

# ACCREDITATION PROCESS FOR NEW PROGRAMS

## III. B. INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS

### ACCREDITATION PROCESS FOR INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS

The Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE®) accepts applications from occupational therapy and occupational therapy assistant programs located outside the United States. Such programs are invited to submit Letters of Intent to seek ACOTE accreditation, which if granted, would allow its graduates to sit for the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT) certification examination upon meeting NBCOT's application requirements. A maximum of four international programs will be reviewed by ACOTE per calendar year. The acceptance of applications for review will be based on the receipt date of the Letter of Intent.

Within 60 days of the Letter of Intent being received by ACOTE, the senior staff representative will notify, in writing, the appropriate government and non-governmental accreditation or quality assurance entities in the country where the program is located of the program's intent to apply for ACOTE accreditation. The correspondence will include an overview and purposes of ACOTE accreditation and a timeline for accreditation actions. The entities will receive copies of statements of all actions taken by ACOTE regarding the program.

The steps of the accreditation process for international programs are:

- **APPLICATION REVIEW**

International programs will follow the three-step initial accreditation process, which begins with submission of the Candidacy Application through ACOTE Online (<https://acote.aota.org>). (See [ACOTE Policy III.A. Overview of the Process](#)). Upon review of that Application, ACOTE either grants, defers action on, or denies Candidacy Status. Although the designation "Candidacy Status" is not a guarantee of accreditation, it does indicate that the resource allocation and plan for development of the proposed program appear to demonstrate the ability to meet the [ACOTE Accreditation Standards](#) if fully implemented as planned. (See [ACOTE Policy III.A.1. Step One: The Application Review](#) for further detail.)

- **PREACCREDITATION REVIEW**

The program director (head of the department) should prepare an initial Report of Self-Study using the Self-Study tab of ACOTE Online as directed by AOTA. The report must be prepared and submitted on or before the established deadline.

At its next scheduled meeting, ACOTE takes action to grant, defer action on, or deny Preaccreditation Status. Granting of Preaccreditation Status indicates that on the basis of the paper review of the submitted materials, ACOTE has determined that the program is likely to meet the [ACOTE Accreditation Standards](#) if fully implemented in accordance with its plans. (See [ACOTE Policy III.A.2. Step Two: Preaccreditation Review](#) for further detail.)

- **THE INITIAL ON-SITE EVALUATION**

The initial on-site evaluation (usually 2 to 2½ days in length) is conducted by a team of at least two evaluators. Based on review of the Evaluators' Report of On-Site Evaluation, ACOTE will either grant a status of Accreditation or Accreditation Withheld at its next scheduled meeting. (See [ACOTE Policy III.A.3. Step Three: The Initial On-Site Evaluation](#) for further details.)

## INITIAL ACCREDITATION TIMELINE

The timeline for submission of the Candidacy Application, Initial Report of Self-Study, and subsequent on-site evaluation will be established in collaboration with each program.

- **ON OR BEFORE ESTABLISHED DUE DATE**

The Candidacy Application and check for the balance of the Application Fee must be received on or before the established due date. All documentation must be submitted in English. The Application must be electronically signed by the **occupational therapy program director**, the dean or administrator overseeing the proposed program, and the chief executive officer of the sponsoring institution.

- **PRIOR TO THE ACOTE MEETING**

The Candidacy Application is made available to AOTA Accreditation Department staff and the designated reviewers. The reviewers assess all materials submitted and present recommendations to ACOTE for consideration at its next scheduled meeting.

- **AT THE ACOTE MEETING**

At the ACOTE meeting, a subcommittee examines the findings of the application review team and prepares a motion regarding action on Candidacy Status and a Report of Application Review. After discussion, ACOTE takes action to grant, defer action on, or deny Candidacy Status.

A statement of the action taken by ACOTE is forwarded to the chief executive officer of the sponsoring institution, the dean or administrator to whom the program director reports, and the program director. A Report of Application Review that lists the strengths of the program and details the concerns of ACOTE accompanies the letter. If Candidacy Status has been granted, AOTA Accreditation Department staff confirm the timeline for the preaccreditation review process, including a submission date for the initial Report of Self-Study. If action on a Candidacy Status is deferred, the program receives, along with the notification of deferral, a list of concerns identified by ACOTE in reaching their decision and a due date for submission of supplementary information that addresses the concerns.

- **ON OR BEFORE ESTABLISHED DUE DATE**

The program director submits the initial Report of Self-Study on or before the established due date. All documentation must be submitted in English. The preaccreditation review team reviews all materials submitted and presents recommendations to ACOTE for consideration at its next scheduled meeting.

- **PRIOR TO THE ACOTE MEETING**

The reviewers assigned to the preaccreditation review team will assess the materials submitted by the program. The program director may be requested to provide additional written information to the review team to clarify or enhance submitted materials. After conducting a complete review of all submitted materials, each reviewer submits a comprehensive evaluation to the review team coordinator. A Composite Report of the Preaccreditation Review Team is prepared by the review team coordinator for presentation to ACOTE.

- **AT THE ACOTE MEETING**

At the ACOTE meeting, a subcommittee of ACOTE examines the findings of the preaccreditation review team and prepares a motion to grant, defer action on, or deny Preaccreditation Status.

Following ACOTE action, a letter is forwarded to the chief executive officer of the sponsoring institution, with a copy to the administrator overseeing the program (if applicable) and program director, indicating action taken on Preaccreditation Status. A Report of Preaccreditation Review that lists the strengths of the program and details the areas of concern accompanies the letter.

If Preaccreditation Status is granted, AOTA Accreditation Department staff arranges with the program director an appropriate date for the required on-site evaluation. If action on Preaccreditation Status is deferred, the program receives, along with the notification of deferral, a list of concerns identified by ACOTE in reaching its decision and a due date for submission of supplementary information that addresses the concerns. If action on Preaccreditation Status is denied, no further action is taken by ACOTE unless the appropriate institutional official and the program director send a Letter of Intent to proceed with the accreditation process within 30 days of receipt of notification of denial. (If Preaccreditation Status is deferred or denied, the procedures outlined in [ACOTE Policy III.A.2. Step Two: Preaccreditation Review](#) are followed.)

- **TWO MONTHS PRIOR TO THE ON-SITE EVALUATION**

In preparation for the on-site evaluation, the program director supplies an update of any information previously provided for the preaccreditation review. (Details regarding additional materials needed to supplement the initial Report of Self-Study are included in the Preaccreditation Report.) The program director will be requested to submit updated materials to the AOTA Accreditation Department at least 2 months prior to the date of the on-site evaluation.

- **ON-SITE EVALUATION**

At least two evaluators conduct the on-site evaluation\*. A summary report of the visit is made by the evaluators at the final on-site conference and institution officials are given a copy of the Evaluators' Report of On-Site Evaluation at that time. To expedite preparation of the report for ACOTE review and action, the program director is requested to submit a copy of the report with any corrections or comments to the AOTA Accreditation Department within 1 week after the on-site evaluation. (Additional response time is available if needed.) A written response to the on-site visit may also be submitted if there are special considerations or circumstances the program director wishes to be brought to the attention of ACOTE. Additional material or documents will not be considered by ACOTE, however. ACOTE will only consider action on the program based on those materials the on-site team had the opportunity to review and discuss during the on-site visit.

\*NOTE: Warnings published by the US Department of State (<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel.html>) that have implications for safety of the visiting team will be considered when scheduling an on-site evaluation. Such warnings could result in the postponement or cancellation of the on-site evaluation.

- **NEXT SCHEDULED ACOTE MEETING**

At its meeting, ACOTE reviews the Report of On-Site Evaluation and any comments submitted by the program director, makes amendments if necessary, and votes to either grant or withhold accreditation. If accreditation is granted and areas of noncompliance are cited in the final Report of ACOTE, a due date for the required Plan of Correction is established. The program will receive the letter of notification regarding the action of ACOTE within 4 weeks after the meeting.

Programs may appeal an ACOTE decision to withhold accreditation. (See [ACOTE Policy IV.D. Appeals Process](#).)

## **INTERNATIONAL ACCREDITATION FEES**

Fees for the initial accreditation of international programs will be charged as indicated in [ACOTE Policy V.A. Fees](#).

## **WITHDRAWAL OF REQUEST FOR INITIAL ACCREDITATION**

An institution may withdraw its request for initial accreditation of an occupational therapy educational program at any time prior to final action by ACOTE. The request for withdrawal should be in writing and signed by the program director overseeing the program and the chief executive officer of the sponsoring institution and submitted to the ACOTE Chairperson. If the program wishes to reapply for initial accreditation, applicable fees will be assessed.