

IV. B. 4. TRANSITIONING EDUCATION LEVELS

ACCREDITED PROGRAMS TRANSITIONING TO A HIGHER DEGREE LEVEL:

- OT MASTER'S TO AN OT DOCTORAL DEGREE LEVEL
- OTA ASSOCIATE TO AN OTA BACCALAUREATE DEGREE LEVEL

Accreditation status is awarded based on compliance with degree-specific accreditation Standards. Accredited master's-degree-level occupational therapy programs and associate-degree-level occupational therapy assistant programs transitioning to an entry-level doctoral program or entry-level baccalaureate level program must follow a separate accreditation procedure for the new degree-level program. ACOTE review and acceptance of the Candidacy Application is required prior to the admission of students into the curriculum. The accreditation status of the existing program does not accrue to the new degree-level program until the procedures for accreditation of the new program are successfully completed.

LETTER OF INTENT

An occupational therapy program or occupational therapy assistant program seeking accreditation for a new entry-level degree program must follow the accreditation process for new programs. See relevant ACOTE Policies:

- [III.A. Overview of the Initial Accreditation Process](#)
- [III.A.1. Step 1: The Application Review](#)
- [III.A.2. Step 2: The Preaccreditation Review](#)
- [III.A.3. Step 3: The Initial On-Site Evaluation](#)

STATUS OF THE PROGRAM

During the transition period, it is recommended that the accreditation status of the program be maintained until at least the time that the new program is granted accreditation and the last student has graduated from the current program. During this period, a special transition rule will be implemented related to the review of the program for programs that submitted a Letter of Intent to transition to a higher degree level prior to January 1, 2021.

TRANSITION RULE*

***Letters of Intent received after January 1, 2021 are not eligible for the Transition Rule.**

There are requirements that must be met to remain compliant with recognition agencies (e.g., U.S. Department of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation). For example, federal regulations require that ACOTE conduct an on-site evaluation at regularly scheduled intervals in order for a program to maintain accreditation.

If a program has submitted a Letter of Intent with a proposed timeline to seek accreditation for a doctoral-degree-level program for the occupational therapist or baccalaureate-degree-level for the occupational therapy assistant, the program's existing accredited master's-degree-level or associate-degree-level program must comply with the following reporting requirements. *Programs that submitted a Letter of Intent to transition to a higher degree level after January 1, 2021, must complete a full Interim Report, Report of Self-Study, and on-site evaluation.

1. Annual Reports:
 - Must be submitted until the master's or associate-degree-level program has withdrawn from accreditation.
2. *Interim Reports:
 - If the master's or associate-degree-level program is scheduled to graduate its last class and voluntarily withdraw from the accreditation process 4 or more years after the reaccreditation on-site year, a full Interim Report will be required.
 - If the master's or associate-degree-level program is scheduled to graduate its last class and voluntarily withdraw from the accreditation process 3 or less years after the reaccreditation on-site year, an abbreviated Interim Report will be required.

An abbreviated Interim Report will address:

 - a. Any current areas of noncompliance, and
 - b. Standards related to Program Director and Faculty, Budget, Timely Program Completion, Curriculum Design, Strategic Plan, Professional Development Plans, Program Evaluation, Certification Exam Pass Rate, and Fieldwork. (2018 Standards A.2.3, A.2.9, A.2.11, A.4.7, A.5.5, A.6.1-A.6.4, C.1.1, C.1.7, and C.1.9.)
3. *Reaccreditation and Self-Study Review:
 - If the master's or associate-degree-level program is scheduled to graduate its last class and voluntarily withdraw from the accreditation process 4 or more years after the reaccreditation on-site year, a full self-study and on-site will be required.
 - If the master's or associate-degree-level program is scheduled to graduate its last class and voluntarily withdraw from the accreditation process 3 or less years after the reaccreditation on-site year, an abbreviated Report of Self-Study and on-site evaluation will be required.
 - a. The abbreviated Report of Self-Study will address:
 - (1) Any current areas of noncompliance, and
 - (2) Standards related to Program Director and Faculty, Budget, Timely Program Completion, Curriculum Design, Strategic Plan, Professional Development Plans, Program Evaluation, Certification Exam Pass Rate, and Fieldwork. (2018 Standards A.2.3, A.2.9, A.2.11, A.4.7, A.5.5, A.6.1-A.6.4, C.1.1, C.1.7, and C.1.9.)
 - b. An abbreviated one day on-site visit will include interviews with faculty, students, administrators, and recent graduates.
 - c. The accreditation term awarded by ACOTE subsequent to an abbreviated on-site visit will be established based on the scheduled graduation date of the last class of master's or associate-degree-level students.

| |
|----------------------------------|
| CHANGE IN TRANSITION PLAN |
|----------------------------------|

If a program decides not to transition to higher degree level, it will no longer be eligible for an abbreviated on-site visit. If an abbreviated on-site has already been scheduled, the program may be awarded a 2-year accreditation term and will be scheduled for a full on-site within 18 months of the abbreviated on-site.