

# Standards for an Accredited Educational Program for the Occupational Therapy Assistant

Adopted December 1998 by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education of The American Occupational Therapy Association, Inc.

The Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) of the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) accredits educational programs for the occupational therapy assistant. The Standards comply with the United States Department of Education (USDE) criteria for recognition of accrediting agencies.

*These Standards are the requirements used in accrediting educational programs that prepare individuals to become occupational therapy assistants. The extent to which a program complies with these Standards determines its accreditation status.*

Sections A and C contain general standards, while Section B delineates standards specific to curriculum. The specific standards in Section B are stated as outcome-based criteria.

## Preamble

The rapidly changing and dynamic nature of contemporary health and human service delivery systems requires the entry-level occupational therapy assistant to possess basic skills as a direct care provider, educator, and advocate for the profession and the consumer.

A contemporary entry-level occupational therapy assistant must:

- have acquired an educational foundation in the liberal arts and sciences, including a focus on issues related to diversity;
- be educated as a generalist, with a broad exposure to the delivery models and systems utilized in settings where occupational therapy is currently practiced and where it is emerging as a service;
- have achieved entry-level competence through a combination of academic and fieldwork education;
- be prepared to work under the supervision of and in cooperation with the occupational therapist;

- be prepared to articulate and apply occupational therapy principles, intervention approaches and rationales, and expected outcomes as these relate to occupation;
- be prepared to be a lifelong learner and keep current with best practice;
- uphold the ethical standards, values, and attitudes of the occupational therapy profession.

## **Section A: General Requirements for Accreditation**

### **1.0 Sponsorship**

- 1.1 The sponsoring institution(s) and affiliates, if any, must be accredited by recognized national, regional, or state agencies with accrediting authority.
- 1.2 Sponsoring institutions must be authorized under applicable law or other acceptable authority to provide a program of postsecondary education, must have degree granting authority, or be a program offered within the military services.
- 1.3 For programs in which the academic and fieldwork components of the curriculum are provided by two or more institutions, responsibilities of each sponsoring institution and fieldwork site must be clearly documented in a memorandum of understanding.
- 1.4 Documentation must be provided that each memorandum of understanding between institutions and fieldwork sites is reviewed at least every five years by both parties.
- 1.5 Accredited occupational therapy assistant educational programs may only be established in community, technical, junior and senior colleges, universities, medical schools, vocational schools/institutions, or military services.
- 1.6 The sponsoring institution shall assume primary responsibility for appointment of faculty, admission of students, curriculum planning, including selection of course content, and granting the certificate or degree documenting satisfactory completion of the educational program. The sponsoring institution shall also be responsible for the coordination of classroom teaching and supervised fieldwork practice and for providing assurance that the practice activities assigned to students in a fieldwork setting are appropriate to the program.

### **2.0 Academic Resources**

- 2.1 The program must have a director who is assigned to the occupational therapy assistant program on a full-time basis.

- 2.2 The program director shall be an occupational therapist, initially certified nationally, and credentialed according to state requirements. The director shall have a minimum of five years of professional experience in areas related to clinical practice, administration, and teaching. At least one of these years must be a fulltime academic appointment with teaching responsibilities.
- 2.3 The program director shall have academic qualifications comparable to other administrators who manage similar programs within the institution and relevant experience in higher education requisite for providing effective leadership for the program, its faculty, and its students.
- 2.4 The program director must have an understanding of and experience with occupational therapy assistants, which includes clinical supervision.
- 2.5 The program director shall be responsible for the management and administration of the program, including planning, evaluation, budgeting, selection of faculty and staff, maintenance of accreditation, and commitment to strategies for professional development.
- 2.6 The program must have at least one additional full-time equivalent faculty member.
- 2.7 The program director and faculty must possess the necessary academic and experiential qualifications and backgrounds, identified in documented descriptions of roles and responsibilities, appropriate to meet program objectives.
- 2.8 The occupational therapy assistant faculty will assume responsibility for development, implementation, and evaluation of fieldwork education. There will be an individual specifically identified with fieldwork coordination responsibilities.
- 2.9 The faculty shall include occupational therapy practitioners who have been initially certified nationally and who have documented expertise in their area(s) of teaching responsibility.
- 2.10 The occupational therapy assistant faculty must be sufficient in number and must possess the expertise necessary to ensure appropriate curriculum design, content delivery, and program evaluation.
- 2.11 Faculty responsibilities shall be consistent with the mission of the institution.
- 2.12 Each fulltime faculty member shall have a written continuing professional growth and development plan to ensure effectiveness and currency as an academic educator consistent with the structure of the program's strategic plan.
- 2.13 The program shall develop a strategic plan congruent with the mission of the institution and the curriculum design. This plan shall incorporate professional development plans of the faculty and the program objectives.

- 2.14 The faculty/student ratio shall permit the achievement of the purpose and stated objectives of the program, be compatible with accepted practices of the institution for similar programs, promote quality education in laboratory and fieldwork experiences, and ensure student and/or consumer safety.
- 2.15 Clerical and support staff shall be provided to the program, consistent with institutional practice, to meet programmatic and administrative requirements.
- 2.16 The program shall be allocated a budget of regular institutional funds, not including grants, gifts, and other restricted sources, sufficient to implement and maintain the objectives of the program and to fulfill the program's obligation to matriculated and entering students.
- 2.17 Classrooms and laboratories shall be provided consistent with the program's educational objectives, teaching methods, number of students, and safety/health standards of the institution, and shall allow for efficient operation of the program.
- 2.18 Laboratory space shall be assigned to the occupational therapy assistant program on a priority basis.
- 2.19 Space shall be provided to store and secure equipment and supplies.
- 2.20 The program director and faculty shall have office space consistent with institutional practice.
- 2.21 Space shall be provided for the private advising of students.
- 2.22 Appropriate and sufficient equipment and supplies shall be provided for student use and for the didactic and supervised fieldwork components of the curriculum.
- 2.23 Students shall be given access to the evaluative and treatment technologies that reflect current practice.
- 2.24 Students shall have ready access to a supply of current books, journals, periodicals, computers, software, and other reference materials needed to meet the requirements of the curriculum. This may include, but is not limited to, libraries, on-line services, interlibrary loan, and resource centers.
- 2.25 Instructional aids and technology shall be available in sufficient quantity and quality to be consistent with the program objectives and teaching methods.

### **3.0 Students**

- 3.1 Admission of students to the occupational therapy assistant program shall be made in accordance with the practices of the institution. There shall be stated admission criteria that are clearly defined and published, and reflective of the demands of the program.

- 3.2 Policies pertaining to standards for admission, advanced placement, transfer of credit, credit for experiential learning (if applicable), and prerequisite educational or work experience requirements shall be readily accessible to prospective students and the public.
- 3.3 Criteria for successful completion of each segment of the educational program and for graduation shall be given in advance to each student.
- 3.4 Evaluation content and methods shall be consistent with the objectives and competencies of the didactic and supervised fieldwork components of the program.
- 3.5 Evaluation shall be employed on a regular basis to provide students and program officials with timely indications of the students' progress and academic standing.
- 3.6 Students must be informed of and have access to the health services provided to other students in the institution.
- 3.7 Advising related to coursework in the occupational therapy assistant program and fieldwork education shall be the responsibility of the occupational therapy assistant faculty.
- 3.8 A mechanism shall be in place to ensure collaboration between the fieldwork educator and representatives of the academic program during fieldwork experiences.
- 3.9 The program faculty shall have access to institutional and community resources and make them available to students in situations that could interfere with student progress through the program.

#### **4.0 Operational Policies**

- 4.1 All program publications and advertising (including academic calendars, announcements, catalogs, handbooks, and internet descriptions) must accurately reflect the program offered.
- 4.2 The program's accreditation status and the name, address, and telephone number of ACOTE shall be published in the catalog, program brochures for prospective students and, if available, internet sites.
- 4.3 Faculty recruitment and employment practices as well as student recruitment and admission procedures shall be non-discriminatory.
- 4.4 Graduation requirements, tuition, and fees shall be accurately stated, published, and made known to all applicants.
- 4.5 The program or sponsoring institution shall have a defined and published policy and procedure for processing student and faculty grievances.

- 4.6 Policies and processes for student withdrawal and for refunds of tuition and fees shall be published and made known to all applicants.
- 4.7 Policies and procedures for student probation, suspension, and dismissal shall be published and made known.
- 4.8 Policies and procedures shall be published and made known for human subject research protocol; appropriate use of equipment and supplies; and for all educational activities that have implications for the health and safety of clients, students, and faculty (including infection control and evacuation procedures).
- 4.9 A program admitting students on the basis of ability to benefit must publicize its objectives, assessment measures, and means of evaluating ability to benefit.
- 4.10 Documentation of all progression and retention, graduation and credentialing requirements, including certification/licensure, shall be published and made known to applicants.
- 4.11 The program shall have a documented and published policy to ensure students complete all graduation and fieldwork requirements in a timely manner.
- 4.12 Records regarding student admission, enrollment, and achievement shall be maintained and kept in a secure setting. Grades and credits for courses shall be recorded on students' transcripts and permanently maintained by the sponsoring institution.

## **5.0 Curriculum Framework**

**This is a description of the program that includes the mission, philosophy, and curriculum design.**

- 5.1 The statement of the mission of the occupational therapy assistant program shall be consistent with that of the sponsoring institution.
- 5.2 The statement of philosophy of the occupational therapy assistant program shall reflect the current published philosophy of the profession and shall include a statement of the program's fundamental beliefs about human beings and how they learn.
- 5.3 The curriculum design shall reflect the mission and philosophy of both the occupational therapy assistant program and the institution and shall provide the basis for program planning, implementation, and evaluation. The design shall identify educational goals and describe the selection of the content, scope, and sequencing of coursework.
- 5.4 Didactic instruction and supervised practice shall follow a plan documenting learning experiences appropriate for the development of the competencies

required for graduation; the plan shall also delineate the instructional methods (e.g., presentations, demonstrations, discussions) and materials that shall be used to develop these competencies.

- 5.5 Instruction must follow a plan that documents clearly written course syllabi that are consistent with the curriculum design and describe learning objectives and competencies to be achieved for both didactic and fieldwork education components.
- 5.6 Instruction must follow a plan that documents evaluation of students on a regular basis to assess their acquisition of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, and their ability to apply them to occupational therapy practice.

## 6.0 Program Evaluation

**The program must have a continuing system for reviewing the effectiveness of the educational program, especially as measured by student achievement, faculty performance, and the ability to meet program goals. Timely self-study reports must be prepared to aid the faculty and staff, the sponsoring institution, and the accrediting agencies in assessing program qualities and needs.**

- 6.1 Programs shall routinely secure and systematically analyze sufficient qualitative and quantitative information about the extent to which the program is meeting its stated goals and objectives. This must include, but need not be limited to:
- faculty effectiveness in their assigned teaching responsibilities;
  - students' progression through the program;
  - graduates' performance on the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT) exam; and
  - graduate job placement and performance based on employer satisfaction.

*The manner in which programs seek to comply with this criterion may vary; however, timely efforts should be made to document the data and analysis provided. These sources of data may include, but should not be limited to, surveys covering type and scope of practice, salary, job satisfaction, and adequacy of the educational program in addressing education and skills, and interviews or surveys with program graduates and employers of graduates.*

- 6.2 The results of ongoing evaluation must be appropriately reflected in the program's strategic plan, curriculum design, and other dimensions of the program.

*Program evaluation should be a continuing systematic process with internal and external curriculum validation in consultation with employers, faculty, preceptors, fieldwork educators, students, and graduates, with follow-up studies of their employment and national examination performance. Other dimensions of the program merit consideration as well, such as the mission and philosophy of the program, admission criteria and process, and the purpose and productivity of all advisory bodies.*

## **Section B: Specific Requirements for Accreditation**

### **1.0 Foundational Content Requirements**

Program content shall be based on a broad foundation of the liberal arts and sciences. A foundation in the biological, physical, social, and behavioral sciences supports an understanding of occupation across the life span. Coursework in these areas may be prerequisite to or concurrent with occupational therapy assistant education and shall facilitate development of the performance criteria listed below. The student will:

- 1.1 Demonstrate oral and written communication skills.
- 1.2 Employ logical thinking, critical analysis, problem solving, and creativity.
- 1.3 Demonstrate competence in basic computer use.
- 1.4 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the structure and function of the human body to include the biological and physical sciences.
- 1.5 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of human development throughout the life span.
- 1.6 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the concepts of human behavior to include the behavioral and social sciences.
- 1.7 Demonstrate knowledge and appreciation of the role of sociocultural, socioeconomic, diversity factors, and lifestyle choices in contemporary society.
- 1.8 Appreciate the influence of social conditions and the ethical context in which humans choose and engage in occupations.

### **2.0 Basic Tenets of Occupational Therapy**

These shall facilitate development of the performance criteria listed below. The student will:

- 2.1 Acknowledge and understand the importance of the history and philosophical base of the profession of occupational therapy.
- 2.2 Be able to differentiate among occupation, activity, and purposeful activity.
- 2.3 Understand the meaning and dynamics of occupation and purposeful activity including the interaction of performance areas, performance components, and performance contexts.



- 2.4 Be able to articulate to the consumer, potential employers, and the general public the unique nature of occupation as viewed by the profession of occupational therapy.
- 2.5 Acknowledge and understand the importance of the balance of performance areas to the achievement of health and wellness.
- 2.6 Understand and appreciate the role of occupation in the promotion of health and the prevention of disease and disability for the individual, family, and society.
- 2.7 Understand the effects of health, disability, disease processes, and traumatic injury to the individual within the context of family and society.
- 2.8 Exhibit the ability to analyze tasks relative to performance areas, performance components, and performance contexts.
- 2.9 Demonstrate appreciation for the individual's perception of quality of life, well being, and occupation to promote health and prevention of injury and disease.
- 2.10 Understand the need for and use of compensatory strategies when desired life tasks cannot be performed.
- 2.11 Be familiar with the theories, models of practice, and frames of reference that underlie the practice of occupational therapy.

### 3.0 Screening and Evaluation

**The process of screening and evaluation shall be done under the supervision of and in cooperation with the occupational therapist and shall be based on theoretical perspectives, models of practice, and frames of reference that facilitate development of the performance criteria listed below. The student will:**

- 3.1 Gather and share data for the purpose of screening and evaluation including, but not limited to, specified screening assessments, skilled observation, checklists, histories, interviews with the client/family/significant others, and consultations with other professionals.
- 3.2 Administer selected assessments and use occupation for the purpose of assessment.
- 3.3 Demonstrate the ability to use safety precautions with clients during the screening and evaluation process, such as standards for infection control that include, but are not limited to, universal precautions.
- 3.4 Document occupational therapy services to ensure accountability of service provision and to meet standards for reimbursement of services. Documentation shall effectively communicate the need and rationale for occupational therapy services.

## **4.0 Intervention and Implementation**

**The process of intervention shall be done under the supervision of and in cooperation with the occupational therapist and shall facilitate development of the performance criteria listed below. The student will:**

- 4.1 Select, adapt, and sequence relevant occupations and purposeful activities that support the intervention goals and plan as written by the occupational therapist. These occupations and purposeful activities shall be directly related to performance areas, performance components, and performance contexts. They shall be meaningful to the client, maximizing participation and independence.
- 4.2 Use individual and group interaction and therapeutic use of self as a means of achieving therapeutic goals.
- 4.3 Adapt the environment, tools, materials, and occupations to the needs of clients and their sociocultural context.
- 4.4 Develop and promote the use of appropriate home and community programming to support performance in the client's natural environment.
- 4.5 Demonstrate the ability to educate and train client/family/significant others to facilitate skills in performance areas as well as prevention, health maintenance, and safety.
- 4.6 Demonstrate the ability to interact through written, oral and nonverbal communication with client/family/significant others, colleagues, other health providers, and the public.
- 4.7 Use therapeutic adaptation with occupations pertinent to the needs of the client. This shall include, but not be limited to, family/care provider training, environmental and behavioral modifications, orthotics, prosthetics, assistive devices, equipment, and other technologies.
- 4.8 Exhibit the ability to use the teaching-learning process with client/family/significant others, colleagues, other health providers, and the public. This includes assisting learners to identify their needs and objectives and using educational methods that will support those needs and objectives.
- 4.9 Demonstrate the ability to use safety precautions with the client during therapeutic intervention, such as contraindications and use of infection control standards that include, but are not limited to, universal precautions.
- 4.10 Modify intervention approaches to reflect the changing needs of the client.
- 4.11 Demonstrate the ability to refer to specialists, internal and external to the profession, for consultation and intervention.
- 4.12 Monitor and reassess the effect of occupational therapy intervention and the need for continued and/or modified intervention.

- 4.13 Facilitate discharge planning by reviewing the needs of client/family/significant others, resources, and discharge environment. This includes, but is not limited to, identification of community, human, and fiscal resources, recommendations for environmental adaptations, and home programming.
- 4.14 Recommend the need for termination of occupational therapy services when stated outcomes have been achieved. This includes a summary of occupational therapy outcomes, appropriate recommendations and referrals, and discussion with the client of postdischarge needs.
- 4.15 Document occupational therapy services to ensure accountability of service provision and to meet standards for reimbursement of services. Documentation shall effectively communicate the need and rationale for occupational therapy services and must be appropriate to the system in which the service is delivered.

## 5.0 Context of Service Delivery

**The knowledge and understanding of the various contexts in which occupational therapy services are provided shall facilitate development of the performance criteria listed below. The student will:**

- 5.1 Understand the models of health care, education, community, and social systems as they relate to the practice of occupational therapy.
- 5.2 Understand the role and responsibility of the practitioner to address changes in service delivery policies and to effect changes in the system.

## 6.0 Assist in Management of Occupational Therapy Services

**Application of principles of management and systems in the provision of occupational therapy services to individuals and organizations shall facilitate development of the performance criteria listed below. The student will:**

- 6.1 Understand a variety of systems and service models, including, but not limited to, health care, education, community, and social models, and how these models may effect service provision.
- 6.2 Understand the implications and effects of federal and state regulatory and legislative bodies on practice.
- 6.3 Demonstrate knowledge of applicable national and state requirements for credentialing.
- 6.4 Demonstrate knowledge of and ability to comply with the various reimbursement mechanisms that affect the practice of occupational therapy, including, but not limited to, federal and state reimbursement practices and third party and private payers.

- 6.5 Advocate for the profession and the consumer and demonstrate an understanding of the due process and appeals systems when reimbursement is not approved for occupational therapy services.
- 6.6 Use principles of time management, including being able to schedule and prioritize workloads.
- 6.7 Maintain and organize treatment areas, equipment, and supply inventory.
- 6.8 Maintain records as required by practice setting, third-party payers, and regulatory agencies.
- 6.9 Demonstrate program evaluation using predetermined criteria.
- 6.10 Understand the ongoing professional responsibility for providing fieldwork education and supervision.

## **7.0 Use of Professional Literature**

**The ability to read and understand professional literature and recognize its implications for practice and the provision of occupational therapy services shall facilitate development of the performance criteria listed below. The student will:**

- 7.1 Articulate the importance of professional literature for practice and the continued development of the profession.
- 7.2 Be able to use professional literature to make informed practice decisions, in cooperation with the occupational therapist.
- 7.3 Know when and how to find and use informational resources, including appropriate literature within and outside of occupational therapy.

## **8.0 Professional Ethics, Values, and Responsibilities**

**An understanding and appreciation of ethics and values of the profession of occupational therapy shall facilitate development of the performance criteria listed below. The student will:**

- 8.1 Demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of the AOTA Code of Ethics, Core Values and Attitudes of Occupational Therapy, and AOTA Standards of Practice as a guide for professional interactions and in client treatment and employment settings.
- 8.2 Understand the functions and influence of national, state, and local occupational therapy associations and other related professional associations.
- 8.3 Promote occupational therapy by educating other professionals, consumers, third-party payers, and the public.

- 8.4 Acknowledge the personal responsibility for planning ongoing professional development to ensure a level of practice consistent with current and accepted standards.
- 8.5 Demonstrate an understanding of professional responsibilities related to liability concerns under current models of service provision.
- 8.6 Develop an understanding of personal and professional abilities and competencies as they relate to job responsibilities.
- 8.7 Understand and appreciate the varied roles of the occupational therapy assistant as a practitioner and educator.
- 8.8 Articulate the importance of professional relationships between the occupational therapist and the occupational therapy assistant.
- 8.9 Understand professional responsibilities when service provision is on a contractual basis in the current system.
- 8.10 Demonstrate an understanding of approaches to use in resolving personal and organizational ethical conflicts.
- 8.11 Demonstrate an understanding of the variety of informal and formal ethical dispute resolution systems that have jurisdiction over occupational therapy practice.
- 8.12 Be able to assist the consumer in gaining access to occupational therapy services.
- 8.13 Demonstrate knowledge of advocacy for the benefit of the consumer and the profession.

## 9.0 Fieldwork Education

**Fieldwork education is a crucial part of the preparation of the occupational therapy assistant and is best integrated as a component of the curriculum design. Fieldwork experiences should be implemented and evaluated for their effectiveness by the educational institution. The experience should provide the student with the opportunity to carry out professional responsibilities under supervision and for role modeling. The program will:**

- 9.1 Document a plan to ensure collaboration between academic and fieldwork representatives. The plan shall include agreed upon fieldwork objectives that are documented and made known to the student.
- 9.2 Ensure that the ratio of fieldwork educators to student(s) enables proper supervision and frequent assessment of the progress in achieving stated fieldwork objectives.
- 9.3 Ensure that fieldwork agreements shall be sufficient in scope and number to allow completion of graduation requirements in a timely manner in accordance with the policy adopted by the program.

- 9.4 Conduct fieldwork in settings equipped to provide application of principles learned in the academic program and appropriate to the learning needs of the student.
- 9.5 Require that all aspects of the fieldwork program be consistent with the curriculum design of the program.

**The goal of Level I fieldwork is to introduce students to the fieldwork experience, and develop a basic comfort level with and understanding of the needs of clients. Level I fieldwork shall be integral to the program's curriculum design and include experiences designed to enrich didactic coursework through directed observation and participation in selected aspects of the occupational therapy process. The focus of these experiences is not intended to be independent performance. Qualified personnel for supervised Level I fieldwork include, but are not limited to, occupational therapy practitioners initially certified nationally, psychologists, physician assistants, teachers, social workers, nurses, and physical therapists. The program will:**

- 9.6 Ensure that Level I fieldwork shall not be substituted for any part of Level II fieldwork.
- 9.7 Document all Level I fieldwork experiences that are provided to students.
- 9.8 Document mechanisms for formal evaluation of student performance on Level I fieldwork.

**The goal of Level II fieldwork is to develop competent, entry-level, generalist occupational therapy assistants. Level II fieldwork shall be integral to the program's curriculum design and shall include an in-depth experience in delivering occupational therapy services to clients, focusing on the application of purposeful and meaningful occupation. It is recommended that the student be exposed to a variety of clients across the life span and to a variety of settings. The fieldwork experience shall be designed to promote clinical reasoning, appropriate to the occupational therapy assistant role; to transmit the values and beliefs that enable ethical practice; and to develop professionalism and competence as career responsibilities. The program will:**

- 9.9 Recognize that Level II fieldwork can take place in a variety of traditional settings and emerging areas of practice. The student can complete Level II fieldwork in a minimum of one setting and maximum of three different settings.
- 9.10 Require a minimum of the equivalent of 16 weeks full-time Level II fieldwork. This may be completed on a full-time or part-time basis, but may not be less than half-time as defined by the fieldwork site.
- 9.11 Ensure that the student shall be supervised by an occupational therapy practitioner, who meets state regulations and has a minimum of one year of practice experience, subsequent to the requisite initial certification. The supervisor may be engaged by the fieldwork site or by the educational program.

- 9.12 Ensure that supervision provides protection of consumers and opportunities for appropriate role modeling of occupational therapy practice. Initially, supervision should be direct, then decrease to less direct supervision as is appropriate for the setting, the severity of the client's condition, and the ability of the student.
- 9.13 In a setting where there is no occupational therapy practitioner on site, the program must document that there is a plan for the provision of occupational therapy services. On-site supervision must be provided in accordance with the plan and state credentialing requirements. The student must receive a minimum of six hours of occupational therapy supervision per week, including direct observation of client interaction. Additionally, the occupational therapy supervisor must be readily available for communication and consultation during work hours. Such fieldwork shall not exceed 8 weeks.

## **Section C: Maintaining and Administering Accreditation**

### **1.0 Program and Sponsoring Institution Responsibilities**

- 1.1 The accreditation review process conducted by ACOTE can be initiated only at the written request of the chief executive officer or an officially designated representative of the sponsoring institution and the occupational therapy assistant program director or dean overseeing the proposed program.
- 1.2 This process is initiated by submitting a letter of intent to seek accreditation to the:
- Accreditation Department  
American Occupational Therapy Association, Inc.  
4720 Montgomery Lane  
P.O. Box 31220  
Bethesda, MD 20824-1220
- 1.3 At any time before the final accreditation action is made by ACOTE, a program or sponsoring institution may withdraw its request for initial or continuing accreditation.
- 1.4 To maintain accreditation, the following actions are required: The program must submit a Report of Self-Study and other required reports within a period of time determined by ACOTE. The program must agree to a site visit date before the end of the period for which accreditation was previously awarded. In accordance with stated policy, the program must inform ACOTE within 90 days of a change in program director. The sponsoring institution must inform ACOTE of the transfer of program sponsorship.

- 1.5 The program and the sponsoring institution must pay accreditation fees within a time period specified in the ACOTE Accreditation Manual.

*Failure to meet these administrative requirements for maintaining accreditation may lead to being placed on Administrative Probation and ultimately to having accreditation withdrawn.*

## **2.0 ACOTE Responsibilities**

- 2.1 All policies and procedures relating to the accreditation process are found in the AOTA Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) Accreditation Manual.
- 2.2 ACOTE will follow fair practice procedures when complaints are received by ACOTE indicating that accredited programs or programs seeking accreditation may not be in substantial compliance with the Standards for an Accredited Educational Program for the Occupational Therapy Assistant or may not be following established accreditation policies. A record of complaints is maintained by the AOTA Accreditation Department. The policy and procedure for complaints are found in the AOTA Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) Accreditation Manual.

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# Glossary of Terms for Standards for an Accredited Educational Program for the Occupational Therapist and Occupational Therapy Assistant

*Definitions given below are for the purposes of these documents*

## **Ability to Benefit**

A phrase that refers to a student who does not have a high school diploma or its recognized equivalent, but is eligible to receive funds under the Title IV Higher Education Act (HEA) programs after taking an independently administered examination and achieving a score specified by the Secretary of Education that the student has the ability to benefit from the education being offered. (United States Department of Education)

## **Academic Calendar**

The official institutional document which lists registration dates, semester/quarter stop and start dates, holidays, graduation dates and other pertinent events.

## **Activity**

A natural or normal task.

## **Affiliate**

An entity which formally cooperates with the sponsoring institution in implementing the occupational therapy educational program.

## **Assist**

To aid, help, or hold an auxiliary position.

## **Client**

A person, group, program or organization for whom the occupational therapy practitioner is providing services and receives remuneration.

## **Client-Centered Service Delivery**

An interactive approach to service that considers systems, models and contexts in making decisions that focus on the client's needs and that engage the client as a participant.

## **Collaborate**

To work together with a mutual sharing of thoughts and ideas.

**Communities of Interest**

Various stakeholders directly affected by the occupational therapy accreditation and education process, i.e., clinicians, faculty, students, parents, consumers, college administrators, clients, etc.

**Competent**

To have the requisite ability/qualities and capacity to function in a professional environment.

**Computer Competence**

The ability to use basic software applications, e.g., word processing, spreadsheets, e-mail, and to use the Internet and intranets for research to accomplish the requirements of the occupational therapy/occupational therapy assistant program.

**Consumer**

The direct and/or indirect recipient of educational and/or practitioner services offered.

**Cooperate**

To work together toward a common end or purpose where there is an implied hierarchy among the participants; in this case, the occupational therapist and occupational therapy assistant.

**Curriculum Design**

An overarching set of assumptions that explain how the curriculum is planned, implemented, and evaluated. Typically, a curriculum design includes educational goals and provides a clear rationale for the selection of content, the determination of scope of content, and the sequence of the content. A curriculum design is expected to be consistent with the mission and philosophy of the sponsoring institution and the program.

**Entry-Level Occupational Therapist**

The outcome of the occupational therapy educational and certification process; the individual prepared to begin generalist practice as an occupational therapist with less than one year of experience.

**Entry-Level Occupational Therapy Assistant**

The outcome of the occupational therapy educational and certification process; the individual prepared to begin generalist practice as an occupational therapy assistant with less than one year of experience.

**Faculty, Collective**

The aggregate of individuals charged with the design, implementation and evaluation of the occupational therapy curriculum.

**Faculty, Individual/Full-Time**

A qualified paid employee of an institution to teach specific content in the occupational therapy curriculum, who holds an appointment that is considered by that institution to constitute full time service.

### **Faculty, Part-Time**

A qualified paid employee of an institution to teach specific content in the occupational therapy curriculum, who holds an appointment that is considered by that institution to constitute less than full time service.

### **Fieldwork Coordinator**

The person identified to schedule all activities related to fieldwork. This person may or may not be responsible for the development, implementation and evaluation of fieldwork education.

### **Frame of Reference**

Set of interrelated internally consistent concepts, definitions, postulates, and principles that provide a systematic description of a practitioner's interaction with clients. It is intended to link theory to practice.

### **Initially Certified Nationally**

The process by which a non-governmental agency or association grants recognition to an individual who has met predetermined qualifications specified by that agency or association. [As evidenced by the Representative Assembly action (97 M121) in April 1997 and 1998 N88 in April 1998, AOTA understood the term to refer to entry-level certification.]

### **Mission**

The statement which explains the unique nature of the program and how it helps fulfill or advances the mission of the sponsoring institution.

### **Model of Practice**

Set of theories and philosophies that define the views, beliefs, assumptions, values, and domain of concern of a particular profession or discipline. Models of practice delimit the boundaries of the profession.

### **Occupation**

The uniquely human task behavior that is characterized by the qualities of personal meaning and purpose used in the context of occupational therapy. Occupation is the means through which a patient/client (consumer) achieves therapeutic goals for maximum independence and life satisfaction. Successful engagement in occupation is the desired end product for intervention.

### **Occupational Therapy**

The art and science of applying occupation as a means to effect positive, measurable change in the health status and functional outcomes of the client by a qualified occupational therapist and/or occupational therapy assistant (as appropriate).

### **Occupational Therapy Practitioner**

An individual who is initially credentialed as an occupational therapist or an occupational therapy assistant.

### **Performance Areas**

Broad categories of human activity that are typically part of daily life. They are activities of daily living, work and productive activities, and play or leisure activities.

### **Performance Components**

Elements of performance required for successful engagement in performance areas, including sensorimotor, cognitive, psychosocial and psychological aspects.

### **Performance Contexts**

Situations or factors that influence an individual's engagement in desired and/or required performance areas. Performance contexts consist of temporal aspects (chronological, developmental, life cycle, disability status) and environmental aspects (physical, social, political, cultural).

### **Philosophy**

The undergirding belief and value structure for the program that is consistent with the sponsoring institution and which permeates the curriculum and the teaching learning process.

### **Program Director**

The program director (as outlined in the Standards) is an occupational therapist, initially certified nationally, with sufficient knowledge, experience, academic qualifications, and senior level status within the educational institution for providing effective guidance and leadership to the program, faculty and students.

### **Program Evaluation**

A continuing system for reviewing and assessing the effectiveness of an educational program, especially as measured by student achievement.

### **Purposeful Activity**

Refers to goal-directed behaviors or tasks which may be a means to an end and may or may not have personally imbued meaning. Purposeful activity may be subsumed under the larger context of occupation and may be internally or externally driven.

### **Recognized Agencies**

Specialized and regional accrediting agencies recognized by the United States Department of Education (USDE) and/or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) to accredit post-secondary educational programs/institutions. The purpose of recognition is to assure that these accrediting agencies are reliable authorities for evaluating quality education or training programs in the institutions they accredit.

### **Skill**

The ability to use one's knowledge effectively and readily in execution or performance.

### **Sponsoring Institution**

The identified legal entity which assumes total responsibility for meeting the minimal standards for ACOTE accreditation.

### **Strategic Plan**

A comprehensive plan that sets forth the broad program goals, specific measurable objectives, and strategies for objective attainment. Typically, a strategic plan provides the basis for continuous program evaluation.

**Supervise**

To direct and inspect the performance of (workers or work).

**Supervisor**

One who ensures that tasks assigned to others are performed correctly and efficiently.

**System**

An organized entity of interdependent components or principles that provides a structure by which to function.

**Theory**

Set of interrelated concepts used to describe, explain or predict phenomena.

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