

# CPA Clinical Specialty Program

## Policies & Procedures

March 2017



Physiotherapy Specialty  
Certification Board of Canada  
Conseil canadien de certification  
des spécialités en physiothérapie



Canadian  
Physiotherapy  
Association

Association  
canadienne de  
physiothérapie

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# INTRODUCTION

## A. The Clinical Specialist in Physiotherapy

*A clinical specialist in physiotherapy practices at an advanced clinical level within a recognized physical therapy specialty area and has satisfied the requirements for formal recognition of his/her knowledge and skills by the Canadian Physiotherapy Association (CPA) (Adapted from WCPT, 1985).*

## B. CPA Program Assumptions

1. The CPA Clinical Specialty Program will recognize physiotherapists who demonstrate the elements of advanced competence in a specified area of physiotherapy practice. Physiotherapists will receive a credential upon meeting the specified education, practice, and research and assessment requirements of the program.
2. The *Essential Competency Profile for Physiotherapists in Canada* (2009) is the “repertoire of measurable knowledge skills and attitudes required by a physiotherapist throughout their professional career”<sup>1</sup> and the foundation upon which physiotherapy practice is based.
3. The higher level of knowledge and skills demonstrated by the clinical specialist (CS) represent a qualitative difference in practice. While CPA recognizes that the competencies attributed to the CS have application to all practicing physiotherapists, the clinical specialist is anticipated to demonstrate proficiency in their practice, as described in the Dreyfus model of skills acquisition<sup>2</sup>.
4. The program will be voluntary. Certification in the specialty area is not a requirement for practice in the specialty area. In the same manner, certification in a specialty area does not limit physiotherapists to practice in that clinical area.
5. Requirements of the Clinical Specialty Program (the program) will include:
  - applied clinical experience in the specialty area;
  - a combination of university courses and/or clinical/practical courses;
  - involvement in research, including dissemination of knowledge;
  - leadership activities; and
  - an assessment component.
6. All requirements are defined with due concern for accessibility to physiotherapists from all geographical regions.
7. The program describes the minimum requirement for recognition of CS.
8. The program promotes the best available evidence on developing, assessing and maintaining specialized practice skills.
9. The assessment component of the program focuses on clinical, or applied, physiotherapy practice. Established and psychometrically sound testing and measurement principles will be applied to ensure valid and reliable results.
10. The credential will be conferred for 10 years common to each specialty area, after which time recertification will be required.

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<sup>1</sup> National Physiotherapy Advisory Group. *Essential Competencies of a physiotherapist in Canada*. Canadian Physiotherapy Association: Toronto; 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Benner P. *From Novice to Expert: excellence and power in clinical nursing practice*. Addison-Wesley; Menlo Park; 1984.

11. The program meets the regulatory requirements for formal recognition of a CS.
12. The program is subject to regular program review by the Physiotherapy Specialty Certification Board of Canada (PSCBC).
13. CPA program standards are based on established and internationally respected standards for credentialing programs, specifically the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA)<sup>3</sup>, and are consistent with the practices of the Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators, and the Centre for the Evaluation of Health Professionals Educated Abroad.

### C. Code of Ethics

A candidate in the program follows the CPA Code of Ethics and the Code of Ethics of their provincial regulatory body in their practice as a physiotherapist.

### D. Guidance for the Use of Title and Designation as Specialist

In Canada, the provincial physiotherapy regulatory colleges regulate use of title or designation. Therefore permission to use the designation of CS in physiotherapy depends on the provincial legislation which varies by province.

#### *Restricted/Controlled Acts*

The CS in physiotherapy is subject to provincial legislation on restricted/controlled acts as are all other physiotherapists in their jurisdiction. Recognition of CS in physiotherapy will not affect other physiotherapists' scope of practice<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Certification the ICE Handbook, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. The Institute for Credentialing Excellence. 2009.

<sup>4</sup> Assumption CPA Clinical Specialty Program Policy and Procedures, Page 5, 2012.

# 1 Physiotherapy Specialty Certification Board of Canada (PSCBC)

## 1.1 Role

The Physiotherapy Specialty Certification Board of Canada (PSCBC) oversees the certification process of the CPA Clinical Specialty Program. The PSCBC reviews the certification process including the assessor comments, scoring and recommendations to approve certification of CS who have completed the program. The PSCBC ensures transparency in the conduct of certification activities.

## 1.2 Mandate

The mandate of the PSCBC is

- Approve the policy and procedures of the program;
- Review and adjudicate candidate assessments and the findings of the assessor panel;
- Adjudicate candidate appeals;
- Make recommendations on accommodation requests on a case-by case basis;
- Approve new areas of practice for clinical specialty certification;
- Evaluate the quality and consistency of assessor training;
- Ensure that specialty competencies remain beyond entry-level practice;
- Participate in ongoing internal review of the program;
- Periodically initiate an external review of the program;
- Make recommendations for continued program improvement.

All decisions made by PSCBC for the program are communicated to CPA staff by the Chair for action.

## 1.3 PSCBC Relationship to the CPA

The CPA owns the CS program including all associated intellectual property. The CPA Board of Directors recognizes its fiduciary duty to determine that the program is strong and the assessment process is robust, however, recognizes that ownership does not necessarily mean stewardship. It is critical that the oversight PSCBC be an autonomous decision-making board to adhere to best practice in professional designation programs and to ensure clarity and transparency of the certification process. Therefore, the PSCBC is an independent body and functions at arms-length from the CPA. Given the close relationship to the CPA, the PSCBC adopts relevant CPA policies (e.g. confidentiality) as an administrative convenience.

## 1.4 Membership Composition

PSCBC members are appointed and represent the key stakeholder groups for certification of CS in physiotherapy. PSCBC structure and stakeholder representation were developed in keeping with the NCCA guidelines.

The PSCBC is composed of up to seven (7) members representing key program stakeholders, including:

- The Chair;
- One representative from the Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators;
- One representative from the CPA Division Chairs;
- An individual with expertise in test development, evaluation, and education;
- An employer;
- A member of the public who is not a physiotherapist
- The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the CPA (Ex-Officio).

CPA staff provides all administrative services.

#### 1.4.1 *Appointment*

##### *Inaugural Board*

The inaugural members of the PSCBC were selected using more than one recruitment method to form the inaugural PSCBC. CPA invited professional stakeholder groups to nominate representatives. Representatives from remaining groups were recruited through referrals.

##### *Subsequent Boards*

The CPA Board of Directors appoints the PSCBC Chair for one three (3) year term.

The two (2) representative groups, the Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators and the CPA Division Chairs, nominate representatives to the PSCBC. Nominees are approved by the sitting members of the PSCBC.

The sitting members of the PSCBC appoint new public and employer representatives, and the individual with test development, evaluation and education experience.

The CEO of the CPA is an ex-officio member of the PSCBC.

Policy and procedures for appointments are determined by the PSCBC.

#### 1.4.2 *Term of Office*

Appointments to the PSCBC are three years in length. With the exception of the Chair, who is limited to one term, members of the PSCBC may serve a second three-year term. Where possible, Terms of Office for individual members overlap to ensure continuity in the process.

#### 1.5 *Process Review*

The PSCBC seeks to instill shared confidence in its decisions. To this end, the PSCBC oversees an internal annual review of the program process, undertaken by CPA staff.

#### 1.6 *Reporting*

The PSCBC reports to key program stakeholders annually. Reports include data identifying program participation, acceptance rates, assessment chronology, frequency of appeals, and other information necessary to determine and monitor the quality, integrity, and sustainability of the program. The PSCBC also presents the results to program stakeholders.



## 1.7 Meetings

The PSCBC meets by teleconference to review candidate assessments, and the recommendations of the assessor panel as well as to review appeals, requests and discuss policy review.

Meetings are held up to four times annually.

Additional meetings may be required at the time of internal or external process reviews or as required.

### 1.71 Quorum

The PSCBC Board is composed of 7 members; a quorum will be achieved when there are 3 PSCBC members present plus the PSCBC Chair.

## 1.8 Expenses

PSCBC members are eligible for reimbursement of travel and accommodation expenses incurred related to oversight of the CPA program. Travel is not normally required and toll free numbers are provided for teleconference calls.

Expenses incurred are submitted using the CPA expense claim form and are reimbursed in accordance with the CPA expense policy.

## 1.9 Orientation

PSCBC members are oriented to the program. The orientation includes:

- An overview of program history, philosophy, and guiding principles;
- The program policies and procedures;
- The program requirements, competencies and standards;
- Candidate assessment procedures;
- Assessment tool development and review; and
- The program evaluation and review.

## 2 Assessors

### 2.1 Qualifications

Assessors are graduates from the program, CPA members, and members of the Division corresponding to their clinical specialty area and have completed the CPA assessor training. Assessor services are secured on a voluntary basis; assessors are not CPA employees. Assessors bring valuable expertise to the program. The CPA commits to assessor training, evaluation and provision of an honorarium for assessment services.

CPA retains the list of trained assessors for each clinical specialty area. Ongoing assessor recruitment and training ensures sufficient numbers of assessors in relation to the candidate pool.

CPA Divisions are consulted and requested to provide potential assessor names in addition to the CPA issuing general recruitment calls as required.

### 2.2 Assessor Role Description

Assessors are:

- Physiotherapists registered in good standing with a Canadian provincial regulatory body and holding valid professional liability insurance;
- Certified CS in a CPA clinical specialty area;
- CPA members and Division members for the practice area in which they are certified;
- Able to participate in an assessor training program held at a specific location (Toronto or Ottawa) and of duration of at least two days, and regular re-training every five years or as required;
- Able to maintain confidentiality and security of candidate and other confidential data;
- Able to complete assessments within the specified time frame;
- Able to identify and declare conflicts of interest and resolve them appropriately;
- Able to be fair, unbiased and objective, and open to the use of assessment and treatment approaches different than those they are familiar with;
- A proficient communicator, both written and verbal;
- Able to provide three references speaking to professional expertise, related experience, and relevant personal characteristics (responsible, accountable etc.).

To remain on the current roster of assessors, assessors commit to:

- A minimum of one assessment and up to four candidate assessments per year<sup>5</sup> and,
- A term of five years.

*Bilingualism is an asset.*

CS wishing to serve as assessors must complete the assessor application form. Applicants for assessor training are notified in writing of the outcome of their application. Specific feedback on the outcome is provided upon request.

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<sup>5</sup> This requirement may be waived if there are insufficient numbers of candidates involved in the program; however assessors who have not completed an assessment within the most recent two years may be required to retrain prior to taking on a new assessment.

## 2.3 Appointment of the Assessor Panel

CPA appoints a three-member assessor panel, considering conflict of interest and clinical specialty areas, to review each candidate submission. Assessors make every effort to complete the full candidate assessment.

### 2.3.1 Resignations and Re-appointments

In the event that an assessor is unable to complete the assessment of a candidate within an appropriate timeframe, they are to notify the CPA as soon as possible so that a new assessor can be appointed.

An orientation to the candidate submission is provided to assessors appointed to a panel part-way through a candidate assessment to ensure they are informed of all previous activity on the assessment file.

## 2.4 Honorarium

Assessors receive an honorarium for time spent reviewing, assessing, documenting, and reporting on a candidate submission and certification, answering questions related to the portfolio, responding to PSCBC inquiries, or otherwise engaged in activities required to complete a candidate assessment.

No honoraria provided for assessor training (see section 2.6 for additional information).

The amount of the honorarium is reviewed annually by the CPA.

## 2.5 Expense Reimbursement

Assessors are eligible for the reimbursement of reasonable, pre-approved expenses incurred related to the assessment of an assigned candidate file.

Assessors meet with each other and the candidate electronically or by teleconference. Travel and accommodation are not normally required for candidate assessment and toll free numbers are provided for teleconference calls. Assessors are requested to notify the CPA in advance if additional expenses are incurred, and submit claims using the CPA expense claim form. Reimbursement is in accordance with the CPA expense policy.

## 2.6 Training

Assessors complete a training program prior to their first candidate assessment and participate in on-going training or updates to remain current with the program content and process. Ongoing training is required for assessors who do not assess a sufficient number of candidates to maintain their skills.

Assessor training includes:

- An overview of the program history, philosophy, and guiding principles;
- Review of program policies and procedures;
- Overview of the organizational structure of the PSCBC, and its relationship with the CPA and other physiotherapy organizations;
- Confidentiality and conflict of interest guidelines and reporting;
- Essentials of program development, rigour and integrity;
- Program requirements, competencies and assessment tools;

- Standards for specialty certification;
- Instruction in evaluation, interviewing and using program scoring rubrics; and
- Assessor training evaluation and overall program review.

Travel and accommodation expenses related to attendance at the mandatory assessor training sessions are reimbursed by the CPA.

## 2.7 Maintenance of Assessor Status

Assessors commit to meeting performance standards and skill maintenance and improvement to maintain their status as an assessor within the program. Formal assessor performance review occurs via:

- Annual self-evaluation;
- Peer review;
- Candidate evaluation; and
- CPA program staff evaluation.

Informal evaluation includes staff, candidate and PSCB feedback regarding factors such as provision of comments to support their recommendations, flexibility, timeliness, availability to accept assessment assignments, etc.

To remain on the current roster of assessors, assessors commit to a minimum of one assessment and up to 4 candidate assessments per year<sup>6</sup> and a term of 5 years.

### 2.7.1 Retired and non-practicing Program Assessors

There are many very experienced and knowledgeable Clinical Program Assessors who are very close to retirement or are in the process of winding down their career by working less than full time hours. The loss to the program should all of the Assessors retire and no longer continue to be program assessors would be a catastrophic loss of knowledge and experience, as well as assessor resources. It is for this rationale that the program would be best served by allowing retired or no longer practicing Clinical Program Assessors to continue to be program assessors.

Assessors who during their role within the Clinical Specialty Program retire or are no longer practicing as clinicians will continue to be able to act as a Program Assessors on a case-by-case basis.

However, those assessors who are no longer practicing clinicians will not be able to recertify since the criteria for maintaining a minimum standard of 200 hours of clinical practice per annum in the area of specialty will no longer be met and as a result the Assessor in this position will not be able to recertify as a Clinical Specialist.

## 2.8 Termination of agreement

CPA can release assessors from the program on recommendation of the PSCBC, or feedback from a candidate, other assessors or staff. Factors that can lead to release may include, but are not limited to, documented poor assessor performance; failure to maintain currency in conducting assessments and/or engage in continuing development activities; and failure to maintain confidentiality or other conduct that undermines or discredits the program.

The CPA retains the right to determine the appropriate number and practice/demographic mix of the CPA Clinical Specialty Program assessor pool.

<sup>6</sup> This requirement may be waived if there are insufficient numbers of candidates involved in the program; however assessors who have not completed an assessment within the most recent two years may be required to retrain prior to taking on a new assessment.

## 3 Candidates

### 3.1 Candidate Eligibility

The candidate enrolled in the program must meet the program pre-requisites and requirements as detailed in the *Candidate Handbook*; accessible at [www.physiotherapy.ca](http://www.physiotherapy.ca).

### 3.2 Candidate Resources

Prior to enrolling in the program, the candidate has access to the *Candidate Handbook*. Once enrolled in the program, the candidate has access to the *Candidate Working Guide* and additional resources. The *Candidate Working Guide* provides instructions on meeting program requirements and demonstrating program competencies.

### 3.3 Electronic Material Submission

Electronic submission of program materials is the preferred method for the purposes of candidate submission between CPA and candidates, as well as for secure storing. One exception is where clients choose to use a hard (paper) copy to respond to the Multi-Source Feedback Tool.

### 3.4 Confidentiality

Personal information protection, including safeguards around collection, access, use, retention, and destruction, is according to the CPA privacy policy. The candidate must also be informed of privacy policies and practices relating to the management of personal health information at their respective facilities. These policies must be applied to all aspects of their involvement in the program, specifically to the submission and transfer of patient information. The candidate is responsible for ensuring that all facility and program confidentiality policies have been met.

### 3.5 Timelines

The candidate has three years from the date of acceptance of their application to complete the program. A candidate who fails to complete the program within three years must re-apply and pay the associated application and program fees.

The candidate Stage I and Stage II submission material is sent to the assessor panel once complete. The CPA must receive the submission by the posted assessment period deadline to be considered for assessment in that specific period. Delays in receipt of materials may result in a deferral to the next posted assessment period, or require re-application to the program if beyond the 3 year time limit.

Timelines for the program:

- CPA confirms acceptance of application and fee within 10 business days of receipt.
- CPA sends complete Stage I submission packages to the assessor panel twice yearly at pre-determined dates (posted on CPA website at [www.physiotherapy.ca](http://www.physiotherapy.ca)).
- CPA sends complete Stage II submissions to the assessor panel upon receipt following successful completion of Stage I.

- CPA notifies the candidate if there are any issues regarding timelines on behalf of the assessor panel, PSCBC or other extenuating circumstances that may impact their application.
- CPA sends assessor panel scoring, comments and recommendations to candidates within 8 weeks of the posted Stage I submission deadline date and within 8 weeks of the Case Based Discussion (CBD).
- CPA sends assessor panel scoring, comments and recommendations to the PSCBC for review and confirmation following the CBD. The candidate receives the final assessment decision within 8 weeks of completing the CBD. Candidates are notified of any delays in transmission of results.

The CPA notifies a candidate if they have exceeded the three year time limit to complete the program.

### 3.6 Program Fees

The CPA sets the program fees. The CPA reserves the right to evaluate and change the fees on an annual basis. Current fees are outlined on the Candidate Application Form and the CPA website, [www.physiotherapy.ca](http://www.physiotherapy.ca).

The candidate pays the application fee at the time of program application. The program fees are due with the Stage I submission, prior to the candidate's Stage I submission moving forward to the assessor panel for review.

Candidates may choose to pay the program fees in instalments as outlined below:

| CPA Members     |        | Non CPA Members |        |
|-----------------|--------|-----------------|--------|
| Application fee | \$ 500 | Application Fee | \$500  |
| Stage 1         | \$1200 | Stage 1         | \$2200 |
| Stage 2         | \$ 950 | Stage 2         | \$1300 |
| Total           | \$2150 | Total           | \$3500 |

To be eligible for the CPA member rate, the candidate must be CPA members at the time of their application to the program and remain a member for the duration of the program. A candidate who allows their CPA membership to lapse must pay the non-member fee differential prior to completing the program.

### 3.7 Program Fee Reimbursement

The application fee is non-refundable.

The program fee is refundable if the candidate withdraws from the program prior to the CPA sending the Stage I submission to the assessor panel for review. To withdraw from the program the candidate submits their request to the CPA in writing to [specialization@physiotherapy.ca](mailto:specialization@physiotherapy.ca).

A candidate who receives a refund as a result of a withdrawal from the certification process must submit a new application form and fee if they re-apply to the program.

### 3.8 Deferrals and withdrawals

All deferral requests, including those that would extend beyond the three year timeline, are submitted to the CPA in writing 30 days **prior** to the three year submission deadline, or before the next posted program

deadline if the candidate has already submitted material to the program. Deferral request must be submitted to [specialization@physiotherapy.ca](mailto:specialization@physiotherapy.ca).

Only one deferral can be requested per candidate, for extenuating circumstances. The length of deferral granted is at the discretion of the CPA but in general will not exceed six months.

Candidates unable to complete the process within the extended time line and who are refused a deferral are advised to withdraw.

### 3.9 Certification in More than One Specialty Area

Each candidate is eligible for certification in more than one clinical specialty area however can only apply to one per application. Applications to more than one clinical specialty area by the same candidate are considered separate submissions and must be specific to each specialty area.

Hours submitted as fulfilling the requirement for clinical experience in one specialty area may not be submitted again as eligible practice hours for the second area of certification.

### 3.10 Candidate Responsibility for Expenses

The candidate covers any personal expenses related to participation in the program. In addition to the application fee, such expenses may include but are not limited to the duplication of portfolio materials, professional liability insurance fees, and any wage/billing losses associated with time spent completing the submission.

### 3.11 Maintenance of Clinical Specialist Certification

The candidate is required to maintain a minimum of 300 clinical contact hours in the clinical specialty area annually. Confirmation of maintenance of hours is submitted to the CPA Clinical Specialty Program coordinator annually at [specialization@physiotherapy.ca](mailto:specialization@physiotherapy.ca).

## 4 Clinical Specialty Program Overview

### 4.1 Program Description

The program is a formal competency-based, peer-assessed program that recognizes physiotherapists who have focused their careers in a specific area of physiotherapy clinical practice.

### 4.2 Program Goals

The program:

- Meets physiotherapists' needs for professional development of clinical skills and advanced clinical reasoning in a specific physiotherapy practice area;
- Provides a vehicle for formal recognition of a clinical specialist; and
- Provides the public with a means of identifying successful clinicians who meet the Program requirements in their practice area.

### 4.3 Program Requirements

The following prerequisites, requirements and competencies describe the minimum standards to receive the CS certification.

#### 4.3.1 *Program Pre-requisites*

Applicants submit the completed application form; a copy of their registration with their provincial regulatory body and the application fee.

#### 4.3.2 *Program Requirements*

The candidate is assessed in four key areas in their clinical specialty area:

1. Advanced clinical competence
2. Professional leadership
3. Professional development
4. Involvement in research

These four key areas are the program requirements for program.

#### 4.3.3 *Program Competencies:*

The candidate must demonstrate proficiency in nine specific competencies:

1. Advanced clinical skills
2. Advanced clinical reasoning
3. Advanced knowledge
4. Teaching and mentoring
5. Communication and collaboration
6. Professional development and lifelong learning,
7. Leadership
8. Innovation
9. Research



#### 4.4 Program Submission Process

The program is comprised of two stages. In Stage I, the candidate submits a Portfolio, which includes documentation in support of the program requirements, completed Multi-Source Feedback (MSF) questionnaires, curriculum vitae and two Clinical Reflections. Following successful review of the Portfolio by the assessor panel, the candidate submits three cases for discussion with the assessor panel for the Case Based Discussion (CBD), Stage II of the program.

#### 4.5 Program Assessment Standard

The program requires successful candidates to demonstrate a minimum of proficiency in skills acquisition in their specialty practice area for each of the four program requirements and nine program competencies.

#### 4.6 Program Accessibility

The program requirements can be met and achieved by any qualified physiotherapist practicing in Canada, regardless of geography, practice area or setting.

# 5 Assessment Process

## 5.1 Description of Assessment Process

The candidate is assessed by a three member assessor panel through a two stage process to determine if they meet the four program requirements and demonstrate proficiency in the nine program competencies. Successful Stage I candidates progress directly to Stage II of the program.

## 5.2 Assignment of Assessor Panels

The CPA appoints a three member assessor panel of clinical specialists to review each candidate submission. Two assessors are content experts in the candidate's clinical specialty area and one is from a different practice area. The assessor panel remains the same throughout the entire assessment process.

In the event that an assessor cannot fulfill their duties for the entire assessment process, the CPA appoint a new assessor to the candidate submission. The CPA provides the newly appointed assessor with the candidate submission and all assessment results; if the candidate has already moved on to Stage II of the program.

### 5.2.1 *Conflicts of Interest*

In the event that the candidate reports a conflict of interest with the available assessors in their clinical specialty area, the CPA determines the most appropriate composition of the assessor panel based on the assessor pool at the time. In the event of a conflict, the CPA is committed to accommodating the candidate assessment requirements however may not be able to appoint two assessors from the candidate's specialty area.

### 5.2.2 *French Language Panel*

In the event that the candidate requests a bilingual (French and English) assessor panel, the CPA will determine the appropriate composition of the assessor panel based on the assessor pool at the time and their fluency in both official languages.

Due to the limited number of bilingual assessors, the CPA may not be able to appoint two assessors from the candidate's specialty area.

## 5.3 Assessment Criteria

The CPA developed behavioural indicators to guide the assessment of candidate submissions in determining proficiency in the program competencies and requirements. The behavioural indicators describe proficiency of a CS for the nine program competencies.

The assessors determine the candidate's proficiency using the behavioural indicators as a reference. The candidate is assessed in each competency using a three point scale:

1. Does not meet the level of a CS;
2. Meets the level of a CS;
3. Exceeds the level of a CS.

The assessors also provide objective comments to support their ratings.

## 5.4 Assessor Role in Assessment Process

Assessors complete scoring rubrics for each document the candidate submits to the program. Assessors also complete an overall Summary Rubric at the end of Stage I and Stage II.

All scoring rubrics are completed by the three assessor panel members. Stage I scoring is completed independently; assessor panel members cannot discuss Stage I assessments with one another.

Stage II scoring is completed independently, however assessors can discuss Stage II assessments and overall candidate status in the program once candidate has completed the second stage of the program.

All completed assessments, after Stage I and II of the program, are sent to the lead assessor for final review before sending to the CPA Clinical Specialty Program coordinator.

CPA staff collates the assessor panel scoring rubrics.

### 5.4.1 *Progression from Stage I to Stage II*

In Stage I, the assessor panel reviews the Portfolio submitted by the candidate. Each assessor completes the scoring rubrics for each component of the Portfolio using the behavioural indicators.

The candidate moves on to Stage II of the program if the assessors determine they demonstrated proficiency in each competency at least once in Stage I. A strong submission can move forward to Stage II without demonstrating proficiency in all nine competencies, at the discretion of the assessor panel. The assessor panel must provide rationale to support this decision.

A candidate may move forward to Stage II if at least 2 of the 3 assessors recommend that they move forward; consensus within the assessor panel is not required in Stage I.

### 5.4.2 *CS Designation*

A candidate is designated a CS in their practice area if all three assessors determine they meet all four program requirements and demonstrate proficiency in each competency at least once in Stage I and at least once in Stage II.

The decision to recommend certification of the candidate as a CS requires consensus within the assessor panel.

## 5.5 PSCBC Role in Assessment Process

All candidate assessments are reviewed by the PSCBC. The PSCBC reviews Stage I assessments for candidates who do not move forward to Stage II and all Stage II candidates regardless of the outcome. The PSCBC is responsible for confirming the integrity of the assessment process and notifying the CPA of the final results of their review (PSCBC process outlined in section 6.2 of this manual).

## 5.6 Assessment Periods

Candidate assessment occurs twice yearly; refer to the CPA website at [www.physiotherapy.ca](http://www.physiotherapy.ca) for the assessment dates.

## 6 PSCBC Review Process

### 6.1 PSCBC Role

The role of the PSCBC is to confirm that the policies and procedures of the CPA Clinical Specialty Program were adhered to by the assessor panel during the assessment process, following both Stage I and Stage II of the program. The secondary role of the PSCBC is to assess the potential for an appeal.

PSCBC members review collated candidate assessments to confirm adherence to the policies and procedures of the program.

The Chair organizes a meeting to discuss any outstanding files and communicates final decisions to the CPA.

The CPA Staff acts as secretariat for the PSCBC.

### 6.2 PSCBC Review Process

1. Assessor panels complete their candidate assessments and submit completed scoring rubrics to the CPA.
2. The CPA collates assessor ratings and comments from each candidate assessments and sends to the Chair of the PSCBC for review.
3. The Chair of the PSCBC assigns two PSCBC members to review one report. One member is designated the lead on the report and the other is designated the second reviewer.
4. The PSCBC members review the reports independently and complete the PSCBC review form to confirm if the process has been followed. PSCBC members have 6 weeks to review the collated assessments and submit their recommendations to the Chair. Files are transmitted between CPA and the PSCBC electronically. Collated candidate assessments are not discussed between PSCBC co-reviewers at any time during the review process.
5. The Chair collates the information submitted by the PSCBC.
6. The Chair of the PSCBC schedules a meeting to discuss the outstanding assessments resulting from the PSCBC review. The lead PSCBC reviewer presents the outstanding report to the PSCBC. The entire PSCBC participates in the discussion of the outstanding reports to determine the outcome.
7. The Chair sends the PSCBC final decisions to the CPA.
8. CPA staff communicates the results of the PSCBC review to the assessors in the event of incomplete assessments.
9. CPA staff communicates the results of the PSCBC review to the candidates once the final decision has been confirmed.
10. The Chair of the PSCBC does not review any files at this stage in order to maintain neutrality in the event of an appeal.

### 6.3 PSCBC Review Outcomes

#### 6.3.1 *Confirmation of Recommendations*

The PSCBC reviewers agree that the process was followed. The final decision of the assessor panel is confirmed.

The CPA communicates the results to the candidate.

### 6.3.2 *Scoring Rubrics must be revised*

The PSCBC reviewers agree that the scoring rubrics are incomplete and that revisions are required to confirm the process was followed. The PSCBC reviewers complete the review form with feedback for the assessors.

CPA sends the PSCBC feedback to the assessor panel. Assessors have 10 days within receipt of the PSCBC feedback to complete the scoring rubrics and return to the CPA.

The PSCBC confirms the final decision of the assessor panel pending the completion of the scoring rubrics

CPA communicates the final results to the candidate.

### 6.3.3 *Process not confirmed*

PSCBCB members confirm that the process was not followed and do not support the recommendations of the assessor panel.

The CPA communicates the final results to the candidate.

## 7 Appeals Process

### 7.1 Introduction to Policy on Appeals Procedures

The appeals process provides a mechanism for dispute resolution should a candidate have concerns that the assessment process did not follow the policies and procedures of the CPA Clinical Specialty Program.

The candidate may appeal the final assessment decision in both Stage I and Stage II of the program as well as the Recertification finding. The process is the same for Stage I and Stage II and for Recertification appeals.

New information not included in the candidate's original submission cannot be submitted as evidence in support of an appeal or as evidence during the appeal process.

The Chair of the PSCBC oversees the appeals process.

### 7.2 General Overview

The PSCBC Chair receives all candidate appeal requests. The Chair convenes a sub-committee of the PSCBC to review the candidate's appeal request, and the assessor panel's scoring rubrics. The sub-committee determines if the candidate has the right to an appeal. An appeal is based on process only. New information not included in the candidate's original submission will not be considered.

If the PSCBC sub-committee grants an appeal, the CPA appoints a new three-person assessor panel and the candidate's submission is assessed as a new submission during the next assessment period.

The appeal decision of the PSCBC Chair is final and not subject to further review.

#### 7.2.1 *Reviewable Actions*

The candidate may base an appeal on procedural matters only. The professional judgment of an individual assessor or the assessor panel cannot be the subject of an appeal.

#### 7.2.2 *Appeal Process Steps*

The Preliminary Review is the first step in the appeal process. The candidate's assessment and appeal request is reviewed by a sub-committee of the PSCBC. The PSCBC determines if there is evidence to support the candidate's request for an appeal.

The formal appeal is the second step in the appeal process. In this step, the candidate's original submission to the program is re-assessed by a new assessor panel at the next posted assessment period.

The Preliminary Review is intended to provide a means whereby resolution may be attained, where possible, prior to enacting a formal appeal.

### 7.3 Appeal Process

#### 7.3.1 *Appeal Request*

An appeal request is submitted formally to the attention of the Chair of the PSCBC, at [specialization@physiotherapy.ca](mailto:specialization@physiotherapy.ca), within 60 calendar days of the date of receipt of notification of final assessment. The Appeal Request form may be obtained from the [CPA website](#).

The appeal request must clearly indicate where the assessment process did not follow the policies and procedures of the Clinical Specialty Program.

### 7.3.2 Step 1 - Preliminary Review by the PSCBC

1. Upon receipt of an appeal request the Chair of the PSCBC opens a Preliminary Review file and appoints a sub-committee of the PSCBC to the file. The sub-committee members appointed to the file are PSCBC members who were not involved in the original PSCBC review of the candidate's file. The PSCBC sub-committee includes the Chair of the PSCBC and no less than two other PSCBC members.
2. The PSCBC sub-committee reviews the candidate's written notification requesting an appeal and the collated assessments of the candidate's original submission. The sub-committee determines whether there is sufficient evidence to support a formal appeal.

The PSCBC sub-committee completes the review within 60 Calendar days.

3. If the Preliminary Review decision supports the candidate's request for an appeal, the Chair proceeds with the formal appeal process. If the decision does not support the candidate's request for an appeal, then the final recommendations stand.
4. The Chair of the PSCBC communicates the results of the Preliminary Review to the candidate and to the CPA.

The Preliminary Review decision is final.

### 7.3.2 Step 2 - Formal Appeal

A formal appeal is initiated if the candidate's appeal request is supported by the Preliminary Review process.

The decision from the formal appeal is final.

1. The candidate submits written notification of their intent to proceed to a formal appeal to the chair of the PSCBC to [specialization@physiotherapy.ca](mailto:specialization@physiotherapy.ca), care of CPA, within 30 calendar days following the candidate's receipt of the Preliminary Review results.
2. For Stage I and for Recertification, the candidate is required to pay a \$750.00 appeal fee to proceed with the formal appeal process.

For Stage II, the candidate is required to pay a \$1500.00 appeal fee to proceed with the formal appeal process.

3. CPA confirms receipt via email of candidate's formal submission of appeal.
4. The candidate's submission is considered a new submission to the CPA program and is submitted in the next assessment period. The submission is reviewed by a new three-member assessor panel. Assessor(s) from candidate's area of specialty may not be available for assessment.
5. The CPA appoints a new three member assessor panel to review the candidate's submission according to the assessment policies outlined in section 5.

No new information is accepted during the formal appeal process; the candidate's submission is reviewed as it was submitted originally.

The decision from the formal appeal is final.

#### 7.4 Time Limit

Minor adjustments to the time limits set for the Preliminary Review and Appeal process may be allowed, subject to the approval of the Chair of the PSCBC.

#### 7.5 Appeal Fees

The candidate is reimbursed the full appeal fee if the Formal Appeal process is successful.



# 8 General Policies

## 8.1 Confidentiality

The CPA is committed to protecting the privacy and confidentiality of the information it receives, including safeguards around collection, access, use, retention and destruction. The CPA fulfills this commitment to privacy and confidentiality by complying with the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004.

### 8.1.1 *Candidate and Assessor Confidentiality*

Candidate names, documentation (including any patient health information), status within the program, and assessor panel comments, scoring and recommendations are confidential. Assessors sign a confidentiality agreement prior to receiving a candidate submission.

Assessors, CPA staff and PSCBC members are required to maintain confidentiality regarding candidate outcomes, scoring and all other information related to the certification process that is not generally available to the public. Failure to maintain information security and confidentiality may result in disqualification of the candidate, assessor or PSCBC member.

Assessors and PSCBC members must ensure that any files, whether paper or electronic, in their possession for the purpose of undertaking an assessment are stored in a manner that prevents unauthorized access. Maintenance of confidentiality also includes inappropriate contact between assessors and the candidates. A candidate who approaches an assessor directly regarding materials in their submission outside of scheduled teleconferences may be disqualified from the program. Assessors should report any such inappropriate approach by a candidate to the CPA immediately.

Assessors and PSCBC members must delete and destroy all files submitted to the program 10 days after the candidate has completed the program.

### 8.1.2 *Public Release of CS Status and Aggregate Data*

Certification status, including practice area, of all CS will be retained by CPA, the PSCBC and the CPA Divisions. This list will be public information, available by contacting the CPA office or viewing the list of certified CS at [www.physiotherapy.ca](http://www.physiotherapy.ca).

The name and certification status of individuals who have not completed the process, are not successful in certification, are appealing a decision or have withdrawn from the process remains confidential.

Qualitative and quantitative aggregate program data, such as ratios of successful versus unsuccessful candidates, annual applicants; appeals; reviewer demographics; candidate demographics, etc. may be released publicly, but will not include data that may identify an individual candidate or assessor. As well, aggregate data in an anonymous format will be used for quality improvement and may also be used for research purposes.

### 8.1.3 *Retention and Return of Records*

The candidate is responsible for maintaining copies of the documentation submitted to the program to assist with recertification. Documentation submitted by program candidates is maintained according to the following schedule:

- **Successful candidate:** Records maintained for the duration of certification and one year following lapse of certified status.

- **Unsuccessful candidate – with appeal:** Records maintained for five years following unsuccessful appeal; records maintained for duration of certification and one year following lapse of certified status following a successful appeal and certification.
- **Unsuccessful candidate – no appeal:** Records maintained for five years.
- **Withdrawals:** Records of candidates who withdraw from the process will be maintained for five years.

All records and documentation submitted to the program are the property of the CPA and are not returned to candidates. All materials submitted should be retained in duplicate by the candidate.

## 8.2 Conflict of Interest and Impartiality

Candidates, assessors, CPA staff, and PSCBC members adhere to relevant Conflict of Interest guidelines and principles.

### *Definition*

A conflict of interest may arise when the nature of a relationship between an assessor and a candidate, or a PSCBC member and a candidate, or a PSCBC member and an assessor, is such that the assessment or certification review cannot or may not be conducted with impartiality. Relationship examples would include spouses, employer/employee (current or former), family members, close friends, work colleagues, or teacher/student (current or recent past i.e. last five years).

When a known or potential conflict exists, it is incumbent on the individual(s) involved to declare the conflict. Depending on the nature of the relationship, it may be sufficient to simply declare and acknowledge the relationship. However, in some cases it may be necessary to assign a different assessor to the candidate file.

Prior to commencing an assessment, both the members of the assessor panel and the candidate identify potential conflict of interest. If candidates or assessors are uncertain as to whether or not a conflict exists, they are encouraged to contact a CPA staff member to discuss the nature of the potential conflict.

Assessors, PSCBC members, and CPA staff should not participate in decision making or comment on any matter where impartiality may be affected.

## 8.3 Assessment Accommodation

Candidates requiring accommodation or modification of the assessment process to meet their needs due to a disability or accessibility concern are asked to contact the CPA at [specialization@physiotherapy.ca](mailto:specialization@physiotherapy.ca). Individual accommodation and modifications are considered on a case by case basis to ensure an equitable and fair assessment process. Appeals on decisions are forwarded to the PSCBC.

## 8.4 Official Languages

The CPA Clinical Specialty Program is currently available in English only. Documentation will be translated into French following program roll out.

In the event of a specific request, CPA endeavors to assign at least one assessor fluent in the candidate's preferred official language, either French or English, to the assessor panel. The candidate is invited to contact CPA staff at [specialization@physiotherapy.ca](mailto:specialization@physiotherapy.ca) to discuss their language accommodation needs.

## 8.5 Right to Amend Policies & Procedures

Upon PSCBC approval, CPA reserves the right to revise the program policies and procedures contained in this document.

The candidate is notified immediately in the event that a policy change affects their status within the program.

The most current version of the program policies and procedures is available on the CPA website at: [www.physiotherapy.ca](http://www.physiotherapy.ca).

## 8.6 Complaints Regarding the Clinical Practice of a CPA Certified CS

The investigation of complaints regarding clinical physiotherapist practice, regardless of specialist certification, is the jurisdiction of the provincial regulatory body. Any complaint received related to the clinical practice of a CPA certified CS is referred to the appropriate provincial physiotherapy regulatory body.

## 8.7 Professional Malpractice Insurance

The candidate is responsible for carrying professional malpractice insurance. CPA's member insurance program does not require additional insurance riders for graduates of the program as their practice remains within the scope of practice of physiotherapy. A candidate who is insured with other insurance providers are advised to confirm that additional insurance riders are not required upon their certification as a CS.

## 8.8 Complaints regarding the CPA Clinical Specialty Program

Complaints regarding the program process are to be addressed to the Chair of the PSCBC c/o [specialization@physiotherapy.ca](mailto:specialization@physiotherapy.ca).

# 9 Revocation and Suspension of Specialist Status

## 9.1 Introduction

Where evidence exists of material information misrepresentation in the application or assessment process, or a violation of the confidentiality or conflict of interest policies, involved candidates may be subject to a disciplinary process.

## 9.2 Grounds for Disciplinary Action

### 9.2.1 *Breach of Confidentiality*

Any candidate who approaches an assessor directly regarding materials in their submission outside of scheduled teleconferences may be disqualified from the program. Assessors should report any such inappropriate approach by a candidate to the CPA immediately.

The CPA will investigate all breaches of confidentiality. If evidence is found to support the reported breach of confidentiality, the candidate may be disqualified from the program.

### 9.2.2 *Misrepresentation*

The issue of misrepresentation is a concern for the reputation of the program and the CS designation. Misrepresentation occurs when a candidate misrepresents their qualifications in their application to the program, during their candidacy in the program or once they have received the CS designation.

All candidates are licensed as physiotherapists in their respective provinces with their respective provincial regulatory bodies. The regulatory bodies have a mandate to discipline and have infrastructure in place to manage all disciplinary processes. Therefore all cases of misrepresentation will be referred to and managed by the candidate's provincial regulatory body.

The program application form includes a disclosure statement advising the candidate that in the event of misrepresentation of credentials, the case is referred to the candidate's regulatory body and that all materials submitted to the program by the candidates are sent to the regulatory body for review.

## 9.3 Disciplinary Process

In the event that a case of misrepresentation is suspected by an assessor, the assessor must report the case to the CPA staff. Complaints are to be submitted in writing to the CPA c/o CPA Clinical Specialty Program or to [specialization@physiotherapy.ca](mailto:specialization@physiotherapy.ca)

The CPA staff report the suspected case of misrepresentation to the candidate's provincial regulatory body.

The candidate's provincial regulatory body is responsible for investigating the case of misrepresentation.

As a reporter/witness, the CPA may be called to testify during disciplinary hearings held by provincial regulatory bodies.

The candidate's status in the program is on hold during the investigation.

## 9.4 Outcomes

A candidate who is cleared of the misrepresentation allegations by the provincial regulatory body continues in the program.

A candidate who has their license suspended or their license revoked by their provincial regulatory body is no longer eligible for certification as a CS in the program. Once the suspension has been lifted or license has been re-instated, the candidate may re-enter the program.

For further information, please contact the Clinical Specialty Program at CPA National Office:

Clinical Specialty Program  
955 Green Valley Crescent  
Ottawa, ON  
K2C 3V4  
Phone: 613-564-5454 / 1-800-387-8679  
Email: [specialization@physiotherapy.ca](mailto:specialization@physiotherapy.ca)  
Website: [www.physiotherapy.ca](http://www.physiotherapy.ca)



Physiotherapy Specialty  
Certification Board of Canada

Conseil canadien de certification  
des spécialités en physiothérapie



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