



# ACCREDITATION

## Physiotherapy Education Accreditation Canada

**Kathy Davidson**, PT, BScPT, MRSc, CPA member since 1990

Physiotherapy Education Accreditation Canada (PEAC) is often an invisible or unknown organization to many practising physiotherapists, except to those such as faculty, instructors, or students who are involved closely with one of Canada's 15 entry-level physiotherapy programs. <http://peac-aepc.ca/english/accreditation/programs-with-accreditation-status.php>

In order for Canadian physiotherapy graduates to be licensed to practise as physiotherapists in Canada, they must successfully challenge the Physiotherapy Competency Exam (PCE) administered by the Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators (CAPR). In order to be eligible to challenge the PCE, they must have graduated from a PEAC-accredited entry-level physiotherapy education program.

PEAC is a national not-for-profit organization whose role is to accredit physiotherapy programs, and they also collaborate with the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists to accredit physiotherapist assistant and occupational therapist assistant programs in Canada. More information about that part of PEAC's work is found below in the section about the OTA & PTA EAP.

PEAC has a dedicated volunteer Board of Directors, and equally committed volunteer Accreditation Committee members. Each education program is reviewed at least every six years by a team of four volunteer peer reviewers who conduct an offsite (paper) review and then travel onsite for three days to interview stakeholders to triangulate the information in the paper documents submitted by the program. We couldn't operate without their tireless, detailed work and commitment; the fact that they are volunteers helps us keep our accreditation fees as low as possible for education programs.

When an education program has been granted accreditation status, it has "demonstrated compliance" with the accreditation standards agreed upon by the profession. Our accreditation standards are revised every six to ten years, and the revisions are made with input from CAPR, CPA, CCPUP, and other key stakeholders. The revisions consider all of the key documents that guide our profession—the Competency Profile for Physiotherapists in Canada, the Curriculum Guidelines and Clinical Guidelines used by the entry-level education programs, and the CAPR blueprint that guides the exam content. PEAC's accreditation process ensures that programs are graduating safe, competent, and professional physiotherapists who are ready for practice.

Sometimes during an accreditation review, programs are found to be not fully in compliance with all the accreditation standards and criteria. PEAC has the option to award a program either Accreditation—Fully Compliant, Accreditation—Partially Compliant, or Accreditation—Probationary. All of these are considered to be an Accredited status, but they require the program to submit ongoing reports to PEAC describing (and providing evidence) about how they are addressing the concerns that were identified during its review. To help a program do this, PEAC provides a detailed report to show which criteria were in compliance and which criteria need additional evidence, along with specific requests and a deadline by which to submit a progress report. We consider our role to be less about policing and more about working together with the program towards improving the quality of the program, and thus the quality of the education that the students receive.

For more information about PEAC and the accreditation process, please visit our website at [peac-aepc.ca](http://peac-aepc.ca) or contact Executive Director Kathy Davidson at [kathy.davidson@peac-aepc.ca](mailto:kathy.davidson@peac-aepc.ca).



### About Kathy

Kathy Davidson is a physiotherapist and an independent consultant. One of her roles is as Executive Director of Physiotherapy Education Accreditation Canada, and she also works with the College of Physical Therapists of BC. She is an Adjunct Professor in the Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy Department at the University of British Columbia and teaches in UBC's Master of Rehabilitation Sciences online program. Her past and current consulting work relates to accreditation and regulation with several health professions in Canada.

### References:

PEAC Programs with Accreditation Status - <http://peac-aepc.ca/english/accreditation/programs-with-accreditation-status.php>

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## Occupational Therapist Assistant & Physiotherapist Assistant Education Accreditation Program

**Amanda Walton**, PT, Program Manager for the OTA & PTA EAP

The Occupational Therapist Assistant and Physiotherapist Assistant Education Accreditation Program (OTA & PTA EAP) is responsible for the accreditation of physiotherapist assistant and occupational therapist assistant education programs in Canada.

The OTA & PTA EAP is governed by both Physiotherapy Education Accreditation Canada (PEAC <http://www.peac-aepc.ca/english/index.php>) and the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT <https://caot.ca/>) which are the accreditation agencies for Canadian entry-level physiotherapy and occupational therapy education programs, respectively.

Accreditation is the public recognition awarded to education programs that meet established standards. It offers a measure of quality by ensuring programs meet professional standards of academic and operational integrity and quality.

Currently, accreditation of OTA & PTA education programs in Canada is voluntary, meaning it is not mandated for education programs to seek accreditation. Programs who choose to pursue accreditation do so to ensure quality education for their graduates and the best possible employment outcomes.

There are currently 27 education programs across the country affiliated with the OTA & PTA EAP. A full listing can be viewed on our website at [www.otapta.ca](http://www.otapta.ca).

In many regions and health care settings, employers are increasingly recruiting assistants that are graduates of an accredited OTA & PTA education program to ensure a threshold level of sound competence and quality.

It is important for practicing physiotherapists to understand that because accreditation of OTA & PTA education programs is currently voluntary, variability exists in levels of training and skill of assistants, depending on where and when they received their training. While it is always necessary to assess the skill level of the assistant prior to task assignment per regulatory requirements, the competencies taught to graduates of accredited education programs can offer a standard baseline from which to begin. You can learn more about the competencies evaluated through accreditation by reviewing Standard 6 PTA of the OTA & PTA EAP Accreditation Standards, available on our website. Standard 6 PTA was created based on the Essential Competency Profile for Physiotherapist Assistants in Canada (2012), which can be viewed on our website.

To meet accreditation standards, students in accredited OTA & PTA education programs must complete a minimum number of placement hours prior to graduation. Sourcing a variety of good quality placement opportunities to meet the needs of all students can be a challenge for education programs. You can help by providing placement opportunities for OTA/PTA students, either directly or indirectly, through supervision of an OTA/PTA graduate who is serving as a preceptor to an OTA/PTA student. Fieldwork placement opportunities allow students the opportunity to consolidate skills learned in the classroom. Well trained OTA/PTA graduates can effect positive change on the Canadian health care system by contributing to increased efficiency and access to care. Serving as a preceptor for OTA/PTA students as well as for PT students offers the opportunity to give back to the physiotherapy profession.

Graduates of accredited programs are eligible for membership with both CPA and CAOT. 🇨🇦



### About Amanda

Amanda Walton is the Program Manager for the OTA & PTA EAP. Throughout her 20-year career in physiotherapy, she has worked as a clinician and an administrator across both private and public health care sectors in a variety of settings, including private practice, homecare and hospital rehabilitation. Amanda enjoys working from her London, Ontario home office with her two dogs dozing at her side. [amanda.walton@otapta.ca](mailto:amanda.walton@otapta.ca)