific references within official institutional records where content area(s) may be found. These references may be in the form of educational objectives, listing of course content, course syllabi, test questions, or other curricular documents.

**Content Area:** Component competencies as designated by the *Evaluative Criteria for Accreditation of Educational Programs for the Preparation of Physical Therapist Assistants* (Adopted April 2006, effective July 1, 2007).

**Course:** A series of study which is taught at the post-secondary level and results in an official transcript of record with assigned grade, a course description and syllabus, and credit can be verified by the institution. Credit is either assigned by a semester of 15 weeks plus exam week or is converted to semester hours based on 16 weeks of study.

**Credit Hour:** A semester credit hour must include at a minimum: 15 hours of lecture, or 30 hours of laboratory, or 48 hours of clinical education.

**Data-collection skills:** Those processes/procedures used throughout the intervention to gather information about the patient's/client's progress through observation; measurement; subjective, objective, and functional findings. (*A Normative Model of Physical Therapist Assistant Education: Version 2007; p. 130*)

**Foundational Sciences:** Essential content that contributes to the development and understanding of physical therapy to include sciences that can be described as *basic* and *applied*. (*A Normative Model of Physical Therapist Assistant Education: Version 2007, Page 132*)

**General Education:** General Education constitutes all non-physical therapy education completed, provided these courses were taken at the college level from a recognized educational program. These courses, both pre-professional and post-professional education, may be used to fulfill the 30 credit requirements after the core courses have been met. General education may be included in Foundational Studies.

**Grades:** Grades must equate to a "C" average in the United States. No failing grades should be accepted. Credentialing decisions for conversion of grades or semester credits should follow accepted guidelines as published in acceptable and recognized country codes and "International Reference Guides." This includes but is not limited to, P.I.E.R., NAFSA publications or AACROA publications.

**Intervention:** The purposeful and skilled interaction of the physical therapist or physical therapist assistant with the patient/client, and, when appropriate, with other individuals involved in the patient/client care, using various physical therapy procedures and techniques to produce changes in the patient's/client's condition. (*A Normative Model of Physical Therapist Assistant Education: Version 2007 p. 133*)

**Standards:** Foundational requirements of an established profession to determine entry-level professional/ technical requirements for physical therapists and physical therapist assistants. In physical therapy, *The Guide to Physical Therapist Practice Second Edition, A Normative Model of Physical Therapist Assistant Education: Version 2007*, and *Evaluative Criteria for Accreditation of Education Programs for the Preparation of Physical Therapist Assistants* serve as resources for setting these requirements.

**Substantially Equivalent:** The individual has satisfied or exceeded the minimum number of credits required in foundational and technical education needed for a U.S. first degree for a physical therapist assistant. Coursework completed may not be identical in all respects to a U.S. first degree for a physical therapist assistant, but all required content areas are evident. Deficiencies may be noted in coursework, but may not be in the essential areas of technical education or of such magnitude that the education is not deemed to be at the entry-level of preparation for work in the United States.

**Technical Skills:** Psychomotor processes/procedures supported by affective and cognitive processes/procedures that constitute patient/client interventions. The skills must be integrated to achieve the most effective interventions and optimal outcomes. (*A Normative Model of Physical Therapist Assistant Education: Version 2007, p. 135*)

**Transcript Reference:** Official documentation from the academic institution of courses completed, grades assigned, and degree conferred in the form of an official transcript. In the exceptional cases where an official transcript does not exist within the institution, an alternative official document may be considered.

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