



PHYSICAL THERAPY GUIDE

FOR FOREIGN-TRAINED PROFESSIONALS IN MAINE

New Mainers Resource Center, Portland Adult Education



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New Mainers Resource Center – Who We Are

The New Mainers Resource Center (NMRC) is a program within Portland Adult Education serving area immigrants and refugees. Our offerings are designed to help new Mainers overcome barriers in order to enter the US workforce. These include: career guidance and employment case management, assistance with credential review and licensing requirements, intensive classes focused on job readiness skills, networking groups, workshops and other offerings.

The Purpose of this Guide

One major challenge faced by skilled professionals, such as physical therapists, is navigating the complex licensing requirements in Maine. The purpose of this guide is to provide foreign-trained physical therapists with the information they need to make informed decisions about pursuing certification in the field of physical therapy.

For additional information or assistance from the New Mainers Resource Center contact:

New Mainers Resource Center, *Maine's Welcome Back Center*, Portland Adult Education 14 Locust St. Portland, Maine 04101 Phone: 207 874-8155, Website: www.nmrcmaine.org, Email: Sally Sutton, Program Coordinator, suttos@portlandschools.org.

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OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS

This guide assumes that you have completed the education and licensing requirements as a physical therapist (PT), or physical therapist assistant (PTA) in another country, and are interested in understanding the process for becoming licensed as a PT or PTA in the U.S.A.

1

DECIDE:

You will need to decide if you want to pursue licensure as a physical therapist (PT) or as a physical therapy assistant (PTA) in the U.S. There are other positions in healthcare you can pursue as alternatives to licensure, or as temporary work while you undergo the licensure process. See page 2 to explore other jobs in the field.

2

EDUCATION EVALUATION:

All foreign-educated and licensed PTs and PTAs will need to complete an education evaluation to determine if their education program is equivalent to a U.S. accredited PT or PTA program.

- You will need official transcripts, course descriptions and other additional materials sent DIRECTLY from the school or your original licensing office. It can sometimes be very difficult to access all course descriptions.
- Once FCCPT (Foreign Credentialing Commission on Physical Therapy) receives your official documents from your educational institution, they will send them back to you to have them translated by an ATA certified translator.
- You will need access to official diplomas and licenses (notarized).
- ***You will need your course descriptions and syllabi, and will need them translated if not provided in English. Find out if this is logistically and financially possible before beginning this process.***
- If you do not meet the educational requirements for exam eligibility, you will need to complete course work at an accredited institution, or complete another PT or PTA program. See page 4 for more details.

3

ENGLISH PROFICIENCY:

If the course work was not taught in English, the applicant must take the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), or the Test of Spoken English For Professionals (TSE-P) and the Test of Written English (TWE). Right now there is no required score, but the requirements for English language proficiency scores are changing, and you can review these changes on page 6.

4

APPLYING FOR THE EXAM:

If you have successfully completed your evaluations and English test, you can apply through FSBPT (Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy) to take the NPTE (National Physical Therapy Exam). Both PTs and PTAs need to take the exam. See pages 7 and 8 for more details on applying for and passing the exam.

5

APPLYING FOR LICENSURE:

Upon completion of the exam, you can apply for licensure through the State of Maine Professional and Financial Regulation office for Physical Therapy. See page 9 for details.

1

OTHER CAREERS IN THE FIELD

OVERVIEW:

Once you consider the price, the time-line and the work that will be required of you before you can be re-licensed as a PT or PTA, you may want to consider other work options while you pursue license, or as an alternative to licensure. Another job in healthcare, with less entrance requirements, might help you fulfill your longer term goals. Additionally, some healthcare employers might be able to financially support you while you pursue licensure and study for the NPT exam. Be upfront about your career goals with any employer that you work with, to see how they might be able to best support you. One more benefit of a alternative job in healthcare is the chance to immerse yourself in the U.S. healthcare system and culture before you take on official licensed work.

PHYSICAL THERAPY ASSISTANT

The process of becoming a licensed PTA is similar to the process for PTs, but with less course work required. Most U.S. PTAs have completed an associate degree before taking the PTA exam. The PTA assists the PT and fulfills other duties specific to the PTA. Similar to PTs, all PTAs must fulfill the educational requirements to sit for the PTA exam. For foreign-trained PTs and PTAs, this means an educational equivalency review. Foreign-trained PTs rarely have the required coursework to become a licensed PTA in Maine and have to enroll in local classes or programs before they can sit for the PTA exam. However, in general there will be less course work for PTA licensure, then for PT re-licensure.

PHYSICAL THERAPY AIDE/ REHAB AIDE /TECH

There is often a demand for PT aides, rehab aides and techs (which are all used interchangeably), especially in hospitals and outpatient facilities. Rehabilitation aides, working under the direct supervision of a physical therapist or assistant, often help the operations of a physical therapy practice. They may maintain treatment area and prep therapy sessions, aiding in the transport of immobile patients. Unlike physical therapy assistants who need to complete an associate degree program, aides are typically required by employers to hold a high school diploma or the equivalent. Aides are trained by employers on the job and do not require licensure, unlike assistants or clinical therapists.

CERTIFIED NURSING ASSISTANT, CNA

CNAs generally assist nurses and other healthcare providers with a variety of tasks and duties. CNAs must complete a relatively short training program, pass a test and undergo a criminal background check before working as a CNA. Working as a CNA in the healthcare field will help you become familiar with the healthcare system and culture in the U.S.

HEALTHCARE INTERPRETER

If you have strong language skills in English and other languages (bilingual), you may want to consider becoming a healthcare interpreter. With a background in healthcare, you could be an important asset to hospitals with interpreting needs. You can either work for a healthcare facility, or for a private interpreting agency. There are training programs for healthcare (medical) interpreters. The human resources departments at hospitals might be a good resource for potential healthcare interpreters.

1

PHYSICAL THERAPY ASSISTANT

OVERVIEW: While the roles are quite different, the PTA licensure process is very similar to the PT licensing process, with less course work required. If you have completed a PTA program in another country, you can complete the evaluation process for PTA to see if your education is equivalent. PTs can also submit their education for the PTA review, but it will be a separate process from their PT evaluation.

What evaluation do you need?

- If you have completed a PT or PTA program in another country and would like to become a PTA, you will need to do a PTA-specific evaluation, called the Physical Therapist Assistant Educational Equivalency Review (PTA-EER)
- You will need to complete the application and submit all required documents.

What will you need?

- Please go to this page to see exactly which documents you will need: <http://www.fccpt.org/Getting-Started/How-to-Apply/Submitting-Documents>

You will need to submit:

1. Your Notarized Attestation form for the selected service. This has to come from you, so can be taken to a local notary.
2. Notarized copy of the diploma. This can come from you, or from issuing institution, so will have to be notarized with you or through the institution.

Other institutions will need to submit:

1. Official Transcripts, or combination of Transcript of Hours and Marksheet or Statement of Marks.
2. Certificates of Clinical Experiences & Hours
3. Detailed Course Descriptions or Syllabi
4. Your licensing authority in your country will need to send a verification of your license.
5. Once documents are received and verified by FCCPT (Foreign Credentialing Commission on Physical Therapy), they will be sent to you to complete the translations on your own.

What is the PTA equivalency tool?

- The PTA equivalency tool is a way for an individual, evaluation company or school to review your education to make sure it reflects the foundational studies and science and technical education equivalent to that of a U.S. PTA degree.
- You can access the PTA equivalency tool here, to pre-asses how your own education might compare: https://www.fsbpt.org/Portals/0/documents/free-resources/PTATool2_20170215.pdf?ver=2017-03-03-165028-223
- An accredited PTA program is commonly a two year associates program in the U.S. While PTA coursework varies somewhat between schools, you can expect to take courses in: Anatomy & Physiology, Introduction to Kinesiology for the PTA, Pathology, Kinesiology for the PTA, Neuroscience

If you pass the education review:

- FCCPT completes the review and will issue a report to you and your selected jurisdiction(s) and/or requested recipient.
- You will need to apply for eligibility to take the PTA exam, through the state of Maine board of physical therapists. Then you will need to complete the NPTE (National Physical Therapy Exam) for PTAs.

REMEMBER:

1. Keep in mind that FCCPT says: "The PTA-EER is not a shorter or simplified version of the Educational Credentials Review (for PTs). It is a different review with different criteria".

2. You can contact a PTA program to see if they can help you fill the gaps. However, there are only two accredited PTA programs in Maine, and they are generally focused on providing courses for their fully matriculated students. It is NOT a guarantee that they will be able to meet your needs.

2

EDUCATION EVALUATION

OVERVIEW: If you have completed a PT or PTA education program in another country, you will need to have it evaluated for equivalency. It is through the credentials evaluation process that a licensing authority determines whether an applicant's education is equivalent to the education provided by an entry-level US PT or PTA program.

How long will this take?

- Consider how long it may take for your educational institution to send official documents to the evaluator.
- Consider how long it will take to get necessary documents notarized.
- Consider the time it may take to have your documents translated.

How much will it cost?

For PTs:

Educational Credentials Review \$1,200
Reactivation \$900 and Re-evaluation \$780

For PTAs:

PTA Educational Equivalency Review (PTA-EER) \$950.
PTA-EER Re-evaluation \$625

STEPS

1. The Maine board asks that you use the Foreign Credentialing Commission on Physical Therapy (FCCPT) (www.fccpt.org) to review your past education, for both PTs and PTAs.
2. You are only eligible for an evaluation if you have graduated from a regionally accredited PT or PTA program (the program will need to be regionally accredited, regardless of the country).
3. If you are pursuing licensure as a PT, you will need to select, apply for and pay for the *Educational Credentials Review Service* <http://www.fccpt.org/Primary-Services/Primary-Services/Educational-Credentials-Review>.
4. Review the required documents closely here: <http://www.fccpt.org/Requirements/How-to-Apply/Submitting-Documents>, and see below for general information on what is required.

You will need to submit:

1. Your Notarized Attestation form for the selected service. This has to come from you, so can be taken to a local notary.
2. Notarized copy of the PT diploma. This can come from you, or from issuing institution, so will have to be notarized with you or through the institution.

Other institutions will need to submit:

1. Official Transcripts, or combination of Transcript of Hours and Marksheet or Statement of Marks.
2. Certificates of Clinical Experiences & Hours.
3. Detailed Course Descriptions or Syllabi.
4. Your licensing authority in your country will need to send a verification of your license.

A NOTE ON COURSE DESCRIPTIONS AND SYLLABI:

- ***Depending on your program and institution, these could be difficult to attain. Some institutions may not have complete records of all courses and the descriptions and syllabi for these courses. Other programs may be able to put these together for you before you even leave the program. It depends, but is something you should look into before beginning this process.***
- ***Some may be able to supply these documents in English, but if not, please consider the cost of translating these documents. This could end up being thousands of dollars, if you do a standard translation rate of about \$50.00-\$60.00 dollars a page.***

REMEMBER:

- You will select two recipients for the final evaluation: FSBPT (who will determine your eligibility to take the test) and the Maine Board, who will also determine your eligibility to take the test.
- If your documents are not in English, see note on translations to your right.

NEXT STEPS:

- If your education is NOT deemed equivalent, review your options on the next page.

TRANSLATIONS

- Ask your educational institution if they can submit your official documents in English.
- IF NOT, FCCPT will notify you that your documents have been received in a language other than English, and they will attach those documents electronically for your to have translated with a certified translator.
- The certified translator should send the documents DIRECTLY to FCCPT once complete.
- One place to find a professional translator is at the American Translators Association (ATA) website.

OVERVIEW: Once you complete the evaluation of your education, you will be able to see if there are any gaps you will need to fill before applying for the exam. While the evaluation company will make recommendations, and you can select a service to help guide you towards course work, it will be your responsibility to complete the missing requirement, and re-apply for the evaluation.

Do you have the required coursework?

- Before you do the Educational Credentials Review, you can get a sense of what course work they will be looking for by reviewing the Course Work Tool for PT or PTA. These documents detail what they will be looking for when they evaluate your education, and you can assess, beforehand, whether it will be worth your time and money to complete this evaluation. Visit this page: <https://www.fsbpt.org/Free-Resources/Regulatory-Resources/Coursework-Tools-CWT> and select the CWT appropriate to your year of graduation.

What is next?

- If the Educational Credentials Review results in your education being found “not equivalent”, you will need to complete course work to meet the requirements.
- You will need to find a CAPTE (Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education) accredited institution that can provide you with the missing course work. This will be tricky, as there are only four programs in the state that offer coursework, and many don't have the flexibility to offer specific course work.
- Your next step will be to get in touch with one of the four programs (depending on your goals for PT and PTA) and ask if you can meet your coursework needs in their program. It is not a guarantee.
- If you would like assistance in finding options for coursework to meet the U.S. standards for physical therapy education, you may benefit from the Planned Learning and Assistance Network (PLAN) service (<http://www.fccpt.org/Related-Services/PLAN-Services/PLAN-Plus>) after FCCPT has completed your initial evaluation. If you do sign up for this service, FCCPT will provide you with a PLAN Worksheet - a detailed summary of their findings that includes potential course options to meet the specific academic requirements found on your evaluation report; and/or answer specific questions about a course or courses that you have found. PLAN Plus is \$1,400, which includes the re-evaluation fee, which you will need to do anyway. PLAN Standard \$650 includes the guidance on completing your coursework, but does not include the re-evaluation fee.

Re-apply:

- If you do complete the coursework required of you, you may apply to FCCPT for a re-evaluation of your educational credentials after submitting additional information about your education.
- Remember, you must work directly with FCCPT in correcting any deficiencies in your report; the Maine licensing board has no role in the re-evaluation process or in counseling you in how to meet your education deficiency.

PT and PTA programs in Maine

There are two accredited Physical Therapy educational programs in the state, and two accredited Physical Therapy Assistant programs in the state. See below:

PHYSICAL THERAPY PROGRAM:

- **University of New England** <https://www.une.edu/wchp/pt>
- **Husson University** https://www.husson.edu/college-of_health-and-pharmacy/school-of-physical-therapy/

PT ASSISTANT PROGRAM

- **University of Maine at Presque Isle** <https://www.umpi.edu/academics/physical-therapist-assistant/>
- **Kennebec Valley Community College** <https://www.kvcc.me.edu/academics/information/programs-of-study/physical-therapist-assistant-program/>

3

APPLYING FOR THE NPT EXAM

OVERVIEW: You will only be eligible to take the NPT exam for PT or PTA once you have passed the educational review with FCCPT and completed your TOEFL test. You will apply to the state board and to FSBPT for permission to take the exam. You will have to be given permission from the state board to take the exam. Once you have permission (through email from the state board), you can apply through FSBPT.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED TO APPLY

STEPS:

Being eligible to take the exam is the largest hurdle in the licensure process for foreign-trained professionals (in addition to passing the test itself). Many states defer to FSBPT to determine eligibility. However, the state is involved in one key way.

1. When you complete your educational review with FCCPT, you will need to select FSBPT and the state licensing board as the recipients of that evaluation.
2. Once the board has received the report, you will complete the state application to determine eligibility to take the exam and if successful, the board will give you approval to apply for the NPTE through FSBPT.
3. Applications for PT and PTA eligibility for foreign-educated individuals can be found here: https://www1.maine.gov/pfr/professionallicensing/professions/physical_therapists/pdf/pt_pta_qualify_for_examination.pdf
5. Once you have written email approval from the board, you can follow the steps below.

NPTE SCHEDULING AND TESTING SITE PROCEDURES

- If you have email approval from the Maine board, you can register online with FSBPT for the NPTE: <https://www.fsbpt.org/Our-Services/Candidate-Services/NPTERegistrationPayment>
- If approved, FSBPT will send you an ATT (Authorization To Test) letter that will include instructions about how to schedule your exam at a Prometric testing site. There is a scheduling fee that is paid to Prometric when you schedule your exam.
- Prometric administers the NPTE in testing centers across the U.S. You can register with Prometric, but you cannot schedule the exam until your application has been processed and you have received an (ATT) notice. The ATT includes detailed instructions for choosing a testing center and scheduling a date to take the NPTE.
- On the day of the test, you must bring the ATT and two forms of acceptable identification. Acceptable ID is a currently valid, government-issued photo ID.

REMEMBER

- **TIMING:** A candidate may take the required test sections individually and in any order. However, once you pass your first section, you must then pass the other three sections within 18 months.
- You are able to apply for one or more sections of the examination at a time; however, you are advised to only apply for a section of the examination if you are ready to take it within the next six months.

PASSING THE NPT EXAM

OVERVIEW: The Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy (FSBPT) administers the National Physical Therapy Examination (NPTE), the examination that every graduate of a physical therapy or physical therapist assistant education program must pass to become a licensed physical therapist or licensed physical therapist assistant in the United States.

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?:

- Upon passing your first exam section, you will have 18 months to complete the other three sections.
- There is no minimum number of sections that must be completed in a testing window. You may take any section in any order, and you do not have to pass one section prior to applying for another.
- If you fail a section of the test, you will need to re-take it in another testing window. You cannot take the same section twice in the same testing window.

HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?

- Physical Therapist (PT) whole test \$485.00
- Physical Therapist Assistant (PTA) whole test \$485.00
- Fees are subject to change. There will also be additional fees payable to Prometric.
- Take into account the cost of a preparation program, or fees for retaking sections of that test that you may not pass.

REGISTRATION FEE: Regardless of how many sections you register for, it is \$75.00 each time. Therefore, if you are ready, it makes sense to register for more than one exam section at a time.

- The NPTE is a computer-administered examination. The physical therapist licensure examination has five sections each with 50 questions. Of the 250 multiple choice questions, only 200 are scored. The physical therapist assistant licensure examination has four sections with a total of 200 multiple choice questions. As in the physical therapist examination, 50 of these questions are being pre-tested and are not scored.

EXAM PREP:

The NPTE for PT and PTA is a difficult test, especially for those whose first language is not English. It is worth investing the time and the money in a preparation course. There are plenty of free on-line resources to start your preparation, but it might be necessary to sign up for an on-line course. There is a limit to the amount of attempts you can make on the exam (three per section, and six attempts in a lifetime). Additionally, you should consider the cost of re-taking the test before signing up. It is important to be prepared.

Online courses and materials:

- There are a variety of test preparation resources available for low cost. FSBPT offers a Practice Review Tool and a practice examination (PEAT) that are both available through their website for a fee.
- Preparation resources for the test: <https://www.fsbpt.org/Secondary-Pages/Exam-Candidates/National-Exam-NPTE/Prepare-for-Exam>
- Here are some free resources provided by FSBPT to help with exam content: <https://www.fsbpt.org/Free-Resources>

4

ENGLISH PROFICIENCY AND 2022 CHANGES

OVERVIEW: If your courses were taught in English, you will have to submit written verification to prove that to FSBPT. If your courses were not taught in English, you will need to submit TOEFL scores before being eligible to take the exam. The Maine board defers to FSBPT to determine scores, and right now, all scores are accepted. See below for notes on passing scores, and changes proposed for 2022. However, if you are doing the TYPE 1 educational review with FCCPT, you will need to submit the passing scores listed below for 2022. Remember: even though there is no required score right now, you will need a high English level to be able to pass the NPT exam. You will also need high verbal skills to be able to interact with clients as a PT or PTA.

TOEFL DIRECTIONS:

- **FOR NOW:** You will need to take the TOEFL test. Candidates need to email FSBPT a copy of their TOEFL score report before being given permission to test. Documentation supplied by the candidate to FSBPT is acceptable. All scores are accepted. It is also acceptable for candidates to request ETS send a copy of the report directly to FSBPT at the time that they take the test.

ALL PLANNED CHANGES:

- There are other planned changes coming from FSBPT to determine your eligibility to test. See below regarding documentation and where documentation will need to be received from.

	CURRENT	PLANNED FOR 2022
<i>TOEFL score</i>	Any score accepted.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading – 22 • Listening – 21 • Writing – 22 • Speaking – 24
<i>Date of TOEFL</i>	Any date accepted.	Must be within two years of registration.
<i>Documentation</i>	Can be supplied by the individual or ETS.	Has to come directly from ETS.
<i>Evaluating agency for educational equivalence</i>	Any agency. Can submit their own report.	Any agency that uses FSBPT CWT 6. Must come directly from the agency.
<i>Educational Equivalence</i>	Deemed substantially equivalent on any agency's tool.	Substantially equivalent on FSBPT CWT 6.
<i>Proof of Equivalence</i>	Candidate may supply their own copy of the agency's report.	Report must come directly from the credentialing agency.

5

APPLYING FOR THE LICENSE

OVERVIEW: If you have successfully passed the PT or PTA NPT exam, then you have essentially completed the licensure requirements set forth by the state of Maine for licensure. You will need to submit an additional application for final licensure. The State of Maine Office of Professional and Financial Regulation for Physical Therapy makes the ultimate decision regarding your eligibility for licensure.

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?:

- After you have submitted your application, you can check www.maine.gov/professionallicensing.
- Your license will show up as PENDING at first; upon issuance of your license by this office your status will be ACTIVE.

HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?:

- License fee of \$55.00
- Criminal background check fee of \$21.00
- Total Due: \$76.00

STEPS

1. Once you have passed the NPTE for PT or PTA, you will need to complete the final application for licensure, which can be found following the links below:
 - PT: https://www1.maine.gov/pfr/professionallicensing/professions/physical_therapists/pdf/pt_pta_licensure.pdf
 - PTA: https://www1.maine.gov/pfr/professionallicensing/professions/physical_therapists/pdf/pt_pta_licensure.pdf
2. You will need your NPT exam scores sent directly from FSBPT to the licensing board.
3. If you have previously applied to the board for permission to take the test, they may already have many of the required documents for final licensure. Read the application closely to make sure they have all required documents. For example, they will need:
 - Your evaluation report from FSBPT
 - Copies of the documents submitted to FSBPT
 - Notarized licenses
 - TOEFL scores

CONTACT

- The mailing address is:
35 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333-0035
- You can contact the board with questions at Dominic Cotone-Office Specialist II (207)-624-8620 or physicalthrp.lic@maine.gov



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