



Welcome

Welcome to our first issue of *Accreditation matters*, the Occupational Therapy Council of Australia Ltd's (OTC's) update for education providers and assessors. We plan to provide an update twice per year to keep you informed on all things accreditation, including new developments.

Our role as an accreditation authority under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (NRAS) is to ensure graduates from accredited occupational therapy programs are safe, ethical and competent practitioners ready to enter the workforce.

In this update you will find information about:

- Our plan to publish accreditation report summaries on the OTC website
- Accreditation timelines
- Professional accreditation status on university websites
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Curriculum Framework project

We will also introduce you to our new accreditation manager, Anne Szadura, who started with the OTC in early August.

We value your feedback, so if you have any comments about the format of this update, any queries or topics you would like us to address in future updates, please let us know via accreditation@otcouncil.com.au or our individual emails. The OTC has updated our individual email addresses to include our surnames (see below). Emails to our previous address are being redirected, but please make contact if you have not had a reply to any query!

As 2023 draws to a close, we send out a big thank you for your continued collegiality over this year and wish you all a very Merry Christmas and happy and safe festive season. We look forward to continuing to work with you in 2024.

Best wishes to you all,

Rebecca Allen: Professional Adviser, Program Accreditation
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Publishing accreditation report summaries on the OTC website

From July 2024 the OTC plans to publish summaries of accreditation assessment reports from site visits, virtual visits and desktop reviews on the OTC website.

This is a major change in our procedures, and we will be in touch with each education provider individually in the New Year to outline the proposed format of the summary report, seek your comment and answer any questions or address any concerns you may have.

The initiative is being undertaken to make accreditation decision-making more transparent, as well as giving external stakeholders, including current and prospective students, employers, consumers of occupational therapy services and the wider public assurance that graduates of accredited Australian occupational therapy programs meet the relevant entry level criteria and standards prior to professional practice. It provides a guarantee of standing of graduates that is independent of the education provider and opportunity for greater understanding of the outcomes of accreditation processes in contributing to program quality.

It will also align the OTC with the processes or intended processes of almost half of the other accreditation authorities operating in the NRAS. The Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra) Independent Accreditation Committee (see: <https://www.ahpra.gov.au/About-Ahpra/Who-We-Are/Ahpra-Board/Accreditation-Committee.aspx>) has a deliverable in its workplan around enhanced transparency. Hence, we anticipate summary reports in the public domain will be an expectation for all accreditation authorities in the near future.

The summary reports will not contain any commercial in-confidence information or identify any individuals.

The change will be applicable to accreditation reviews undertaken from the second half of 2024.

Accreditation timelines

If you plan to offer a new program, you need to let the OTC know **12-18 months** prior to the planned intake and commencement of the first cohort of students. We understand that offering a new program requires a lot of internal planning and approval processes, but program accreditation can also take up to twelve months, so it is important the processes be undertaken in tandem. New programs must be accredited (with conditions) by the OTC and approved by the OTBA prior to students participating in any activity involving client contact. The OTC is now moving towards requiring all new programs to be accredited before students commence rather than our current approach which is more flexible.

You can notify us of your intent to commence a new program via the [Intent to submit – Application for new programs](#). You are also welcome to contact us to discuss the new program or plans for a new program and planned timelines so we can plan a mutually convenient timing for the accreditation process to take place and more importantly be completed prior to students commencing.

Please note that extension of an existing program to another campus is considered a new program and the OTC does need to be advised of such plans 12-18 months in advance of program delivery to enable us to complete the accreditation process prior to program commencement.

Professional accreditation status on university websites

The OTC undertakes periodic review of education provider website statements of the accreditation status of programs. Our recommended wording for website statements is below:

- i. for a new program undergoing accreditation [Name of University] is currently seeking accreditation of the occupational therapy program with the Occupational Therapy Council of Australia Ltd and approval by the Occupational Therapy Board of Australia.

Students studying in an approved program are required to be registered with the Occupational Therapy Board of Australia (OTBA) (the University will organise this), and graduates from approved programs are eligible to apply for registration with the OTBA.

The program is also being developed to meet the expectations of the World Federation of Occupational Therapists.

- ii. for a program accredited by the OTC, and subsequently approved by the OTBA and Occupational Therapy Australia on behalf of the WFOT:

“The [name of program] is accredited by the Occupational Therapy Council of Australia Ltd (OTC) and approved by the Occupational Therapy Board of Australia (OTBA). Graduates will be eligible to apply for registration as an occupational therapist with the OTBA.

The program is also approved by the World Federation of Occupational Therapists.”

This information is helpful to prospective and current students as well as external program partners.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Curriculum Framework project

The report of the project’s Program Advisory Group’s (PAG) recommendations will be with you very soon. Many thanks to those who provided input to inform this project. The OTC accreditation team will be reviewing the OTC’s approach to implementation of the PAG’s recommendations early in 2024.

Meet our new accreditation manager

Our new accreditation manager Anne Szadura joined the OTC on 7 August 2023 and is already making a positive impact! She is working with Rebecca and Alison in managing program accreditation processes.



Anne comes to us from the Australian Dental Council (ADC), where she was the Manager, Accreditation for four years and was responsible for managing accreditation activities for dental practitioner programs. Prior to that Anne has worked for the Australian Council of Deans of Education (ACDE) as the Manager, Policy, Projects and Networks, and has also worked in the tertiary education sector across several universities and a range of roles and disciplines.

Here is a little bit of further information about Anne:

What inspired you to join the OTC?

The OTC team really appealed to me, as did the potential to learn about the occupational therapy profession. I have a lot of experience in the NRAS and accreditation and hope to be able to contribute to the OTC's accreditation processes and more broadly back to communities by helping protect public health and safety.

What are you looking forward to in your current role?

I am looking forward to meeting our education providers and assessors and continuing to build on the collegial relationships already established by Rebecca and Alison. I hope that I will also be able to contribute to further streamlining accreditation processes to make them less burdensome and more understandable.

What is one of your career highlights?

At the ACDE I was involved in several collaborative projects with the More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers Initiative (MATSI) based at the University of South Australia. This included the development of the Respect, Relationships, Reconciliation (3Rs) website of resources for pre-service teachers, as well as the Engagement and Success project, aimed at supporting and improving enrolments into, retention and completion of Indigenous students in initial teacher education programs across Australia.

I am also honoured to have been the Co-Chair in developing and implementing the ADC's first (Reflect) Reconciliation Action Plan and was involved in supporting reconciliation activities across the organisation.

What is your favourite travel destination?

I love travelling in Asia. My first trip to Asia was to Bali (like a lot of Australians) – and I was hooked. Since that time, I have travelled through Indonesia more widely, as well as Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, Laos, Brunei, Thailand, India and Sri Lanka. I enjoy learning about the different cultures and meeting local people, visiting markets and temples, the countryside and natural landscapes, and of course the food!

What do you do to relax?

I love reading, going to the theatre, playing board games, patchwork and embroidery, and creative cookery. I also love theme parks, especially roller coasters.

Do you have any pets?

I love animals and would have a menagerie if I had the space. My family currently has three cats.

What is one thing on your bucket list?

I want to drive a tank! I have an inkling that I am going to do this for my birthday next year, although it is supposed to be a secret...

The Occupational Therapy Council of Australia Ltd acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands where we work and live. We celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of Australia. We pay our respects to elders past, present and emerging.

