



REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL: ALTERNATIVE CLINICAL COMPONENT OF PHYSIOTHERAPY COMPETENCY EXAMINATION

The College of Physiotherapists of Ontario ("College") is inviting proposals for the development, implementation, and ongoing delivery of an alternative entry to practice clinical exam. Successful completion of a clinical examination is required for individuals to apply for an Independent Practice Certificate in Ontario.

Proposals must be received by **September 24, 2021, @ 5:00 pm EDT.**

The College

The College is the self-regulatory authority responsible for registering and governing physiotherapists in Ontario. Its authority comes from the [Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991\(RHPA\)](#) and the professions specific [Physiotherapy Act, 1991](#). There are 26 similar bodies in Ontario that regulate other health professions.

The mandate of the College is to protect the public interest by ensuring that members of the profession are qualified, competent, and ethical practitioners. This starts when an applicant seeks to be registered with the College. As such, the Entry to Practice program is a key area within the College as it relates to this mandate, ensuring the College only registers physiotherapists who can provide competent and ethical care.

Organizations interested in submitting a proposal are strongly encouraged to review and understand the *RHPA*, the *Physiotherapy Act*, as well as additional background on the College through our website at www.collegept.org. Appendix 1 provides an overview of some of the primary sources of information on the College, entry to practice program, and examinations.

Background and Description of the Project

In order to be registered, an applicant must meet a number of criteria. Key among them, as required by statute, is to successfully complete a competency examination. The Physiotherapy Competency Examination (PCE) tests a candidate's ability to meet the essential competencies of physiotherapy practice, such as physical examination, data interpretation, clinical problem solving, treatment techniques, ethics, and safety. The PCE is broken down into two components: written and clinical. The same examination is administered to Canadian trained applicants and Internationally Educated Physiotherapists.

The written component assesses physiotherapy knowledge in various practice areas. An applicant must achieve a minimum overall score to pass, at which time they can apply to be granted a Provisional Practice certificate of registration. Following successful completion of the written component, the applicant can then proceed to undertake the clinical component of the PCE. The clinical component is an objective structured clinical exam (OSCE) which is based on the Essential Competency Profile for Physiotherapists in Canada.

The College's [Registration Regulation \(532/98\)](#) requires an applicant to pass a clinical examination to be registered with the College in the Independent Practice class. In addition, a candidate that has been unsuccessful at the clinical component can no longer practice as a physiotherapist until they have passed a clinical exam.



To date, both components of the examination have been overseen and administered by the [Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators](#) (CAPR). CAPR is a credentialing and assessment agency that provides evaluation services on behalf of Canadian provincial physiotherapy regulators, including Ontario.

In response to the COVID pandemic, the delays in the administration of the clinical exam have required that we consider alternative clinical exams. In August 2020, the written component of the examination was moved to a virtual administration and continues to be delivered. The June and November 2020 administrations of the clinical component of the exam were cancelled. The June 2020 administration was cancelled in April 2020 in keeping with nation-wide public health lockdowns. The November 2020 clinical exam was cancelled in September because of Canada-wide closures of universities, which is where CAPR runs its face-to-face exams. CAPR then began preparation to administer a virtual examination in March 2021. The virtual clinical examination had to be terminated on the day of the exam due to unspecified problems with the exam delivery platform. The June 2021 administration was also delayed. The clinical component was last administered in November 2019 and the number of candidates waiting to complete this examination continues to grow. It should be noted that individuals who were successful in the written exam, registered with the College and are waiting to take the clinical component have been able to continue to work as Residents in the Provisional Practice class.

The College has the ability to decide what examination(s) it will use to assess the competency of applicants. However, any alternative to the CAPR examination must meet certain requirements that are contained in the College's Registration Regulation. The exam must contain both written and practical (i.e. clinical) components, be based on Canadian competencies, and must be sufficiently consistent in its testing (reliability), and accurate in what it tests for (validity). This is to ensure the examination(s) are fair to all applicants and can withstand legal challenges when individuals are unsuccessful.

Due to continuing delays, the College is now seeking a qualified organization/firm ("Organization") to develop, implement, and administer an **alternative clinical component of the PCE**. The aim is to have the clinical component available to administer and evaluate applicants by early 2022. Currently, there are approximately 900 individuals who are waiting to sit the clinical component of the examination. It has yet to be determined if the alternative exam will be available to applicants in an ongoing way, if applicants will be able to choose between clinical exams or if the alternative exam will ultimately replace the clinical exam offered by CAPR. If it was to be offered on an ongoing basis, the alternative examination may have an anticipated throughput of up to 500 individuals annually.

The clinical exam must meet specified criteria to ensure legal defensibility and public protection. The criteria include:

2. The examination must assess the entry to practice competency skills required in Canada;
3. The examination must be valid and reliable;
4. The examination must be accessible;
5. The examination must be secure;
6. The examination must have the appropriate safety precautions and measures in place;
7. The examination must be available in both official languages (English & French).

It should also be noted that the Ontario Fairness Commissioner has expressed a desire for virtual exams where possible.



Expected Deliverables

1. Develop an alternative clinical examination, based on the Canadian Physiotherapy Competency Profile, that is acceptable to the College. The examination must assess practical skills and be available in both official languages. The examination must also be:
 - a. Valid
 - b. Reliable;
 - c. Accessible; and
 - d. Secure
2. Pilot the examination using best practices in examination/assessment methods, reliability, and security. The pilot phase is to allow for any adjustment to development without incurring additional costs to the College.
3. Outline a plan for ongoing implementation, and administration of the examination. The plan must lay out, plans for registering candidates, the costs for each session of exam administration, costs for applicants, failsafe options in the case of issues/delay, security protections in place, reporting exam results to the College and accessibility considerations. The aim is for the examination to be operational by January 2022.
4. Outline the examination review process, including the anticipated review cycle and the use of a psychometrician, to ensure the examination is appropriately testing practical skills and remains valid and reliable.
5. Outline the process for determination and review of the examination's pass score.
6. Establish initial and annual operating budgets to maintain the clinical examination.
7. Outline the Organization and the College's responsibilities through this process.

Proposed Timeline

- Request for Proposals Released: September 13, 2021
- Proposal Submission Deadline: September 24, 2021
- Contract awarded: no later than October 15, 2021
- Exam Development: October – December 2021
- Exam Launch: January 7, 2022

Submission Requirements

1. All proposals will be treated in confidence.
2. Proposals should be succinct yet comprehensive and include:
 - Background information on the Organization and project team.
 - An outline of the exam development, implementation, and review process.
 - The defined components of the process and a timeline for completion of each part of the process.
 - The costs associated with each part of the process.
 - Previous exam development/implementation work undertaken.
 - A minimum of 3 references, including name, position, organization, phone, and email contact information.

Budget Guidelines

The proposal must include a detailed breakdown of the project components including:

- Approximate number of days proposed and costs for: a) the background review and work; b) the exam development and testing; and c) the ongoing implementation, administration, and review of the exam.



- Projection of associated expenses.

Consultant Selection Criteria (criteria is subject to change)

- a) Demonstrated expertise and experience in exam development, administration, and review;
- b) Understanding of regulatory environment and entry to practice processes for regulatory professionals;
- c) Thoroughness/quality of the submission;
- d) Reasonableness of cost;
- e) Ability to meet timelines as determined;
- f) Consideration of any potential, actual, or perceived conflict of interest and how the organization proposes to manage it.

General Terms of Proposal Process

- The project will be tendered at the discretion of the College.
- Nothing in this request for proposal mandates that the College is obliged to award a contract under this RFP.
- The College shall not be responsible for any costs involved in or associated with preparing the submission or any meeting, discussion, or negotiation following submission that could lead to acceptance of the proposal.
- The College will have complete proprietary ownership of the examination and can seek other vendors for administration.

Deadlines

Anticipated timeline for project completion and exam launch: **January 7, 2022**

Proposals must be submitted by email on or before **September 24, 2021**, to:

Rod Hamilton, Registrar
rhamilton@collegept.org
College of Physiotherapists of Ontario

All enquiries related to this RFP should be directed to Rod Hamilton, rhamilton@collegept.org

We look forward to receiving your response.



Appendix 1 – Resources

- The College’s registration regulation prescribes the legal requirements for registration as a physiotherapist in Ontario: <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/980532>
- The College’s website contains considerable resources which describe the role of the College, its programs and its activities: www.collegept.org
- The College’s website also contains a section specific to providing information to potential applicants: <https://www.collegept.org/applicants>
- The website of the Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators provides information describing its role, with a particular focus on its role in providing credentialing services and examinations to potential applicants for physiotherapy registration in Canada: <https://www.alliancept.org/>
- The website of the Ontario Fairness Commissioner provides information on its role to ensure that Ontario regulators have fair entry to practices processes: <https://www.fairnesscommissioner.ca/en/Pages/Home.aspx>