

ACCREDITATION PROCESS FOR NEW PROGRAMS

III. A. 2. STEP TWO: PREACCREDITATION REVIEW

PREACCREDITATION REVIEW

The preaccreditation review is a process used by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE®) as a mechanism for providing feedback to a developing program prior to the initial on-site evaluation. A program must have obtained Candidacy Status prior to proceeding with the preaccreditation review. The granting of Preaccreditation Status indicates that, on the basis of examination of the initial Report of Self-Study and supplementary information available to the reviewers, ACOTE has determined that the program is likely to meet the [ACOTE Accreditation Standards](#) if fully implemented in accordance with its plans. This is intended to provide an indication that program planning appears to be proceeding in a direction that will lead toward ACOTE accreditation. The program must allow time in its timeline for submission of the initial Report of Self-Study after the first class of students has completed some coursework in the occupational therapy or occupational therapy assistant curriculum. Programs may NOT hold preaccreditation status for more than two years unless extended by ACOTE for good cause.

FEES

A preaccreditation review fee (payable to AOTA) must be received by the AOTA Accreditation Department prior to ACOTE scheduled action on the preaccreditation review of the program or the preaccreditation review will be cancelled. Information regarding current fees is located in [ACOTE Policy V.A. Fees](#) and appears in the ACOTE website (www.acoteonline.org).

THE PREACCREDITATION REVIEW

The reviewers assigned to the preaccreditation review team review the materials submitted by the program director. The program director may be requested to provide additional 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 Preaccreditation Review is prepared by the review team coordinator for presentation to ACOTE.

ACOTE ACTION ON PREACCREDITATION REVIEW

At its next scheduled meeting, ACOTE takes one of the following actions:

- **PREACCREDITATION STATUS GRANTED**
The proposed program would appear to meet the Standards if fully implemented in accordance with the plans of the sponsoring institution. An on-site evaluation will be conducted before the first class completes the academic curriculum.
- **PREACCREDITATION STATUS DENIED**
One or more of the Standards are not met and there does not appear to be evidence of the ability to comply within the immediate future.

If Preaccreditation Status is denied, the program must note the denial of Preaccreditation Status on the program's homepage.

- **PREACCREDITATION STATUS DEFERRED**

Information received from the program is incomplete and/or insufficient for evaluation. Supplementary information is requested for consideration at a subsequent ACOTE meeting.

PROGRAM DIRECTOR CHANGES DURING PREACCREDITATION

If the qualified program director resigns from a program holding Preaccreditation Status, the program may not admit another cohort of students until a new, qualified program director has been hired and is on-site.

PROCEDURES FOLLOWING ACTION ON PREACCREDITATION REVIEW

Following action by ACOTE relative to the granting of Preaccreditation Status, the results of the review are sent to the chief executive officer, dean or administrator to whom the program director reports, and program director. Included in this notification is the Report of Preaccreditation Review, which lists the strengths of the program, the concerns of ACOTE, and the action taken.

A. If **PREACCREDITATION STATUS** has been **GRANTED**:

1. Accreditation Department staff contacts the program director to schedule an on-site evaluation prior to graduation of the first class. This on-site evaluation must occur while students are still on campus. A reasonable effort is made in scheduling to allow for ACOTE action on the Report of On-Site Evaluation prior to the actual graduation date.
2. In preparation for the initial on-site evaluation, the program director is required to respond to any reopened Standards in the initial Report of Self-Study as requested in ACOTE's action letter.
3. Procedures for on-site evaluation are followed according to those outlined in [ACOTE Policy III.A.3. Step Three: The Initial On-Site Evaluation](#).

B. If **PREACCREDITATION STATUS** has been **DENIED**:

1. If Preaccreditation Status is denied, the program **must** note the denial of Preaccreditation Status on the program's homepage.
2. 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.
3. At the end of the 30 days, if no request has been received from the program, the program is removed from Candidacy Status and the accreditation process for that program is considered terminated.
4. The sponsoring institution is responsible for informing the students in the occupational therapy or occupational therapy assistant program that there is no assurance that the program will be accredited prior to their graduation. Because failure to receive accreditation would affect the students' eligibility to sit for the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT) certification examination, it is imperative that students be notified by the institution of the options for protecting certification eligibility (e.g., transfer to an accredited program).
5. The institution retains the option of proceeding with the initial on-site evaluation by notifying the AOTA Accreditation Department in writing of the intent to proceed. Should the institution choose to do so, the dates of the on-site evaluation are established as described in A.1 above. The program will be notified if additional Report of Self-Study materials are required.
6. Procedures for on-site evaluation are followed according to those outlined in [ACOTE Policy III.A.3. Step Three: The Initial On-Site Evaluation](#).

7. The application review and preaccreditation review processes may be repeated. The program may submit a Letter of Intent to reenter the accreditation process from the beginning. A second application fee and preaccreditation review fee are charged. A due date for submission of new self-study materials would then be established. In preparing new self-study materials, the program should be guided by the Report of Preaccreditation Review, as provided with the letter of notification.
NOTE: There is no guarantee that the accreditation process can be repeated in time to complete accreditation action prior to the graduation of the first class of students.

C. If **ACTION** has been **DEFERRED ON PREACCREDITATION STATUS**:

1. 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.
2. The supplementary information is reviewed at the next meeting of ACOTE, at which time a decision will be made to either grant or deny Preaccreditation Status. A program may have action on Preaccreditation Status deferred only once.
3. The sponsoring institution is responsible for informing the students in the occupational therapy program that there is no assurance that the program will be accredited prior to their graduation. Because failure to receive accreditation would affect the students' eligibility to sit for the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT) certification examination, it is imperative that students be notified by the institution of the options for protecting certification eligibility (e.g., transfer to an accredited program).
4. If the program does not respond by the due date for submission of supplementary materials (see #1 above) or if the Preaccreditation Status is denied following the second review, the program is removed from Candidacy Status and the accreditation process for that program is considered terminated.