



World Confederation  
for Physical Therapy

# **WCPT guideline for qualifications of faculty for physical therapist professional entry level education programmes**

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The World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT) represents the physical therapy profession worldwide. WCPT is registered in the UK as a charity.



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**WCPT guidelines** are produced to assist member organisations and others to raise the quality of physical therapy. They may provide guidance on standards criteria or courses of action in areas relevant to physical therapy education research practice or policy. They are not mandatory but designed to assist the implementation of WCPT's policies.

# WCPT guideline for qualifications of faculty for physical therapist professional entry level education programmes

## Section 1: Introduction

### 1.1 Purpose

WCPT's policy statement on education sets out its agreed stance or opinion on physical therapist professional entry level education.<sup>1</sup> It is an important tool for informing health education policy and delivery around the world, and furthering the development of the profession.

This guideline on qualifications of faculty has been produced to support member organisations intent on meeting WCPT's guideline for physical therapist professional entry level education through the development of physical therapist professional entry level programmes. While the guideline has been developed for and with input from member organisations of WCPT, the intent is that it may also be used by countries where physical therapy associations and education programmes do not currently exist and where the profession is not represented in WCPT.

The guideline has been informed by and is for use in conjunction with existing WCPT policy statement and guidelines:

- Guideline for physical therapist professional entry level education.<sup>2</sup>
- Guideline for the clinical education component of the physical therapist professional entry level programme.<sup>3</sup>
- Guideline for the standard evaluation process for accreditation/recognition of physical therapist professional entry level education programmes.<sup>4</sup>
- Policy statement: Autonomy.<sup>5</sup>
- Policy statement: Description of physical therapy.<sup>6</sup>
- Policy statement: Education.<sup>1</sup>
- Policy statement: Ethical responsibilities of physical therapists and WCPT members.<sup>7</sup>
- Policy statement: Evidence based practice.<sup>8</sup>
- Policy statement: Regulation of the physical therapy profession.<sup>9</sup>
- Policy statement: Relationships with other health professionals.<sup>10</sup>
- Policy statement: Research.<sup>11</sup>
- Policy statement: Standards of physical therapist practice.<sup>12</sup>

Together these documents enable the development and accreditation of high quality physical therapist professional entry level programmes.

### 1.2 Target audience

This guideline may be used by:

- WCPT member organisations
- potential WCPT member organisations
- national physical therapy organisations

- physical therapy educators
- health and education authorities
- monitoring and regulatory bodies
- government policy makers
- others, who have an interest in providing physical therapist professional entry level education programmes

### **1.3 Application**

This guideline may be used by WCPT member organisations and their members in negotiating with governments and educational institutions; by people responsible for recruitment of faculty for physical therapist professional entry level programmes; and for existing faculty to understand the professional expectations for faculty appointments. Physical therapists considering an academic career may use the guidelines as an indication of career paths.

Curriculum development, instructional design and delivery, and evaluation of the physical therapist professional entry level programme are the combined responsibilities of the core faculty and programme head/administrator/leader/dean. While a physical therapy degree is determined to be the basic requirement in this document, WCPT understands that certificate and diploma programmes were previously the entry level professional requirement for practice. Therefore, individuals who possess such qualifications should not be precluded from a faculty position as long as they can demonstrate evidence of having a graduate degree and advanced experience.

Faculty members need to bring their students from admission to an entry level professional programme to a standard of practice comparable to the entry level standards for the profession.

## **Section 2: Description of physical therapy faculty**

Titles and description of physical therapy faculty vary from country to country, and the titles given below are for descriptive purposes. The following table outlines the characteristics expected of faculty involved in the delivery of entry level physical therapy education.

Characteristics	Faculty				
	Programme head/ administrator	Core academic faculty	Clinical education director/coordinator	Clinical education site instructor	Associate faculty
Is a physical therapist	Yes	Yes, unless teaching content where other expertise is required, eg exercise physiology	Yes	Yes	Not necessary
Is a member of WCPT's member organisation in the country	Yes	Yes, if physical therapist	Yes	Yes	Yes, if physical therapist
Demonstrates active involvement in professional organisation	Yes	Desirable	Desirable	Desirable	Desirable
Gives evidence of an appropriate academic qualification	PhD, EdD, ScD, DSc desirable  Coursework/degree in management desirable (eg MBA, Master's in Management Science)	Post professional degree desirable  If not a physical therapist, has an appropriate degree for area of teaching	Post professional qualification in physical therapy or related field  3 years of clinical experience in a variety of settings  Previous teaching experience	Professional degree in physical therapy  Post professional education desirable	Professional degree in physical therapy or other appropriate degree for area of teaching  Post professional qualification desirable
Recognised expert in their area of teaching and research	Yes	Desirable	Desirable	Desirable	Desirable
Is typically an employee of higher education institution	Yes	Yes	Yes	Formal affiliation or appointment at institution desirable	Not necessary
Is clinically practicing	If possible	If possible	If possible	Yes	Not expected
Is a member of core faculty of physical therapy programme	Yes	Yes	Desirable	Desirable	No
Demonstrates contemporary expertise in their area of programme responsibility	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, a minimum of one year clinical experience	Yes
Demonstrates ongoing continuing professional development consistent with professional and programme requirements	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Characteristics	Faculty				
	Programme head/ administrator	Core academic faculty	Clinical education director/coordinator	Clinical education site instructor	Associate faculty
Demonstrates effective teaching and student evaluation skills	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Has a well-defined scholarly agenda	Yes	Yes	Not expected/desirable	Not expected/desirable	Yes
Has a record of service consistent with expectations of the physical therapy programme and the educational institution	Yes	Yes	Yes	Not expected/desirable	Yes
Participates in governance of the institution	Yes	Desirable	Not expected/desirable	No	Not expected
Possesses contemporary expertise in management and leadership	Yes	Not expected/desirable	Desirable	Not expected	Not expected
Participates in physical therapist entry level curriculum development	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Has had a previous role as a clinical educator of physical therapy students	Not expected/desirable	Not expected/desirable, if physical therapist	Yes	Not expected/desirable	Not applicable
Demonstrates understanding of contemporary practice, quality clinical education, the clinical community, and the health delivery system	Yes	Yes, if physical therapist	Yes	Yes	Yes, if physical therapist
Has had a previous faculty appointment	Yes	Not essential/desirable	Not essential/desirable	Not expected	Not expected

## Glossary

**Accreditation** — is a type of quality assurance process which utilises all aspects of review and assessment according to pre-defined standards. Accreditation may be applied to education programmes or a programme of physiotherapy.<sup>9,13</sup>

**Associate faculty** — the people whose employing faculty is not the physical therapy faculty and who teach their subject in physical therapy professional programmes. Examples of associate faculty are physicians and nutritionists. See also faculty.

**Bachelor's degree** — is an academic degree granted to individuals who have undergone: study demonstrating acquisition of a systematic and coherent body of knowledge, the underlying principles and concepts, and the associated communication and problem-solving skills; development of the academic skills and attributes necessary, comprehend and evaluate new information, concepts and evidence from a range of sources; development of the ability to review, consolidate, extend and apply the knowledge and techniques learned, including in a professional context; development of a foundation for self-directed and lifelong learning; and development of interpersonal and teamwork skills appropriate to employment and/or further study. A programme leading to this qualification also usually involves major studies in which significant literature is available. Programme content is taken to a significant depth and progressively developed to a high level which provides a basis for postgraduate study and professional careers.<sup>14-15</sup>

**Clinical education** — is the delivery, monitoring and evaluation of learning experiences in clinical settings. Clinical education sites may include institutional, industrial, occupational, primary health care, and community settings providing all aspects of the patient/client management model (examination, evaluation, intervention, diagnosis, prognosis/plan of care, and interventions including prevention, health promotion, and wellness programmes).<sup>3</sup>

**Clinical education director/coordinator** — is a physical therapist and an academic faculty member, who is responsible for the clinical education component of the physical therapist professional entry level programme that is normally delivered by physical therapists in the clinical environment.<sup>3</sup> See also faculty.

**Clinical education site instructors** — physical therapists practising in clinical placement sites who supervise and evaluate the clinical skills of the student physical therapist while on placement and report to the higher education institution. (May also be known as clinical supervisor/clinical educator).<sup>3</sup>

**Continuing professional development (CPD)** — is the process through which individuals undertake learning, through a broad range of activities that maintains, develops, and enhances skills and knowledge in order to improve performance in practice.<sup>16</sup>

**Core academic faculty** — the people who are employed in the physical therapy faculty to teach physical therapy professional education programmes. See also faculty.

**Credential** — see qualification.

**Curriculum development** — “describes all the ways in which a training or teaching organisation plans and guides learning. This learning can take place in groups or with individual learners. It can take place inside or outside a classroom. It can take place in an institutional setting like a school, college or training centre...”<sup>17</sup>

**Degree** — an academic rank conferred by a university after examination or completion of a course.



**Faculty** — a department or group of related departments in a college or university' and 'all the teachers in a faculty of a college or university'.<sup>18</sup>

**Graduate degree** — a degree subsequent to a first academic degree; Master's and Doctoral degrees are examples of graduate degrees.

**Master's degree** — is an academic degree granted to individuals who have undergone study demonstrating a mastery or high-order overview of a specific field of study or area of professional practice. Within the area studied, graduates possess: advanced knowledge of a specialised body of theoretical and applied topics; high order skills in analysis, critical evaluation and/or professional application; and the ability to solve complex problems and think rigorously and independently.<sup>14-15</sup>

**Physical therapist professional entry level education programmes** — are those that equip physical therapists to practise as independent professionals. WCPT recommends that education for entry level physical therapists should be based on university or university-level studies of a minimum of four years, independently validated and accredited as being at a standard that affords graduates full statutory and professional recognition.<sup>2</sup>

**Qualification** — formal certification, issued by a relevant approved body, in recognition that a person has achieved learning outcomes or competencies relevant to identified individual, professional, industry or community needs.<sup>14</sup> The term credential is also used. Examples of qualifications expected of faculty for physical therapist professional entry level programmes include: Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), Doctor of Education (EdD), Doctor of Science (DSc or ScD), Masters of Science (MSc), Master of Arts (MA), Masters of Business Administration (MBA).

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**(Asociación Española de Fisioterapeutas, organización miembro de la WCPT, ha participado en su elaboración).**