



Beyond the Coursework Tool (CWT) –Leadership Issues Forum Recommendations

One of the ongoing goals of the Federation has been to develop tools and standards that member boards could use to assess the competence of foreign educated physical therapists to practice in the US healthcare setting.

The Coursework Tool is one of those tools. It is designed to assess whether an applicant's coursework is substantially equivalent to US physical therapy coursework.

Developing and using the CWT

The CWT was developed in 1998. It was validated in a study done by Northwestern University in 2003; in 2005, the Federation's Delegate Assembly recommended its use. The PTA Tool 2007 was developed when CMS required foreign-educated PTAs to show certification of their education equivalency. (Read the full history at www.fsbpt.org ->Regulatory Tools ->CWT.)

At this time, 50 jurisdictions (48 states, the District of Columbia and the Virgin Islands) accept the Coursework Tool. Two states, although they do not accept the CWT in total, use portions of the CWT in their own tool. Five credentialing agencies use the CWT as well.

Purpose and limitations

The key to understanding the CWT's purpose and limitation is to remember that it assesses coursework. It is a paper review of the curriculum submitted by the school of education. It requires verification of clinical internship hours, but it is a paper validation of those hours.

Leadership Issues Forum

The Leadership Issues Forum hosted by the Federation in August 2012 confirmed the value of the CWT but also recognized that it only looked at one aspect of the education and training of a foreign-educated graduate.

Participants made the following recommendations regarding the Coursework Tool.

- Evaluate the current CWT requirements for General Education and the need for specifics in specific content areas in relation to what is necessary for minimal safe and effective care.
- Continue to develop interpretive guidelines for the CWT and encourage jurisdictions to follow these guidelines versus modifying elements of the tool for their jurisdiction.
- Explore using additional methods for assuring quality and depth of education in addition to the CWT.
- Consider including an evaluation of experience and ongoing professional development to the credentials evaluation process.
- Determine “core prerequisites” and consider these to be the core critical elements of General Education; these could potentially occur either in General Education or be encompassed in Professional Education courses.

There were many other recommendations to assess internationally educated therapists beyond those within the CWT, which are listed below.

Working with member jurisdictions:

- Continue to focus on the critical elements that impact safe and effective practice and not the degree received.
- Continue to encourage FSBPT jurisdiction members to work towards uniformity in requirements including English language requirements.

Working with other countries:

- Continue to dialogue with colleagues outside the United States in an effort to gain understanding of the similarities and differences in education, practice and scope of practice between countries.
- Monitor Canada as they develop and implement their practice-specific English language exam.
- Conduct a site visit to the University of Toronto bridging program. (You can read about that in this edition’s – Spring 2013 - *President’s Perspective* article.)
- Explore the feasibility of Mutual Recognition Pacts with countries that have similar scopes of practice.

Working with other organizations:

- Explore the feasibility of development of a common definition of “substantial equivalence” in collaboration with appropriate external organizations.

Working with APTA and CAPTE (the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education):

- Continue to dialogue with CAPTE regarding the possibility of offering accreditation/approval to non-US programs.
- Explore the possibility of developing a joint legislative agenda with APTA that works towards uniformity of jurisdictional requirements.
- Continue to have dialogue with CAPTE and the ACAPTA (APTA Academic Council) regarding the development of Bridge Programs

English language proficiency:

- Explore options and models to identify and bridge English language and general communication gaps when they may exist.

Supervised Clinical Practice:

- Continue developing the Supervised Clinical Practice Best Practices Model, assuring that there is flexibility incorporated in the model.
- Check out the Fall 2012 Forum articles that address this topic and these recommendations – *President’s Perspective*; *Coming to America: Supervised clinical practice as a requirement for licensure*; and *An International Perspective*. Go to www.fsbpt.org -> About FSBPT -> Forum Magazine -> Forum – Fall 2012.

FSBPT-sponsored research:

- Add “identification and assessment of the gap” to the FSBPT’s research agenda.

Tests beyond the NPTE:

- Continue to explore the need for a “stepped assessment” beyond the NPTE process for all candidates (basic science exam, clinical skills exam).

Consider experience and professional development since graduation:

- In developing assessment and remediation programs, consider a variety of methods depending on what the candidate’s education included as well as what the candidate has been doing since graduation (experience and professional development).

Identify available resources:

- Identify components of US healthcare for which it would be helpful to have resources for the non-US educated physical therapist.
 - Compile a resource list for those resources already available.
 - Consider appropriate entities and organizations that might want to develop resources that are not available.

Our next steps are to evaluate these recommendations for their feasibility, appropriateness and effectiveness. We will then incorporate the recommendations deemed feasible and appropriate into the organization’s strategic plan and annual goals.