

# Reciprocity – mutual professional recognition

Policy statement

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# Reciprocity – mutual professional recognition

Many physiotherapists choose to seek practice opportunities at some time in their professional careers in a country other than the one in which they qualified, and World Physiotherapy supports the opportunities this provides. It also recognises the value of reciprocity, where one country recognises the physiotherapy 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 physiotherapy qualifications are substantially equivalent and that there are enough similarities or minor differences in professional practice to ensure protection of the public. (1, 2)

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 physiotherapists 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. World Physiotherapy 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. World Physiotherapy notes with concern that some regulatory requirements and qualification recognition procedures act, or can appear to act, as barriers to worldwide professional mobility.

World Physiotherapy 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. World Physiotherapy 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. World Physiotherapy advocates for the implementation of the World Health Organization's Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel. (3)

World Physiotherapy encourages member organisations to support mechanisms that:

- facilitate the international occupational mobility of physiotherapists
- are in the public interest and ensure public safety
- maintain the professional standards expected in any jurisdiction with appropriate entry level education
- promote the development of mutual recognition agreements where possible
- provide access to measures that assist physiotherapists to meet the standards of practice in the host country

**Glossary** (<https://world.physio/resources/glossary>)

**Reciprocity**

**Recognition**

**Regulation of the profession**

**Regulatory authority**

Approval, review and related policy information	
<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> <p>Reviewed and re-approved at the 201th General meeting of WCPT May 2023.</p>
<b>Date for review:</b>	2027
<b>Related World Physiotherapy policies:</b>	<p>World Physiotherapy policy statements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Autonomy</li> <li>• Description of physiotherapy</li> <li>• Regulation of the physiotherapy profession</li> </ul> <p>World Physiotherapy guideline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guideline for the development of a system of legislation/regulation/recognition of physiotherapists</li> </ul>

### References

1. World Physiotherapy. Guideline: Development of a system for regulation of the physiotherapy profession London, UK: World Physiotherapy; 2021 [3 Nov 2023]. Available from: <https://world.physio/guideline/regulation-legislation>.
2. World Physiotherapy. Policy statement: Regulation of the physiotherapy profession London, UK: World Physiotherapy; 2023 [3 Nov 2023]. Available from: <https://world.physio/policy/ps-regulation>.
3. World Health Organization. Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel. Geneva, Switzerland 2010 [3 Nov 2023]. Available from: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/wha68.32>.

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