

# FCCPT Update

## Developing the Coursework Evaluation Tool for Previous Accreditation Standards

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### Introduction

The Federation originally developed the Coursework Evaluation Tool based on current CAPTE educational standards. The Tool was designed to evaluate foreign educated physical therapists' education to determine whether it was equivalent to the education received by graduates of current Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE)—accredited schools.

The Tool did not take into account earlier accreditation standards. The result was that unlike their U.S. counterparts, foreign educated physical therapists were evaluated using educational standards that did not exist when they graduated.

To rectify this, the 2004 Delegate Assembly passed a motion to develop and implement Coursework Evaluations Tools to reflect the U.S. standards of education for physical therapists for the years prior to the current CAPTE criteria.

CAPTE was able to provide the previous standards for accreditation for the years of study from 1955 to 1977, 1978 to 1991, and 1992 to 1997. The current criteria were implemented in 1998 and are reflected in the FSBPT *4th Edition: Coursework Evaluation Tool*.

### Summary of Methodology

The Federation staff, in cooperation with the FCCPT staff, developed a methodology of study to determine and validate the three tools that would reflect the three previous accreditation standards.

The individual tools are structured the same as the current 4th Edition to maintain ease of use and interpretation. The language used in the tools has been maintained to match the current *Guide to Physical Therapist Practice* language. Guidelines for training evaluators will highlight the interpretation of accepted language or professional jargon.

Each tool includes a section on the background or general comments which reflect the culture and philosophy of education at the times of the standards in place. The tools

reflect the minimum standards for each time period, and when information was available regarding the norm of education, these were incorporated as well.

### Summary of Tools

**Tool 1955:** Tool 1955 reflects the standards set by the AMA; they were eventually “given” to the APTA for oversight. These were very prescriptive standards and prepared the therapist to work under the direction of the physician. Physical therapy education at this time resulted in a certificate which comprised 12 months of professional work following at least two years of college study. A Bachelor of Science (BS) degree was common but not a requirement. These two years of college study were most often within nursing programs and included the basic health sciences in preparation for the introduction of physical therapy skills and knowledge.

**Tool 1978:** In 1978, the APTA Board of Directors approved the *Standards for Accreditation of Physical Therapy Education Programs*. The BS degree was the minimum entry-level degree for PT. It was determined that physical therapy programs should be offered within the university systems in the U.S.

These specific criteria were not at all prescriptive. Requirements for core curriculum in general education were addressed through the requirement to obtain a BS degree and the professional content was addressed in the required outcomes for the physical therapist education. Students were able to incorporate many of the basic health sciences for professional education within the core curriculum requirements for attaining a BS degree.

**Tool 1992:** CAPTE proposed changes to the *Standards for Accreditation of Physical Therapy Education Programs* in 1990, and these were implemented in 1992. These criteria do not reflect or recommend any specific degree, but do emphasize an “education based upon a foundation of liberal arts appropriate in depth and breadth to develop the ability in students to think independently, to weigh values and to understand fundamental theory and to develop skills of critical thinking and communication.” *The Normative Model of Physical Therapist Professional Education* thus separated out prerequisite general education from the specific physical therapist professional requirements.

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