



European Network of Physiotherapy in Higher Education

PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES

PHYSIOTHERAPISTS, ADVANCED PHYSIOTHERAPISTS AND PHYSIOTHERAPIST ASSISTANTS

ESCO Professional definitions + ENPHE recommendations

Contextualization

“ESCO” –is the multilingual classification of European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations, of the European commission.

It identifies and categorises skills, competences, qualifications and occupations relevant for the EU labour market and education and training, in 25 European languages. The system provides occupational profiles showing the relationships between occupations, skills, competences and qualifications.

ESCO has been developed in an open IT format and is available for use free of charge by everyone and can be accessed through an online portal <https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/home> .

The three levels in the profession of Physiotherapy, proposed and requested by ESCO to specify are:

- Physiotherapist assistant
- Physiotherapist
- Advanced physiotherapist

For the definition of each level, the group of education of the European Region of the World Confederation of Physiotherapy (ER-WCPT) has been working with ESCO. In collaboration with ER-WCPT, ENPHE has given comments for the process during the years 2013-2016.

The definitions have been given by ENPHE to the educational organizations as well as physiotherapist, employers and administrators within the network for validation and in last phase to the country coordinators of ENPHE. The final version has been approved by the ER-WCPT and afterwards by ESCO.

Besides the definitions of the profession and the 3 different levels, ENPHE developed a working group to specify the roles and competences of each professional level and the level of education. The CanMeds-model: 1) Physiotherapy expert (Assessment skills, Diagnostic Skills, Intervention skills), 2) Communicator, 3) Collaborator, 4) Manager, 5) Health care promotor, 6) Reflective practitioner, 7) Professional, was used as a framework.

This specification was also validated by the ENPHE members and Country Coordinators.

The results are described in this document, that ENPHE recommends being used when developing educational programmes for the different levels of the profession.

ESCO DEFINITIONS

Physiotherapy

Physiotherapy is the health profession with expertise in movement and exercise prescription throughout the lifespan across the health spectrum. Physiotherapy involves specific interventions to individuals and populations where movement and function are, or may be, threatened by illness, ageing, injury, pain, disability, disease, disorder or environmental factors. Such interventions are designed and prescribed to develop, restore and maintain optimal health.

Physiotherapy is integral to all spheres of health and well-being such as promotion, prevention, habilitation and rehabilitation and encompasses physical, psychological, emotional and social factors. Physiotherapy involves the interaction of the physiotherapist with the client including his/her family, care givers and relevant other health professionals and communities.

Physiotherapist Assistant

Physiotherapist assistants work under supervision, within defined contexts using agreed treatment protocols and procedures such as collecting client data and maintaining the equipment required in physiotherapy interventions. The overall responsibility is retained by the delegating professional.

Physiotherapists

Are autonomous health professionals who are responsible for developing, maintaining or restoring motor function and movement throughout the lifespan using evidence-based practice. They relieve pain and treat or prevent physical conditions associated with injury, disease or other impairments. Physiotherapists empower patients and their carers to manage the condition outside clinical settings. They work within their scope of practice and their professional Code of Conduct.

Advanced Physiotherapist

Advanced physiotherapists are highly specialist. They make complex decisions and manage risks in unpredictable contexts and within a defined area. They may focus on a specific area of clinical practice, education, research or professional management.



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ENPHE RECOMMENDATIONS

Level of education, Roles and Competences

Physiotherapist Assistant

Level of education - EQF level 5 - is organized in only in few European countries.

Roles and Competences - Physiotherapist Assistants work within defined contexts using agreed treatment protocols and procedures. Are accountable for their actions, however, Physiotherapists or Advanced Physiotherapists retain overall responsibility for clients.

Physiotherapy expertise

1) Assessment skills

- Collecting qualitative and quantitative data related to the patient/client's physical, mental, emotional and social status and functional ability within set parameters, monitoring patient/client's responses and status during the performance of assigned measures/tests (e.g. shortness of breath, pain) and taking appropriate action under supervision of a physiotherapist, including reporting the findings to the physiotherapist.

2) Defining the physiotherapy diagnose does not belong to the responsibilities of the physiotherapist assistant

3) Intervention skills

- Support the discharge from physiotherapy by assisting in the transition across the health care continuum whilst ensuring that the agreed patient/client's needs are met appropriately and as directed by the physiotherapist.

- Record patient/clients' progress in response to treatment by observing, listening and measuring outcomes.

Communicator

- Effectively communicate and adapt communicational interventions appropriately, whilst maintaining the therapeutic relationship, to maximise the (re)habilitation, and prevention within potential of patients, clients and other stakeholders. This includes overcoming common barriers to communication.

- Reporting and documenting physiotherapy process understandable along professional code and national guidelines

Collaborator

- Assist a physiotherapist, under his/her direction and supervision, in the process involved with patient/client management

- Interact in the process of constructing and sharing information, ideas and meaning through the use of the most appropriate communicational system and channel.



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- Facilitate sharing of information, advice and ideas, using a variety of media (including spoken, non-verbal, written and e-based) and giving and receiving feedback. Modify communication to meet individuals' preferences and needs.
 - Sharing information, advice and ideas, using a variety of media (including spoken, non-verbal, written, e-based) and giving and receiving feedback.
 - Engage with technology, particularly the effective and efficient use of Information and Communication Technology.

Manager

- Participate in activities that promote quality.
- Promote adherence to health and safety policies, guidelines and protocols.
- Understand the main points of health, wellbeing and safety policy and procedures as agreed with employers, Knowhow and when to report health and safety risks that have been identified. Be aware of procedures to follow if an accident or injury should occur.
- Maintain equipment and supplies. Ensure that they are safe and fit for purpose.

Health care promoter

- Promote on health and wellbeing on behalf of patient/clients and the profession
- Promote adherence to local, regional, national and EU health and safety policies, guidelines and protocols.

Reflective practitioner

- Reinforce information on therapeutic outcomes including any possible side effects to patient/clients.
 - Ensure that physiotherapy is provided upholding professional ethical values and principles and local/national policies.
 - Undertake continuous professional development / lifelong learning activities, to continuously develop his / her knowledge, skills, competencies and behaviours within the profile of the profession and role.
 - Use formal and informal feedback and self-evaluation to reach these aims and seeking input to establish and implement a learning plan.
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Physiotherapist

Level of education - EQF level 6 - in few European countries can be 7.

Roles and Competences - Physiotherapists are autonomous health care professionals who assess, diagnose, plan, treat and evaluate clients and are responsible for their own actions.

Physiotherapy expertise

1) Assessment skills

- Collect qualitative and quantitative data related to the patient/client's physical, mental, emotional and social status and functional ability within set parameters
- Evaluate patient/client's responses and status during the performance of assigned measures/tests (e.g. shortness of breath, pain) and take action appropriate to the context.
- Undertake a physiotherapy assessment, incorporating data collected from subjective, physical examinations and information retrieved from other relevant sources if necessary. Demonstrate appropriate handling and communication skills.

2) Diagnostic Skills

- Defining a physiotherapy diagnosis through analysing and making synthesis from the data s/he has found out in assessment and reflected on the evidence-based knowledge.
- Work with patient/clients to identify impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions (ICF) resulting from illness, injury and/or ageing. It includes using also the information from other professionals / sources - diagnostic imaging, laboratory tests and other investigations.
- Undertake a holistic approach to provide a physiotherapy diagnosis / clinical impression of their condition.

3) Intervention skills

- Formulate a treatment plan and evaluation based on physiotherapy diagnosis along the clinical reasoning process.
- Enforce and adapt evidence-based physiotherapy interventions (for example therapeutic exercises, physical therapy, manual therapy, guidance, patient education).
- Record patient/clients' progress in response to treatment after measuring the outcomes.
- Effectively communicate and adapt interventions.

Communicator

- Communicate effectively with patient/clients and stakeholders.
- Document physiotherapy process clearly along professional code and national guidelines.



Collaborator

- Refer patient/clients to other health care practitioners, as appropriate, and communicate directly with them on the outcomes of the physiotherapy assessment and/or treatment, especially when recognising that additional healthcare intervention is required or where physiotherapy is not indicated.
- Organise discharge planning and/or transfer of care, when applicable, across a range of healthcare settings, communicating effectively and ensuring that the patient/client and carers are involved in the decision-making process.
- Engage with technology, particularly the effective and efficient use of Information and Communication Technology.

Manager

- Lead and participate in activities that promote quality.
- Promote adherence to health and safety policies, guidelines and protocols.
- Train, manage, develop and supervise physiotherapy staff and students.
- Ensure delivery of physiotherapy within the wider healthcare context efficient and effective patient/client care.
- Evaluate the need for indicating physiotherapy.
- Collaborate in budget planning processes including cost of supplies needed for adequate physiotherapy services and management.
- Contribute to the development of systems, policies and procedures for the provision of physiotherapy services. Share knowledge and contribute to learning opportunities both within and outside the physiotherapy unit.
- Maintain equipment and supplies. Ensure that they are safe and fit for purpose.

Health care promoter

- Advocate on health and wellbeing promotion and disease or injury prevention on behalf of patient/clients and the profession to enhance individual, community and public health.
- Promote adherence to local, regional, national and EU health and safety policies, guidelines and protocols.

Reflective practitioner

- Inform the patients on therapeutic outcomes including any possible therapeutic side effects to patient/clients.
 - Pursue continuous professional development / lifelong learning activities.
 - Provide empowerment for patient/clients, carers, students, peers, support workers and other healthcare practitioners by assessing the learners' development needs and preferences. Design formal and informal
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agreed outcomes of learning and deliver materials that facilitate learning and development. Evaluate the effectiveness of the learning and development experience, facilitating self-reflection.

- Provide evidence-based information and strategies on self-management and on developing practices.
- Ensure that physiotherapy is provided upholding professional ethical values and principles and local/national policies.

Professional

- Demonstrate clinical reasoning skills concerning the process of planning, prioritising, organising, directing/facilitating action and evaluating performance. This process may involve:
 - o The organisation of financial, human, physical, technological resources.
 - o The context-dependent thinking and decision-making processes used in professional practice to guide practice actions.
 - o Systematic processes of collecting, analysing, and synthesising information to evaluate current practice and generate new understandings about practice
 - o Analysing, synthesising and evaluating the best- available evidence, and integrating it.
 - Triage patients for physiotherapy, prioritising their assessment and indicating where additional services are needed.
 - Contribute to the triage process to assign patient/clients to the best management pathway for their condition in collaboration with other healthcare practitioners.
 - As a user, contributor or researcher, undertake different levels of engagement in research activities to improve the quality of and evidence-based healthcare.
 - Demonstrate knowledge relevant to the area of practice that underpins physiotherapy scope of practice
 - Demonstrate skills to mentor other physiotherapists within their advanced area of expertise.
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Advanced Physiotherapist

Level of education - EQF level 7

Roles and Competences - Advanced Physiotherapists may have completed an advanced program of studies and / or be able to demonstrate the ability to work at an advanced level, focusing on a specific area of clinical practice, education, research, or professional management among others. Have additional skills to address the more complex decision-making processes manage risk in unpredictable contexts that require new strategic approaches.

Physiotherapy expertise

1) Assessment skills

- Collect qualitative and quantitative data related to the patient/client's physical, emotional and social status and functional ability within a broad variety of parameters.
- Evaluate patient/client's responses and status during the performance of assigned measures/tests (e.g. shortness of breath, pain) and take action appropriate to the context.
- Undertake a physiotherapy assessment, incorporating data collected from subjective, physical examinations and information retrieved from other relevant sources.
- Demonstrate effective handling and communication skills;

2) Diagnostic Skills

- Provide a physiotherapy diagnosis through analysing and making synthesis from the data found out in assessment and based on best evidence.
- Work with patient/clients to identify impairments, activity limitations and participation restriction resulting from illness, injury and/or ageing, if necessary using the information from other professionals.
- Undertake a holistic approach to provide a physiotherapy diagnosis.

3) Intervention skills

- Formulate an evidence-based treatment plan and evaluation based on physiotherapy diagnosis and clinical reasoning process.
- Record patient/clients' progress in response to treatment by measuring the outcomes.
- Enforce and adapt evidence-based physiotherapy interventions.
- Effectively communicate and adapt communicational interventions appropriately, whilst maintaining the therapeutic relationship, to maximise the (re)habilitation, and prevention within potential of patients and clients.



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- Provide advanced clinical skills to individuals or groups in relation to physiotherapy diagnose and planning of complex interventions. Guide other physiotherapists in planning patient/client care.
 - Demonstrate advanced level of competence in dealing with unpredictable, variable and complex situations and exercising a high level of autonomy and initiative in complex and unpredictable situations.
 - The aim is to describe for instance medications, orthotics and supportive techniques as MRI, Xray in defined areas when indicated, for therapeutic effectiveness, appropriate to patient/client needs and in accordance with evidence-based practice as well as national and practice protocols, within physiotherapists scope of practice.
 - Utilise advanced and specialised clinical skills in different contexts, following specific training, to address the needs of the patient/clients.

Communicator

- Communicate effectively with patient/clients and other stakeholders.
- Document physiotherapy process understandable along professional code and national guidelines.

Collaborator

- Refer patient/clients to other health care practitioners, as appropriate, and communicate directly with them on the outcomes of the physiotherapy assessment and/or treatment, especially when recognising that additional healthcare intervention is required or where physiotherapy is not indicated.
- Organise discharge planning and/or transfer of care, when applicable, across a range of healthcare settings, communicating effectively and ensuring that the patient/client and carers are involved in the decision-making process.
- Interact in the process of constructing and sharing information, ideas and meaning through the use of the most appropriate communicational system and channel.
- Facilitate sharing of information, advice and ideas, using a variety of media (including spoken, non-verbal, written and e-based) and giving and receiving feedback. Modify communication to meet individuals' preferences and needs. Engage with technology, particularly the effective and efficient use of Information and Communication Technology.

Manager

- Lead and participate in activities that promote quality.
 - Promote adherence to health and safety policies, guidelines and protocols.
 - Train, manage, develop and supervise physiotherapy staff and students.
 - Ensure delivery of physiotherapy within the wider healthcare context efficient and effective patient/client care.
 - Evaluate the need indicating physiotherapy.
 - Collaborate in budget planning processes including cost of supplies needed for adequate physiotherapy services and management.
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- Contribute to the development of systems, policies and procedures for the provision of physiotherapy services. Share knowledge and contribute to learning opportunities both within and outside the physiotherapy unit.
- Maintain equipment and supplies. Ensure that they are safe and fit for purpose.

Health care promoter

- Advocate on health and wellbeing promotion and disease or injury prevention on behalf of patient/clients and the profession to enhance individual, community and public health.
- Promote adherence to local, regional, national and EU health and safety policies, guidelines and protocols

Reflective practitioner

- Inform the patients on therapeutic outcomes including any possible therapeutic side effects to patient/clients.
- Pursue continuous professional development / lifelong learning activities.
- Provide empowerment for patient/clients, carers, students, peers, support workers and other healthcare practitioners by assessing the learners' development needs and preferences. Design formal and informal agreed outcomes of learning and deliver materials that facilitate learning and development. Evaluate the effectiveness of the learning and development experience, facilitating self-reflection.
- Provide evidence-based information and strategies on self-management and on developing practices.
- Maintain patient/client safety, comfort and dignity during assessment.
- Ensure that physiotherapy is provided upholding professional ethical values and principles and local/national policies.

Professional

- Demonstrate clinical reasoning skills concerning the process of planning, prioritising, organising, directing/facilitating action and evaluating performance. This process may involve:
 - o The organisation of financial, human, information and technological resources.
 - o The context-dependent decision making processes used in professional practice to guide practice actions.
 - o Systematic processes of collecting, analysing, and synthesising information to evaluate current practice and generate new understandings about practice
 - o Analysing, synthesising and evaluating the best- available evidence, and integrating it.
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- As a user, contributor or researcher, undertake different levels of engagement in research activities to improve the quality of and evidence-based healthcare.
 - Demonstrate knowledge relevant to the area of practice that underpins physiotherapy scope of practice
 - Demonstrate skills to mentor other physiotherapists within their advanced area of expertise.
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