

# Continuing Competence: Frequently Asked Questions

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## [General Information](#)

### **What is Continuing Competence?**

*A: As defined by the proposed rules (21 NCAC 48G .0105) Continuing competence means "...the licensee's ongoing activities to augment knowledge, skills, behaviors, and abilities related to the practice of physical therapy."*

### **When did the Continuing Competence rules first go into effect?**

*A: The rules requiring continuing competence for license renewal first went into effect January 1, 2009.*

### **When did the modifications to the Continuing Competence rules go into effect?**

*A. The modified continuing competence rules become effective January 1, 2014.*

### **What changes were made?**

*The most significant rule change involves the definition of a reporting period. A reporting period is now defined as: "... a **25-month period** commencing on January 1<sup>st</sup> during which the licensee must complete all continuing competence requirements. Points earned by a licensee may be counted toward completion during one reporting period only. " (Definitions section 21 NCAC 48G .0105 (12)). Confusion over different dates for reporting period and license renewal should be eliminated. The 25-month period*

*aligns the date by which continuing competence activities need to be completed with the date of licensure expiration, January 31<sup>st</sup>. In addition, activities completed in January at the end of the reporting period may be reported in the current reporting period or the next reporting period that begins January 1 but not both.*

**Other changes of note include:**

*21 NCAC 48G .0106 – clarification of which points may be carried over*

*21 NCAC 48G .0108 – the addition of IACET (The International Association for Continuing Education and Training) as a pre-approved provider of CC activities by NCBPTE.*

*21 NCAC 48G .0109 – (a)(1) addition of live, real-time activities completed via electronic media to earn up to 15 points.*

*-(a)(4) clarifies non-interactive, electronic media activities by an approved provider may earn up to 10 points.*

*-(a)(6) and (a)(8) clarify differences in home study activities, with (6) being self-designed for up to 5 points and (8) being offered by an approved provider for up to 10 points.*

*21 NCAC 48G .0109 (f) (7) & (8)– are new activities that qualify for points under Research and Publishing, with the distinction being either published, non peer-reviewed (a maximum of 4 points) or published, peer reviewed articles, book reviews or abstracts related to PT (a maximum of 15 points).*

*21 NCAC 48G .0109 (i)(1) Workplace Education – now differentiates between attendees and presenters for earning points.*

*21 NCAC 48G .0109 (j)(5) Professional Service – now includes unpaid, volunteer service to both the general public and healthcare professionals*

*-(j)(8) adds service for item writing for either the NPTE or ABPTS exams*

*-(j)(9) adds participation in conducting clinical research (not intended as a research subject participant)*

*21 NCAC 48G .0111 Deferments for completion of continuing competence activities for license renewal were eliminated and clarifications were made for exemptions from continuing competence requirements.*

*Editorial corrections and updates were also made and are highlighted at the link [www.ncptboard.org](http://www.ncptboard.org), Continuing Competence link, Rules and Chart.*

### **What are continuing competence “points”?**

*A: Points are the units of measure awarded for a continuing competence activity. By way of example, continuing education courses that offer contact hours or CEU’s will have points awarded as follows: 1 CEU = 10 contact hours, 10 course hours or 10 classroom hours = 10 points. Further explanation of these units is found in rules 21 NCAC 48G .0105, .0109 and in the Summary Chart.*

*To earn a point toward the continuing competence requirement, in categories that are time based, one point is defined as 50-60 minutes of activity, while a ½ point may be earned for 25-30 minutes of activity. NCBPTE does not recognize units less than ½ point as counting toward the requirement.*

### **Requirements for PT/PTA’s**

#### **What is required to meet the Continuing Competence rules for licensure renewal in physical therapy in North Carolina?**

*A: Rules 21 NCAC 48G .0106 (for current licensees) and 21 NCAC 48G .0203 (for licensees reviving licenses) describe the basic requirements. Generally, 30 points for PT’s and 20 points for PTA’s are required per 25 month reporting period. Overall, there are 11 categories of activities from which licensees can choose to meet the requirement. (For additional information go to [www.ncptboard.org](http://www.ncptboard.org), Continuing Competence links, Rules and Chart to read the rules in their entirety.)*

#### **I obtained my first license in the middle of the year. Do I need to have the full amount of points for that year to renew my license?**

*A: No. Rule 21 NCAC 48G .0106 explains that for licensees whose initial date of licensure is after January 1, 2009, their reporting period for continuing competence requirements begins on January 1 of the year following the date of initial licensure. Upon first licensure, a licensee is sent a packet including information and references on Continuing Competence and license renewal requirements. A licensee should confirm that the assigned reporting period begins January 1 AFTER the date of first licensure. Activities completed **prior to the beginning of the first reporting period will not count**. Reporting periods may be verified by contacting the Board, [dragan@ncptboard.org](mailto:dragan@ncptboard.org) or logging in to the Continuing Competence Reporting application on the website.*

#### **What are the categories of Continuing Competence activities?**

*A: Continuing Education, Advanced Training (Certification and Recognition), FSBPT Practice Review Tool (PRT), Clinical Education, Presenting/Teaching, Clinical Practice, Professional Membership and Service, Workplace Education/Facility-based Education, Professional Self-Assessment/Reflective Practice, Research and Publishing and the mandatory Jurisprudence Exercise. Additional details for each of the categories may be found in the Rules under 21 NCAC 48G .0109 or the Summary Chart found on the “Continuing Competence, Rules and Chart” page at [www.ncptboard.org](http://www.ncptboard.org).*

**Are there limitations on the number of points I can earn in any category?**

*A: Yes. Each category has limitations and maximum points that may be earned toward the requirement. Any maximums or limitations are listed in each rule (21 NCAC 48G .0109) and in the summary chart. Up to 10 points earned in excess of the requirement may be carried over from one reporting period to the next. Carry over points may not be claimed from Jurisprudence Exercises, Clinical Practice and Self-Assessment categories.*

**Documentation Requirements**

**What documents do I have to keep to prove I completed each activity?**

*A: The required documentation for each activity in a category is listed in the rule itself (21 NCAC 48G .0109) and in a summary document found on the Board website, [www.ncptboard.org](http://www.ncptboard.org), under the continuing competence link, "Required Documentation."*

**Should I send documents when I complete an activity?**

*A: No. Documentation should be kept by the licensee unless the Board requests the documentation pursuant to an audit.*

**How long should I keep documentation?**

*A: Board rules state documentation should be kept for 4 years after the close of the reporting period for which the activity was claimed for points.*

**Are there special forms I need to use to document continuing competence activities?**

*A: On the Board website, Continuing Competence Forms, there are links to forms that may be used to document some categories of continuing competence. Those available are: Clinical Instructor Documentation and Verification of Clinical Practice forms. These forms are not mandatory but are helpful in documented the required information easily.*

**Can I document a research grant by submitting the grant in an electronic format?**

*A: Yes, large documents may be submitted in their entirety in electronic format.*

**As a grant reviewer I have agreed to destroy all materials related to the grant and not to discuss it with others. How do I document that I did the review?**

*A: In order for an audit to be legitimate and maintain the integrity of the process, documentation must be submitted according to the rule. A copy of the non-disclosure agreement you signed and any materials that would fulfill the requirements without breaking the non-disclosure agreement will be*

required. Decisions about whether these materials meet the requirement will be done on a case-by-case basis.

**How should I save my documentation?**

A: Documentation may be saved in hard copy or electronically. The key is to save as few documents as needed to meet the requirement and have access to them at anytime in case of audit. Documentation is the responsibility of the licensee, not the employer.

**Rule Interpretations**

**Q: To earn points for continuing competence activities, what topics are included in “related to PT Scope of Practice” described in Rule .0107?**

A: Activities included in the PT Scope of practice may be found in the Practice act – and include clinically related, ethically related and Healthcare management related topics. If you question whether the topic is relevant, contact the Board office.

**I work two jobs. How do I count continuing competence points for clinical practice?**

A: You add the total number of clinical hours worked at both jobs and determine under which category the total hours fit: less than 200 hours, 1000 hours or more or 1750 hours or more. The total number of hours worked in all jobs determines the number of points earned for that year.

**Q: With changes to the rules there are now more options to earn points for Home Study and Electronic media. How do I determine what is counted under what category?**

<b><u>Category</u></b>	<b><u>Requirements</u></b>	<b><u>Instructional Method</u></b>	<b><u>Points earning</u></b>
Continuing Education .0109 (a) (1)	-Approved provider -live interaction with instructor	Electronic – example: teleconference, webinar (100% completed electronically)	1 hour = 1 point up to 15 points
Continuing Education .0109 (a) (4)	-approved provider -non-interactive	Electronic (100% completed electronically) videotape, satellite transmission, webcast, DVD or other electronic media	1 hour = 1 point up to 10 points
Continuing Education .0109 (a) (6)	Home Study -self-designed -no approval necessary -no interactive with instructor requirement	Paper-based, electronic, hands-on or observational activity	3 hours = 1 point up to 5 points
Continuing Education .0109 (a) (8)	Home Study -approved provider -no interactive with instructor requirement	Approved provider - Paper-based, electronic, hands-on or observational activity, etc.	1 hour = 1 point up to 10 points

**I am enrolled in a tDPT program. I am taking several courses for 3 credit hours through a university PT program. How do I count my hours for this course?**

A: Rule .0109 (a)(2) addresses post-baccalaureate, academic courses under which courses taken in a transitional DPT would fall. 3 credit hour courses will earn 45 points per course for a grade of “C” or better or a “P” if the course is taken Pass/Fail.

**I would like to attend a course offered on topics including physical therapy for animals and the use of animals to treat patient conditions. Would those meet the requirements in Rule .0107?**

A: In the definition of physical therapy in the Practice Act it states, “Physical therapy” means the evaluation or treatment of **any person...**” which does not include animals. Course content relating to physical therapy on animals would not count toward points because treatment of animals in NC cannot be referred to as physical therapy. However, the use of animals in physical therapy such as hippotherapy could be included. If the course contained content about hippotherapy and otherwise met the criteria in rule .0107 it may be counted for continuing competence points

**Presenting and Teaching: How should I determine if my participation in instructing a class is counted and how would I document this?**

A: The rule is as follows: **21 NCAC 48G .0109 Continuing Competence Activities**

(e) Presenting or teaching for an accredited physical therapy educational program, a transitional Doctor of Physical Therapy (“DPT”) program, an accredited program for health care practitioners licensed under the provisions of Chapter 90 of the North Carolina General Statutes, or a state, national or international workshop, seminar or professional health care conference earns two points for each hour of presentation or teaching. The licensee shall submit written materials advertising the presentation or teaching, or other evidence of the date, subject and goals and objectives of the presentation and any written materials prepared by the licensee. A maximum of six points is allowed during any reporting period, and credit shall not be given for teaching or presenting the same subject matter more than one time.

To determine if your participation in class instruction is considered presenting and teaching a licensee should be able to answer yes to all of the following:

Presenting or Teaching Activity	Yes	No
-accredited PT/PTA educational programs		
-transitional DPT program		
-accredited program for healthcare practitioners licensed under Chapter 90 of the NC General Statues		
-state, national, international workshop, seminar, healthcare conference		
Copy of written materials developed and presented by licensee		
Can provide documentation of date, subject, goals, objectives and written materials developed		

To document the activity the licensee should maintain:

1. Copy of the brochure or other written material advertising the presenting/teaching OR other evidence of the activity such as letter of confirmation to speak including date and topic or course syllabus listing date and topic
2. Documentation of the goals and objectives of the presentation developed either by the licensee or the program
3. Documentation of written materials presented and developed by a licensee

If the answer is no, to some or all of the categories above, the activity is not considered presenting and teaching. However, it may be considered part of the licensee's work duties and may fall under Clinical Practice for continuing competence purposes or be considered presenting at an in-service under the Workplace Education category.

## **Approved Courses and Providers**

### **How will I know if a continuing education course I want to attend is approved?**

A: 21 NCAC 48G .0108 describes Approval of Providers and Activities. The licensee is responsible for determining if a course is approved. In general, any course approved by a Chapter or section of APTA, FSBPT, IACET or a state PT licensure board in the US or Canada is considered approved for points by NCBPTE. If this information is not listed on a course brochure or website, the licensee should call the provider of the continuing education and ask whether the course has been approved. If it has not been approved, the licensee may submit an application for approval to NCBPTE. A licensee should review Rule .0108 for a complete listing of pre-approved providers and view the listing of courses NCBPTE has approved at [www.ncptboard.org](http://www.ncptboard.org) Continuing Competence link, Continuing Competence Providers and Course Listing. NCPTA is also able to approve providers and courses. There is a listing of courses and providers they have approved at their website [www.ncpt.org](http://www.ncpt.org).

### **How do I submit a course to NCBPTE for approval?**

A: Go to [www.ncptboard.org](http://www.ncptboard.org) Continuing Competence links, "Continuing Competence Forms". Download the application form. Complete all of the information and attach supporting materials and fees to the application and submit to the Board address listed on the website. Applications will not be processed without proper fees or all supporting materials.

### **How much does it cost to submit an application for course approval to NCBPTE?**

A: For providers, \$150.00 and for licensees \$25.00

### **Do I have choices for where can I submit courses for approval?**

A: Yes, a course may be submitted to your provider of choice for review to obtain course approval. You may submit the course to any chapter or section of APTA, any state PT licensure board in the US or Canada or FSBPT for approval. In North Carolina, you may submit to NCPTA [www.ncpt.org](http://www.ncpt.org) or NCBPTE

[www.ncptboard.org](http://www.ncptboard.org). Applications and fee requirements may be found online for both of these organizations.

**Several of my work colleagues also attended the same course that was not approved. Do we all have to submit an application for \$25.00?**

A: No, once the course application has been approved, it is approved for all licensees.

**I go to a lot of continuing education in-services at work but the points I can earn are very limited. How can I earn more points for continuing competence activities I participate in at work?**

A: An employer, facility, PT department, organization or individual may become an approved provider for PT continuing competence activities in North Carolina. Approved providers who sponsor continuing education courses are able to have their activities count 1 hour of activity = 1 point. In the workplace education category points are limited to 5; however, if these continuing education courses are offered by the employer who is an "approved provider," up to 29 points may be earned for PT's and 19 for PTA's. Go to [www.ncpt.org](http://www.ncpt.org) for details on becoming an approved provider.

**How do I know if a provider is approved?**

A: 21 NCAC 48G .0108 makes physical therapy licensing boards, APTA, State Chapters of APTA, FSBPT, IACET and any organizations approved by them approved providers, as are accredited physical therapy education programs and AHEC activities directly related to physical therapy. Otherwise contact the education provider directly and ask where the course has been approved.

**Will I receive credit for educational activities required by my employer?**

A: Some workplace education is eligible for points. Rule 21 NCAC 48G .0109 (i) outlines which activities may be eligible. One option is to recommend to your employer they become an approved provider and then points may be accumulated at the highest rate.

**I am currently involved in a residency program for which I am required to take courses. Will those courses be eligible for credit?**

A: APTA credentialed residency or fellowship programs in physical therapy qualify for continuing education contact hours (one point per contact hour).

## **Continuing Competence Online Reporting and Audits**

**Will I be audited?**

A: Random audits of licensees will be conducted after each reporting period. Your reporting period is determined by your date of licensure. It is very important that licensees retain evidence of compliance with the continuing competence requirements for a period of 4 years following any reporting period so that they may comply with a possible audit.



### **How will I prove that I have completed my Continuing Competence requirement?**

*A: First, you are required to keep documentation or “evidence of compliance” for each activity you will count toward the requirement. Details on what information you should keep to document continuing competence activities are found in Rule .0109. Secondly, at the time of licensure renewal and at the end of your reporting period, you will be asked to update you online Continuing Competence Report attesting to the completion of your requirement.*

## **Continuing Competence Resources**

### **I missed the Continuing Competence: Are You Ready? educational sessions. How can I get this information?**

*A: There are three online educational sessions about Continuing Competence requirements for PT licensees available via the Mountain Area Health Education Center (MAHEC). The online educational modules are available at low or no cost. Completing each course earns 2 continuing competence points. Go to the MAHEC [www.mahec.net](http://www.mahec.net) and NCBPTE website [www.ncptboard.org](http://www.ncptboard.org) for details.*

*(Note: These will be replaced November or December 2013 by one video covering all information)*

### **What is an approved Self-Assessment / Reflective Practice Exercise (RPE)?**

*A: In rule 21 NCAC 48G .0109 (h), a reflective practice exercise is described as “...a process for a licensee to evaluate current clinical abilities, to establish goals to improve clinical abilities, to develop a plan to meet those goals and documentation that the objectives are being accomplished.” An approved RPE can be found at the NCBPTE website [www.ncptboard.org](http://www.ncptboard.org) under Continuing Competence links. Other self assessment tools may be used if submitted to the Board for approval.*

## **Revivals**

### **When I moved out of state 2 years ago I allowed my North Carolina PT license to lapse. We are moving back to NC. What continuing competence requirements do I have to complete to revive my license?**

*A: Rule 21 NCAC 48G .0203 describes the requirements for Revival of Lapsed License. If your license has lapsed longer than one year but less than 5 years you will need to show proof of completed continuing competence activities within the last 2 years including a NCBPTE Jurisprudence Exercise (30 for PT’s, 20 for PTA’s) that meet the NC requirements. If you do not have continuing competence activity documentation or have not completed activities worth the required number of points, you will need to complete the activities and/or obtain documentation prior to any application for revival being complete. An alternative would be to apply for a “revival by endorsement” if you have a current, active license to practice PT in another state.*

## Maximizing Points

### **I cannot attend many continuing education courses away from home. How can I maximize the continuing competence points I earn through home study?**

A: Home study points may be earned via purchased home study courses various providers have available, creating your own home study or by completing approved online courses at home. Using websites such as APTA and “goggling” Physical Therapy Continuing Education can net many options with varying point totals. You may earn 1 point for every 3 hours of **home study (Rule .0109(a)(6))** up to a maximum of 5. In addition, if you earn points in the **online Rule .0109(a)(4)** category by an approved provider you may earn 1 point for every 2 hours of study up to a maximum of 10 points. You could earn a maximum of 15 points in these two categories while at home. Don’t forget you may “carry over” up to 10 points into the next reporting period if you go over in either of these categories.

### **I am participating in an approved Residency program. During my reporting period the residency will only be partially complete. Can still earn points for the residency?**

A: Points for Residencies and fellowships may only be earned **after** it is complete and the certificate of completion presented (21 NCAC 48G .0109 (b) (1-2)). There are other ways to earn points during residencies and fellowships that may apply to the continuing competence requirements. Points may be earned for hours accrued in clinical practice and any continuing education that may be required during the residency or fellowship if it meets the criteria in 21 NCAC 48G .0109 (a)(1-7). Reflective practice exercise or portfolios may also earn points for meeting the criteria outlined in the rules.

### **Are there any low cost options for completing continuing competence requirements?**

A: Yes. For example,

1) Completing the Jurisprudence Exercises ( I, II or III) have no cost, and one point is earned for each exercise completed. Board’s website, [www.ncptboard.org](http://www.ncptboard.org), Free.

2) Working in a clinical practice earns points (depending on the number of hours worked) with no additional cost or time away from the clinic.

3) Serving as a Clinical Instructor earns points with no cost or time away from the clinic.

4) Attending certain types of facility based/workplace education earns points without cost or time away from the clinic.

5) A Self Assessment/Reflective Practice Exercise can be accomplished during personal time and helps you develop a plan for your ongoing continuing competence. Board website, [www.ncptboard.org](http://www.ncptboard.org), Self-Assessment, under continuing competence links. Completing all 5 parts will earn 5 points. Free. (5 points)

6) Study Group – Join or start one that meets the rules requirement. Free or low cost. 2 hours of activity = 1 point up to 5 points.

7) For continuing education there are many low cost options available on-line, via audio-conference and home study. Searching is easily done via the APTA website, North Carolina and other state chapters of the APTA, North Carolina AHEC's, Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy (FSBPT) or through a search engine on the internet. Become familiar with resources in your area and on-line. PT colleagues are an excellent source of information.

8) Professional Service – service to PT related organizations or volunteerism earns a varying number of points depending on activity. Free.

**Q: When a course provider advertises courses that say you can earn “all your points” for several reporting period, is that true?**

*A: Despite what a course provider or specific course may advertise, it is the Board that determines points awarded, which is dependent on the course or provider approval status, subject matter, length of time of the activity and method of instruction. Licensees should be extremely wary of offers for future credits, not only for obvious reasons related to performance, but also because credit cannot be awarded for the same course of instruction more than once in the same reporting period and rules are subject to change.*