Recognition of Physiotherapy Qualifications in Australia

November 2007

PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS DOCUMENT IS UPDATED REGULARLY AND WHILST THE INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THIS VERSION IS CURRENT AT THE TIME OF PUBLICATION IT IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE. READERS SHOULD ENSURE THAT THEY HAVE THE CURRENT VERSION OF THIS DOCUMENT – AVAILABLE AT www.physiocouncil.com.au
INTRODUCTION

This booklet has been prepared by the office of the Australian Physiotherapy Council for the information and guidance of overseas-qualified physiotherapists who wish to obtain recognition of their qualifications in Australia. It is intended as a guide only, and is not legally binding on any of the bodies or agencies listed. The information given is believed to be accurate at the time of publication; however, requirements for recognition may vary from time to time. Current information is available at www.physiocouncil.com.au

Australia has a federal system of government and is divided into six independently governed States and two Territories. Each Australian State and Territory has separate legislation covering the recognition of physiotherapy qualifications. (However, under the Mutual Recognition Act, subject to certain conditions, if a person is registered to practise an occupation in one State or Territory, they can carry out an equivalent occupation in any other State or Territory). To practise physiotherapy you must be registered with the local State or Territory physiotherapy registration authority. The unregistered practice of physiotherapy is illegal.

If you live overseas and intend to migrate to Australia and you are a physiotherapist with a qualification gained outside Australia or a qualification in physiotherapy gained from an Australian university and you intend to work in this profession in Australia, you should first contact the nearest Australian Embassy, High Commission or Consulate. Information relating to the general skilled migration program, including requirements for assessment of skills and qualifications, is available on the website of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) - http://www.immi.gov.au

If you are already in Australia and need a skills assessment to support an application to change your migration status, you should seek the advice of the DIAC office in your State or Territory or visit the DIAC website www.immi.gov.au.

If you have an entry level Australian physiotherapy qualification that is accredited by the Australian Physiotherapy Council or you hold full registration and a current practising certificate in Australia or New Zealand, you should seek the advice of the Australian Physiotherapy Council - phone +61 2 6262 6029 or website http://www.physiocouncil.com.au/eligibility/exemptions to find out what documents you must submit in order to have your skills assessed.

If you intend to take a working holiday in Australia and work under supervision for up to six months in any one place for up to twelve months, you may be able to get a special type of temporary registration from the relevant Physiotherapists Registration Board. Contact the relevant Physiotherapists Registration Board for more information. Contact details are listed at http://www.physiocouncil.com.au/contact_us/other_contacts/registration_boards

This booklet only provides information for overseas qualified physiotherapists who have obtained a physiotherapy qualification overseas and who do not hold full registration and a current practising certificate in Australia or New Zealand. These physiotherapists have two options to gain professional recognition as a physiotherapist in Australia:

1. successfully complete the Australian Physiotherapy Council assessment process.

2. successfully complete an Australian University Physiotherapy degree program (entry level) that is accredited by the Australian Physiotherapy Council.

Please note that postgraduate physiotherapy qualifications in Australia are not accredited by the Australian Physiotherapy Council and are not recognised for registration purposes.
Physiotherapy in Australia involves a holistic approach to the prevention, diagnosis, and therapeutic management of disorders of movement or optimisation of function to enhance the health and welfare of the community from an individual or population perspective. The practice of physiotherapy encompasses a diversity of clinical specialties to meet the unique needs of different client groups. Most patients treated by physiotherapists have musculoskeletal, respiratory or neurological disorders. Obstetric, psychiatric and other types of patients are also treated.

The practice of physiotherapy in Australia uses an evidence-based, clinical reasoning process. The physiotherapist is a primary contact practitioner and may undertake the following activities: the performance of physiotherapy assessments, including diagnosis, and the treatment of any injury, disease, or other condition of health, or the prevention or rehabilitation of injury, disease, or other condition of health. Physiotherapists may use physical interventions, and/or exercise prescription and/or electrophysical agents within a framework of empowerment of the individual/carer or the community through education. Practice is informed by physiotherapy specific research and the general scientific literature. In this way physiotherapists in Australia engage in evidence-based practice.

Physiotherapists may practise in a general or specialised hospital, or in a specialised unit, for example, intensive care, paediatrics, geriatrics and obstetrics, with in-patients or out-patients. Physiotherapists may also practise in special schools, community health centres, health clinics, nursing homes, psychiatric clinics, government agencies, industry, sports clinics or they may establish a private practice. Some patients are treated at home or, in some Australian States, through domiciliary nursing care centres.

To qualify as a physiotherapist in Australia, a person must meet the entry requirements of one of the universities offering physiotherapy programs and then complete a primary physiotherapy qualification. Primary qualifications are offered at Bachelor level or at graduate entry Masters level (these are NOT postgraduate physiotherapy programs).

The Australian universities offering Bachelor degree courses in physiotherapy that are accredited by the Australian Physiotherapy Council are: The University of Sydney; The University of Queensland; La Trobe University; The University of Melbourne; The University of Newcastle; Charles Sturt University; The University of South Australia; Curtin University of Technology; Griffith University and the University of Notre Dame.

The Universities offering graduate entry Master of Physiotherapy programs that are accredited by the Australian Physiotherapy Council are The University of Sydney; The University of Queensland; The University of South Australia; Curtin University of Technology; Griffith University and the University of Canberra.

Other Australian universities that offer physiotherapy programs that are currently undergoing review for accreditation by the Australian Physiotherapy Council are: James Cook University; Monash University and Bond University.
PROCEDURES FOR ASSESSMENT OF OVERSEAS QUALIFIED PHYSIOTHERAPISTS

The assessment of overseas qualified physiotherapists is carried out by the Australian Physiotherapy Council for two purposes:

1. for recognition for skilled migration purposes
2. for professional recognition in Australia for registration purposes.

Upon successful completion of the Australian Physiotherapy Council assessment process, a candidate will be eligible to apply to register to practise as a physiotherapist in Australia. At this stage, a candidate’s skills are considered suitable for migration purposes and the Skilled Migration certificate may be issued.

The Australian Physiotherapy Council assessment process has three stages:

1. **Eligibility Assessment** – a physiotherapist who completed his or her primary physiotherapy qualification overseas must complete and submit Form 1249 - *Eligibility and Skills Assessment to Undertake the Professional Examinations in Physiotherapy* and include all documentation as specified in the form. This information is assessed to determine whether the applicant satisfies the eligibility criteria outlined below. Overseas qualified physiotherapists who are assessed as satisfying the criteria are invited to undertake the physiotherapy professional examinations.

2. **Written Examination** – conducted world-wide. The Written Examination is a multiple choice question examination covering the principal areas of physiotherapy as practised in Australia.

3. **Clinical Examination** – conducted in Australia only.

THE ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

An overseas qualified physiotherapist is normally assessed as eligible and invited to proceed to the Written Examination if he or she submits evidence that the following criteria have been satisfied:

1. The tertiary level studies leading to his or her physiotherapy qualification are equivalent in duration to no less than three academic years and the curriculum studied is sufficiently similar in theory and practical aspects to the entry-level physiotherapy programs undertaken in Australia, and included a substantial element of supervised physiotherapy clinical practice in cardiorespiratory, musculoskeletal and neurological physiotherapy.

2. The tertiary level studies leading to his or her physiotherapy qualification included theoretical, practical and clinical components of cardiorespiratory, musculoskeletal and neurological physiotherapy, and theoretical and practical aspects of electrotherapy, similar in content and duration to entry-level physiotherapy programs undertaken in Australia;

3. The tertiary level studies leading to his or her physiotherapy qualification qualify the candidate to be registered/licensed as a physiotherapist in the country in which the program was completed (if applicable); and

4. The candidate is able to demonstrate that he or she has a comprehensive knowledge and satisfactory level of skill in English by completing the English Language Requirement.
A comprehensive knowledge of English is essential to practise physiotherapy in Australia and all applications must satisfy the English Language requirement.

1. Applicants who provide evidence that their initial physiotherapy professional education was in the English language medium in any of the countries listed below are not required to provide any further evidence of their English language ability in their application.

2. Applicants who completed their primary and secondary education in the English language medium in any of the countries listed below, but completed their physiotherapy education in a different country must provide a certified copy of their High School Certificate and a certified copy of evidence that their primary and secondary education was completed in the English language medium.

3. Applicants who have worked or studied in a clinical area of the physiotherapy profession for at least two years in the last three years any of the countries listed below and have a strong command of the English language medium must provide a certified copy of their visa and entry stamp in their passport as evidence of their residence and a certified copy of a Statement of English Language Proficiency from a university supervisor or employer. The statement must be written on letterhead paper and must conform to the format provided on the Australian Physiotherapy Council website: www.physiocouncil.com.au

**Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Republic of Ireland, South Africa, United Kingdom, and United States of America**

All other applicants must provide a certified copy of a satisfactory result from one of the English language tests listed below.

1. **International English Language Testing System (IELTS):**

An overall score of Band 7, and a minimum score of Band 6 in each of the four components must be achieved in the Academic Module.

Detailed information including locations, contact details and dates for IELTS examinations in Australia and overseas is available at www.ielts.org

2. **Occupational English Test (OET):**

A pass at a B level or above in all four sections of the test is required.

Detailed information including locations, contact details and dates for OET examinations in Australia and overseas is available at http://www.occupationalenglishtest.org/

**Important note regarding test validity:** IELTS and OET tests results are only valid for a period of two years from the test date. If your test results expire while you are undertaking the Australian Physiotherapy Council examination process, you may be requested to provide a new English test result.
HOW TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY ASSESSMENT

Step 1. Obtain Form 1249 - Eligibility and Skills Assessment to Undertake the Professional Examinations in Physiotherapy from the Australian Physiotherapy Council website. If you do not have internet access or cannot download the form, contact:
Australian Physiotherapy Council
GPO Box 587
Canberra ACT 2601 AUSTRALIA
Tel: + 61 2 6262 6029
Fax: + 61 2 6262 5284
E-mail: enquiries@physiocouncil.com.au
Web: http://www.physiocouncil.com.au

Step 2: Complete form 1249 and compile all the documents listed in the form.

Step 3: Send form 1249 and all required documentation to the Australian Physiotherapy Council. Please ensure that you have all of the necessary documentation as outlined in the checklist in the form. Your application will not be assessed until you have provided all of the required documents.

Applications for assessment of eligibility are accepted throughout the year. Applicants are strongly advised to send their complete application (including English language test result if required) as soon as possible. If the application form or documentation is incorrect or incomplete, the application will not be sent to the assessor until the applicant sends all the required documents to complete the application.

An applicant will be notified of the outcome of the assessment around 6 weeks from the date that his or her complete application is received by the Australian Physiotherapy Council. The outcome of the assessment may be:

i) advice that the applicant has been assessed as eligible and is required to register for the next written examination;
ii) a request for more detailed information; or
iii) advice that on the basis of the documentation provided the applicant has not been assessed as eligible for the professional examinations in physiotherapy.

If an applicant disagrees with the outcome the assessment, he or she may request a review. The request for a review must be in writing and a review fee of up to AUD $495.00 may be charged. The request for a review should include the reasons why the applicant disagrees with the outcome and any supplementary information or documents that the applicant considers will support his or her request.

WRITTEN EXAMINATION

The Written Examination is held twice yearly, in the first week of March and the first week of September. It is the date that an applicant is assessed as eligible that will determine which written examination session the applicant is required to sit. Applicants that are assessed as eligible between 1 June and 30 November will be required to sit the written examination in March the following year. Applicants who are assessed as eligible between 1 December and 31 May will be required to sit the written examination in September.

The written examination consists of two (2) papers each of two (2) hours duration taken on the one day – Paper 1 is completed in the morning and Paper 2 is completed in the afternoon. The Written Examination is designed as a comprehensive test of application of knowledge in the principal fields of physiotherapy, as it is practised in Australia. The majority of questions are written but some may be based on diagrams. Further information and examples of MCQ items are provided to eligible applicants.
Venue Information

Candidates resident in Australia may sit for the examination in Brisbane, Canberra, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth, Hobart, Townsville or Mackay. Candidates based overseas may sit the Examination at a participating exam venue. For each session of the examination the venues may change based on the location of candidates for that particular session. The following offshore venues are usually available:

Europe: Athens, London, Moscow
Middle East: Ankara, Dubai, Islamabad, Riyadh
Sub Continent: New Delhi
Africa: Accra, Cairo, Harare, Johannesburg, Nairobi
Asia: Hong Kong, Manila, Singapore
South America: Brasilia
Pacific: Auckland

There are no venues available in USA or Canada.

Registered candidates will be advised of the exact date, time and venues approximately four weeks in advance of the exam date. Exam venues may vary from session to session so there is no guarantee that there will be an exam venue available in a candidate's country and he or she may have to travel.

Results of the Written Examination will be published 40 days following the examination date. The Written Examination must be successfully completed before the candidate is able to progress to the Clinical Examination. When a candidate passes the Written Examination, he or she will receive an Australian Physiotherapy Council Interim Certificate.

CLINICAL EXAMINATION

Candidates must hold an Australian Physiotherapy Council Interim Certificate to be eligible to sit for the Clinical Examination. The Clinical Examination can only be completed in Australia.

The candidate will be examined by two or three experienced Australian Physiotherapy Council examiners on patients who have acute, sub-acute or chronic conditions in the three component areas of cardiorespiratory, musculoskeletal and neurological physiotherapy. The standard an Australian Physiotherapy Council candidate is expected to attain is the same as that applied to a final year physiotherapy student graduating from an Australian university.

Overseas Residents Note: If you live overseas and have passed the Written Examination, you should ensure you have a visa that permits you to enter Australia to complete the Clinical Examination. Seek advice regarding visa types from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) [www.immi.gov.au](http://www.immi.gov.au)

AUSTRALIAN PHYSIOTHERAPY COUNCIL FINAL CERTIFICATE

When a candidate successfully completes the clinical stage of the process, an Australian Physiotherapy Council Final Certificate is issued. This is one of the requirements for registration with any of the Australian Physiotherapists' Registration Boards.

Once a physiotherapist is registered in Australia, he or she will have the same rights to practise as an Australian qualified and registered physiotherapist.

If an applicant intends to migrate to Australia he or she must indicate this on form 1249. A skills assessment will be issued for the purposes of applying to migrate to Australia under the skilled visa categories when the candidate successfully completes the clinical stage of the process.
ABOUT THE AUSTRALIAN PHYSIOTHERAPY COUNCIL

The Australian Physiotherapy Council an independent national body ensuring high standards in physiotherapy for the Australian community.

The members of the Australian Physiotherapy Council are the eight Physiotherapists Registration Boards, the Australian Physiotherapy Association and a representative of the Schools of Physiotherapy in Australia.

The Australian Physiotherapy Council promotes a safe and competent physiotherapy workforce for the Australian community by:

- Accreditation of entry level physiotherapy programs in Australian universities prior to registration of graduates to practise physiotherapy in Australia.
- Maintenance and regular review of the Australian Standards for Physiotherapy.
- Assessment of overseas qualified physiotherapists prior to registration to practise in Australia.
- Assessment of overseas and Australian qualified physiotherapists for the purpose of migration to Australia as a physiotherapist under the skilled visa categories.
- Provision of advice to Government agencies and Physiotherapists Registration Boards in Australia on legislative matters relevant to a consistent national approach to physiotherapy registration.

CONTACT DETAILS – Australian Physiotherapy Council

Australian Physiotherapy Council
GPO Box 587
CANBERRA ACT 2601
AUSTRALIA

Tel: + 61 2 6262 6029
Fax: + 61 2 6262 5284
E-mail: enquiries@physiocouncil.com.au
Website: http://www.physiocouncil.com.au

CONTACT DETAILS – Australian Physiotherapy Registration Boards

1. New South Wales

Physiotherapists’ Registration Board of New South Wales
PO Box K599
HAYMARKET NSW 1238

Tel: + 61 2 9219 0255
Fax: + 61 2 9281 2030
Email: physioreg@hprb.health.nsw.gov.au
Web: www.physioreg.health.nsw.gov.au
2. **Queensland**

The Physiotherapists’ Board of Queensland  
GPO Box 2438  
BRISBANE QLD 4001

Tel:    + 61 7 3225 2505  
Fax:    + 61 7 3225 2527  
Email: physiotherapy@healthregboards.qld.gov.au  
Web:   www.physioboard.qld.gov.au

3. **Victoria**

Physiotherapists’ Registration Board of Victoria  
PO BOX 248  
Collins Street West VIC 8007

Tel:    + 61 3 9286 1888  
Fax:    + 61 3 9286 1880  
Email: registrar@physioboard.vic.gov.au  
Web:   www.physioboard.vic.gov.au

4. **South Australia**

The Physiotherapy Board of South Australia  
GPO Box 1270  
ADELAIDE SA 5001

Tel:    + 61 8 8274 1488  
Fax:    + 61 8 8372 6677  
Email: jbailey@gtsa.com.au  
Web:   http://www.physioboardsa.org.au/

5. **Tasmania**

Physiotherapists’ Registration Board of Tasmania  
GPO Box 792  
HOBART TAS 7001

Tel:    + 61 3 6224 9331  
Fax:    + 61 3 6224 9700  
Email: physio@regboardstas.com  
Web:   www.physioboard.tas.gov.au

6. **Western Australia**

Physiotherapists’ Registration Board of Western Australia  
PO BOX 959  
SOUTH PERTH WA 6951

Tel:    + 61 8 9368 2644  
Fax:    + 61 8 9368 2677  
Email: enquiries@prbwa.com.au  
Web:   www.prbwa.com.au
7. Australian Capital Territory

Physiotherapists’ Registration Board of the ACT
Scala House
11 Torrens Street
Braddon ACT 2612

Tel: + 61 2 6205 1601
Fax: + 61 2 6205 1602
Email: david.bale@act.gov.au

8. Northern Territory

Physiotherapists’ Registration Board of the Northern Territory
GPO Box 4221
DARWIN NT 0801

Tel: + 61 8 8946 9546
Fax: + 61 8 8946 9550

AUSTRALIAN PHYSIOTHERAPY ASSOCIATION – Information and Contact Details

The Australian Physiotherapy Association (APA), which has a branch in every State and Territory, is the professional body for physiotherapists in Australia.

The APA formulates ethics and policies for the profession and makes representations on its behalf to government and other bodies at national and State levels.

The Association is a member of the World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT) and offers professional development in specialisation, continuing education, clinical special groups, congresses and conferences.

Membership is open to any physiotherapist eligible for registration in Australia and is processed through the branch in the State or Territory in which the physiotherapist practises. The address of the National Office of the APA is:

Australian Physiotherapy Association
PO Box 6465
ST KILDA CENTRAL VIC 8008
AUSTRALIA

Tel: + 61 3 9534 9400
Fax: + 61 3 9534 9199
Web: www.physiotherapy.asn.au

CONTACT DETAILS – Australian Physiotherapy Schools

University of Queensland
Department of Physiotherapy
ST LUCIA QLD 4072

Tel: +61 7 3365 2275
Web: http://www.uq.edu.au
University of Sydney
School of Physiotherapy
East Street
LIDCOMBE  NSW  2141
Tel:  +61 2 9351 2222
Web:  http://www.usyd.edu.au

La Trobe University
School of Physiotherapy
BUNDOORA  VIC  3083
Tel:  +61 3 9479 1111
Web:  http://www.latrobe.edu.au

University of Melbourne
School of Physiotherapy
Grattan Street
PARKVILLE  VIC  3052
Tel:  +61 3 8344 4000
Web:  http://www.unimelb.edu.au

Charles Sturt University
School of Physiotherapy
PO Box 789
Albury NSW  2640
Tel:  +61 2 6051 6988
Web:  http://www.csu.edu.au

University of South Australia
School of Physiotherapy
North Terrace
Adelaide  SA  5000
Tel:  +61 8 8302 6611
Web:  http://www.unisa.edu.au

Curtin University of Technology
School of Physiotherapy
Selby Street
SHENTON PARK  WA  6008
Tel:  +61 8 9266 9266
Web:  http://www.curtin.edu.au
OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION

Importance of English

As in any other profession, a good command of the English language is essential in order to practise as a physiotherapist. For some overseas-qualified physiotherapists, a short course in English language skills will be very helpful. To obtain information about English language courses in Australia you should contact:
• Centrelink;
• Local offices of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC);
• Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) providers;
• Technical and Further Education (TAFE) colleges; or
• Migration Resource Centres (MRC).

The local Australian telephone book will provide details of addresses and telephone numbers for these agencies. In addition, there is a national Telephone Interpreter Service (TIS) that provides assistance directly over the telephone for people who have difficulty in communicating in English. This service can be reached on telephone 131450 from anywhere in Australia for the cost of a local call.

### Australian Education International – Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations seeks to help overseas qualified professionals who are Australian citizens or permanent residents living in Australia to obtain recognition of their qualifications in Australia.

The **Assessment Subsidy for Overseas Trained professionals (ASDOT) program** covers fees for assessments of some overseas qualifications leading to full and unconditional registration where occupations are regulated or, in other professions, the fees for an examination required.


**FEE-HELP** is an Australian Government scheme to make loans to overseas-trained professionals who are undertaking bridging courses for overseas-trained professionals.

For further information, go to [http://www.goingtouni.gov.au/Main/FeesLoansAndScholarships/Postgraduate/FullFeesAndFEE-HELP/Default.htm](http://www.goingtouni.gov.au/Main/FeesLoansAndScholarships/Postgraduate/FullFeesAndFEE-HELP/Default.htm)