



# HONG KONG PHYSIOTHERAPY ASSOCIATION LIMITED

## 香港物理治療學會有限公司

中國香港特別行政區 九龍佐敦德興街12號興富中心9樓901室  
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### Position Statement: Entry-level Physiotherapy Education

Over the past few years, there has been a substantial imbalance between the demand of physiotherapy service and supply of new physiotherapy graduates, leading to a severe shortage of physiotherapists across different health care sectors and a large number of vacant positions.

According to the Strategic Review on Healthcare Manpower Planning and Professional Development Report released by the Government in 2017, it is projected that there will be a shortage of more than 900 physiotherapists (PT) by the year of 2030.<sup>1</sup> To alleviate projected shortage, it is recommended in the Report that *“The Government should encourage the self-financing sector to offer physiotherapy programme....., in addition to increasing publicly-funded training places.”*<sup>1</sup>The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) has been the sole provider of entry-level physiotherapy education in Hong Kong. In light of the current shortage of physiotherapists, which will become even more critical in the near future, it is foreseeable that other institutions may seize this opportunity to develop and implement their own self-financed entry-level physiotherapy education programs.

The Hong Kong Physiotherapy Association (HKPA) does not object to the idea of having other institutions provide entry-level physiotherapy education, because the issue of manpower shortage has to be resolved, and there are many examples of having more than one institution providing physiotherapy training within the same city in other parts of the world. However, HKPA maintains that the government should shoulder the responsibility of ensuring adequate manpower supply of physiotherapists by increasing the publicly funded training places in universities, rather than solely relying on the self-financing sector to fill the gap between supply and demand. In addition, the quality of the new entry-level physiotherapy programs is of utmost importance. Nowadays, physiotherapy training in Hong Kong and other developed countries takes place in a university setting, where research is the mandate, rather than in a vocational school or technical college. Teaching should always be informed by the latest research discoveries. We expect the graduates to demonstrate not only proficiency in entry-level physiotherapy practice skills, but also critical thinking and ability to use research evidence to drive their clinical decision making. The days when physiotherapists are seen as someone who merely deliver “prescribed therapy” are long gone. Only by having quality entry-level physiotherapy education can we provide quality physiotherapy service to the public. Producing graduates that are below the acceptable practice standard would also jeopardize our professional standing and tarnish our professional image, which has taken so many years of tireless work of our current and previous colleagues to build. So the issue at hand is not only an education one, but one that has major ramifications for our professional development, and health and welfare of the public.

To ensure program quality and accountability, for academic institutions that offer entry-level physiotherapy education programs, there should be an external advisory body made up of physiotherapists, employers from different sectors and representatives of professional bodies. The advisory body should be informed of important matters pertinent to the program including but not limited to student admissions, operational issues, finance, staffing and academic performance of students.



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For quality assurance purpose, having a comprehensive accreditation system is crucial. The Physiotherapists Board (PT Board) cannot shy away from its responsibility to ensure that whatever new entry-level physiotherapy education programs are developed are of acceptable standard. While there is a current system in place adopted by the PT Board for accrediting local programs other than the BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy Program at PolyU (e.g., Master in Physiotherapy (MPT) Program at PolyU) and programs offered by overseas institutions, there is much room for improvement. Several years ago, when the Master in Physiotherapy (MPT) Program at PolyU had to go through the accreditation process, the Definitive Document of the PolyU BSc (Hons) in Physiotherapy Program curriculum was used as the basis of their accreditation document. The subject areas and hours allocated to each subject in the new program basically had to exactly match those described in the BSc (Hons) in Physiotherapy Program. Such an accreditation framework is not desirable. Firstly, the BSc (Hons) in Physiotherapy Program curriculum of PolyU is also subject to change itself. Indeed, it has undergone several significant changes in the past few years. Secondly, different programs should have their own unique structure and characteristics because of the difference in student background, mission of the institution, and societal needs. Without lowering the demand for quality of the program, the accreditation system should allow more flexibility when considering the differences in curriculum design and teaching methodology across different physiotherapy education programs. The most important issue is whether all essential subject areas pertinent to entry-level physiotherapy practice are adequately covered, whether the intended learning outcomes are appropriate, well defined and properly assessed, rather than imposing the same program structure and the same number of teaching hours for each subject as in PolyU. Apart from the curriculum design, other important issues including the student admission criteria, qualifications of teaching faculty, and quality of clinical education should be addressed in the accreditation. There should also be sufficient provision of space and state-of-the-art equipment, library facilities and an appropriate student-staff ratio to enable successful delivery of quality teaching.

The PT Board may take reference from international standards to formulate its own accreditation framework, such as the guidelines formulated by the World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT) or the accreditation systems used by developed countries such as Australia and New Zealand. In particular, WCPT has a policy statement on education<sup>2</sup> and also well-established guidelines for (1) physical therapist professional entry level education,<sup>3</sup> (2) standard evaluation process for accreditation/recognition of physical therapist professional entry level education programmes,<sup>4</sup> (3) the clinical education component of physical therapist professional entry level education,<sup>5</sup> and (4) qualifications of faculty for physical therapist professional entry level programmes.<sup>6</sup> In any case, threshold for what is considered to be an acceptable standard should be clearly defined for different aspects of the program. And the same standard should be applied to all entry-level programs, regardless of the academic institutions involved.

In summary, concerning the matter related to new entry-level physiotherapy education programs, HKPA maintains that:



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1. Having academic institutions from self-financing sector offer entry-level physiotherapy education programs is a possible solution to tackle the problem of shortage of physiotherapists in the workforce;
2. The government should shoulder the responsibility of ensuring adequate manpower supply of physiotherapists by increasing the publicly funded training places in universities, rather than solely relying on the self-financing sector to fill the gap between supply and demand;
3. The quality of the physiotherapy education program should be the most important consideration;
4. The PT Board should develop a comprehensive accreditation system by taking reference from international standards.

### References

1. Food and Health Bureau, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government. Strategic Review on Healthcare Manpower Planning and Professional Development Report, 2017.
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### 香港物理治療學會對開辦物理治療課程的立場

在過去數年，社會對物理治療服務的需求日益增大，惟物理治療畢業生的供應卻嚴重不足，導致不同醫療界別的物理治療師嚴重短缺，出現龐大的職位空缺。

根據香港特區政府於二零一七年發佈的「醫療人力規劃和專業發展策略檢討」，預計到二零三零年，市場上將會有達九百多名的物理治療師空缺<sup>1</sup>。有見及此，為了舒緩物理治療師短缺的情況，「醫療人力規劃和專業發展策略檢討」建議香港特區政府應增加政府資助的物理治療學位，同時鼓勵及支持自資院校開辦物理治療課程，以培育更多的物理治療人才<sup>1</sup>。現時，香港理工大學是香港唯一一所開辦物理治療課程的大專院校。有鑑於物理治療師短缺的情況將會愈趨嚴重，可以預期將來會有其他大專院校陸續開辦物理治療學科的自資學士學位課程。

香港物理治療學會〔本會〕並不反對增加開辦物理治療課程的大專院校，因為解決物理治療師短缺的問題是刻不容緩。於世界各地，在同一城市內擁有多於一間學術機構提供物理治療師的培訓課程亦很普遍。但是，本會認為政府應積極考慮增加大學內物理治療學科的政府資助學額，而不是單純依賴自資學術機構來改善物理治療師人手短缺的情況。此外，物理治療課程的質素最為重要。如今，香港和其他已發展國家的物理治療課程都是在大學內進行，當中的專業培訓著重精密及系統化的科學研究，教學內容亦會根據最新的科研證據而作出調整，並非一般職業學校或技術學院能提供這樣的訓練。我們期望本科畢業生不僅能夠熟練掌握物理治療的相關臨床技巧，同時能積極運用批判性的思維和科研證據來推動臨床決定。物理治療師僅僅被視為提供“處方療法”的技術人員的日子早已不存在。要為社會大眾提供優質的物理治療服務，優質的物理治療專業培訓是不可或缺的。培育出不符合基本專業水平的畢業生，會危及物理治療師的專業地位，糟蹋了不少同業和前輩多年來努力不懈的成果。所以，這不單是一個教育問題，而是足以影響物理治療的專業發展，以及對市民的健康和福祉造成重大影響的一項議題。

為確保物理治療課程的質素和問責性，物理治療專業培訓的學術機構應設立由物理治療師、不同醫療界別以及專業團體的代表所組成的諮詢組織。有關的學術機構必須向諮詢組織報告任何與物理治療課程有關的重要事宜，包括收生，課程運作，財務，教學人員配置以及學生的學習成績。



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為了保證課程的質素，全面的認證機制尤其重要，確保所有新開辦的物理治療課程符合認可標準，物理治療師管理委員會是責無旁貸的。雖然物理治療師管理委員會已有相關的課程認證機制，並且應用於本港以及外國的物理治療課程認證上，包括香港理工大學物理治療學〔榮譽〕理學士學位以外的物理治療課程〔例如香港理工大學物理治療學碩士學位課程〕。儘管如此，本會認為其認證機制仍有很大的改善空間。數年前，香港理工大學物理治療學碩士學位課程必須經過認證程序，物理治療師管理委員會接納以當時香港理工大學物理治療學〔榮譽〕理學士學位課程作為認證機制的基礎。分配給每個學科的學習內容和時數基本上必須與香港理工大學物理治療學〔榮譽〕理學士學位課程所描述的資料完全一致，本會認為這樣的認證框架並不是完全可取的。首先，香港理工大學物理治療學〔榮譽〕理學士學位課程的內容並非恆常不變。事實上，過去幾年間它的課程內容已經歷了數次重大的變化。其次，由於學生背景，院校使命和社會需求的差異，不同的物理治療課程應具備其獨特的結構和特點。在不影響課程質素的前提下，認證系統需要更彈性處理這些不同院校的物理治療課程和香港理工大學物理治療學〔榮譽〕理學士學位課程在課程設計及教學方法所存在的差異，才能作出有效的評估。必須慎重考慮的問題是：課程是否完全包含了物理治療學科必須涵蓋的重要學術範疇？學習的目標成果是否恰當、其定義是否清晰、其對學生是否達致學習目標成果的評核過程是否正確？本會認為一套完善的課程認證機制絕不能單純複製香港理工大學物理治療學〔榮譽〕理學士學位的課程結構和教學時數。除了課程設計的考量，完善的認證機制還須加以審視其他重要的因素，包括學生錄取標準，教師資格和臨床教育質量。另外，提供物理治療專業培訓的學術機構應具備足夠的空間和先進的設備、圖書館設施和確保學生與教學人員的比例保持於適當水平，以促進優質的教學。

物理治療師管理委員會可參照國際標準來制定課程認證框架，例如世界物理治療聯盟〔World Confederation for Physical Therapy〕所制定的指引或澳洲、新西蘭等已發展國家所使用的認證制度。其中，世界物理治療聯盟針對<sup>2</sup> 1) 物理治療專業培訓<sup>3</sup>，2) 物理治療課程之認證機制的評估<sup>4</sup>，3) 物理治療課程的臨床教育<sup>5</sup>，以及4) 提供物理治療培訓教學人員的資格審核<sup>6</sup>，皆提供了明確的指引。不論什麼情況，一套可以被廣泛接受及認可的課程認證標準是必要的，任何學術機構的物理治療課程皆需在同樣的認證標準下得到公平公正的評核。

總括而言，本會對新開辦的物理治療自資學士學位課程，立場如下：

1. 如有其他自資學術機構能開辦物理治療學科的準入學位課程，是解決物理治療師人手短缺問題的可行方案之一；
2. 政府應積極考慮增加大學內物理治療學科的政府資助學額，而不是單純依賴自資學術機構來改善物理治療師人手短缺的情況；



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3. 物理治療課程的質素是最為重要的考慮因素；
4. 物理治療師管理委員會應參照國際標準制定全面的課程認證機制。

### 參考資料：

1. Food and Health Bureau, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government. Strategic Review on Healthcare Manpower Planning and Professional Development Report, 2017.
2. World Confederation for Physical Therapy. WCPT policy statement: Education. London, UK: WCPT; 2017. <http://www.wcpt.org/policy/ps-education> (Access date 6th January 2018).
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