

Introduction to Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)

If you would like to become an RMT in PEI and you are not:

- a graduate of a massage therapy education program recognized by PEI, or
- an RMT registered in a regulated province

you may be able to apply for the registration examination after completing a prior learning assessment (PLA). The PLA determines if your knowledge, skills, and abilities are substantially equivalent to those of an applicant in one of the two categories listed above.

Prior Learning Assessment video

This video describes the Prior Learning Assessment process. Please watch the video, and carefully follow the steps outlined.

Prior Learning Assessment – Video Script:

Welcome to Prior Learning Assessment. We'll call it the PLA from here on.

This process is for individuals who would like to become an RMT and who are not either a graduate of a recognized massage therapy education program or an RMT registered in a regulated province.

The PLA is an alternate pathway. This process determines if your knowledge, skills and abilities are substantially equivalent to our entry-level requirements.

Before you begin, take a good look at those requirements.

The recommended resources list provides textbooks and references that present the depth and breadth of learning required to successfully complete the registration examination. These documents outline the knowledge and abilities required to be an RMT. Spend time here before you commit to the lengthy and costly process of the PLA. Ask yourself honestly, is the material similar to what you learned before?

If you're confident in your prior learning and are ready to apply, let me show you what to do.

To start, you'll need to create an account on the online portal. You'll be prompted in the portal to pay for the PLA application and for the Online Prior Learning Self-Assessment Tool. The two fees total \$150. Pay online with a credit card and then you'll be asked to provide ID and to upload documents.

When your account is complete, it's time for the Online Self-Assessment Tool. We'll refer to it as the OSAT from here on. The OSAT will give you feedback on whether or not your foundational knowledge is adequate to support RMT practice. The OSAT is a multiple-choice online exam that will take up to four hours to complete and must be completed in one sitting. You may only take the OSAT one time. We recommend that you use the OSAT to assess your current foundational knowledge. Dedicate the four hours it takes when you know you'll be able to focus without interruption. Take it seriously; it's an important step.

At the end of the OSAT, you will immediately receive your results. It is at this time that we ask you to pause and meaningfully reflect on your results. Did you do as well as you expected? On the questions you answered correctly, ask yourself, did I guess or did I truly know those answers? There is no passing grade here. The OSAT is a true self-assessment, which means whether or not you proceed to the next step is entirely up to you.

If you feel confident in your results, please proceed. If not, or if you're unsure, stop here and re-assess your goal of becoming an RMT. If you are committed to the goal and your foundational knowledge is not adequate to proceed, look into one of the accredited and recognized massage therapy education programs for instruction.

If you decide to continue, it's time for the Clinical Competence Assessment. Welcome to the next step. The CCA is a two-part process that includes a written component and a practical component. Each will take a half-day to complete and is individually scheduled. Follow the prompts in the applicant portal to schedule your CCA. You will be asked to write in a range of dates and times when you can attend the CCA in Vancouver. You can do either assessment first. When requesting dates, please provide options at least three weeks from the time of booking to allow arrangements to be made for you.

The written assessment is a three-hour multiple choice exam. There are 150 questions about foundational health sciences and massage therapy practice. The blueprint for the written assessment is based on our entry-level requirements, the Practice Competencies and the Guidelines for Foundational Knowledge.

The practical assessment is hands-on and in person. It takes place in a clinical setting, much like what an RMT would use in clinical practice. You'll be required to palpate muscle anatomy and perform manual muscle testing, and you will palpate anatomical structures on the human body. You will conduct clinical interviews and assessments based on case interviews, and you will perform an appropriate massage treatment for one of the case scenarios selected based on your findings during the clinical interview and physical assessment. Your assessors will be RMTs skilled at determining entry-level competence. Study thoroughly to prepare for the CCA. Review your prior learning and access our recommended resources for entry level requirements.

Following the CCA, you will receive your result in the online portal. It will be one of three possibilities.

- *Not substantially equivalent. The file closed and the PLA is complete. Please enroll at an accredited and recognized massage therapy education program if you wish to pursue your goal.*
- *Upgrading required. Areas of ability and knowledge that need upgrading will be identified. You must complete necessary education upgrades before you may apply for our Registration Examination.*
- *Passed. The PLA is complete and you're now eligible to apply for the Registration Examination.*

Thank you for watching this video. We wish you well on your goal of becoming an RMT. We look forward to meeting you during the PLA process.

Prior Learning Assessment FAQs

1. Can I review my Online Self-Assessment Tool (OSAT) results?

As soon as your OSAT has been submitted and graded, you can review a version of your completed assessment. It will include your answer selections and the correct answers for those questions you answered incorrectly. **This will be available to you for 60 minutes after your OSAT has been submitted.** This is the only time that you are able to review your answers. After that, your total score will be visible in the Learning Centre and your record in the Applicant Portal, but not the full OSAT results.

2. How many times can I take the OSAT?

Each PLA Applicant may take the OSAT one time.

3. What do you do with my OSAT results?

Your OSAT results are for your personal use only. There is no passing grade. The OSAT's purpose is to assist you when determining if you want to proceed to the next step in the PLA process. We do not use your OSAT results in determining the outcome of your Clinical Competence Assessment (CCA).

4. What areas/content are tested in the Clinical Competence Assessment?

The CCA has content derived from all areas listed in two documents:

- Guidelines for Foundational Knowledge in Massage Therapy Educational Programs (2018) (PDF)
- Inter-Jurisdictional Practice Competencies and Performance Indicators for Massage Therapists at Entry-to-Practice (PDF).

Learn more about these documents on the Recommended Resources & Entry-Level Requirements page.

5. What is the difference between the Clinical Competence Assessment and the registration examination?

Written assessment:

- The written component of the CCA includes representative content from three exam components of the four-component entry-to-practice examination: Knowledge and Theory of Sciences, Clinical Sciences, and the Law, Ethics & Professionalism item banks.

Practical assessment:

- The practical assessment of the CCA follows a format similar to the Performance-Based Assessment (PBA), which is the practical component of the four-component entry-to-practice examination.
- In the practical assessment you will conduct three clinical interviews, perform assessment techniques for two conditions, and provide treatment and home care for one condition. This is different from the PBA, which is described on the Exam Components page.

Written feedback is provided to you on both components of the CCA; this is not the case with the entry-to-practice registration examination. The CCA is an assessment that provides you with information to help you make decisions about your career.

6. Why does the CCA cost \$1,600?

The cost of the CCA is based on ensuring the assessment is a full cost-recovery project. We derive all of our income from registration fees paid by registrants. These fees pay operational expenses for regulating the profession and fulfilling its statutory mandate. The Prior Learning Assessment process provides information to applicants who do not meet the traditional requirements for access to the registration examination. The costs of this assessment are borne by the applicants to provide information that is unique to them.

The \$1,600 cost pays for scheduling, administering and grading both written and practical components of the CCA, for the software licenses that maintain the Applicant Portal and the learning management system that houses the Online Self-Assessment Tool (OSAT), and for subject matter expertise and time taken to provide detailed feedback to applicants regarding their performance.

Unfortunately, many applicants to the PLA are unsuccessful in their goal to become RMTs. For this reason, the PLA is financed solely by fee-for-service to recover the cost of this service.

7. After I've completed the Clinical Competence Assessment, when will I get my results?

Applicants receive their results approximately four weeks after completion of the final component of their CCA.

8. What is the passing grade of the written component of the CCA?

The CCA has two components: written and practical. A determination of substantial equivalency is based upon all of the material collected during the CCA process and represents the combined outcome of both components. Although neither a percentage mark nor a pass/fail indication is provided for either of the two components, it is unlikely an applicant will be deemed to be substantially equivalent if they score less than 60% on the written component. To be clear: success at the PLA takes the form of being granted an assessment of substantial equivalency to the knowledge and skills of a graduate of a recognized education program in massage therapy. It is not a "pass" – it is a decision that you have (or have not) met the requirement of substantial equivalency.

Remember: if you receive an assessment of substantially equivalent, you now qualify for application to the registration examination. Your knowledge gaps have been identified by the CCA. It is wise to study both in the identified gap-areas, as well as in the areas where you succeeded.

9. How long is my PLA result valid? Within what time period must I apply for the registration examinations? Can I take a year's break after I complete PLA before I sign up for the registration examinations?

PLA results do not expire. If you have passed or have satisfactorily completed the required upgrading, it will be up to you to decide when to apply to take the registration examination.

10. How long are the written and practical components of the CCA?

The written and practical components are each three hours long.

11. If I want to apply for the late summer/fall registration examination, what is the latest date I can complete the CCA?

The final component of your CCA must be completed by mid-June if the registration examination is scheduled for August or September. This ensures there is adequate time for you to receive your results and meet the application deadline for the late summer/fall registration examination.

12. If I want to apply for the spring registration examination what is the latest date I can complete the CCA?

The final component of your CCA must be completed by mid-December. This will ensure there is enough time to receive your results and meet the application deadline for the spring registration examination.

13. Why do I have to complete the CCA so far in advance of the registration examination?

Dates of the registration examination fluctuate, as they are dependent on availability of venues required to administer the examination. The registration examination has a deadline for applications that generally falls six to eight weeks prior to the start of the exam components. Your CCA must be completed at least four weeks in advance of that deadline, to ensure that you receive results from the CCA in time to apply for the registration examination prior to the deadline for applications.

14. How do I register for the Prior Learning Assessment and start the PLA process?

Watch the video above on the PLA process and follow the steps detailed in the video.

PLA PROCESS: PORTAL (online, <https://onlineservice.cmtbc.ca/webs/cmtbc/application/#>)

Initial PLA application page – on first login

Before deciding to start the Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) application pathway, you are strongly encouraged to study our entry-to-practice standards.

Our entry-to-practice standards are set out in these two documents:

- Inter-Jurisdictional Practice Competencies and Performance Indicators for Massage Therapists at Entry-to-Practice, and
- Guidelines for Foundational Knowledge in Massage Therapy Educational Programs.

The PLA process involves the following:

1. Online application to PLA, including an Online Self-Assessment Test (\$150)
2. Clinical Competence Assessment in-person (\$1,600)

Once you have completed personal details:

The next step in the PLA is the Online Self-Assessment Test (OSAT).

The OSAT helps you assess your foundational knowledge in health sciences and related studies. Questions are similar to questions in the two written components of the registration examination: *Knowledge & Theory of Sciences*, and *Clinical Science*.

Note: *The outcome of the OSAT is for your information only. The results provide you with feedback on your relevant foundational knowledge, so you can make an informed decision about whether you want to continue with the PLA.*

Register for the OSAT by clicking the “Enroll in OSAT” button.

After you have enrolled, you will receive an email from the Learning Centre with your login credentials. Follow the prompts in the email to access the OSAT in the Learning Centre.

NOTE: *Your username and password in the Learning Centre are different from those used in the Applicant Portal. Make a note of your usernames and passwords, and store them safely.*

Once you press “Start Test” in the Learning Centre, you will have four hours to complete the 150 multiple choice questions for the OSAT.

NOTE: Once you have completed your OSAT test, it takes 1 – 2 business days for your result to automatically transfer to your Applicant Portal. Once it is posted, you can continue to the next step in the Prior Learning Assessment process.

Once you have completed the OSAT

Prior Learning Assessment

PLA Component	Exam Result
Online Self Assessment Test (OSAT)	%
Clinical Competence Assessment (CCA)	N/A

How will the OSAT help you decide your next steps?

You can use the OSAT to help you decide if you are ready to do a Clinical Competence Assessment (CCA), which is the next step in the PLA process.

- **If your score is very low:** Continuing with the PLA process may not be the path for you. Take some time to think about your knowledge and skills. When you reviewed the Inter-Jurisdictional Practice Competencies and Performance Indicators for Massage Therapists at Entry-to-Practice document were you unfamiliar with many of the practice competencies? When you reviewed the Guidelines for Foundational Knowledge in Massage Therapy Educational Programs, did you struggle to describe every item listed? If yes, attending a recognized massage therapy education program may be the best way to pursue your goal of becoming an RMT.
- **If your score is low (e.g. 35%):** Are you confident that you could improve your score by refreshing your knowledge? If yes, make a plan to do so. Many applicants take anatomy and physiology review courses at college level to prepare for entry-level massage therapy practice. This saves you time and money later if you are accepted to the registration examination. Historical examination results show CPLA candidates have had low pass rates compared to graduates of recognized massage therapy education programs (2017 Annual Report, pages 11-14). It is better to prepare *before* you start the registration examination process instead of when you are in the process.
- **If your score is more than 50%:** Did you understand the content in the text books in the Recommended Resources for Exams? Are you confident in your knowledge of the material examined in the OSAT? Do you understand the practice competencies outlined in the Inter-Jurisdictional Practice Competencies and Performance Indicators for Massage Therapists at Entry-to-Practice document? If you answered yes to these questions, you may be ready for a Clinical Competence Assessment.

About the Clinical Competence Assessment (CCA)

The CCA includes both a written and a practical evaluation of knowledge, skills and abilities required for entry-level practice as an RMT. The CCA assesses your practical clinical skills including anatomical palpation, patient interview/intake, assessment, massage treatment, and instruction in ongoing care for the patient. It also assesses your critical thinking, and your application of foundational knowledge to clinical scenarios.

The written and the practical assessment are each three hours long. Both components of the CCA are conducted in-person. CCAs may be set at any time during the year, except major holidays.

You will be asked to provide a range of times and dates when you are available. We will set the dates and times for both components of your CCA after reviewing your availability.

Important: Once your CCA has been scheduled, the dates and times cannot be changed unless you are able to provide official documentation (e.g. medical emergency, other).

To proceed with the CCA, you must register and pay the CCA fee (\$1,600).

Plan for your Clinical Competence Assessment by clicking the “Schedule a CCA” button.

Once you have scheduled your CCA:

Your CCA has been scheduled for the following dates and times.

WRITTEN COMPONENT: date/time/location

PRACTICAL COMPONENT: date/time/location

ADDITIONAL DETAILS:

CLINICAL COMPETENCE ASSESSMENT (CCA) - PRACTICAL COMPONENT

The practical component of the CCA follows a format based on the Performance Based Assessment (PBA), which is the practical component of the four-component entry-to-practice examination. A detailed video of the PBA can be found here. The practical component of the CCA provides opportunities for assessors to provide you with feedback.

FORMAT OF THE PRACTICAL COMPONENT

Assessors

You will be accompanied by two assessors:

- a standardized patient (an RMT who is also an entry-level competence assessor), and
- an observing assessor (again, an RMT-assessor).

Supplies

The room will be set up as an RMT’s treatment room. There will be a massage therapy table, chairs, writing table/desk, linens, pillows, oil and lotion, hydrotherapy (simulated hot pack and cold pack), a measuring tape should you require it for assessments, and an exercise band for home-care, should you choose to use it. With the exception of a holster for oil/lotion and a pen, you may not bring additional equipment.

Informed Consent

Informed consent is always required during an RMT's practice. As an applicant, it is your responsibility to negotiate appropriate consent with the standardized patient in all stages of the assessment.

Process

The session begins with **5 minutes** for introductions and orientation to the treatment room. Please follow the observing assessor's instructions. They will direct the 'flow' and pace of activities. It is your responsibility to stay within the times available for each section.

During the assessment, you will be provided with printed instructions that outline each step, including time available. The instructions will outline these steps:

1. You will receive a list of four muscles. For each muscle:

- Palpate the muscle on the standardized patient.
- Accurate and thorough palpation from the origin, along the course to the insertion, is required. You are marked on what you do, not what you say, for all palpation.
- Demonstrate all of the muscle's actions **on yourself**.
- Perform **effective and safe** manual muscle tests on the standardized patient.
- Record your findings of the manual muscle testing on the chart provided for this purpose.
- You will complete the muscles-section (including any charting required) in **20 minutes**. It is up to you how you wish to use the time available.

2. Next, you will receive a list of four anatomical structures/features. For each structure/feature:

- Palpate the structure/feature on the standardized patient.
- You are assessed on what you do, not what you say, about the anatomical palpation.
- You will have **5 minutes** to complete these palpations.

3. You will receive three case scenarios.

- Complete an **interview/intake/case history** discussion, for each of the three case scenarios.
- **Each** interview may last no more than **7 minutes**.
- You will record your interview findings. Charts will be provided.

4. The observing assessor will then select two of the case scenarios.

- **Complete physical assessments** on the standardized patient, for each of the case scenarios selected. The assessors will mark only the first two assessment techniques you perform. If you wish to perform additional assessment techniques you may do so; however, **you will be assessed on the first two assessment techniques you perform for each case scenario**.
- Assessments for each case scenario may last no more than **7 minutes**.
- You will have **5 minutes** to chart your assessment findings. Charts will be provided.

5. The observing assessor will then select one of the remaining case scenarios.

- Perform a **30-minute massage treatment** that incorporates your interview and assessment findings and demonstrates effective, safe, and ethical treatment.
- Massage supplies will be available in the assessment room; arrange the area as needed.
- Position the standardized patient on the table as appropriate. Use pillows, sheets as required.
- Please address questions or comments **to the standardized patient**.
- **Monitor your time** – assessors will not provide a warning. The treatment must be finished 30 minutes after you begin.
- Advise the patient when the treatment is complete.
- If you are still treating after 30 minutes, the observing assessor will instruct you to stop.
- After the treatment, you will have **5 minutes to record** your observations and other charting requirements. Charts will be provided.

6. Final station: **10 minutes** to instruct the standardized patient in appropriate **home-care**, based on the case scenario for which you provided a massage treatment, including:

- One **hydrotherapy** technique they can perform at home.
- One appropriate **stretch** they can perform at home.
- One appropriate **strengthening** exercise they can perform at home.
- Two suggestions or instructions about **activities of daily living**.

Result of PLA: (three options)

PLA Component	Exam Result
Online Self Assessment Test (OSAT)	X %
Clinical Competence Assessment (CCA)	Pass/Fail

1. **Your prior learning is assessed as substantially equivalent** to the knowledge, skills and abilities obtained through graduation from a Recognized Education Program.
 - a. You are eligible to apply for the registration examination.
2. **Your prior learning is not substantially equivalent** to the knowledge, skills and abilities obtained through graduation from a Recognized Education Program. The gaps in your knowledge, skills and abilities may be addressed by completing further education in the following:
Information added by PLA Manager

It is your responsibility to select appropriate upgrading, and to confirm with us that your upgrading plan is acceptable to address the identified gaps. Successful completion of upgrading must be verified by transcript(s).

3. **Your prior learning is not substantially equivalent to the knowledge, skills and abilities obtained through graduation from a Recognized Education Program**, and the gap is too extensive for upgrading in specified areas.

You are advised to consider attending a recognized massage therapy education program to pursue your goal of becoming an RMT. Your Applicant Portal will automatically be closed in 30 days. Please ensure you retrieve any information or documents prior to .