



## Entry-to-Practice Competency Assessment for Physiotherapy and Other Regulated Health Professions: Rapid Review and Targeted Scan Findings

Accessing Centre for Expertise  
08 September 2022

#### About ACE

The mission of the Accessing Centre for Expertise (ACE) is to make it easier for a diverse range of health organizations and stakeholders to connect with academic researchers and graduate students representing multidisciplinary health services, systems and policy expertise. ACE is led by researchers who hold faculty appointments in Canadian universities including the Institute of Health Policy, Management and Evaluation in the Dalla Lana School of Public Health at the University of Toronto.

#### About this Report

ACE was commissioned by the Canadian Physiotherapy Association to prepare this report on existing evidence regarding entry-to-practice competency assessment for physiotherapy and comparator health professions both in Canada and internationally and related challenges and opportunities. The views expressed in this report are those of ACE and its authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Canadian Physiotherapy Association.

#### Suggested Citation

Accessing Centre for Expertise. *Entry-to-Practice Competency Assessment for Physiotherapy and Other Regulated Health Professions: Rapid Review and Targeted Scan Findings*. Toronto, Canada. 08 September 2022.

#### Contact Information

Accessing Centre for Expertise (ACE)

Tel: +1 416 578 3214

Email: [info@ACEexpertise.ca](mailto:info@ACEexpertise.ca)

Web: <https://ACEexpertise.ca>

Twitter: [@ACEexpertise\\_ca](https://twitter.com/ACEexpertise_ca)

# Entry-to-Practice Competency Assessment Practices for Physiotherapy and Other Regulated Health Professions: Rapid Review and Targeted Scan Findings

## Executive Summary

The Canadian Physiotherapy Association (CPA) commissioned the Accessing Centre for Expertise (ACE) to conduct (1) a rapid review of research evidence on the performance of entry-to-practice competency assessments, and (2) a targeted scan of relevant regulatory/licensure granting organizations to document entry-to-practice competency assessment practices in a range of comparator jurisdictions.

- For the rapid review, we searched traditional academic databases (Medline, CINAHL, Google Scholar) and conducted a web search (Google). We also conducted five informational interviews with experts to supplement the review.
- For the targeted scan, we scanned websites for 27 regulatory/licensure granting organizations representing 18 different countries. We captured data on professional permissions, pathways to licensure, educational credentials review, examination requirements, supervised clinical practice, among other elements.
- The informational interviews helped to identify 19 articles for consideration in the review. As important, the experts provided important insights on the current challenges facing entry-to-practice competency assessment, how regulatory and education systems are re-orienting approaches to competency assessment, and key trends/innovations (e.g., competency-based education, entrustable professional activities, the learner progression, test-enhanced learning, and workplace-based competency assessment).
- Our rapid review identified 3893 unique results. After screening, we included 34 articles in our final review. This included 22 research articles (15 quantitative analyses, four Delphi studies, three qualitative studies), six literature reviews and six commentaries.
- The 15 quantitative research studies included a number of validation studies on tools developed to assess student competency in clinical contexts and a number of studies analysing predictors of success for national board licensure exams in the US.
- Potentially more interesting and relevant were three qualitative research articles, which included a big picture conceptualization of the clinical and education relationship, a conceptual assessment of tensions related to competency among the regulatory, clinical and education spheres, and an important study on perspectives of new grads and experienced physiotherapists on the transition from student to independent practitioners.
- The six reviews were also helpful, including a systematic review and meta-analysis by Bobos and colleagues that assessed the reliability and validity of objective structured clinical examinations (OSCEs) for education and licensure purposes and reviewed key educational and licensing components and policies among 17 countries with well-developed physiotherapy regulation systems. This article has received a lot of feedback (both positive and negative) on the role of high stakes OSCEs and Canada's unique place internationally in maintain this requirement for physiotherapy. Another review by the Saskatchewan College of Physical Therapists provided a thoughtful assessment of the current context in light of COVID-19 and made specific recommendations intended for the College to act upon.
- The six commentaries also provide relevant insights, pointing to important theoretical and practical discussions regarding education, clinical and regulatory goals.

- While much of the last two plus years has been clouded by the global COVID-19 pandemic, this review provides clear evidence of a much longer trajectory of thinking about entry-to-practice competency assessment in the health professions. While the COVID-19 pandemic may be a catalyst for progressing along the current paths, it was striking how COVID-19 had a very light footprint on both the rapid review and targeted scan.
- The targeted scan presented a number of challenges with diverse approaches to presenting information. At one level, the basic pathways to licensure are consistent across jurisdictions (a domestic and an international pathway), a deeper dive suggests a more varied and nuanced set of pathways that are subject to local and regional contexts.
- The target scan did emphasize and reinforce that Canada is in a fairly unique position in the global physiotherapy community with the OSCE being a key component of the licensure process. But as the rapid review results suggest, there is important work to consider what a future without the OSCE as part of the licensure process would look like and how it would mesh with regulatory and public safety responsibilities and efforts to support ongoing collaborations between education and clinical communities.

Given the short timelines for this project, feasibility considerations impacted on the comprehensiveness of the review and the depth of the targeted scan. However, our goal was to assist CPA in identifying and navigating the available literature and activity in this space. To that end, ACE has provided a high-level overview of the literature on entry-to-practice competency assessment in a sample of health professions and comparison of regulatory/licensure granting organizations approaches to entry-to-practice competency assessment. ACE has provided PDF copies of each article included in this review in a cloud folder.



