

Petition for the Addition of a Related Health Science Discipline for the Profession of Orthotics and Prosthetics

The National Commission on Orthotic and Prosthetic Education (NCOPE) a current Committee on Accreditation (CoA) within the CAAHEP system would like to petition the board of directors for the addition of a related health science discipline within the orthotics and prosthetics profession. The level is identified as the **Pedorthist**. Below are the answers to the questions concerning this level:

1. The health science discipline must represent a distinct and well defined field.

- Provide a detailed description of the profession

A Pedorthist is a health care professional who is specifically educated and trained to manage comprehensive pedorthic patient care, which includes shoes, shoe modifications, foot orthoses, ankle foot orthoses, partial foot prostheses and other pedorthic devices—to solve problems in, or related to, the foot and lower limb. When a foot requires medical attention, footwear and lower limb orthoses become factors in the patient's treatment, recovery, or rehabilitation. It's a team approach: while the doctor treats your foot, the credentialed pedorthist addresses your therapeutic (medical) footwear and orthotic needs. Pedorthics is the management and treatment of conditions of the foot, ankle, and lower extremities requiring fitting, fabricating, and adjusting of pedorthic devices. Pedorthics uses footwear, orthoses and partial foot prostheses to help ease and treat these foot-related problems.

- Is there a journal or published literature? If yes, please describe/name.

There are several publications printed on behalf of the profession that will provide information to assist and aid the pedorthist. These publications are as follows:

- *Current Pedorthics Magazine - the official bimonthly publication of the Pedorthic Footcare Association is the only professional publication solely dedicated to the allied health care field of pedorthics.*
- *“O&P Edge” – monthly on-line newsletter that provides articles relative the Pedorthic profession.*
- *“O&P Business News” – occasional Pedorthic news or articles related to the profession.*
- *Journal of Prosthetics and Orthotics – occasional Pedorthic research and articles*

- *“Orthotics and Prosthetics International” – occasional technical note regarding device design or fabrication*
 - *Journal of Rehabilitation Research and Development – articles regarding performance outcome of device designs*
 - *Alignment Magazine – O&P publication in Canada that occasionally has provided articles to the profession regarding patient care and technical design and fabrication topics.*
- Is there a professional society(s). If yes, please provide name of organization and contact information.

Yes there is a professional organization for pedorthist to join. It was established in 1958. It is as follows:

- *The Pedorthic Footcare Association as regular individual member.*
 - *PO Box 72184
Albany, GA 31708-2184
229-389-3440
Website: [PFA website](#)*
- Is licensure or certification required for this profession? If yes, please describe.

No, licensure and certification are not required. There are credentialing programs available and offered by the American Board for Certification in Orthotics, Prosthetics and Pedorthics (ABC) and the Board of Certification/Accreditation (BOC). Pedorthics is included in the licensure regulations governing Orthotic and Prosthetic practice in several states.

- Is the profession already associated with an accrediting body? If yes, please describe.

Yes, this level of practice within the orthotics and prosthetics profession is associated with the National Commission on Orthotic and Prosthetic Education (NCOPE). NCOPE has been serving as the accreditation agency for this level since 2009 and prior to 2009 by the Commission on Accreditation of Pedorthic Education (CAPE). The pedorthic education programs have been pursuing, applying and being granted accreditation for over 10 years.

2. There must be a demonstrated need for the health science occupation and for accreditation of educational programs which prepare persons to enter the field.

- Define the need and scope for this health sciences occupation.

Pedorthics is the practice, pursuant to a written order/prescription when addressing a medical condition, of evaluating, treatment planning, patient managing, measuring, designing, fabricating, assembling, fitting, adjusting, or servicing necessary to accomplish the prevention or amelioration of painful and/or disabling conditions related to the lower extremities. Pedorthics focuses on medical conditions that originate at the ankle or below. Pedorthists utilize a variety of treatment modalities including shoes, shoe modifications, custom shoes, foot orthoses, Subtalar Control Foot Orthoses (SCFO's), Ankle Foot Orthoses (AFO's) and partial foot prostheses.

Based upon the 2014 study, "Projecting the Adequacy of Workforce Supply to Meet Patient Demand- Analysis of the Orthotics and Prosthetics (O&P) Profession", the need for pedorthists will increase over the next ten years. There are a significant number of studies validating the efficacy of various pedorthic devices.

- Why is it important for this profession to have accredited programs?

Many people suffer from foot problems, ranging from calluses to conditions that require hospitalization. Pedorthists can help treat these problems conservatively (non-surgically) by creating or modifying footwear, providing orthoses and partial foot prostheses as part of an overall treatment regimen prescribed by their doctor. Footwear is a crucial part of treatment, as mobility is affected by everything that surrounds or touches the foot. Footwear modifications can also be performed to simply make shoes more comfortable. With the management and treatment of conditions originating in the foot - ankle, and lower extremities requiring fitting, fabricating, and adjusting of pedorthic devices, appropriate education and a very specific skill set are required for provision of quality patient care. Having accredited programs ensures that the education of the entry level practitioner imparts the basic skills necessary to provide safe patient care regardless of which education program attended.

3. **Educational programs for the health science occupation must not duplicate educational programs for already existing health science occupations.**

- Are there other professions whose scope of practice overlaps with the proposed profession? If so, which professions are these? Where is the overlap?

Yes, the orthotist and prosthetist to a degree. Essentially the pedorthic profession, which has been in existence since 1958, is a highly skilled/educated specialty for the management and treatment of conditions originating at the ankle or below only. Pedorthists utilize knowledge and skills that are very distilled as a result of this narrow focus. Both orthotists and prosthetists are educated and trained in the same modalities/devices but their level of education and expertise extends to the entire body which reduces the intensity of their focus on this body segment.

4. **Educational programs must be no shorter than one academic year (two semesters). Programs must comply with established standards and submit documentation that graduates have gained the required skills and knowledge to obtain entry-level positions within the occupation.**

- What is the range of length of existing programs?

Currently the program length is one semester in length, but NCOPE wants the education defined and elevated to an associate's degree level. All current programs are either located in an academic institution or have an affiliation with an academic institution.

- What is the academic level(s) of this program (Associate, Baccalaureate, post Baccalaureate)?

The academic level currently is a certificate, but goal is to pursue, under CAAHEP, the minimum requirement of an associate's degree.

- What type of educational institutions are these currently existing programs housed in?

All of the current programs in place are either housed at community college or have an affiliation with a community college.

- *The Academy of Pedorthic Science, Sponsored by Kennesaw State University in Atlanta, GA*
- *Baker College of Flint in Flint, MI*
- *Francis Tuttle Technology Center in Oklahoma City, OK*
- *The Robert M. Palmer, M.D., Institute Of Biomechanics, Inc., Sponsored by Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology, Elwood, IN*
- *St. Petersburg College, St. Petersburg, FL*