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Information paper

Working in the United Kingdom

Advice for overseas-qualified physiotherapists planning to work in the UK

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Contents

1.	Introduction	2
2.	Applying for UK registration	3
3.	CSP membership	7
4.	Working in the UK	8
5.	Frequently Asked Questions	11
6.	Further reading.....	12

1. Introduction

This document helps you to understand what you need to do to work as a physiotherapist in the UK. You will need:

- to be registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC)
- be able to demonstrate your ability to speak and understand the English language to a required level
- to have a visa to enter and work in the UK if you are not a British citizen or a national of an EEA country (see p. 8)

All physiotherapists practising in the United Kingdom, including those from countries within the European Economic Area (EEA) and overseas, are required by law to be registered with the UK Health & Care Professions Council (HCPC).

<http://www.hcpc-uk.co.uk/>

Registration is required for all public, private and voluntary work. It allows registrants to use the protected titles 'physiotherapist' or 'physical therapist'. It is a criminal offence to practise in the UK using either of these titles if you are not on the HCPC register.

This document explains the HCPC registration process and what the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP) offers to support you during the application phase and once you are an HCPC registered physiotherapist. It also provides information on how to find a job in the UK.

Sufficient English language competence is required to practise safely and effectively, therefore the HCPC might ask you to sit a language test or provide other evidence on your level of English.

Following the 2016 EU referendum the UK is intending to leave the European Union and in this context the current arrangements on the mutual recognition rights for EEA physiotherapists (see p. 5) may be reviewed in the future. We have no further information on this at present.

UK organisations relevant to physiotherapy

The HCPC and the CSP are separate organisations with different functions.

- The **HCPC** is an independent regulatory body with responsibility for registration of allied health professionals including physiotherapists. It deals with
 - protection of the public
 - recognition of professional qualifications

- maintenance of standards of education and continuing professional development (CPD)
 - return to practice (for UK registrants)
 - conduct, performance and ethics
 - fitness to practise
 - setting and auditing standards for CPD
- The **CSP** is the professional, educational and trade union body for the UK's physiotherapists, physiotherapy support workers and physiotherapy students. CSP membership is optional.
 - Its purpose is to lead, promote and represent the profession by driving excellence in physiotherapy practice and employment; and influencing healthcare policy across the UK
 - Details on member benefits can be found on the CSP website <http://www.csp.org.uk/membership/membership-benefits>

2. Applying for UK registration

HCPC standards

There is important information on the HCPC website to help you to understand what standards are expected of you when practising in the UK. The documents listed below are relevant for all UK physiotherapists and outline the standards physiotherapists need to meet.

<https://www.hcpc-uk.org/standards/>

- Standards of proficiency for physiotherapists
- Standards of conduct, performance and ethics
- Standards of continuing professional development

HCPC assessment process

The HCPC assesses applications on an individual case-by-case basis to find out whether an applicant can fulfil their standards of proficiency. It is important to provide information on your physiotherapy training and additional professional experience on the application form. The application form is the basis for the assessors' decision-making.

Quite often, applicants do not include sufficient information/evidence in HCPC applications on the following areas:

- work settings, range of service users and type of services provided;
- types of assessments, treatments and evaluation methods used;
- information about record keeping, reflective practice, quality assurance;
- theoretical and practical aspects of training/experience in the three main areas (neurology, respiratory and musculoskeletal);
- any evidence on 'autonomous practice' (if applicable)
- use of research in clinical practice in both initial assessment and treatment progression.

There are various ways in which the above may be addressed. The easiest way is by providing curricula/course information. Another method is by providing references from supervisors, even if these are relating solely to placements while studying. Statements or case studies from applicants referencing the above could also be included in the submission.

Language competence

The HCPC website gives information on the requirements for proof of proficiency in English for overseas applicants from outside the European Economic Area (EEA)*.

<https://www.hcpc-uk.org/registration/getting-on-the-register/international-applications/english-language-proficiency/>

For EEA applicants no formal proof of English proficiency is required; however, when you apply for a job your employer will normally check your language skills at your interview to ensure safe practice.

Outcome of the registration process

The outcome will be one of the following:

- Acceptance on to the HCPC register
- Request for further information *or* invitation to attend a Test of Competence (TOC) based on the profession's Standards of Proficiency *or* an invitation to undergo 'compensation measures' (EEA applicants only – see p. 6)
- Refusal of the admission to the Register

*The European Economic Area (EEA) includes Member States of the European Union (EU), and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). Swiss nationals are also included as EEA nationals for the purposes of HCPC registration and immigration only.

Applications under the mutual recognition rights (EU Directive 2005/36/EC) on recognition of the professional qualifications of EEA nationals

If the following applies to you, you can apply to the HCPC under the mutual recognition rights:

- be a citizen of a 'relevant European State' (an EEA Member State or Switzerland) or be an exempt person who is treated as such a national (eg by marriage to such a citizen);
- be fully entitled to practise a relevant profession in a relevant European State (other than the UK) and, if the profession is not regulated in that State, to have practised there for at least two out of the last ten years;
- have qualified in a relevant European state or hold qualifications obtained outside of the EEA or Switzerland which have been recognised in a relevant European State. If the latter, then you must also have practised your profession in that State for at least three years.

EU Directive on recognition of the professional qualifications

For an explanation of how the Directive applies to physiotherapists, please refer to the following documents:

- European Region of the World Confederation for Physical Therapy (ER-WCPT): Recognition of the professional qualifications_ http://www.erwcpt.eu/eu_and_advocacy/recognition_of_professional_qualification
- User guide <https://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Qualifications-Recognition/EU-Directive-2005-36-EC-User-Guide.pdf>

European Professional Card (EPC)

As part of the reviewed Directive, in early 2016 an additional route for registration became available for European physiotherapists seeking to work in other European countries. Applying for the EPC is an alternative you can choose to register and practice in another European country.

<https://www.hcpc-uk.org/registration/getting-on-the-register/international-applications/emr-applications/applying-with-the-epc-european-professional-card/>

You can choose from the following options:

- Using the traditional route by contacting the HCPC to start the application process
- Applying for an EPC by setting up an account on the European Commission Authentication Service (ECAS), create a profile and submit your application

The EPC is not a physical card; it is an electronic record to prove that an applicant has met the conditions for registration in another European country. The HCPC assessment process for overseas-qualified physiotherapists remains the same.

You can find more information about the EPC on the following websites:

- HCPC
<https://www.hcpc-uk.org/registration/getting-on-the-register/international-applications/emr-applications/applying-with-the-epc-european-professional-card/>
- ER-WCPT
https://www.erwcpt.eu/physiotherapy_and_practice/eu_mobility

Compensation measures

If you are an EEA applicant and your HCPC assessment shows that you have shortfalls in any of the main clinical skill areas, you will be offered the opportunity to make up for these. This is called ‘undergoing compensation measures’ and you will be offered the following options:

- Undertake a **‘period of adaptation’** (POA) ,i.e. a period of supervised practice in areas defined by the HCPC. It can be difficult to find a placement for a POA, so you might opt for an aptitude test first.
HCPC information on periods of adaptation
<https://www.hcpc-uk.org/resources/guidance/periods-of-adaptation/>
- Undergo an **‘aptitude test’** offered by the HCPC. It is worth considering this option first as this might lead to not being required to do a POA or having to do a shorter POA

Provision of temporary/occasional services

Under the terms of the Directive, an EEA national who qualified in an EEA member country may apply for ‘temporary or occasional’ registration. This requires information on the registration status in your home country and the nature of your planned work in the UK. You must remain registered to practise in your home

country throughout your stay. Applicants for temporary worker registration are not required to undergo an assessment of proficiency.

Initial temporary registration is for one year and it is possible to apply for renewal, although the HCPC can refuse to renew your registration if it has any reason to doubt that the services you are providing are genuinely temporary or occasional.

If you wish to take a job in the UK on a permanent basis, you must apply for full HCPC registration.

Temporary HCPC registrants working in the UK do **not** have the right to use a UK protected title but must use the title of the professional qualification awarded in their home country in its original language. For example, a French national would only be eligible to practise as a 'kinesithérapeute' and not as a physiotherapist.

HCPC information on temporary registration
<http://www.hcpcuk.org/aboutregistration/declaration/>

As stated earlier in this document, the current arrangements on the mutual recognition rights for EEA nationals may be reviewed in the future, following the 2016 EU referendum and the UK intending to leave the European Union.

3. CSP membership

There are several membership options available for HCPC registered physiotherapists but the following two might be most relevant for overseas-qualified physiotherapist:

- **Full CSP membership (MCSP)**; requires HCPC registration and a UK address and offers a range of services, including
 - Professional Liability Insurance
 - Professional Advice Service
 - Union Services
 - Library and Information Services

- **Associate membership**; available for physiotherapy assistants/support workers **and** overseas-qualified physiotherapists who have started their international HCPC registration application. This category includes the following member benefits:
 - Professional Liability Insurance for any supervised work (e.g. as an physiotherapy assistant or during POA)
 - CSP resources for overseas-qualified physiotherapists (details below)

For a full list of CSP member benefits, please visit the CSP website
<http://www.csp.org.uk/membership/membership-benefits>

CSP resources for overseas-qualified physiotherapists

- The interactive CSP (iCSP) 'Overseas Qualified' network offers support for CSP members who qualified overseas. You must log in to use this network.
www.csp.org.uk/icsp/overseas-qualified
This is an online discussion forum to share experiences with colleagues who have been practising physiotherapy in the UK for some time. It links to a range of helpful information for members during their transition into the UK context.
- Free mentoring by qualified physiotherapists familiar with physiotherapy in the UK
- Insurance cover for clinical placements, providing you are supervised by an HCPC registered physiotherapist

4. Working in the UK

If you are not a British citizen or a national of an EEA country, you will need to apply for a visa from the UK Visas and Immigration Department before you can enter and work in the UK.

<https://www.gov.uk/browse/visas-immigration/work-visas>

Refugee health care professionals in the UK

The NHS employers website provides information on refugee health care professionals in the UK:

<http://www.nhsemployers.org/your-workforce/recruit/employer-led-recruitment/refugee-healthcare-professionals>

If you are a refugee health care professional you do not need to pay an application fee when registering with the HCPC

<http://www.hcpc-uk.org/apply/international/>

Finding work

Physiotherapy jobs are advertised in the CSP magazine *Frontline* and in the Physiotherapy Jobs section of the CSP website

<https://www.csp.org.uk/jobs>

Anyone can search Physiotherapy jobs for vacancies, but only CSP members can log in, create a profile and apply for jobs online.

Public sector (NHS) jobs

There are online NHS job sites where vacant posts in all UK countries are advertised. You do not need to be a CSP member to access any of these sites.

- England and Wales: www.jobs.nhs.uk
- Scotland: www.jobs.scot.nhs.uk
- Northern Ireland <https://jobs.hscni.net/>

There is a database of NHS UK hospitals, with contact details, at

www.nhs.uk/servicedirectories/Pages/AcuteTrustListing.aspx

If you want a temporary locum (short term)/agency job, you can enter your personal details and where you want to work on the website www.nhsprofessionals.nhs.uk You may be contacted if a job becomes available.

EURES

Information about working in the UK for people from within the European Union including a job search portal can be found at the European Employment Service job mobility portal EURES:

<http://ec.europa.eu/eures/home.jsp?lang=en>

This site is not specific to physiotherapy but does have generic information to help EU citizens who wish to migrate to another EU county to seek work.

Private sector work

There are private hospitals, clinics and individual private practices throughout the UK who employ physiotherapists.

Jobs in the private sector are advertised in *Frontline*, on Physiotherapy Jobs and through health care recruitment agencies.

Using a recruitment agency

There are several recruitment agencies that will help you find a locum (short term) or a longer-term job in either the public or private sector. The CSP cannot endorse particular agencies.

- Reputable recruitment agencies should not charge you a fee in relation to finding you employment
- If you are offered an interview, payment for your travel should be discussed
- An NHS employer should interview you in person or on a video link, via a properly constituted selection panel, and should not rely solely on a telephone interview
- An NHS employer should provide you (either directly or via the agency) with the job description for the specific post and a person specification; as well as information on the location of the post, the salary, grading structure and training and education opportunities
- An NHS employer should provide information about their local community, access to public services, established social networks, available cultural support and local places of worship.

Preparing for an interview

If you are going for a job interview you will need to know about the healthcare system in the UK, its key policies and the current issues for the profession.

Do some research on the CSP website, and also the Department of Health website www.dh.gov.uk, particularly sections on

- Evidence based practice
- Clinical governance
- National Service Frameworks
- Patient consent
- Health and social care

Working in the public sector

The majority of physiotherapists who practise in the UK work within the NHS (public sector).

Salaries and working hours in the NHS

Currently, physiotherapists employed in the public sector are employed on a national contract that sets their pay, grading and basic conditions of service such as annual leave, sick pay, days of paid leave and hours of work.

Visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk for background information about working in the NHS and

the NHS employers page for information about pay scales

<http://www.nhsemployers.org/your-workforce/pay-and-reward/pay/agenda-for-change-pay>

The CSP Employment Relations and Union Services (ERUS) team provides CSP members with information and advice on NHS pay and conditions.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

All UK physiotherapists must undertake CPD in order to maintain and develop their ability to work safely and effectively and to maintain their HCPC registration.

All employees should have equal access to CPD opportunities. Your CPD should be linked to the nature of patient care and service provision in your workplace.

Evidence of CPD is also linked to your HCPC registration. You will be required to self-declare every two years that you have maintained your CPD. You may need to provide evidence, so you should keep a record of all CPD activity you carry out.

The CSP provide an online CPD portfolio tool and learning hub to its members to support you to document your learning.

www.csp.org.uk/professional-union/careers-development/cpd

5. Frequently Asked Questions

Can I work as a physiotherapy assistant while I am waiting for the HCPC registration application process to be completed?

There is currently no registration requirement for assistants/support workers, so you could work as a physiotherapy assistant while waiting to obtain HCPC registration. The advantage of this is that you can use your existing experience while familiarising yourself with the UK health service.

Some physiotherapists come to an arrangement with the hospital that offers them a period of adaptation or skills upgrade. The hospital provides clinical supervision for the period of adaptation, and the physiotherapist works as a support worker for the hospital.

The two activities must be kept separate.

- During a period of adaptation you will develop your physiotherapy skills, supervised by a chartered physiotherapist.
- As a support worker you will be allowed to work on delegated tasks only.

I am a qualified physiotherapist in my own country and am applying to a UK university to do a Masters course as part of my CPD. Do I need HCPC registration?

It is essential to check with the university running the Masters course whether you will require HCPC registration.

- You will need to be registered if your course involves any contact with patients.
- If it is a purely theoretical degree then you may not require HCPC registration, unless you also decide to work with patients in your spare time, in which case you need to be HCPC registered.

How can I find a hospital willing to provide me with a period of adaptation?

Visit the website

www.nhs.uk/servicedirectories/Pages/AcuteTrustListing.aspx

for a list of hospitals, and contact the physiotherapy manager direct; or visit

www.nhsprofessionals.nhs.uk or www.nhscareers.nhs.uk.

Periods of adaptation can be difficult to arrange, due to pressure on placements from UK undergraduate students, plus a shortage of senior physiotherapists who have the time to supervise you.

You might want to opt for the aptitude test instead.

6. Further reading

CSP information papers

- Chartered Society of Physiotherapy. Quality assurance standards. February 2013. www.csp.org.uk/professional-union/professionalism/csp-expectations-members/quality-assurance-standards
- Chartered Society of Physiotherapy. Code of members' professional values and behaviour. October 2011. www.csp.org.uk/professional-union/professionalism/csp-expectations-members/code-professional-values-behaviour
- Chartered Society of Physiotherapy. Webpages on scope of practice. <http://www.csp.org.uk/professional-union/professionalism/scope-of-practice>



- Chartered Society of Physiotherapy. Survival guide in obtaining your first physiotherapy post. 2015.
www.csp.org.uk/publications/survival-guide-obtaining-your-first-physiotherapy-post
CSP members only
- Supervision, accountability and delegation of activities to support workers
www.csp.org.uk/publications/supervision-accountability-delegation-activities-support-workers-guide-registered-pract **CSP members only**

The National Health Service

NHS Choices. Information about the NHS in England
www.nhs.uk/NHSENGLAND/THENHS/Pages/thenhshome.aspx

NARIC (UK National Recognition Information Centre)

NARIC provides services for individuals and organisations advising on comparisons of international qualifications against UK qualification framework levels.

<https://www.naric.org.uk/naric/>

European Region, World Confederation for Physical Therapy (ER-WCPT)

Information on migration of physiotherapists within the EEA

https://www.erwcpt.eu/students/st_eu_mobility

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