The Australian Physiotherapy Council provides advice to the Physiotherapy Board of Australia regarding qualifications that are substantially equivalent to an approved Australian physiotherapy qualification. The advice is based on the assessment of the qualification of individual applicants.

Qualifications that are substantially equivalent demonstrate evidence for each of the five requirements:

1. Program Attributes
2. Academic Program
3. Quality Systems
4. Clinical Education Program
5. Resources and Infrastructure Elements

The evidence or indicators for each requirement is described in the following pages.

The requirements for substantial equivalence are derived from the “Australian Physiotherapy Council Accreditation of Entry Level Physiotherapy Programs - A Manual for Universities”.

Useful links

Physiotherapy Board of Australia: Guidelines for substantially equivalent qualifications

**EVIDENCE/ INDICATORS FOR EACH REQUIREMENT**

**REQUIREMENT 1: PROGRAM ATTRIBUTES**

1.1:  **Program and Degree Nomenclature**
- The program title includes the word ‘Physiotherapy’.
- The program leads to a degree title that includes the word ‘Physiotherapy’.
- There is no reference to a specialisation in physiotherapy in the degree title.

1.2:  **Duration of Program**
- An entry level physiotherapy program leading to a degree at bachelor level is the equivalent of no less than four academic years of full-time study, based on entry following a satisfactory level of achievement at Year 12 level or equivalent.
- An entry level physiotherapy program leading to a coursework degree at masters level is the equivalent of no less than two academic years of full-time study based on entry following a satisfactory level of achievement in a three or four year university-based baccalaureate degree and the successful completion of defined prerequisite areas prior to a student commencing the physiotherapy program\(^1\).
- An entry level physiotherapy program leading to a degree at doctoral level is the equivalent of no less than three academic years of full-time study following a satisfactory level of achievement in a three or four year university-based baccalaureate degree and the successful completion of defined prerequisite areas prior to a student commencing the physiotherapy program\(^1\).
- The physiotherapy component of a double degree program is the equivalent of no less than two academic years of full-time study following successful completion of defined prerequisite areas.

1.3:  **Entry-level Doctoral Program**
- Learning outcomes are related to education in the professional practice of physiotherapy and in physiotherapy research.
- Course requirements include development of a research proposal to a stage that could be submitted for ethics approval.
- Course requirements include demonstration of profession specific clinical knowledge and skills at a higher level than graduates of a baccalaureate level physiotherapy degree.

\(^1\) The defined prerequisite areas are the sciences fundamental to physiotherapy including the biomedical sciences of cell biology, anatomy, physiology (including comprehensive exercise physiology), pathology, the physical sciences including biomechanics, and the behavioural sciences including psychology, sociology and public health. If these areas are not prerequisites, then the equivalent content must be covered in the physiotherapy qualification.
REQUIREMENT 2: ACADEMIC PROGRAM

2.1: Pedagogy

- The program is structured to ensure that all the key areas of physiotherapy practice are core components of the program.
- The teaching plan for each unit of instruction includes a range of teaching, learning and assessment methods appropriate to the achievement of the specific learning outcomes for the unit and accommodates the learning styles of the students.
- The program schedule includes adequate time for consolidation of student learning.

2.2: Research/Evidence-based Practice

- Students are given adequate grounding in relevant research methods and research ethics.
- Students have skills to conduct all contemporary forms of searches for research based evidence for physiotherapy practice.
- Students can critically analyse and evaluate the usefulness of research papers and presentations.
- The content of all units in the program is supported by relevant and up-to-date reference material which includes references to journal articles.

2.3: Curriculum

- The curriculum is structured to include lectures, tutorials, practical classes and clinical education experiences that are sequenced and integrated to ensure effective learning and include:
  - The sciences fundamental to physiotherapy including the biomedical sciences of cell biology, anatomy, physiology (including comprehensive exercise physiology), pathology, the physical sciences including biomechanics, and behavioural sciences including psychology, sociology and public health;
  - The practice of physiotherapy including but not limited to assessment, diagnosis, interpretation, planning, interventions, measurement of outcomes and reflection on practice; and
  - Aspects of broader professional practice including but not limited to professional ethics and legal responsibilities, leadership, administration, education, consultation and collaborative health care provision.
- The content of the curriculum and the organisation of the learning experiences foster a commitment to continuing professional growth including learning through self-directed, independent study.
- The content of the curriculum addresses contemporary clinical practice and professional issues.
- Students undertake formal practical classes as part of their coursework in professional physiotherapy skill development.
The curriculum is developed and regularly reviewed at a university level by the appropriate university board/committee and by academic staff of the program with input from the program advisory group, representatives of the profession, the student body and other interested groups.

2.4: Assessment

- The breadth and depth of knowledge of the core areas in physiotherapy is adequately assessed.
- The program utilises a range of assessment methods appropriate to the learning outcomes for both formative and summative purposes.
- Students must pass all units in order to complete the program.

**Requirement 3: Quality Systems**

3.1: Program Outcomes

- The university undertakes regular progressive monitoring of program outcomes using a range of appropriate and valid methods.

3.2: Graduate Outcomes

- The university collects data from graduates and employers to determine how the graduates are able to meet the professional and graduate attributes defined by the university.

3.3: Research Environment and Outcomes

- Staff and students are actively involved in and are planning for research and scholarship related to physiotherapy.
**Requirement 4: Clinical Education Program**

### 4.1: Clinical Education Model

- Students are given sufficient grounding in professional ethics prior to undertaking supervised clinical practice.
- There is adequate coverage of professional knowledge and skills within the program for all students prior to beginning their first clinical placement.
- Clinical education is sequential and integrated within the program.
- The clinical education model includes progressive exposure to a variety of clients with problems of increasing complexity.
- Periods of supervised clinical practice are scheduled following relevant theoretical and practical education.
- The supervised clinical practice experience provides opportunities for students to:
  - integrate theoretical and practical concepts into clinical practice.
  - perform professional responsibilities under appropriate levels of supervision.
  - observe professional role models.
  - receive timely and constructive feedback regarding their professional skills and clinical reasoning.
  - reflect on practice.
  - progressively build and develop clinical and professional expertise.

### 4.2: Clinical Placements

- All students have assured access to clinical placements in all core areas of practice and across the lifespan.
- There are specific procedures established for communication between the clinical educators and the students for both issues of client care and for teaching and learning whilst on clinical placements.

### 4.3: Clinical Educators

- Clinical educators are experienced and trained in the key areas of physiotherapy, in a range of settings (acute, rehabilitation and community) and in physiotherapy management of clients of all ages.
- Students are supervised on all clinical placements by a person or persons with qualifications and experience appropriate to the particular environment.
- There are specific procedures established for communication on professional, curriculum and administrative matters between the clinical educators and the academic staff.
Assessment of Substantial Equivalence

Requirement 5: Resources and Infrastructure Elements

5.1: Academic and Research Leadership

- Is the program lead by a physiotherapist with a higher qualification?

5.2: Academic Staffing

- The areas of expertise of the physiotherapy academic staff are sufficient to cover the key areas of physiotherapy practice in Australia, any elective units and research.

5.3: Physical Resources

- Students have access to high quality human anatomical specimens, preferably in wet laboratories.
- The equipment, particularly physiotherapeutic and electronic equipment relevant to physiotherapy technology, and consumables enables the provision of effective learning and research experiences.
- The university library provides assured access to a comprehensive and up-to-date range of physiotherapy texts, monographs and journals in hardcopy and electronic formats.
- The university library provides substantial and widespread access to appropriate biomedical, behavioural and physiotherapy sciences databases as well as commonly used online resources.

5.4: Organisational Structure

- The qualification achieved by the graduate is aligned to an Australian qualification of the same level as defined by the Australian Qualifications Framework.

5.5: Policies

- The selection criteria for entry to the program are clearly stated and are compatible with the requirements of the program including appropriate prerequisite knowledge.

5.6: Procedures

- Appropriate procedures are in place to deal with cases of plagiarism or other instances of unethical conduct.
- Students have assured access to current policies, procedures and program information particularly related to the learning outcomes, assessment, progression and requirements for graduation, appeals processes, costs and academic review processes.
- Procedures are in place to ensure students on placement conduct themselves in an ethical and professional manner.
- Appropriate procedures are in place to deal with student appeals.