

GUIDELINES of the NORTH CAROLINA BOARD of MASSAGE & BODYWORK THERAPY

(Revised: August 21, 2025)

NOTE: These Guidelines are policies and procedures based on the Rules that have been adopted by the Board for the administration of the regulatory program.

1. GUIDELINES FOR RULES SECTION .0200:

1.1 Term of license.

See Rule .0205 (*Adopted January 6, 2000; revised August 30, 2001; deleted August 20, 2005*)

1.2 Application attestation.

Pursuant to Rules .0201 and .1003, all applications shall include a statement from the applicant attesting to the fact that all information contained in the application and accompanying documentation is true and correct. (*Adopted January 6, 2000; revised August 30, 2001, August 15, 2019*)

1.3 Applicant photographs.

Pursuant to Rule .0201(b)(1) one photograph of the applicant shall be required. (*Adopted January 6, 2000; revised August 30, 2001, August 15, 2019*)

1.4 Documentation of high school diploma.

Pursuant to Rule .0201(b)(3), the applicant shall submit one of the following forms of documentation of high school diploma or equivalent:

1.4.1 Photocopy of high school diploma;

1.4.2 Photocopy of general equivalency diploma (G.E.D.);

1.4.3 Photocopy of diploma from an accredited post-secondary institution of higher learning; or

1.4.4 Photocopy of transcript from the applicant's high school or college which indicates date of graduation.

(Adopted January 6, 2000; revised August 30, 2001, August 15, 2019)

1.5 Documentation of age.

Pursuant to Rule .0201(b)(4), the applicant shall submit a photocopy of his/her birth certificate or valid driver's license to document that he/she is at least 18 years of age.
(Adopted January 6, 2000; revised August 30, 2001, August 15, 2019)

1.6 Documentation of required massage and bodywork education.

Pursuant to Rule .0201(b)(5), the applicant shall submit the following documentation of massage and bodywork education:

1.6.1 Official sealed transcript from a Board-approved school, following the requirements of Rule .0603(b); and

1.6.2 (Deleted August 15, 2019)

(Adopted January 6, 2000; revised August 15, 2019)

1.7 Training from school that is not Board-approved.

Pursuant to Rule .0201(b)(5), if the applicant graduated from a school outside the State of North Carolina which has not been Board-approved, then further documentation shall be submitted to the Board in addition to the requirements of Guideline 1.6 herein, for review and approval on a case-by-case basis. This review may be performed at the Board's discretion.

1.7.1 Applicant is responsible for contacting their school and obtaining the following documentation:

- a) Photocopy of the current license authorizing operation of the school, issued by the educational licensing authority in the state, territory or country in which it operates; or a copy of the specific statute under which the school is exempt from licensure;
- b) Copy of the most recent school catalog; and
- c) Copy of the program curriculum, indicating course descriptions and number of classroom hours of supervised instruction in each course.

1.7.2 If the Board determines that the curriculum which is documented in the applicant's transcript and course descriptions consists of a minimum of 500 hours of supervised instruction and meets most, but not all of the Core Curriculum Requirements set forth in Rule .0620(2), then the Board may, in its discretion, grant a license with special conditions.

1.7.3 Special conditions for licensure of such an applicant may include a requirement that the licensee complete specific course work in any areas which are deficient in their curriculum before the time they are issued a license or by their first renewal.

1.7.4 If the applicant's school is no longer in operation and records are unavailable, then the applicant may complete a notarized affidavit attesting to their course of study in the field of massage and bodywork therapy, which may be submitted to the Board for consideration.

(Adopted January 6, 2000; revised April 13, 2000; June 8, 2000, August 30, 2001, August 21, 2003, August 15, 2019)

1.8 Approval of examinations required for licensure.

The Board approves the following examinations to meet the examination requirement for licensure set forth in G.S. 90-629(5) and G.S. 90-630.1(b):

1.8.1 The National Certification Examination in Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork (NCETMB), the National Certification Examination in Therapeutic Massage (NCETM), and the NESL options for the NCETMB and NCETM examinations, from any applicant who has graduated from an in-state school and has passed an exam on or before December 31, 2010.

1.8.2 The National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM) that administers the Asian Bodywork Therapy Examination (ABTE).

1.8.3 The Massage and Bodywork Licensing Examination (MBLEx) administered by the Federation of State Massage Therapy Boards (FSMTB).

1.8.4 The National Certification Examination in Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork (NCETMB), the National Certification Examination in Therapeutic Massage (NCETM), and the NESL options for the NCETMB and NCETM examinations, will be accepted from any applicant who has graduated from an out-of-state school.

(Adopted January 6, 2000; revised July 13, 2000; August 30, 2001; October 20, 2005; February 19, 2009; revised October 21, 2010)

1.9 Documentation of examination and certificant status.

Pursuant to Rule .0201(6), the applicant shall submit one of the following:

- 1.9.1 Photocopy of the applicant's official score report from NCBTMB, NCCAOM or FSMTB; or
- 1.9.2 If the applicant has not received his/her score report from NCBTMB, NCCAOM or FSMTB the applicant may request an Official Score Report to be sent to the Board by the testing agency.
(Adopted January 6, 2000; revised July 13, 2000; August 30, 2001; October 20, 2005; December 9, 2008; February 19, 2009)

1.10 Exemption for movement education techniques.

(Adopted January 6, 2000; revised October 12, 2000; deleted August 15, 2019)

1.11 Exemption for energy-based techniques.

(Adopted January 6, 2000; revised November 9, 2000; deleted August 15, 2019)

1.12 Proof of proficiency in the English language.

Pursuant to G.S. 90-629(7), proof of proficiency in the English language is required. Proof of proficiency in the English language may be determined during an in-person meeting between the applicant for a license and the License Standards Committee of the Board or by the applicant providing proof satisfactory to the License Standards Committee of the Board that the applicant has taken and passed the Test of English as a Foreign Language or a test determined by the Board to be equivalent to the Test of English as a Foreign Language. *(Adopted October 5, 2009; revised August 15, 2019)*

2. GUIDELINES FOR RULES SECTION .0300:

2.1 Professional designations.

Pursuant to Rule .0301(b), other acceptable professional designations that licensees may use in professional communications include:

- 2.1.1 Abbreviations indicating an Associate, Bachelors, Masters, or Doctoral degree from an accredited post-secondary institution, such as A.A., B.S., M.A., Ph.D.;
- 2.1.2 Abbreviations indicating another occupational license, such as D.C., R.N., L.P.C.;
- 2.1.3 Abbreviation N.C.T.M.B. for those holding current certification with the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork; and

2.1.4 Abbreviation Dipl. O.B.T. for those holding current certification with the National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine.

(Adopted January 6, 2000)

2.2 Scope of reciprocity provision.

G.S. 90-630 repealed Rule .0304 in 2008. *(Adopted January 6, 2000; revised August 30, 2001; Repealed October 16, 2009)*

2.3 Denial of license to applicant charged or convicted of a crime, or with disciplinary actions pending.

Pursuant to Rule .0306, the Board may not grant a license to an applicant who has a criminal charge pending, other than a minor traffic violation. Nor to an applicant convicted of a crime, other than a minor traffic violation, until all conditions of the sentence are completed, whether probation, parole, community service, restitution, etc. Nor to an applicant who has a disciplinary action pending from another occupational licensing board, whether in this State or another state. Pursuant to G.S. 93B-8.1, the Board may not deny a license to an applicant due to a criminal conviction until it considers the factors set forth in G.S. 93B-8.1(b1) and, if a license is denied, complies with G.S. 93B-8.1(b2). *(Adopted June 19, 2003; revised August 15, 2019)*

2.4 Renewal of lapsed license.

See Rule .0303. *(Adopted June 19, 2003; deleted August 20, 2005)*

2.5 Extension of time to complete continuing education.

Pursuant to Rule .0303(a), a licensee who has been unable to complete the required number of hours of continuing education for license renewal may make application to the Board for an extension of time to complete the necessary hours to be granted at the discretion of the Board. The number of incomplete hours of continuing education at the time of license renewal shall be added to the total number of hours required in the following licensure period.

Factors the Board will consider:

- (a) Natural Disaster Declared – If the licensee resides in a county in which a natural disaster has been declared by an executive order of the Governor, the licensee shall receive the extension upon application.

- (b) Medical Hardship – If the licensee is experiencing a medical hardship that prevents them from attending or participating in continuing education for an extended period of time, the extension may be granted upon receipt of documentation. *(Adopted June 19, 2003; revised February 13, 2025)*

3. GUIDELINES FOR RULES SECTION .0500:

3.1 Facility requirements.

See Rules .0507, .0513. *(Adopted January 6, 2000; revised August 30, 2001; deleted August 20, 2005)*

3.2 Draping recommendations.

See Rule .0506. *(Adopted January 6, 2000; revised August 30, 2001; deleted August 20, 2005)*

4. GUIDELINES FOR RULES SECTION .0600:

4.1 Renewal of school approval.

Pursuant to Rule .0601(c), for renewal of approval each approved school shall submit an annual report to the Board by April 1, of the year the school's approval expires. Such report shall be made on a form provided by the Board, and shall be accompanied by the required documentation and the renewal fee. The renewal fee is payable in the form of a business check, certified check, or money order. *(Adopted January 6, 2000; revised August 30, 2001; revised October 16, 2009)*

4.1.1 Two-year renewal.

Pursuant to Rule .0601(c), if a school has remained in compliance with all Board rules for a period of five consecutive years and has no disciplinary action taken against it by the Board for a period of five consecutive years the Board may increase the period of approval for that school from one to two years. Some criteria the Board decided would indicate a one-year renewal rather than a two-year renewal were:

- (1) Change of ownership
- (2) New Program Director

- (3) Excessive faculty turnover in core classes (it is presumed that a turnover rate of 40% or more would be excessive)
 - (4) Disciplinary action by the Board
 - (5) Failure to comply with the Rules of the Board or the Practice Act
 - (6) Consistent low pass rate on the examination
 - (7) Negative surveys from students, graduates, or employer's of graduates
- (Revised October 1, 2007)*

4.2 School approval to be maintained on a continuous basis.

Pursuant to G.S. 90-629(4), "successful completion of a course of study at a Board-approved school," shall mean that the applicant graduated from a school that maintained its approval status with the Board on a continuous basis during the applicant's time of enrollment. *(Adopted August 30, 2001)*

4.3 Lapse of approval status; reinstatement; expiration of approval.

- 4.3.1 If a Board-approved school has not met the requirements for renewal by June 30 of the fiscal year, its approval status shall be deemed lapsed.
 - 4.3.2 Approval may be reinstated by the Board if such a school completes its renewal process by July 31 of the fiscal year. A school which has had its approval reinstated following a lapse of no more than 30 days shall be considered to have maintained its approval status on a continuous basis, pursuant to Guideline 4.2, above.
 - 4.3.3 Approval status that has been lapsed for more than 30 days is expired. An expired school approval cannot be renewed; the school shall make an application for initial approval according to the requirements and fees at that time.
- (Adopted August 30, 2001)*

4.4 Public access to information submitted by schools as part of the approval or renewal process.

- 4.4.1 The Board recognizes that much of the information that a school is required to submit as part of the requirements for school approval constitutes a "trade secret" as defined in G.S. 66-152(3) of the Trade Secrets Protection Act.
- 4.4.2 Therefore, pursuant to G.S. 132.1.2 of the Public Records Act, the Board deems only the following portions of the application for school approval or renewal, or

applications for approval or renewal of additional programs or locations, to be “public records” which are available for access: Application Form; Ownership Structure; Accreditation or Other Agency Approval; Facility Plans; Administrative Personnel Forms, Instructional Personnel Forms, Core Curriculum Requirements Form.

- 4.4.3 The Board also deems any information submitted to the Board by national certification agencies on the annual or aggregate pass rates of a school's graduates on national certification examinations to be “public records.”

(Adopted August 30, 2001)

4.5 Approval of additional programs.

Pursuant to Rule .0602(3), an “additional program” is defined as a program, that is a different title, subject matter, or that increases or decreases by more than 10 percent the number of hours of instruction than the program under which the school received its initial approval from the Board. An approved school that intends to offer an additional program is required to submit an Application for Additional Program Approval. *(Adopted August 30, 2001; revised December 6, 2007)*

4.6 Additional locations.

Pursuant to Rule .0602(2), an “additional location” is defined as a facility not part of, nor adjoining the facility of an approved school, where an approved school intends to offer a program. Each such location is considered a separate school, requiring a new Application for School Approval to be submitted to the Board. *(Adopted August 30, 2001; revised December 6, 2007)*

4.7 Core curriculum requirement regarding fundamental theory and practice defined.

- 4.7.1 Pursuant to the scope of practice as defined in G.S. 90-622(3), and to the Core Curriculum Requirement set forth in Rule .0602(9), “A course of study or curriculum consisting of a specified number hours of instruction consistent with the standards set forth in Rule .0620 of this Section that is intended to teach adults the skills and knowledge necessary for the professional practice of massage and bodywork therapy, as defined in G.S. 90-622(3). Each program specified number of instructional hours shall be considered a separate program

for the purposes of Board approval, and shall require a separate application for approval”.

- 4.7.2 Course work in techniques which are considered to be exempt pursuant to G.S. 90-624(6) or (7), and which are identified in Guidelines 1.10 and 1.11 herein, do not meet the Core Curriculum Requirement set forth in Rule .0620(2). However, a maximum of 50 hours of such course work may be applied to the requirement set forth in Rule .0620(2)(f), which includes “other courses related to the practice of massage and bodywork therapy.” *(Adopted August 30, 2001; revised December 6, 2007)*

4.8 Pre-admission orientation session required.

Each approved school shall regularly conduct an orientation session for persons who have applied for admission to the school's training program in massage and bodywork therapy. Such orientation shall include an overview of the program's educational objectives and curriculum, the physical, academic, and behavioral requirements of the program, existing employment opportunities in the field in the area in which the school is located, the time and financial requirements of the program, and state licensing requirements. *(Adopted October 16, 2003; revised December 6, 2007)*

4.9 Definition of College.

An institution of higher learning that awards an Associate degree or higher.
(Adopted February 19, 2009)

5. GUIDELINES FOR RULES SECTION .0700:

5.1 Documentation of continuing education.

Pursuant to Rules .0303 and .0701, licensees shall submit documentation of the approved continuing education courses they have taken during the current license period to meet the continuing education requirement for license renewal. At a minimum, such documentation shall include the course title, date completed, name of institution or course sponsor, location, and number of classroom hours of instruction. *(Adopted August 30, 2001; revised August 15, 2019)*

5.2 Scope of approved continuing education further defined.

See Rules .0701, .0702 and .0703. *(Adopted October 18, 2001; deleted August 20, 2005; adopted August 15, 2019)*

5.3 Time period defined for biennial submission of application for license renewal.

Pursuant to Rule .0303, licensees shall submit an application for license renewal to the Board between the dates of October 1 and December 31. *(Adopted June 20, 2002; revised October 25, 2024; revised April 17, 2025)*

5.4 Time period for completion of approved continuing education within a licensure period defined.

For the current license renewal period, continuing education may be completed between October 1 of the previous license renewal period and December 31 of the current license renewal period. *(Adopted June 20, 2002; deleted August 20, 2005; adopted December 15, 2009; revised August 15, 2019; revised October 25, 2024; revised August 21, 2025)*

5.5 Application of course work from entry-level curricula towards continuing education requirements.

See Rule .0701(b). *(Adopted June 20, 2002; deleted August 20, 2005)*

5.6 Application of continuing education courses from other occupations.

See Rule .0701. *(Adopted June 20, 2002; deleted August 20, 2005)*

5.7 Regional accreditation defined.

5.7.1 See Rules .0701, .0702. *(Adopted October 17, 2002; amended August 21, 2003; deleted August 20, 2005)*

5.7.2 Continuing education taken at an accredited post-secondary institution of higher learning outside the United States may be reviewed at the Board's discretion on a case-by-case basis. The licensee is responsible for obtaining and translating into English any documentation required by the Board. *(Adopted October 17, 2002; amended August 21, 2003)*

5.8 Continuing education in professional ethics required.

See Rules .0701(c), .0702(4). *(Adopted August 21, 2003; deleted August 20, 2005; adopted August 15, 2019)*

6. GUIDELINES FOR BOARD COMMITTEES:

6.1 Mission and Goals.

Each committee, whether a standing or a temporary committee, shall develop a clearly worded statement of mission and goals that shall be submitted to the Board for approval. The committee shall operate within the context of this statement, and shall undertake specific projects or activities only with the approval of the Board. Changes or additions to the mission or goals shall be submitted to the Board for approval. *(Adopted March 9, 2000)*

6.2 Committee work.

Each committee is responsible for organizing its own schedule of meetings, and coordinating efforts with Board staff as needed. Meetings shall not be held unless all committee members have been given adequate notice, and opportunity to participate. Committee work shall adhere to timelines as determined by the committee and approved by the Board. Each committee shall submit a written report for each Board meeting. *(Adopted March 9, 2000)*

6.3 Committee chairperson and membership.

The members of each committee shall elect a chairperson, who shall be responsible for coordinating its activities, and who shall make reports to the Board, as required. Only the Board may change the membership of a committee, pursuant to Rule 26 of the Meeting Procedures. *(Adopted March 9, 2000)*

6.4 Decision making authority.

Unless specifically delegated to a committee, all policy decisions shall be made by the Board. If the members of a committee cannot reach consensus on a matter delegated to that committee by the Board, it shall be referred back to the full Board for action. *(Adopted March 9, 2000; amended June 19, 2003)*

6.5 Establishment of new committees.

Before a new standing or temporary committee is established, the Board shall consider the need for such a committee, and shall discuss its general purpose. *(Adopted March 9, 2000)*

6.6 Standing Committees.

Pursuant to Rule 26 of the Meeting Procedures of the Board, the following standing committees shall exist:

6.6.1 Policy Committee

6.6.2 School Approval Committee

6.6.3 Licensure Standards Committee

6.6.4 Communications Committee.

(Adopted March 9, 2000; revised June 20, 2002)

6.7 Communication with Committees.

6.7.1 Board members may communicate with committee members by any desired means.

6.7.2 Persons wishing to provide information to a committee shall do so in writing to the Board office. Outside information provided to a committee member shall be provided to other committee members, and the committee chair shall provide a copy of such information to the Board office. *(Adopted March 9, 2000)*

6.8 Authority delegated to Licensure Standards Committee.

In the matter of applications for licensure that do not conform to the requirements set forth in G.S. 90-629 or 90-632.11, the Licensure Standards Committee shall review such applications, and shall have direct authority to grant or deny a license. The committee shall report its actions to the Board at each regular meeting. Pursuant to Guideline 6.4, an application shall be referred to the full Board for action if the members of a committee cannot reach consensus. *(Adopted October 16, 2003; revised February 15, 2024)*

7. GUIDELINES FOR RULES SECTION .0400:**7.1 Advertising requirements pertaining to businesses.**

See Rule .0404(c). *(Adopted October 18, 2001; deleted August 20, 2005)*

7.2 Licensees' use of name in advertisements.

Pursuant to the requirement in Rule .0404(a) which specifies that a licensee shall include their name in any advertisement of massage and bodywork therapy services, such requirement shall mean the licensee's first name and last name (surname). A licensee may use a nickname or an abbreviated form of their name in place of their full legal name, as long as there is a first name and surname listed, and that the surname is identical to the surname on the license granted by the Board. Such usage shall not constitute an assumed name or trade name, and is not subject to the requirements of Rule .0402. *(Adopted October 18, 2001)*

8. GUIDELINES FOR CRIMINAL HISTORY RECORD CHECKS (N.C.G.S. 90-629.1):**8.1 Criminal history record checks.**

Criminal history record checks shall be valid for a period of six (6) months from the date the criminal history record check is conducted, unless the period is extended by the License Standards Committee. *(Adopted February 19, 2009)*