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**NATIONAL
PHYSICAL
THERAPY
EXAMINATION
POLICIES**

FEDERATION OF STATE BOARDS OF PHYSICAL THERAPY

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Preface

The National Physical Therapy Examination (NPTE) is the key tool used by the Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy (FSBPT or Federation) in the protection of the public. It is designed to measure the knowledge and cognitive skills necessary for minimal entry-level competence for Physical Therapists (PT) and Physical Therapist Assistants (PTA) in the provision of safe and effective physical therapy services.

This document provides an overview of the policies that are followed by the Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy in the development and administration of the NPTE.

The Examination Development and Examination Administration committees are responsible for reviewing these policies annually and recommending changes to the FSBPT Board of Directors. The Federation Board of Directors has authority for approving changes to these Policies. The procedures used to implement these Policies are outlined elsewhere and subject to amendments and periodic updates.

NPTE Usage

1. Use of the National Physical Therapy Examinations

Licensing authorities contracting with the FSBPT to use the NPTE must be members in good standing of the Federation and must adhere to the NPTE Policies. The FSBPT is the final authority on access to the NPTE and issuance of scores on the NPTE. The FSBPT will not grant a candidate access to the NPTE unless the candidate has first been approved by a licensing authority or authorized designee to sit for the examination.

NPTE Development Policies

1. Examination Security and Integrity

The security and integrity of the NPTE and all examination questions shall be fully protected at all times. All persons involved in item writing, item reviewing, test construction, passing score determination or otherwise exposed to any examination items must understand, sign and agree to security conditions. At a minimum, the security conditions include but are not limited to the following:

- a) Each licensure examination and all examination items are protected under trade secret, contract and federal copyright law. Items and examinations may not be copied, stored, transmitted or disseminated by any means or for any purpose without the prior, express, written permission of the FSBPT.
- b) Individuals who are exposed to NPTE items as part of the development or maintenance of the NPTE may not be currently employed by an examination preparation entity, publishing an examination preparation document or offering a course related to the NPTE and will be prohibited from participating in these activities for a period of five years from the review of the NPTE. Furthermore, they shall not be candidates for PT or PTA licensure for a period of five years following exposure to the NPTE items.
- c) Current, past and future examinations and examination items are protected under trade secret, contract and federal copyright law and may not be used for research, any examination preparation activity, review by any individual or for any other purpose without the prior, express, written permission of the FSBPT.
- d) Significant events and real or potential threats to the integrity of the examination program will be reported to the President and to the Chief Executive Officer of the FSBPT.

2. Deviations from NPTE Policies

Deviations from the NPTE Policies, especially those policies relevant to the security and integrity of the NPTE, may be investigated and pursued to the **full** extent permitted by law and regulation by the FSBPT and the licensing authority involved.

3. Examination Development Committees (formerly Exam Construction & Review Committees)

Per the FSBPT Bylaws and Standing Rules, the Examination Development Committees shall develop and maintain reliable and valid licensing examinations.

4. Job Analysis

The Federation will conduct a formal and periodic analysis of job tasks (job analysis) to establish the job-related knowledge necessary to perform tasks important for entry-level competence of PTs and PTAs. The job analysis serves as the foundation for valid examination forms. To ensure that each examination reflects current entry-level competence, the FSBPT Examination Development Committees will annually review the need for a job analysis and make recommendations regarding the currency of the job analysis to the FSBPT Board of Directors.

5. Test Specifications

The NPTE Examinations will be constructed based on test specifications derived from the most current practice analysis. The test specifications will delineate content areas that reflect and include knowledge critical to competent entry-level performance as determined by the most current job analysis. The proportion of items on an examination form covering each content area will reflect the relative importance of that content area to entry-level competence of PTs and PTAs. Test specifications for PT and for PTA examinations will be included in the NPTE Candidate Handbook and also on the FSBPT website.

6. Item Development

NPTE item writers and item reviewers will be PT or PTA professionals who have passed the appropriate examination, received the appropriate credential and have a minimum of two years of experience post initial credentialing. Item writers will be formally trained in item writing through an FSBPT item writing workshop. Item reviewers will be formally trained by FSBPT in item review. Every effort will be made so that NPTE item writers and item reviewers as a group are approximately representative of the profession in terms of areas of expertise, work setting, geographic location, gender, race/ethnicity and other pertinent factors.

Items should be written to reflect application of knowledge or involve problem-solving skills. Item review must include evaluation of items in terms of the following review criteria: linkage to test specifications, accuracy, currency, clarity, **one** correct or best answer, plausibility of distractors, importance to entry-level practice, bias (e.g., gender and race), cognitive level and other pertinent factors.

7. Examination Construction

The Examination Development Committees monitor the development and maintenance of reliable and valid licensing examinations and supervises the licensing examination process. The committees will include PT and PTA professionals who are representative of the PT and PTA professions in terms of area of expertise, work setting, geographic location, gender, race/ethnicity and other pertinent factors. They will also be formally trained by FSBPT in item review.

Each item proposed for inclusion on an examination form must be reviewed using the same criteria used by item writers. Before any item is included on an examination form for pretesting, the Examination Development Committee (PT or PTA) shall agree that the item passes all review criteria. Only items that pass all review criteria will be pretested. Pretest items with acceptable statistics will be entered into the item bank as items available for inclusion on the licensure examination.

8. Passing Score

The passing scores for the NPTE licensure examinations will reflect the level of knowledge necessary for the provision of safe and effective physical therapy services upon entry into the profession. Because the practice of physical therapy evolves with time, the appropriateness of the passing score for each NPTE examination will be re-evaluated at least every five years, after updating the test specifications to reflect any changes in the scope of practice of entry-level physical therapy and at other times deemed necessary. This periodic review will ensure that the passing scores for the PT and PTA examinations accurately reflect the amount of physical therapy knowledge currently required of competent entry-level professionals.

In setting the passing score for each examination, the Board of Directors will consider information from a variety of sources, such as:

1. Recommendations from standard-setting panels who participated in a professionally conducted process to establish criterion-referenced passing scores for the PT and PTA examinations;
2. A historical record of the passing score and annual summaries of candidate performance on the NPTE examination since the introduction of computer-based testing;
3. Anticipated changes in practice; and
4. Changes in physical therapy educational degree requirements over the past few years, as evidenced by the number of physical therapy programs transitioning from master's to doctoral degrees.

Once approved by the Board of Directors, NPTE passing scores will be maintained using appropriate equating methodology until subsequent adjustments are implemented.

9. Licensing Authority's Review of the Examination Program & Examination Forms

FSBPT provides opportunities for members to learn about the examination process, ask questions and provide suggestions for improvements.

Licensing board members, administrators or authorized representatives from the member board state-licensing agency may review a form of the NPTE once annually. The examination review session will be conducted under the same security standards as an actual test administration. The examination review session ~~will~~may only be held at a time mutually agreed upon by the member and FSBPT ~~last quarter of each year (October, November or December)~~. Two options are available for the review session:

1. The reviewer may schedule an appointment to visit the Federation offices. Staff will provide the opportunity to review an examination form on the office premises and under secure conditions. The licensing authority will pay all travel costs incurred by the reviewer.
2. The reviewer may schedule an appointment at a test-delivery location. The reviewer will need to follow all security procedures established by FSBPT and the test delivery vendor. Approval for

the review must be obtained from the Federation, and an Authorization To Test (ATT) Letter will be sent to the reviewer. The reviewer will have ~~60 days in which to~~ test on a date mutually agreed to by schedule and review the member and FSBPT examination form. The licensing authority is responsible for paying all travel costs and test-delivery costs associated with the review.

The licensing authorities will insure that the individuals they authorize to review the NPTE are not currently employed by an examination preparation entity, publishing an examination preparation document, or offering a course related to the NPTE, and will be prohibited from participating in these activities for a period of five years from the review of the NPTE. Furthermore, a reviewer shall not be a candidate for PT or PTA licensure for a period of five years following review of the NPTE. A reviewer will be required to sign a letter of agreement that stipulates the procedures of NPTE review that must be followed. This letter of agreement will include the confidentiality requirements.

10. Annual Psychometric Audit

The Assessment Department will ensure that the NPTE program is audited on an annual basis. The results of the review will be included in an annual report to the Board of Directors.

11. Annual Report to the Board of Directors of the FSBPT

FSBPT staff will provide the Board of Directors of the FSBPT with an annual confidential report regarding the current NPTE program. The annual report will include the following data: number of examinees, range of scores, national overall average score, standard deviation, examination form reliability and standard error of measurement. The report will also include recommendations for improvements in the program.

12. Annual Report to the Delegate Assembly of the FSBPT

FSBPT staff will provide the Delegate Assembly of the FSBPT with an annual report regarding the current NPTE program. The annual report will include a summary of major program activities, results of ongoing research projects and recommendations for improvements in the program.

NPTE Administration Policies

1. Examination Administration Committee

The Examination Administration Committee shall monitor compliance with all policies and procedures related to registering candidates for and administering the NPTE. The committee will also monitor policies for reporting examination results to the candidates, licensing authorities and other stakeholders.

2. Examination Registration

Candidates who meet all eligibility requirements (refer to Section 11), have submitted the appropriate registration information and payment, and are approved (refer to Section 12) shall be eligible for the examination. The NPTE will be administered on fixed dates that are determined annually. Candidates will be able to select an exam date from the dates available at the time of their registration. ~~registered for the examination.~~

Candidates who have been registered for the examination and approved by a licensing authority will receive an authorization to test (ATT) letter. The ATT will include information about their eligibility period/date, how to schedule an examination appointment, what to expect on the day of the examination and how examination scores are reported. Candidates must then contact the examination delivery vendor to schedule and sit for the examination as per within their ~~sixty (60) day~~ eligibility period/~~or on their eligibility date (NPTE i)~~. Candidates who fail to sit for the examination or withdraw their registration prior to their eligibility expiring will forfeit their fees and will be required to register and pay again if they would like another eligibility period/date.

Candidates may reschedule their appointment to take the examination within their sixty- (60) day eligibility period by contacting the examination delivery vendor a minimum of two (2) days prior to their scheduled appointment date. Candidates may have to pay a rescheduling fee as required by the examination delivery vendor. Candidates who have a single date eligibility period for the NPTE i are not able eligible to reschedule their examination. -

3. Examination Delivery

The examination will be delivered via computer at testing centers in the examination delivery vendor network of test centers. The examination may also be administered with various testing accommodations if a candidate has been approved for testing accommodations in accordance with policies as outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) as amended. Testing centers that deliver the examination will meet FSBPT standards to maintain an acceptable testing environment.

Testing centers will also meet FSBPT standards to ensure the security and integrity of the examination by admitting only registered candidates with proper identification. Testing centers will also photograph, fingerprint, monitor, digitally record testing sessions and take other appropriate security measures (metal detector, etc.) to prevent cheating.

Proper identification means two pieces of identification. One must be a currently valid, government-issued photo identification that includes a signature, such as a passport or driver's license. The second piece of identification must be pre-printed with the candidate's name and contain a signature, such as a

credit card. Both pieces of identification must match the name that has been sent to the examination delivery vendor by the FSBPT.

If a candidate chooses not to participate in the defined check-in, identification, and/or testing procedures (including being photographed, fingerprinted, scanning of identification, digital monitoring, turning out his/her pockets) at the test site or a candidate's fingerprint matches another examinee, the candidate will not be allowed to test. In any case, the candidate will be given a Candidate Care card and will have to either reschedule his/her exam, if the candidate has additional days left in his/her eligibility period or reregister, if the candidate had a single day eligibility period. In addition, a Center Problem Report will be filed and sent to FSBPT.

4. Examination Security and Integrity

In order to maintain the integrity of the NPTE, the FSBPT monitors for cheating and other examination irregularities before, during and after examination administration.

The FSBPT reserves the right to take any and all action to protect the NPTE and related materials and processes.

For purposes of examination security, each candidate who wishes to take the NPTE is required to enter into the following Security Agreement as part of the registration and examination taking processes:

NPTE Security Agreement and General Terms of Use

Before you continue with exam registration or the examination, you must agree to each of the following statements. Each of these statements reflects a requirement that has previously been communicated to you in the NPTE Candidate Handbook, which describes NPTE testing policies. Adherence to these policies is necessary in order to maintain a fair and secure testing process for you and for other candidates.

If you do not agree to these terms, you will not be permitted to test, and your Prometric testing fee will not be refunded.

I certify that I am the person whose name appears on the two forms of identification I will be presenting prior to admission to the testing room. I am taking the NPTE solely for the purpose of seeking licensure in a U.S. jurisdiction, OR, if I am taking the examination for any other purpose, I have applied for and received special permission to take the NPTE from the Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy (FSBPT).

I have read and agree to the terms set forth in the NPTE Candidate Handbook and the Prometric Testing Center Regulations, including but not limited to, the rules and regulations concerning test-day procedures; procedures for candidates in the event of disruptions or errors in test delivery or administration; and the ban on bringing study materials or other prohibited items into the testing room and on other prohibited conduct before, during, or after exam administration.

I am aware that all NPTE test materials, including my answers, are the property of FSBPT. I understand that the NPTE is a confidential and secure examination, protected by U.S. and international copyright and trade secret laws and that the contents of the NPTE are being disclosed to me today in a limited context to permit me to test and for no other purpose.

I agree that I will not discuss or disclose NPTE content orally, in writing, on the Internet, or through any other medium. I agree that I will not copy, reproduce, adapt, disclose, or transmit any exam question or answer, in whole or in part, or assist anyone else in doing the same. I further agree that I will not reconstruct exam content from memory, by dictation or by any other means, for any purpose, including but not limited to purpose of sharing that information with any other individual or entity.

Examples of prohibited acts include, but are not limited to: describing questions or graphics from the exam; discussing exam questions on web “chat rooms,” message boards, or forums, or through email; identifying terms or concepts contained in exam questions; sharing answers to questions; referring others to information seen on the exam; or reconstructing a list of topics tested.

Furthermore, I agree not to disclose the content of any other product owned by FSBPT, including its Practice Examination and Assessment Tool (PEAT), laws and rules exams, or any other exams.

I understand and agree FSBPT has the right to cancel my scores if it finds any evidence of any irregularities whatsoever and that FSBPT is the final authority that determines whether I have the privilege of sitting for the NPTE and whether the score I receive is transferred to any licensing jurisdiction.

I am aware that if I provide false information or if I violate this Agreement, any of the NPTE rules or procedures, or any other terms or conditions stated in the NPTE Candidate Handbook or Prometric Testing Center Regulations, I may be subject to any or all of the following consequences:

- The Test Administrator may immediately dismiss me from the test session;
- My scores may be canceled, without a refund, and the jurisdiction receiving my scores may be informed of the reason for the cancellation;
- I may be banned from taking the NPTE;
- I may face a lawsuit that may result in my paying monetary damages or in my receiving other court-enforced penalties;
- I may face criminal prosecution;
- I may incur monetary fines and disciplinary action by FSBPT and/or the jurisdiction in which I am applying for licensure.

I have read, understand, and agree to the foregoing statements.

Significant events and real or potential threats to the integrity of the examination will be reported immediately to the President and to the Chief Executive Officer of the FSBPT.

5. Candidate Comments

FSBPT will provide candidates with a means of providing comments about the examination, examination administration and logistics to FSBPT. Comments will be reviewed by FSBPT staff and sent to the appropriate jurisdiction.

6. Candidate Services

a) Score Transfer Services

A score will be transferred when 1) a candidate submits a score transfer request; 2) a valid score is available to the FSBPT; 3) the score can be positively associated with the candidate requesting the transfer; and 4) the corresponding payment has been received by the FSBPT.

b) Score Verification

A candidate may request that his or her examination be hand-scored once the score has been received. A fee will be charged to the candidate for the score verification.

c) Performance Feedback Report

Candidates may request a detailed breakdown of their examination results based on content categories. A fee will be charged to candidates for the performance feedback report.

d) Individual Score Reports

The FSBPT will provide a candidate's score directly to the candidate upon request. The Individual Score Report will be generated when an Individual Score Report Request has been submitted and the corresponding payment has been received by the FSBPT.

e) Withdrawals and Refunds

A candidate who wishes to withdraw his or her registration must notify FSBPT in writing of this intent using a Withdrawal Request Form available from the FSBPT. This notification must arrive at the FSBPT before the candidate's eligibility has expired. Candidates who withdraw from the exam will receive a refund of the exam registration, less a processing fee.

~~A candidate must also cancel his or her appointment with the examination delivery vendor two days prior to the scheduled appointment. However, if the candidate does not appear for the appointment, was not able to cancel the appointment or canceled less than two days prior to the scheduled appointment, the candidate is still eligible to withdraw if he or she did not test and requested the withdrawal within the 60-day eligibility period. Candidates taking the NPTE do not have this option.~~

~~Refunds of the examination fee, less a processing fee, are available for candidates who do not show up for their examination or are denied admittance to the examination, as long as the refund~~

~~is requested prior to the candidate's eligibility expiring. Candidates will forfeit the fee paid to the examination delivery vendor if they do not sit for the exam or are denied admittance to the examination.~~

f) Processing fees for refunds

For services costing less than \$100 the processing fee is \$15. For services costing between \$100 and \$200 the processing fee is \$25. For services greater than \$200 the processing fee is \$50.

7. School Services

School Reports

School Reports are made available to accredited PT and PTA schools. These reports provide each school with NPTE performance for the school's students and comparison groups *who took the computer-based NPTE*. Accuracy of school reports is contingent upon the information the FSBPT receives from the candidates and the licensing authority.

8. Licensing Authority Services

a) Score Reports

Examinations will be scored using a criterion-referenced passing score. Scoring will be done upon receipt of the candidate's examination answers from the examination delivery vendor. Once scored, examination results will be distributed to the appropriate licensing authority. Score reports will include only scaled scores; raw scores will not be provided in the score reports to either licensing authorities or candidates.

b) Roster of Authorization to Test (ATT) Letters

The FSBPT makes available to each licensing authority a listing of all candidates who have received ATT letters for that licensing authority.

c) New Score Summary Report

The FSBPT makes available to each licensing authority a listing of all candidate scores that were received by the FSBPT.

d) Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) as amended

The licensing authority shall be solely responsible for investigating, approving and paying for all compliance costs associated with a candidate's request for testing accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended (Public Law 101-336 – the "ADA"). Therefore, candidates with documented disabilities wishing to request testing accommodations must submit their requests to the licensing authority. Requests must be in writing and must be accompanied by such documentation as required by the licensing authority.

Although licensing authorities, who provide licensing examinations pursuant to state laws, including the NPTE, are solely responsible for such ADA accommodation costs, the Board of Directors of the Federation has established a program which effectively provides for cost reimbursement of certain ADA accommodations subsequently noted. Specifically, the Federation will coordinate making the approved arrangements with the test center and directly pay for the services.

The FSBPT does not reimburse for ADA accommodation costs that are approved for state jurisprudence examinations.

Upon receipt of the ADA Reimbursement Request Form from the licensing authority, reimbursement will be provided to the licensing authority whose NPTE candidate has been approved for any of the following accommodations, as long as the accommodations are required under the ADA:

- Up to double time
- Reader
- Recorder
- Separate testing room
- Zoom Text (software that enlarges the print on the computer screen)
- Screen magnifier

The FSBPT Board of Directors will provide each licensing authority at least twelve (12) months advanced written notice of a decision to discontinue the FSBPT ADA Cost Reimbursement Policy. Such notice shall contain rationale by the Board for its decision to terminate the ADA Cost Reimbursement Policy.

9. Retention of Examination Forms and Scores

The FSBPT shall retain master copies of examination forms and answer keys for a period of eleven (11) years from the date the form of the examination is first given and shall retain copies of the examination scores for at least sixty (60) years from the date the candidate took the examination.

10. Retention of Examination Registration Forms

The FSBPT shall not be required to retain examination registration forms submitted by the licensing authorities or the candidates.

11. Requirements for Candidates Registering to Sit for the NPTE

Candidates must complete a registration and pay the appropriate examination fee in order to register for the NPTE.

12. Approval for Candidates to Sit for the NPTE

The licensing authority of the jurisdiction to which the candidate is applying must approve the candidate to sit for the examination. At a minimum, the licensing authority must require the candidate is a graduate of or graduating from a PT or a PTA program that meets the accreditation standards of the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE) or is deemed substantially equivalent. Candidates may sit for the NPTE no more than 90 days prior to their graduation. The FSBPT is the final authority on ~~whether or not candidates will have~~ access to the NPTE and issuance of scores on the NPTE. The FSBPT will not grant a candidate access to the NPTE unless the candidate has first been approved by a licensing authority or authorized designee to sit for the examination. -

An examination may only be used for administration to bona fide candidates for initial licensure, reinstatement or reactivation, or to candidates who are not licensed in a jurisdiction and do not have a qualifying examination score for that jurisdiction. In the case of reinstatement or reactivation, the licensing authority must notify the Federation that the candidate is taking the NPTE and provide the reason the examination is required.

13. Examination Availability

- a) A candidate should only be administered a given form of the NPTE one time. If the candidate has taken all available forms of the NPTE, he/she must wait until new forms of the examination become available. Any exception to this policy will require approval by the FSBPT Board of Directors. This policy does not apply for jurisprudence examinations where the licensing authority has authorized the use of repeatable forms.
- b) If a candidate tests on the same form of the examination twice and achieves a passing score on the second attempt, the following steps will be taken:
 1. The licensing authority will be notified that the candidate tested on a duplicate form and passed the examination.
 2. The Federation will perform a statistical analysis of the candidate's score.
 - a. If both the Federation and the licensing authority conclude that the passing score was valid, it will be accepted as a valid score.
 - b. If there is not agreement on the statistical validity of the passing score the licensing authority can accept or cancel the candidate's score.
 - i. If the licensing authority cancels the candidate's score, the FSBPT will notify the candidate that their examination was invalid and the candidate will need to retest within 180 days of notification.
 - ii. If the licensing authority accepts the candidate's score the candidate will be notified that the score was cancelled by the Federation and will not be transferred to another licensing authority if requested.. The candidate can choose to retest free of charge. If the candidate chooses to retest he/she will be required to acknowledge in writing that his/her decision and he/she must retest within 180 days.
 3. If a candidate tests on the same form of the examination twice and fails on the second attempt, the score will be reported to the licensing authority in the normal fashion.
- c) A candidate may take the NPTE a maximum of three times in a rolling 12-month period.

14. Confidentiality of Candidate Information

The FSBPT considers all candidate information to be confidential. Therefore, the status of a registration, score information and information regarding a candidate's ADA request or accommodation will be disclosed only to the licensing authority and candidate. A candidate may submit a written request for information to be released to a third party.

15. NPTE Candidate Handbook

The FSBPT will maintain and make available an NPTE Candidate Handbook that outlines information regarding the examination's format and duration, examination registration process, examination delivery and other pertinent information.

16. NPTE Appeals Process Policies

- a) **Definition of an appeal.** An appeal is defined as a request to the Board of Directors from a candidate for an exception to examination policies due to special circumstances.
- b) **Decisions.** Decisions made at the Board of Directors' level are final. In making the decision, the board will consider what effect granting the appeal would have on other candidates, the role of the examination in providing a measure of minimal entry-level competence, the security of the NPTE and any impact the decision might create for the licensing authority to which the candidate is applying or any other licensing authority.
- c) **Process.**
 1. After having exhausted all other options with FSBPT staff, candidates must provide a request in writing to the FSBPT Board of Directors for the exception to the policy. The request must provide the rationale for the exception to the policy and include any steps already taken to resolve this problem at the staff level.
 2. Appeals to the Board of Directors will only be considered if they are made within 60 days of the candidate receiving the results of the examination.
 3. FSBPT staff will scan and electronically forward any appeals (as defined above) to the President and the board liaison to the examination committees within five working days of receipt.
 4. The President and the board liaison to the examination committees will jointly make a decision, on behalf of the Board of Directors with respect to appeal request.
 5. If consensus is not reached, the decision will be required to go to the full Board of Directors.
 6. The President will respond to the candidate's appeal in writing within 60 days of receiving the written appeal, either from the candidate or from FSBPT staff.