



### Welcome

Welcome to our second issue of *Accreditation matters*, the Occupational Therapy Council of Australia Ltd's (OTC's) update for education providers and assessors. What a busy start to the year it has been, and it is hard to believe (and a little scary) that we are almost into the second half of 2024.

In this update you will find information about:

- Challenges of artificial intelligence (AI) in ensuring valid, reliable assessment
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Curriculum Implementation Project – Occupational Therapy Program Accreditation
- ABSTARR cultural responsiveness training for accreditation contributors
- IPE Colloquium – “Winhangarra” – Listen, hear, think
- Intellectual Disability Health Capability Framework
- Introducing streamlined accreditation reports
- Information sessions for education providers planning for accreditation reviews
- Accreditation timelines
- Special consideration – Increased rates of application and student anxiety.

You will also get to know a little more about Alison Baker, OTC's Administrative Officer, who many of you will have communicated with about various accreditation matters.

We welcome 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 Anne or Rebecca know via [accreditation@otcouncil.com.au](mailto:accreditation@otcouncil.com.au).

We hope you find this update helpful.

Kind regards,

OTC Program Accreditation Team  
Anne Szadura  
Rebecca Allen  
Alison Baker

### Challenges of AI in ensuring valid, reliable assessment

AI is everywhere and students are going to use it simply because they can. There are also spirited discussions about whether staff should use it to speed up mundane jobs. But how much AI is too much and what is the line between efficiency and plagiarism? As you will be aware, this is the conundrum for education providers and academics. Is academia fighting a battle it cannot win?

From an accreditation perspective, the highest priority remains public safety. As such the OTC remains focused on whether assessment is fair, valid and reliable in measuring each individual student's achievement of learning outcomes and that the scope of assessment checks that students have met the required competency standards and will graduate as safe, ethical and competent occupational therapists. This does not preclude the use of AI in teaching and learning, but rather focuses on its responsible adoption and modification of assessment tasks to address its use and ensure learning outcomes continue to be met.

The education sector has always dealt with new and emerging technologies that can potentially undermine how assessment is done and the validity of assessment. AI is just the latest technology to come on the scene (do you remember the advent of the internet?). From a positive perspective, AI can be a catalyst for change to assessment to make it better. There is sometimes a gap between assessments and the digital world in which we live and work and this is an opportunity to bring them together.

TEQSA has many resources, including webinars, to assist education providers and their staff to meet the challenges and benefit from opportunities afforded by AI. You can find these [here](#).

This area is rapidly changing and evolving. If you have adopted a unique initiative in meeting the challenges of AI in assessment and are willing to have this shared with other education providers, please let us know by emailing [accreditation@otcouncil.com.au](mailto:accreditation@otcouncil.com.au). We would be pleased to showcase it in a future issue of *Accreditation Matters*.

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Curriculum Implementation Project – Occupational Therapy Program Accreditation

Earlier this year we forwarded all education providers and assessors a copy of the final report from the OTC's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Curriculum Framework project, which was completed at the end of 2023.

The Project Advisory Group has made recommendations around three areas:

- Governance implementation priorities and actions.
- Workforce implementation priorities and actions.
- Culturally safe processes implementation priorities and actions.

Each priority is specific to the context of the OTC, OTC program accreditation and occupational therapy programs. The OTC is currently working to implement the recommendations from the project. We will keep you updated on any future changes, which may impact on existing program accreditation processes and reporting requirements. Accreditation of programs will continue to be undertaken with reference to the OTC's *Accreditation Standards for Australian Entry-level Occupational Therapy Education Programs* (December 2018).

Education providers are encouraged to consider these priorities with regards to the work you are doing around ensuring the accredited occupational therapy programs you offer are culturally safe and produce graduates who are culturally responsive practitioners. Please note the priorities in the report are currently recommendations.

If you do have any questions, feedback or wish to discuss any specific aspects of the report, please do not hesitate to contact us at [accreditation@otcouncil.com.au](mailto:accreditation@otcouncil.com.au).

### ABSTARR Cultural responsiveness training

The OTC's *Accreditation Standards for Australian entry-level occupational therapy education programs* (December 2018) include criteria to assess that occupational therapy programs have external input into their design, management and delivery from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and provide students with the opportunity to develop the cultural capabilities to provide culturally safe care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

Equally important is ensuring the actual accreditation process is undertaken in a culturally safe way. The OTC is committed to this with our accreditation staff, assessors, OTC Directors and committee members to undertake ABSTARR Consulting's cultural safety training for accreditation contributors, having previously undertaken training with Indigenous Allied health Australia (IAHA). The training comprises six online modules

followed by a one-day moderated discussion session and has been specifically tailored to accreditation authorities for the health professions regulated under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (NRAS). The training will provide accreditation contributors with knowledge and understanding of cultural safety to enable them to fully participate in discussion about the standards of their health profession and how the standards fully integrate concepts of cultural safety.

Earlier this year, Rebecca Allen completed the online modules and attended the pilot program for the ABSTARR Accreditation Contributor Training, which was moderated by Professor Gregory Phillips, a proud Waanyi and Jaruman and CEO of ABSTARR Consulting and Professor Roianne West, a proud Kalkadunga and Djaku-nde woman and nurse and healer.

By the end of this year, over half our assessors, as well as Rebecca Allen and Anne Szadura, and members of the OTC Program Accreditation Committee (PAC) will have completed the training, deepening the cultural responsiveness knowledge and capabilities of the OTC's assessment teams.

### *Winhangarra* – Listen, hear, think

In Wiradjuri language, *Winhangarra* means to listen, hear and think. This was the theme of the recent Australian Pharmacy Council's Interprofessional Education (IPE) Colloquium held in Brisbane on 22 May 2024, which focused on how we can amplify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices to transform health profession education and practice. Topics included co-design, Indigenising curriculum, cultural safety, and how professions can work together.

Professor Margaret Cook, Chair of the OTC Board, Dr Jill Hummell, Chair of OTC Program Accreditation Committee (PAC) and Ms Anne Szadura, Accreditation Manager attended the colloquium and collaborated and learnt with other health and accreditation professionals on leadership, curriculum and interprofessional collaboration. A unique highlight of the day was engaging in an exploration into storytelling to support understanding of how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and knowledges can enhance the current narrative of health professional education and practice.

### Intellectual Disability Health Capability Framework

The Department of Health and Aged Care is leading the Intellectual Disability Health Curriculum Development Project, with a key component of the project being the development of an [Intellectual Disability Health Capability Framework](#) (the Framework).

The goal of the Framework is to support education providers and accreditation authorities in preparing graduates with the required capabilities to provide the highest quality care to people with intellectual disability.

The OTC, together with other NRAS accreditation authorities, has provided feedback regarding how best to integrate the Framework into existing accreditation standards. The next phase of the project, led by a team at the University of NSW will curate and develop intellectual disability health resources to support the integration of the Framework into accreditation standards and health profession education programs. Occupational therapy programs by their nature already include content around working with and supporting people with intellectual disabilities, but you may find the Framework of interest and value.

## Introducing streamlined accreditation reports

Most of you will be very familiar with the accreditation reports the OTC sends to education providers following assessments of programs for either initial accreditation or reaccreditation. The reports are currently very detailed and there is often reiteration of evidence included in the provider's submission or website. To simplify the report and expedite the time taken to complete it, we are introducing a streamlined 'exception-based' reporting format. Where sufficient and appropriate evidence has been provided for a criterion, the report will simply indicate that satisfactory evidence has been provided. Significant detail will only be provided where the program is not fully meeting the requirements and conditions and monitoring requirements may have been imposed.

The new format will enable education providers to readily focus on areas of deficiency needing to be addressed. We will of course continue to commend areas of best practice for the program and acknowledge these in the report. As well as streamlining the process for all, this move will also align the OTC with existing practice by most other NRAS accreditation authorities. We will be discussing the proposed new format with education providers at the forthcoming ANZCOTE/ANZOTFA meeting in August.

## Information sessions for education providers planning for accreditation reviews

If you are seeking accreditation for a new program or your program is scheduled for reaccreditation or you have a query regarding monitoring or any other aspect of accreditation, please do not hesitate to contact us. We work collaboratively with education providers to ensure there is a clear understanding of accreditation processes. Send us an email to [accreditation@otcouncil.org.au](mailto:accreditation@otcouncil.org.au) and one of our team will quickly reach out to you to arrange a mutually convenient time to meet.

## Accreditation timelines

Just a reminder that if you are planning 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 that the processes be undertaken in tandem. 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 for a meeting to discuss the new program and planned timelines so that we can plan a mutually convenient timing for the accreditation process to take place and more importantly be completed prior to students commencing.

## Special consideration – Increased rates of application and student anxiety

The OTC is participating in the "Fitness to Practice Working Group" which commenced meeting subsequent to discussion at the ANZCOTE/ANZOTFA meeting in May 2023. The group is chaired by Dr Ben Sellar.

The discussions in the Group are providing the OTC with valuable insights into the challenges for programs in accommodating the increasing demands related to supporting students seeking special consideration for a range of concerns, many related to student anxiety. The discussions have also provided us with an insight into the response of universities to concerns raised by programs and highlighted the need for the OTC to carefully consider how program-level decisions are being supported (or not) by the University.

We are looking forward to further discussion at the ANZCOTE/ANZOTFA meeting in August.

## Meet Alison Baker, OTC's Administrative Officer

Alison Baker has been with the OTC since May 2021. Alison combines efficiency with friendliness in supporting accreditation processes. She also supports OTC's governance and policy and has been integral to implementing new processes to streamline our activities.

Here is a little bit of further information about Alison:

*What roles did you have prior to joining the OTC?*

Prior to working at the OTC, I worked at Curtin University in a part-time capacity for 17 years. The first seven years were in Built Environment, Art and Design and the remaining 10 years were spent in the School of Nursing, Midwifery and Paramedicine.



I held varied administrative positions while at Curtin and some tasks included coordinating the School Open Day activities and the School graduation ceremony, being the Curtin administrator for the Australian Infantry Forces (AIF) Malaya Nursing scholarship, coordinating School exam papers and collating and entering information for the School timetabling for future semesters.

Prior to moving to Western Australia, I worked at Macquarie Bank in Sydney as an Executive Assistant in the Property Investment Banking division and before that as a Human Resource Officer for Rank Xerox in London for two years while on a working holiday (more work than holiday, but it was great fun!).

I also did the obligatory “Aussie working in a London pub” for a bit of extra cash, which was a laugh.

*What do you enjoy about your current role and working at the OTC?*

Other than working with some fabulous people, I love the varied nature of my role and assisting to make administrative tasks run smoothly.

*What is one of your career highlights?*

My career highlight would have to be successfully organising the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the School of Nursing and Midwifery, with the Health Minister and Curtin dignitaries attending.

I think I should also mention that I met my husband while working in the UK, so that would be a career highlight too!

*What is your favourite travel destination?*

I would have to say the UK. I never tire of going back. There is always something different to see and we love catching up with people we met all those years ago.

*What do you do to relax?*

Oh, the list is vast – to name a few, in no particular order, I love to play golf, paint, make slip cast ceramics, crochet, walk, socialise, co-ordinate the footy tipping, collect art and visit art galleries, eat good food (preferably prepared by someone else), explore interior design, co-ordinate home renovations, read, attend art and/or crafts courses and make things!

*Do you have any pets?*

Not anymore unfortunately. Our precious cavoodle Tully gave us 13 fabulous years, which we all cherished.

*What is one thing on your bucket list?*

Visit New York. I will get there one day, but always tend to think of Europe as my next travel destination.



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.