

Fact sheet

December 2012

Fact sheet: Becoming a registered physiotherapist

Who's who in physiotherapy regulation?

The National Board

www.physiotherapyboard.gov.au

The Physiotherapy Board of Australia (National Board) is responsible for:

- registering practitioners who meet the minimum standards
- investigating and managing notifications (concerns or complaints) about the performance, conduct or health of practitioners (except in New South Wales which has a co-regulatory system), and
- developing standards, codes and guidelines.

The National Board is a part of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme) and is supported by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA). The National Scheme has patient safety at its heart.

The role of the National Board is to protect the public in accordance with the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law* as in force in each state and territory (National Law).

The Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA)

www.ahpra.gov.au

AHPRA administers the National Scheme and provides operational and administrative support to the National Board in their core role of protecting the public.

The Australian Physiotherapy Council (APC)

www.physiocouncil.com.au

The APC is responsible for:

- recommending accreditation standards to the National Board for approval
- assessing programs of study and education providers to determine whether accreditation standards are being met, and

- assessing overseas trained physiotherapists.

Under the National Scheme, the course accreditation function is at arm's length from the National Board. The Board does not make a decision about a course until the course has been accredited by the APC.

In the cases where the APC accredits a course of study, under the National Law it must provide a report to the Board for its consideration.

In the cases where the APC revokes the accreditation of a course of study, under the National Law, the approval of that course of study is taken to be cancelled at the same time.

The APC is the independent accreditation authority for the physiotherapy profession.

Accreditation standards

These standards help to ensure that education providers and programs of study provide students with the knowledge, skills and professional attributes to competently practise physiotherapy in Australia.

Becoming a registered physiotherapist

In order to call yourself a physiotherapist or claim to be qualified as a physiotherapist you must be registered with the National Board.

To become registered, applicants must meet the Board's mandatory registration standards.

There are several types of registration available. General registration allows unrestricted clinical practice within a practitioner's scope of practice.

Section 53 of the National Law outlines the requirements for qualifications for general registration:

An individual is qualified for general registration in a health profession if—

- (a) the individual holds an approved qualification for the health profession; or*
- (b) the individual holds a qualification the National Board established for the health profession considers to be substantially equivalent, or based on similar competencies, to an approved qualification; or*
- (c) the individual holds a qualification, not referred to in paragraph (a) or (b), relevant to the health profession and has successfully completed an examination or other assessment required by the National Board for the purpose of general registration in the health profession; or*
- (d) the individual—*
 - (i) holds a qualification, not referred to in paragraph (a) or (b), that under this Law or a corresponding prior Act qualified the individual for general registration (however described) in the health profession; and*

(ii) was previously registered under this Law or the corresponding prior Act on the basis of holding that qualification.

Finding out if a course is accredited

The best way to find out whether a program of study is accredited, and provides a qualification for general registration, is to refer to the [Approved Programs of Study](#) list on the National Board's website under the 'Accreditation' tab.

If your course is *not* listed on the National Board website there is a risk that you will not graduate with an approved qualification.

Working in a clinical position while not registered

You must be registered with the National Board to practise physiotherapy or work as a physiotherapist.

Claiming to be a registered physiotherapist, or holding yourself out as being registered, is an offence under the National Law. The maximum penalty which a court may impose is \$30,000 (in the case of an individual) or \$60,000 (in the case of a body corporate).

However, you can legally work in administrative roles or support roles in a physiotherapy clinical setting as *long as* you are not treating or offering clinical or therapeutic advice to patients or holding yourself out as being a registered physiotherapist.

For more information

- All the requirements of becoming a registered physiotherapist are published on the Board's website at www.physiotherapyboard.gov.au
- Additional information is also published at www.ahpra.gov.au
- Please refer to the APC's website for information about the accreditation function and process and the current list of accredited courses at www.physiocouncil.com.au
- For registration enquiries: 1300 419 495 (within Australia) +61 3 8708 9001 (overseas callers)
- For media enquiries: (03) 8708 9200