

Planned Learning and Assistance Network (P-L-A-N)

Susan K. Lindeblad



A new service has been launched to assist foreign educated candidates identify appropriate coursework to complete educational requirements to become deemed substantially equivalent to the first professional degree in physical therapy in the United States.

Why offer this service?

Did you know that 60 percent of the foreign candidates are found NOT to have a substantially equivalent education in their first educational credentials review? Most of these deficiencies relate to differences in educational systems in other countries. The remaining deficiencies relate to differences in the scope of practice of physical therapy in other countries.¹

Many of the candidates who are found not to be equivalent express a need for counseling or assistance in finding appropriate coursework. Candidates are asking jurisdiction board offices to interpret the reports and identify options for supplementation. This is a burden on jurisdiction staff that may not be prepared to provide this type of counseling.

P-L-A-N will provide this needed service for applicants who need the extra help.

The Goal is to Provide Appropriate Educational Resources

This assistance is NOT to make the review equivalent, but to assist applicants in finding appropriate educational resources to meet the curriculum needs for substantial equivalency, and to work with educational programs to facilitate this process.

FSBPT Coursework Evaluation Tool is the Standard

The standard used in the review process is the FSBPT's Coursework Evaluation Tool (CWT), which has been validated against the CAPTE Evaluative Criteria. Thus in finding equivalency of education, P-L-A-N will compare the foreign educated physical therapist's (FEPT) curriculum to the minimum requirements for U.S. physical therapy education, to determine "substantial equivalency."

Educational Equivalence Does Seem to Positively Impact on NPTE Pass Rates

Foreign candidates who meet all of the requirements of the Foreign Credentialing Commission on Physical Therapy (FCCPT) Comprehensive Credentials Evaluation (Type I) have a pass rate on the NPTE within five percentage points of U.S. graduates.²

First Step: A Completed Credentials Evaluation

The first step in the process is to identify the differences in the educational systems and then to complete a course-by-course comparison of what is in the FEPT curriculum and

what is required in the CWT. This service is provided by many credentials review agencies, including FCCPT.

Second Step: FCCPT P-L-A-N

The new counseling service will move beyond the identification of differences. It will begin to identify possible options to bridge the differences.

FCCPT P-L-A-N counselors will assist in the interpretation of CWT deficiencies and when appropriate, assist in interpreting an individual jurisdiction's review tool deficiencies. The counselor will then assist the applicant in understanding the U.S. educational system, which is often foreign to the candidate as well.

The P-L-A-N counselor will help the candidate identify legitimate, accredited and recognized programs that offer the missing coursework and identify which is considered college-level work. They will share information on the "jargon" of U.S. education such as "non-matriculating student;" the difference between continuing education offered at a university versus college courses taken for credit; and how to complete independent study. At times, the P-L-A-N counselor may act as a resource to program faculty as well as the candidate.

In summary, P-L-A-N will help the candidate to design a concentrated and efficient plan of study and assist in identifying available, appropriate educational resources.

How would this work?

Applicants would provide their final credentials review agency's report to P-L-A-N. (Applicants who use FCCPT will be sent an information packet on the P-L-A-N program along with the final report and copy of the CWT.)

P-L-A-N will provide the following services:

1. A consultation to review and interpret the credential review agency's final report.
2. A list of all core requirements/deficiencies that need to be completed.
3. A compilation of information on how and where to fill these core requirements.

4. Develop with the applicant a study plan for completion within an allotted two-year timeframe.
5. General education review and pre-approval of coursework to be taken.
6. Professional education:
 - a. List institutions within the U.S. that will offer the content required.
 - b. Pre-approve coursework to match identified deficiencies.
 - c. Preview course descriptions from foreign programs that the candidate may find to match deficiencies.
7. Collect and collate the re-evaluation materials for the candidate when completed.

If the deficiencies are so broad that supplemental education cannot result in educational equivalency, the counselor will advise the applicant to consider an entry-level CAPTE-accredited program. Counseling fees would be refunded.

Who may benefit from P-L-A-N?

- Candidates who have completed an FCCPT Educational Credentials Review for licensure purposes or a Comprehensive Credentials Review (Type I), were not found to be substantially equivalent to the first professional degree in the U.S., and feel that they need assistance in meeting U.S. standards for PT education.
- Candidates who feel they need to understand the U.S. educational system, and are unsure of where to turn next.
- Candidates who have had their education evaluated by another agency that used the CWT. These candidates may ONLY apply for hourly services to help to identify educational programs, as the FCCPT cannot pre-approve coursework for another agency.

Fees

Fees will be assessed based upon needs of the applicant.³ ■

¹ Information provided by the Foreign Credentialing Commission on Physical Therapy, FCCPT.

² FCCPT 2006 annual report.

³ Note: Jurisdiction staff and board members will continue to receive individual responses as needed from the FCCPT staff without charge.



Susan K. Lindeblad is Managing Director of the Foreign Credentialing Commission on Physical Therapy since 2001. Sue served on the Florida licensing board for 14 years, chairing it twice. She has served as a member of the Exam Program Oversight Committee; an item writer for the exam; a member of the Analysis of Practice Oversight Committee; delegate to the Federation's Delegate Assembly; chair of the PT Exam Construction and Review Committee and member of the Job Analysis Oversight Committee. Sue obtained her master's degree in education and Ph.D. in Higher Education at the University of Miami. She was an associate professor in the physical therapy program at the University of Miami for the 12 years prior to joining the staff of the FCCPT.