



# Texas Board of Physical Therapy Examiners

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## **Information for Foreign-Educated Applicants – March 2009**

### **1. Do I have to have a Master's degree to get a license in Texas?**

No. As stated in §329.5(f)(7) of the Board's rules, you must have completed an educational program substantially equivalent to U.S. programs accredited by the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE). "Substantially equivalent" means close enough in total number of coursework hours and content (as determined by a Board-approved credentialer) to assure the Board that your education was very similar in breadth and depth to that of a person with a PT degree from a CAPTE-accredited program. The PT program must be post-secondary, requiring for entry the equivalent of high school graduation in the US; must consist of at least three years of classroom instruction; and must result in the award of the first academic diploma or degree leading to professional practice in physical therapy. In most countries outside the US, the degree that leads to professional practice is still a bachelor's degree.

### **2. What are the Board's educational requirements?**

The complete description of each requirement is found in §329.5 of the Board's rules, under the section called Licensing Procedures for Foreign-trained Applicants. In summary form, the requirements are below. If you have any questions about these specific requirements, or about the equivalency of your degree, you should contact one of the credentialers in the application instructions. *If you have a PT degree from a foreign CAPTE-accredited program, go to question # 12.*

- Your degree must be substantially equivalent to a US entry-level degree in physical therapy as awarded by regionally accredited universities in the U.S.
- The school from which you received your degree must be recognized formally by the country's Ministry of Education or the equivalent.
- You must have made a grade of "C"/pass or above in all general and professional courses.
- You must have 60 general education hours
- You must have 72 professional education hours (changes to 90 hours on April 1, 2008.).
- You must have 15-23 hours of clinical education.
- Your coursework must meet the criteria of the "Texas version" of the Federation's Coursework Evaluation Tool.

### **3. What are the steps if I am not in the U.S. yet?**

*Can I get a license before I come to the US?*

You may complete the application process if you apply for licensure while you are living outside the US, but you must have arrived in the states and provided the board with your US residential address before we will issue you a temporary license. If requested, we will send you a "Visa letter" stating that you will receive a temporary license once your application and exam registration is complete and you arrive in the US. The visa letter is valid for one year from date of issuance.

*Can someone else act for me until I get to the States?*

You may select a person in the US as a Delegated Representative (see §329.5) to assist you in the licensure process. If you wish to do so, please contact the Board at 512/305-6900, and ask for the Licensing Manager.

### **4. Are there any exceptions to the rules about getting a license in Texas?**

There are some parts of the rules that include exceptions or exemptions in certain cases, and those are always included in the rule. For example, the rule states that the board requires foreign-trained applicants to take the TOEFL tests, but it goes on to list the circumstances in which an applicant may not have to take the tests. If there is an exemption, it will be included in the rule itself. The Board does not make exceptions to its rules, regardless of circumstances.

**5. If I come from a country where English is the native language, or if my PT program was taught in English, do I have to take the TOEFL, TSE, and TWE?**

As of March 15, 2006, graduates of entry-level physical therapy programs in Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand and the United Kingdom do not have to submit scores for the TOEFL tests. Also, as of November 11, 2006, graduates from a program accredited by the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE) of the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) are exempt. If your PT degree is from a university in a country not in that list, you must take the TOEFL tests – unless you qualify for one of the exceptions listed in the rule. Please refer to §329.5 for the details.

**6. Does the Board make exceptions to the requirement that an applicant be licensed in the country of education?**

As of March 15, 2006, the Board may waive this requirement for an applicant who is not licensed in the country of education due to a citizenship requirement of that country. Call the Board if you need more information.

**7. Will the Board accept a TOEFL score report directly from me?**

No. The Board will not accept scores from the applicant. If you are applying for a license by exam in Texas, we will only accept scores sent directly to us by ETS. If you are applying for licensure by exam, and if it has been more than two years since you took the English exams (which means ETS no longer has your scores), you must take those tests again.

If you are applying for a license by endorsement, you already have a PT license in another state. That may mean that it has been more than two years since you took the TOEFL tests. In that case we will accept score reports sent to us by an outside source, such as another state licensing board, a U.S. university, or board-approved credentialer, i.e., an entity that received your scores from ETS directly. The copy must be mailed directly to us, with an official cover letter from the entity stating that the entity received the scores from ETS directly. We will not accept a faxed copy.

**8. Which do I do first – send in my license application or have my education evaluated?**

If you got your PT degree from a university outside of the U.S., we recommend that you get your evaluation done before you apply for a license. You may also want to take the English language proficiency exams (TOEFL, TWE, TSE). The evaluation and the English exams take much longer than submitting the license application. Also, if the evaluation says that you have to take additional courses, or that your education is not equivalent, you may decide not to apply for a license in Texas. Also, your application is good for a year. If it takes you longer than that to complete educational deficiencies, or to get the scores we require on an English exam, you will need to re-apply, and pay a new application fee.

**9. When can I get a temporary license?**

You can get a temporary license ONLY if you have never taken the PT exam. You can get a temporary license ONLY when we have received all of the other things required for the application: application, fees, evaluation, TOEFL scores, affidavits, etc. There are no exceptions to this rule.

**10. Does the Board accept an evaluation done by a company not on the approved list?**

NO. The Board only accepts evaluations done by credentialers on the list of board approved credentialers.

We will not accept an evaluation done by any other company. If you have already had an evaluation done for another state, you must ask them to revise your evaluation to meet Texas requirements. If your evaluation was done by another company, we regret that you will have to have it done again, but there are no exceptions to this rule. The list of credentialers is available at [www.ecptote.state.tx.us](http://www.ecptote.state.tx.us).

**11. Can I get a PTA license if my PT education doesn't meet the Texas requirements?**

No. An applicant for a PTA license must, in addition to all other requirements set by the board, have completed a CAPTE accredited PTA program or a CAPTE accredited PT program. Alternatively, an applicant for a PTA license may present an educational evaluation by a board-approved credentialer stating that the applicant's education is equivalent to an education from a CAPTE accredited PT program. By law, there is no option for establishing the equivalency of an education from a foreign PTA program to a CAPTE accredited PTA program. Foreign-trained PTAs are not eligible for licensure in Texas unless they graduate from a CAPTE accredited program in the US.

**12 My entry-level PT degree is from a foreign program that was or is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE). Am I exempt from any requirements?**

The Board recognizes an entry-level degree from a foreign CAPTE-accredited program as equivalent to one issued by a US CAPTE-accredited program. Therefore, the list of specific hour and subject requirements do not apply to you. However, you must still apply to an approved credentialer. They will NOT evaluate your education course by course, but they will verify that the program was accredited when you graduated from it, and that you did officially graduate. They will also verify that you are or were licensed in the country of education as required by the Board.

Also, as of November 11, 2006, applicants from ALL CAPTE-accredited programs, including programs in Quebec (or any other country where English is not the native language), are exempt from the English language proficiency requirements.

**13. What about prescreening?**

Depending on your visa status, you may need to go through a prescreening process as required by the Dept. of Homeland Security (DHS) U.S. Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (formerly INS) before applying for a license in Texas. To determine whether you need to get a "health care worker certificate," contact your attorney, or check the DHS website at [http://www.bcis.gov/graphics/howdoi/Health\\_Cert.htm](http://www.bcis.gov/graphics/howdoi/Health_Cert.htm). If you need this certificate, the board will accept certificates from either the Foreign Credentialing Commission on Physical Therapy (FCCPT), or the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS). Contact the FCCPT at [www.fccpt.org](http://www.fccpt.org) (or 703/684-8406), or CGNFS at <http://www.cqfns.org/sections/proq/visa.shtml>.