

Physiotherapy Competency Examination

Exam Policies 2014



Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators
Alliance canadienne des organismes de réglementation de la physiothérapie

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This handbook contains the **policies** governing the Physiotherapy¹ Competency Examination (PCE). The Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators (The Alliance) reserves the right to change these policies and procedures **without prior notice**.

Candidates will find a description of the application **process** and the required forms and other instructions for registering for the PCE at www.alliancept.org.

For exam application, process, dates and fees, see **PCE Exam Registration Guide 2014**.

Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators

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¹ Physiotherapy, physiotherapist, physical therapy, physical therapist, physiothérapeute, physiothérapie, PT and pht are official marks used with permission. In this document, *physical therapy* means the same thing as *physiotherapy*, and *physical therapist* means the same thing as *physiotherapist*.



1. General Information

About the Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators (The Alliance)

The Alliance, incorporated in 1992, is dedicated to developing and improving regulatory standards of practice for physiotherapists. Our member organizations regulate physiotherapy according to provincial and territorial legislation.

Purpose and Structure of the Physiotherapy Competency Examination

The Physiotherapy Competency Examination (PCE) tests whether qualified exam candidates have demonstrated a minimum standard of practice. It fairly and accurately evaluates the competencies needed to practise physiotherapy. All physiotherapy regulators in Canada except Quebec's require applicants to have passed the PCE before being granted the right to practice, (although Quebec requires all applicants trained *outside* Quebec to have passed the PCE). Quebec-trained applicants must pass a comprehensive exam unique to that province that is equivalent to the PCE.

The PCE, and its Quebec equivalent, tests the essential competencies of physiotherapy practice – the essential knowledge, skills and abilities. It tests history-taking, physical examination, data interpretation, clinical problem solving, treatment techniques, ethics, safety, interviewing and communication. The exam covers the core clinical practice areas: neuromusculoskeletal, neurological, cardiopulmonary-vascular and multisystem.

The PCE has two components; the first is written, the second is clinical.

Candidates must pass the written component (Qualifying Exam) before being eligible to attempt the clinical component (Physiotherapy National Exam).

Written Component (Qualifying Exam). A multiple-choice exam that tests understanding of the principles and processes of physiotherapy practice. (See page 31 for details.)

Clinical Component (Physiotherapy National Exam). An objective structured clinical exam (OSCE) that tests ability to safely and effectively apply the principles and processes of physiotherapy practice. (See pages 31-34 for details.)



2. Requirements for Registration Not Uniform Across Canada

Requirements for registration as a physiotherapist differ from province to province and territory to territory. Applicants are responsible for contacting the provincial or territorial physiotherapy regulator where they wish to become registered for details.

For example, some regulators may require applicants to pass an examination of testing their knowledge of the rules of physiotherapy practice in that jurisdiction, or the Physiotherapy Competency Examination, (PCE). Some may require applicants to submit evidence of good character in jurisdictions where the applicant was previously registered.

Federally, the two official languages of Canada are English and French. But not all provinces and territories are officially bilingual and some provincial and territorial regulators will require fluency in either English or French, but not both.

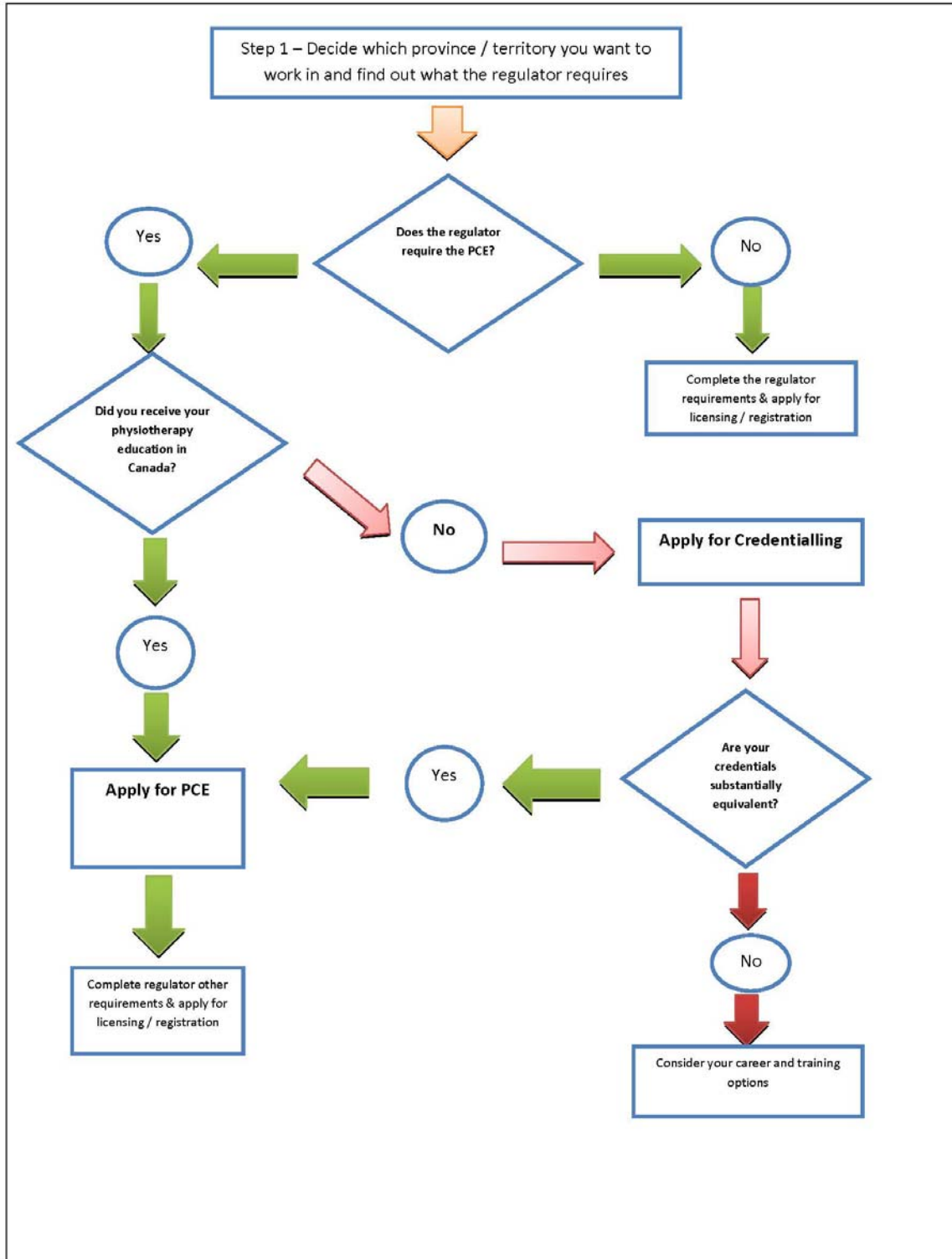
Applicants who wish to practice in Quebec must be fluent in French, and must contact *l'Ordre professionnel de la physiothérapie du Québec*.

Prospective Ontario applicants may “pre-register” with the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario before they qualify for practice in that province. Although pre-registration is optional, the Ontario College highly recommends it.

Those interested in practising in Northwest Territories or Nunavut must contact the territorial health department or their proposed employer.



3. The Licensing/Registration Process:



4. Eligibility to take the PCE

Before being permitted to attempt the written component of the PCE, **Canadian-educated** candidates must:

- Have worked a minimum of 1,025 hours of supervised clinical practice
- Have completed the clinical requirements for registration in the province in which they received their physiotherapy education
- Provide an **official transcript** proving they have successfully completed an entry-level degree in physical therapy from a physiotherapy program accredited with Physiotherapy Education Accreditation Canada (PEAC). Transcripts must be received by the Alliance directly from the university.
- Those enrolled in a Canadian physiotherapy program may attempt the **written component** during their final term of academic study but they cannot attempt the **clinical component** until they have completed their course of study and are eligible for graduation.

Before being permitted to attempt the written component of the PCE, **internationally-educated** candidates must:

- Have successfully completed the Educational Credentials and Qualifications Assessment, which determines whether an internationally educated applicant's education and qualifications are substantially equivalent to those of a Canadian-educated candidate
- Provide proof of proficiency in English or French Canadian



5. Declaration of Identity

A notarized **Declaration of Identity** (DIF) form must be filed with an applicant's **first** application to try the exam, unless the applicant has already filed one for credentialing purposes or if your last exam was prior to 2011.

*Note: the self-study module declaration is **not** the same as the “Declaration of Identity” form. Applicants who are unsure about whether they have previously completed the Declaration of Identity should contact The Alliance.*

The **Declaration of Identity** form must be “notarized”, meaning it must be signed in the presence of a “notary public”, (a person authorized to administer oaths and swear to the accuracy of statements and documents). Contact a notary public for details of the procedure. The notary public must complete Section 2 of the **Declaration of Identity** form.

Along with the **Declaration of Identity** form, applicants must also submit two identical, colour passport photographs of themselves taken within six months previous to the date of the application. One photograph must be attached to the Declaration of Identity form and the notary public must stamp or seal over this photograph. **Please print your name on the back of both photographs.**

The **Declaration of Identity** is valid for five years from the date on the form. Applicants who change their appearance or name within that time, must submit a new form. The photographs submitted will be used to check identity when applicants arrive to take the PCE. Applicants whose appearance and/or name on the *Declaration of Identity* do not match the photograph and information prepared for the PCE may not be able to take the exam.

Note: If you have previously submitted a DIF, extra photographs are not required. Please do not send loose photographs with your exam applications; these will not be used for any purpose and will be returned to you



6. Scoring

We score the two parts of the Physiotherapy Competency Examination independently. You must successfully complete the Written Component (Qualifying Exam) to advance to the Clinical Component (Physiotherapy National Exam). You must successfully complete the Clinical Component to receive a certificate of successful completion of the Physiotherapy Competency Examination.

Written Component (Qualifying Exam)

To pass the Written Component, you must achieve an overall score of 330 or higher on the standard score scale.

Your Standard Score

We have converted your number of correct answers to a standard score so that we can compare candidates' scores from different sittings of the exam. Your standard score is not equal to the number of questions you answered correctly on the exam.

Understanding Your Standard Score

The average score for all Canadian-educated candidates taking the exam for the first time is set at 500. The standard deviation of the scale is set at 100. These values allow you to see whether your score is above or below the average score. If your score is higher than 500, your exam performance was better than the average performance of the Canadian-educated candidates taking the exam for the first time. If your score is below 500, your performance was below that average.

Your Performance Profile

To give you more information on your performance, we have also given your score for each area of practice and function (sub-scores). If a sub-score is near 500, then your performance in that area of practice or function was similar to the average performance of all Canadian-educated candidates taking the exam for the first time.

Your total score is not equal to the average of your sub-scores.

Clinical Component (Physiotherapy National Exam)

We score the Clinical Component of the Physiotherapy Competency Examination on three criteria. You must meet all three criteria in order to pass the exam.

Your station score for ten-minute stations represents how many checklist items you did correctly (80 percent of the station score) and how the examiners rated your performance and communication (20 percent of the station score).

Your station score for five-minute stations represents how many checklist items you did correctly (40 percent of the station score), how the examiners rated your performance



(10 percent of the station score) and how you scored on the written station (50 percent of the station score).

Total Score

Your total score is the average of your station scores, converted to a standard score. To meet this criterion, you must achieve a minimum overall score.

Meeting the total score criterion shows that you have demonstrated an overall minimal standard over a range of knowledge, skills and abilities. The total score does not provide information about specific areas of practice or functions in which you may have gaps in your knowledge, skills or abilities.

Number of Stations

To meet this criterion, you must pass a minimum number of stations.

Meeting the number-of-stations criterion shows that you have performed satisfactorily on a minimum number of sets of items. The number-of-stations criterion will identify frequent or systematic gaps in your knowledge, skills and abilities. The number-of-stations criterion prevents you from passing the Clinical Component if you do well in some stations but badly in others. By doing so, it ensures that you show consistent knowledge, skills and abilities from station to station.

Critical Incidents

To meet this criterion, you can have no more than two minor safety or professionalism violations during the exam, and you cannot have any major safety or professionalism violations.

Examiners write down any critical incidents, which are actions or behaviours that cause concern about your ability to practise physiotherapy safely and professionally. The Board of Examiners reviews these critical incidents and decides whether each identified incident is a safety or professional violation. They consider many factors, including the accuracy and completeness of the examiner's documentation, the planned portrayal by the standardized client, relevant literature, past decisions on similar critical incidents, and the professional judgment of the Board members.

For more information on scoring, see Frequently Asked Questions in the “Exam” section of our website, www.alliancept.org.



7. Exam Results

Results for the written component will be sent **by mail** to the applicant's address within 6 weeks of the examination. Results for the clinical component will be mailed within 12 weeks of the exam.

Canadian educated exam applicants must ensure that the Alliance has received the final official transcript directly from their university program before clinical exam results can be released.

Applicants are responsible for ensuring the Alliance has their current address and should not phone, fax or email the Alliance asking for exam results.

Exam results will be posted on website www.alliancept.org on the same day that they are mailed. Applicants will need a PIN to access their results online.

Note: If you can not locate your PIN please email csa@alliancept.org. We can only send your PIN by email to an email address already on file. We DO NOT release PIN verbally.



8. Re-Taking the Exam

Section (A) - Starting in 2013 or later

Candidates attempting the written component of the exam for the first time in 2013 or later have *five years* from the date they first attempt the *written* component to complete both written and clinical components.

Candidates who take their first attempt at the written component in 2013 or later have a maximum of *three attempts* to pass both written and clinical components of the exam.

After three failed attempts at a component, section A candidates have exhausted exam eligibility.

Your 2nd and 3rd attempt of the failed component, either written or clinical, must be re-tried within *2 years* of the date of the first attempt at that component.

No candidate can take the Written Component more than 3 times in any one calendar year.

Note: You must attempt the Clinical Component within two years of successfully completing the Written Component within your 5 year eligibility.

Section (B) - Prior to 2013

Candidates who have completed a first attempt at either the written or clinical component prior to 2013 are governed by the policy that was in place at the time of their first written attempt. This means that these candidates have up to *two more possible attempts* per component which must be completed within *2 years* of the date of the first written or first clinical component attempt. If the third attempt is not successful, special permission for a *fourth attempt* can be requested.

If a candidate needs to take a component for a *fourth* time, the candidate must request permission for a fourth attempt and submit a detailed exam preparation plan. This plan must be approved by the Program Manager of Examinations.

If the *fourth attempt* is not successful, special permission for a *fifth attempt* can be requested.

If a candidate needs to take a component for a *fifth* time, the candidate must request permission for a fifth attempt and submit a detailed exam preparation plan. This plan must be approved by Board of Examiners.

No candidate can take the Written Component more than 3 times in any one calendar year.

After five failed attempts at a component, section B candidates have exhausted exam eligibility.



Contact csa@alliancept.org for information related to fourth and fifth attempts.



9. Re-scoring, Administrative Reconsideration and Appeals

Re-scoring

Candidates who wish to have their exam scored again must make that request in writing within 30 days of the date on the exam results letter received from the Alliance. The request to re-score must be submitted along with the completed re-scoring form and required fee and addressed to:

Exam Program, *Re-scoring Request*,

Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators,

Suite 501, 1243 Islington Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M8X 1Y9.

Re-scoring involves checking to make sure that a candidate received credit for all correct answers. Exam results rarely change following re-scoring. If re-scoring changes an exam result from a fail to a pass, the re-scoring fee will be refunded (for more information, see the FAQ's).

Administrative Reconsideration

Administrative Reconsiderations are for incidents that affected your ability to perform your best in the exam due to circumstances that were beyond your control. These incidents must have occurred on exam day. If an incident occurred at any point before the exam you should consult the Illness or Other Extraordinary Circumstances before or on Examination Day section in The Exam Registration Guide 2014 on page 11 & 12.

If you request administrative reconsideration and your request meets the criteria set out below, the Program Manager of Examinations will appoint an investigator to review your request. The investigator will consider the reasons you requested administrative reconsideration, and will review your supporting documentation and any additional relevant materials. The investigator will conduct any interviews he or she thinks necessary. The investigator will decide if the issues you raised could have put you at a disadvantage compared to other candidates. The request for administrative reconsideration must be submitted along with the complete administrative reconsideration form and required fee and send it to:

Exam Program, *Administrative Reconsideration Request*,

Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators,

Suite 501, 1243 Islington Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M8X 1Y9.



Criteria for Administrative Reconsideration

We will do an administrative reconsideration for three types of issues:

- Illness on the day of the exam.
- Administrative issues on the day of the exam. If the circumstances of your exam affected your exam performance in a negative way or placed you at a disadvantage compared to other candidates, you may be eligible for administrative reconsideration. These circumstances could include exam procedures that are significantly different from The Alliance's standard exam procedures.
- Extraordinary circumstances. If extraordinary circumstances beyond your control, such as a family emergency, could have affected your exam result, you may be eligible for administrative reconsideration.

Note: For section A and B candidates, an Administrative Reconsideration will not change your eligibility timeline (e.g. if you receive an Administrative Reconsideration for your 1st exam for the purposes of eligibility timelines it will remain the first exam you attempted. This means that an Administrative Reconsideration cannot extend your overall 5 year eligibility timeline).

Process for Administrative Reconsideration

If you are requesting administrative reconsideration because of illness, we must receive your written request within 7 days of the exam. You must submit a Candidate Medical Certificate. If you are requesting administrative reconsideration for any reason other than illness, we must receive your written request at our office within 30 days of the date on your results letter.

- Please submit, in writing, a confidential letter describing the health issues, administrative issues or extraordinary circumstances that you believe affected your result. Your letter must show a cause and effect relationship between the issues you raise and your exam performance. Include specific details about administrative issues or extraordinary circumstances.
- Include payment for the full administrative reconsideration fee. You can pay the administrative reconsideration fee by credit card, certified cheque or money order (see PCE Exam Registration Guide 2014 page 6).

Please deliver or mail the required documents (your letter plus any supporting documentation) and fees to our office to the attention of the Program Manager of Examinations. The administrative reconsideration, conducted by our staff, includes an administrative and statistical audit of test sheets and other documents, as well as interviews with examiners, standardized clients and site staff, as required.



Supporting Documentation

- If your request for administrative reconsideration is based on illness, send medical documentation from a licensed or registered healthcare practitioner and a Candidate Medical Certificate (see www.alliancept.org).
- If your request for administrative reconsideration is based on extraordinary circumstances, send any available relevant supporting documentation.

Outcome of Administrative Reconsideration

If we find that the issues you identified could have significantly affected your results, the outcome of your administrative reconsideration **may** include:

- allowing you to repeat the exam component without counting the failed attempt in your exam history;
- if we find that administrative issues are the deciding factor in granting the reconsideration, we can:
 - refund your administrative reconsideration fee,
 - annul the charge for the exam fee for your next exam attempt.

We will not change a fail to a pass in an administrative reconsideration.

For more information, see the FAQ's on our website.

Appeal

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your administrative reconsideration, you may choose to appeal. In an appeal, we review all the information related to your performance to determine whether the issues you raised could have significantly affected your result. We also determine whether you were treated fairly in the administrative reconsideration process.

The request for an appeal must be submitted along with the required fee and send it to:

Exam Program, *Appeal Request*,

Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators,

Suite 501, 1243 Islington Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M8X 1Y9.

Criteria for Appeal

You must request an administrative reconsideration and receive the response to that request before you can request an appeal.

You must request an appeal in writing. Include a confidential letter describing the issues on which you are basing your appeal.



We must receive appeal requests at our office no more than 30 days after the date on your administrative reconsideration response.

You must include payment for the full appeal fee. You can pay the appeal fee by credit card, certified cheque or money order (see PCE Exam Registration Guide 2014 page 6).

Process for Appeal

Please deliver or mail the required documents (your letter plus any supporting documentation) and fees to our office to the attention of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The CEO will assemble an appeal panel to consider all the information related to your performance, including your administrative reconsideration and any additional information you provide.

Supporting Documentation

If you appeal your administrative reconsideration, we will already have your relevant documents on file. You can submit more documents relevant to your appeal, such as further explanation or details of the issues, or more medical documentation. We will not consider letters of reference or information about your performance in undergraduate placements in your appeal.

Outcome of Appeal

If the appeal panel finds that the issues you identified probably would have significantly affected your results, it may grant your appeal. The outcome of a successful appeal **may** include:

- allowing you to repeat the exam component without counting the failed attempt in your exam history;
- refunding your administrative reconsideration fee;
- refunding your appeal fee;
- not charging the exam fee for your next exam attempt.

In limited circumstances, the appeal panel may decide to change a fail to a pass.

The decision of the appeal panel is final.



10. Additional Information

Limitations

We cannot advise or provide details on matters under the jurisdiction of other institutions or governments, such as:

- regulations, statutes or policies governing physiotherapy licensing or registration;
- opportunities for general or specific experience;
- training or employment opportunities;
- agreements between physiotherapy licensing bodies within or outside Canada;
- the conditions imposed by the Government of Canada for immigration;
- scholarships or funding;
- income tax deductions.

Limits of The Alliance's Liability

Before you register for the PCE, you must read and understand the limits of liability. You must tell interested parties, such as potential or current employers, about the limits of liability.

While the Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators (The Alliance) takes reasonable steps to ensure the accuracy and completeness of information, resources and reports, neither The Alliance nor any of its officers, employees or agents shall be responsible for damages or losses in the event of any errors or omissions, or liable for any damages or losses incurred by a candidate, an employer or a contractor as a result of any decision made by or on behalf of The Alliance or any of its officers, employees or agents. This means that The Alliance is not responsible for impacts of a personal, professional or financial nature. This includes such impacts as loss of income, loss of salary, and expenses incurred by an employer, a contractor or a candidate.

By registering for and participating in the PCE, you agree that you will take no legal action or other proceedings against The Alliance or any of its officers, employees or agents for anything done in good faith related to the PCE, including any errors, omissions, neglect or default. You also agree to fully release and indemnify The Alliance, its officers, employees and agents for any such actions or proceedings. This means that The Alliance will not be responsible for any loss of income or other expenses incurred by you or an employer or contractor due to a decision made by The Alliance related to the PCE, and that you agree not to take legal action against The Alliance.



Financial Assistance

We do not offer financial assistance or information on possible sources of financial assistance. We cannot dismiss or change exam fees except as noted elsewhere in this handbook.

The Alliance is a non-profit organization. The money we need to administer the Physiotherapy Competency Examination comes from the exam fees we collect.

Research

We conduct research using non-identifying exam data, and we may also provide this data to external researchers. Non-identifying exam data is data from your exam, such as your answers and marks that does not include your name or identification number and cannot be traced back to you. By signing the application form, you are consenting to the use of non-identifying data for research purposes.

Privacy Policy

We collect, use and disclose our candidates' personal information responsibly and only as permitted by law. Please see our Privacy Policy for more details. It is available online at our website, www.alliancept.org.



11. Confidentiality and Security of Exam Material

The Alliance maintains strict security over exam content before, during and after the exam to eliminate unfair advantages among candidates and to avoid the costs of replacing exam questions if cheating occurs.

All exam materials are protected by copyright. Our security measures protect exam material while it is being developed and reviewed; while it is being reproduced, transported and disposed of; and while it is being presented on the exam day.

We strictly enforce the rules of conduct for the Physiotherapy Competency Examination and exam security, as described on page 20 & 21. Candidates who do not follow the rules of conduct may be asked to leave the exam site, may not receive results of the exam, or may have their results cancelled.

Please note that we may use monitoring and surveillance technologies to detect and document cheating.



12. Rules of Conduct for the Physiotherapy Competency Examination and Exam Security

By participating in the Physiotherapy Competency Examination, you agree to the following rules:

1. The Physiotherapy Competency Examination and its contents are the exclusive property of the Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators (The Alliance).
2. You cannot remove any part of the Physiotherapy Competency Examination from the exam site, or memorize/record questions for distribution.
3. Your behaviour before, during and after the exam cannot disturb other candidates or cause them anxiety. Do not make disruptive comments about the exam, unnecessarily question exam policies and procedures or engage in other behaviour that could disturb other candidates.
4. If you cheat, as defined below, we may ask you to leave the exam site, we may decide not to mark your exam or we may take other appropriate action.
5. It is assumed that you are in the PCE participating in a good faith attempt to pass. Any actions or behaviors in contravention of this assumption will be considered “cheating”. This includes anything that could affect your results, the results of another candidate or the results of a potential future candidate. It also includes behaviours that the Alliance considers analogous to cheating, such as modifying Alliance documents in order to give the false impression of having passed the exam. Some examples of cheating are listed below, however this list is not exhaustive:
 - a. Non-registered individuals posing as registered candidates
 - b. Bringing study materials to the exam room(s), or any other material that has not been expressly permitted including electronic devices
 - c. Giving or receiving help during the exam
 - d. Engaging in any conduct during the exam that disturbs or is disrespectful towards other candidates or exam staff
 - e. Removing or trying to remove exam materials from the exam site
 - f. Receiving or distributing information about the Written Component or the Clinical Component **either before or after** the exam.² You cannot share information about the diagnoses, tasks or activities that are included in the exam. Do not discuss information about Clinical Component stations with other candidates or examiners even after the exam
 - g. Commencing the exam before being instructed to do so and/or continuing the exam after being told to cease
 - h. Disregarding instructions from the exam supervisor, invigilator, or any exam staff

² You must maintain the same strict confidentiality with station information that you would with patient information. Candidates who have failed the exam but who learn about questions and stations in discussions after the exam will have an unfair advantage on future exams. (In other words, they can pass a station because they already know about the station.)



- i. Modifying exam results letters or other Alliance documentation to give a false impression of having passed the exam or misrepresenting your exam status
- j. Any activity that would be considered illegal, such as assault, harassment, or theft



Actions of The Alliance in the Event of Suspected Cheating

1. If the exam personnel suspect that you are cheating, they may take your exam materials, as well as any other documents, objects or materials that could be used for cheating, and make you or others leave the exam site. The exam personnel report any suspected cheating to the Program Manager off Examinations of The Alliance.
2. The Program Manager of Examinations conducts appropriate investigations into all suspected cheating. You will have an opportunity to submit a written response to the suspicion of cheating.
3. The Exam Steering Group reviews the results of the investigation, including your response. It asks for any additional investigations it believes are necessary and makes one of the following decisions:
 - a. Declare that we cannot confirm whether you cheated.
 - b. Declare that you may have cheated, and recommend appropriate sanctions.
4. The Exam Steering Group will forward a declaration of possible cheating to the Evaluation Services Committee. The Evaluation Services Committee will review the investigation and the recommended sanctions and will make one of the following decisions:
 - a. Declare that we cannot confirm that you cheated.
 - b. Declare that you did cheat, and approve the sanctions.
5. If the recommended sanctions include a permanent ban on testing, termination of a contract or initiation of legal action, the Evaluation Services Committee will forward the recommendation to the Executive Committee for review and approval.
6. If the Exam Steering Group or the Evaluation Services Committee declares that we cannot prove cheating occurred, we will release your score, if possible, or we will let you take the next available exam without charge.
7. The Alliance reserves the right to begin an investigation into suspected cheating at any time before, during or after the Physiotherapy Competency Examination is administered.
8. If the Evaluation Services Committee declares that cheating did occur, one or more of the following will happen:
 - a. We will record your exam result as “undetermined.”
 - b. If we allow you to take the exam again, we will take special measures (at your expense) to prevent you from cheating again.
 - c. We will report findings to the physiotherapy regulators.In addition, the Executive Committee may approve the following sanctions:
 - a. We may permanently ban you from testing. This means you would not be eligible to write the exam again.
 - b. We may take legal action against you.



We do not need to hold a hearing if we give you at least two weeks to respond in writing to the allegation of cheating. You can appeal the Evaluation Services Committee's decision. (See pages 15-16.)



13. Accommodation of Special Needs

The Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators (The Alliance) is committed to providing accessible and equitable service to all exam candidates, including administering the Physiotherapy Competency Examination (PCE) in a way that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities. The Alliance will make the PCE accessible to persons with disabilities to the extent possible including making arrangements for special accommodations available to candidates who have provided evidence of special needs.

In reviewing accommodation requests, The Alliance must balance the rights of the individual examination candidate with its mandate to protect the public interest through a fair, secure, valid and reliable licensing exam.

Principles

In supporting individuals requesting accommodation for the PCE, The Alliance will base its decision on the following fundamental principles:

1. The protection of an individual's rights to demonstrate competency in physiotherapy practice within the context of the Physiotherapy Competency Examination (PCE).
2. The protection of personal, private information, including personal health information. The Alliance will only release personal and/or personal health information for the purposes of determining the most appropriate accommodation. In doing so, The Alliance will provide the client seeking an accommodation with access to his or her own records, and be completely transparent regarding how the health information is used.
3. The regulatory duty to protect the public. The Alliance will comply with its regulatory duty to protect the public interest by ensuring a reliable and fair exam that assesses whether or not a candidate has the abilities, knowledge and skills to conduct safe, effective independent physiotherapy practice.

To Legislative References

1. *The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*: "Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability."³ The Alliance reaffirms its commitment to this individual right, and is

³ The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom. Article 15(1). February 12, 2013. <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/Const/page-15.html>



dedicated to providing reasonable accommodations to exam candidates who require them.

2. *Protection of Personal Health Information Privacy Act* : “A health information custodian shall not collect, use or disclose personal health information about an individual unless,
 - i. (a) it has the individual’s consent under this Act and the collection, use or disclosure, as the case may be, to the best of the custodian’s knowledge, is necessary for a lawful purpose; or
 - ii. (b) the collection, use or disclosure, as the case may be, is permitted or required by this Act. 2004, c. 3, Sched. A, s. 29.

Definitions

For the purpose of the policy, The Alliance defines disability in keeping with the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*:

“disability” means,

(a) any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,

(b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,

(c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language, or

(d) a mental disorder⁴

The Alliance notes that it does not differentiate between permanent and temporary disabilities when considering requests for accommodation.

Policy

The Alliance will review requests for accommodation on a case-by-case basis to ensure that candidates seeking accommodation receive a fair and equal chance to demonstrate the required knowledge, skills and abilities for entry to practice, without compromising the exam’s reliability, validity or security. All requests are confidential and shall only be

⁴*Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*. Article 2(1). February 12, 2013. http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_01o32_e.htm



discussed between The Alliance, the candidate seeking accommodation and, if necessary, a third party consultant (see below for details). The following is a list of the types of accommodations that may be used by The Alliance. This list is not intended to be prescriptive or exhaustive:

- A reader to read the exam to the candidate
- A recorder to record the candidate's answers
- Access to food /drink during the exam and/or during approved scheduled breaks
- Extra time to complete the exam
- A private room for the exam candidate
- Access to medicine during the exam or during approved scheduled breaks

Any individuals involved (e.g. a reader or recorder) in providing or supporting an approved accommodation must sign an agreement with The Alliance stating that they will not provide any assistance to the candidate other than that agreed-to by The Alliance in the context of the accommodation, or attempt to copy or recall any exam materials. Doing so will be considered a breach of The Alliance's *Rules of Conduct for the Physiotherapy Competency Examination and Exam Security*.

Procedure

Requests for accommodations of a physical, cognitive or other special need ought to be made at the same time as **applying for the exam, but no later than 30 business days before the written exam date and 80 business days before the clinical exam date** by completing the **Special Needs Accommodation form** available on The Alliance website. The Alliance must receive documentation (such as a psycho-educational assessment, relevant health practitioner letter, etc.) with the completed application that clearly demonstrates that the accommodation is necessary. Providing The Alliance with fraudulent documents with the purpose of obtaining an unneeded accommodation is considered 'cheating' and a violation of The Alliance's *Rules of Conduct for the Physiotherapy Competency Examination and Exam Security*.

A candidate seeking an accommodation must clearly demonstrate the following;

- how the identified impairment impact's the ability to successfully participate in the examination, and
- how the requested accommodation(s) mitigate(s) the impairment within the specific context of the examination.

Notwithstanding the usual requirements for submission of requests for special needs accommodations, **for situations of recent injury and illness which occur immediately prior to exam date**, candidates may request accommodations on a shorter timeline. These requests are an exception to normal business procedures and must be made as soon as possible prior to exam date.

The Alliance will officially respond to all requests for accommodation in writing, and is responsible for the cost of providing accommodations.



By requesting accommodation for special needs, the candidate agrees that The Alliance may disclose his/her name and the accommodation provided to physiotherapy regulators.

The offer of accommodations for the exam does not obligate The Alliance to offer the same, or other, accommodations for any future administration of the exam.

The Alliance reserves the right to deny accommodations if sufficient evidence has not been provided to support the accommodation request, or if The Alliance determines that the accommodation is unreasonable or practically not possible (e.g. compromising the validity of the exam or its security, or result in unfair advantage).

Candidates previously awarded accommodations by their university level physiotherapy education program may provide a copy of the accommodations as well as authorization for The Alliance to contact the program. The Alliance will consider accommodations that have been awarded by an educational program, but is not bound to provide the same accommodations in the PCE.

In accordance with The Alliance's Privacy Policy, all medical and supporting documentation submitted will be kept confidential by The Alliance, and will be used exclusively for the purpose of assisting The Alliance in determining suitable accommodations.

The final decision regarding an accommodation request is primarily the responsibility of The Alliance Program Manager of Examinations in collaboration with the Senior Examination Officer, but may include the Evaluation Services Committee or the Board of Directors depending on the nature of the accommodation. The Alliance's decision will be communicated in writing to the candidate, and the candidate must indicate their satisfaction with the accommodation by signing and returning the final accommodation plan with original signature to The Alliance prior to the examination date.

The Alliance may request third party input from a psycho-educational consultant which may also include the review of psycho-educational supporting documentation provided by the candidate. If The Alliance determines that such a consultation is required to develop the accommodation plan, The Alliance will request specific consent from the exam candidate to share the supporting documentation to enable this review. Any reports produced by the consultant will be considered property of The Alliance.



14. Orientation Resource

The Orientation Resource is available on The Alliance website, www.alliancept.org. The Orientation Resource includes:

- information on preparing for the exam;
- information on exam-day procedures;
- a description of what is included on the exam;
- Written Component sample questions;
- Clinical Component sample stations.

We encourage you to review these resources well in advance of taking any components of the PCE exam.



15. Contacting the Alliance

Our contact information is on page 3 of this handbook.

The exam department will answer any questions you have about the exam, policies and applications. Whenever you phone, write or email to us, please tell us your personal identification number (PIN).

If you want to authorize someone else to represent you and to act or receive information on your behalf, you need to sign a power of attorney document. After you send us an original notarized⁵ power of attorney, we will give information, correspondence and results to you or to your representative. We will not give information to your representative over the telephone.

For more information and answers to frequently asked questions, please see our website, www.alliancept.org.

⁵ Notarized means that the document has been certified by a person who is authorized to administer oaths and certify documents. In Canada, this person is called a notary public.



16. Description of the Exam

Written Component (Qualifying Exam)

The Written Component is a four-hour written exam with approximately 200 multiple-choice questions that assess your knowledge of all functions and practice areas. Approximately 90 percent of the questions on the Written Component are associated with a vignette (a case scenario). The remaining 10 percent of the questions are stand-alone items. The *Orientation Resource* has sample questions.

The exam will test you on physiotherapy functions: assessment and evaluation; interpretation, planning, intervention and re-evaluation; and professional responsibilities. The questions will be distributed across these functions approximately as follows:

- assessment and evaluation (30–40 percent);
- interpretation, planning, intervention and re-evaluation (45–55 percent);
- professional responsibilities (10–20 percent).

Questions will be distributed across areas of practice approximately as follows:

- the neuromusculoskeletal system (45–55 percent);
- the neurological system (15–25 percent);
- the cardiopulmonary-vascular system (10–20 percent);
- multisystem (10–20 percent).

The questions are multiple-choice, with four possible answers. You must choose the one best answer for each question.

If you would like to use ear plugs during the exam, you must bring your own. You can also bring bottled water. We will not permit any other equipment or food in the exam area. This includes digital watches, mobile telephones and all other electronic devices.

You will receive detailed information on exam-day procedures with your registration package.

Clinical Component (Physiotherapy National Exam)

The Clinical Component is approximately three and a half hours of exam time, with extra time for registration, orientation and breaks, for a total time of approximately five to six hours. We will assign you to either a morning session or an afternoon session.

In the Clinical Component, you move through a series of 16 clinical stations. In each station, a brief written statement will introduce a clinical problem and ask you to obtain a focused history, conduct a focused physical examination, develop a treatment plan or perform an intervention and, in some cases, answer some written or oral questions.



In the Clinical Component, the questions will be distributed across physiotherapy functions approximately as follows:

- assessment and evaluation (30–40 percent);
- interpretation, planning, intervention and re-evaluation (45–55 percent);
- professional responsibilities (10–20 percent).

Questions will be distributed across areas of practice approximately as follows:

- the neuromusculoskeletal system (45–55 percent);
- the neurological system (15–25 percent);
- the cardiopulmonary-vascular system (10–20 percent);
- multisystem (10–20 percent).

On an exam of 16 stations, 8 will be neuromusculoskeletal stations, 3 to 4 will be neurological, 2 to 3 will be cardiopulmonary-vascular, and 2 to 3 will be multisystem.

The guidelines we use to administer the Clinical Component and train the examiners and standardized clients are the same for all sites. Examiners use predetermined station content checklists to assess your performance. These measures ensure that the Clinical Component is objective. Examiners give scores based on your performance at each station. The overall score for the exam is the sum of station scores.

During clinical encounters and at written stations, you may be asked to perform, demonstrate or list a specific number of responses. We assume that you will choose the best of the options available to you. In many stations, the best answer will be worth extra marks.

You must bring a lab coat and a stethoscope. We will provide any other equipment that you need in the stations. We will provide refreshments during the exam. We will not allow any other equipment or food in the exam area.

We will provide hand sanitizer so you can clean your hands at the beginning of each station. You should take all other infection control precautions as indicated by the clinical situation.

You will receive detailed information on exam-day procedures with your registration package.



17. Station Descriptions for the Clinical Component

There are two types of clinical stations: couplet stations and ten-minute stations.

Written instructions are posted outside each exam room and inside each station.

Couplet Stations: Five-Minute Clinical Encounter plus Five-Minute Written Station

Five-Minute Clinical Encounter

We will ask you to do one or more of the following:

- Obtain a focused history.
- Conduct a focused physical examination.
- Perform an intervention.

An examiner will watch you and assess your performance using a predetermined checklist.

Five-Minute Written Station

After each five-minute clinical encounter, you must complete a five-minute written station consisting of short-answer questions. The questions will ask you to do one or more of the following:

- Record findings from the previous clinical encounter.
- Suggest a physiotherapy intervention.
- Interpret x-rays, laboratory results, etc.
- Suggest an investigation or management plan.

A signal system is used to time the stations. You must wait for the signal before moving from one station to the next. The signal sounds to start the station, again when 30 seconds remain, and again at the end of five minutes, when you must leave the room. You have one minute to move from one station to the next.



Ten-Minute Stations

Ten-minute stations assess your ability to obtain a history, conduct a physical examination, demonstrate interviewing and communication skills, apply treatment skills or perform interventions. An examiner will watch you and assess your performance using a predetermined checklist.

A signal system is used to time the stations. You must wait for the signal before moving from one station to the next. A signal sounds to start the station, again when two minutes remain, and again at the end of ten minutes, when you must leave the room. You have two minutes to move from one station to the next.

In most ten-minute stations, you will interact with a standardized client for ten minutes. In a few stations, you will interact with the client for eight minutes, and then for two minutes the examiner will ask you brief questions related to the case. The examiner will listen to your answers and evaluate them using a predetermined checklist. Instructions posted outside the stations will let you know which stations have examiner questions.

Please keep this handbook until you receive your exam results.

