

# Reciprocity – mutual recognition

Policy statement

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# Reciprocity – mutual recognition

Many physical therapists choose to seek practice opportunities at some time in their professional careers in a country other than the one in which they qualified, and the World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT) supports the opportunities this provides. It also recognises the value of reciprocity, where one country recognises the physical therapy qualifications of another. Although this type of mutual recognition facilitates professional mobility, it can only exist when two or more legislative/regulatory/recognition authorities agree that their physical therapy qualifications are substantially equivalent and that there are enough similarities or minor differences in professional practice to ensure protection of the public. <sup>1, 2</sup>

National and international trade agreements and the global economy provide new incentives to encourage registering authorities to consider such agreements. However, while mutual recognition may be highly desirable between some countries, it will be considered a disadvantage to others – for example, where vital qualified physical therapists are attracted away from under-served/low resource areas to practise in higher resourced countries or where there are fears that under-qualified staff will be permitted to practise. WCPT accepts that, while some barriers to practice are legitimate and necessary in order to protect the public from practitioners who have inadequate preparation for the type of practice in a given country, restrictions which serve only to protect national or local professional interests are not in the best interests of the profession. WCPT notes with concern that some regulatory requirements and qualification recognition procedures act, or can appear to act, as barriers to worldwide professional mobility.

WCPT believes that mutual recognition of professional qualifications is a matter that needs to be organised by the legislative/regulatory/recognising authorities and professional bodies of the countries concerned and is not something that can be governed internationally. It accepts that regulatory authorities may wish to retain the right to require applicants to demonstrate understanding of local laws, health regulations, and rules and standards of professional conduct. WCPT believes that an efficient, effective, fair and appropriate legislative/regulatory/recognising system is the prerequisite for both the individual and the mutual recognition of professional qualifications. WCPT advocates for the implementation of the World Health Organization's Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel. <sup>3</sup>

WCPT encourages member organisations to support mechanisms that:

- facilitate the international occupational mobility of physical therapists
- are in the public interest and ensure public safety
- maintain the professional standards expected in any jurisdiction
- provide access to measures that assist physical therapists to meet the standards of practice in the host country

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[Glossary \(www.world.physio/resources/glossary\)](http://www.world.physio/resources/glossary)

**Reciprocity**

**Recognition**

**Regulation of the profession**

**Regulation authority**

<b>Approval, review and related policy information</b>	
<b>Date adopted:</b>	<p>Approved at the 17th General Meeting of WCPT in June 2011.</p> <p>Replaced the Position Statement: regulation and reciprocity, approved at the 14th General Meeting of WCPT May 1999 which was revised and re-approved at the 16th General Meeting of WCPT June 2007. Standalone policy statement on regulation developed 2011.</p> <p>Re-affirmed at the 18th General Meeting of WCPT May 2015.</p> <p>Reviewed and re-approved at the 19th General Meeting of WCPT May 2019.</p>
<b>Date for review:</b>	2023
<b>Related WCPT policies:</b>	<p>WCPT policy statements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Autonomy</li> <li>• Description of physical therapy</li> <li>• Regulation of the physical therapy profession</li> </ul> <p>WCPT guideline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guideline for the development of a system of legislation/regulation/recognition of physical therapists</li> </ul>

## References

1. World Confederation for Physical Therapy. WCPT guideline for the development of a system of legislation/regulation/recognition of physical therapists. London, UK: WCPT; 2011. [www.wcpt.org/guidelines/regulation-legislation](http://www.wcpt.org/guidelines/regulation-legislation) (Access date 30 August 2019)
2. World Confederation for Physical Therapy. Policy statement: Regulation of the physical therapy profession. London, UK: WCPT; 2019. [www.wcpt.org/policy/ps-regulation](http://www.wcpt.org/policy/ps-regulation) (Access date 30 August 2019)
3. World Health Organization. Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel. Geneva, Switzerland; 2010. [www.who.int/hrh/migration/code/practice/en/](http://www.who.int/hrh/migration/code/practice/en/) (Access date 29 August 2019)

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