



## What does the Occupational Therapy Council of Australia Ltd (OTC) look for in the Supervised Practice Plan when it comes to cultural capabilities?

The OTC assessors must determine the extent to which the internationally-qualified occupational therapist's proposed goals and actions in the Supervised Practice Plan provide opportunity to evidence the required professional behaviours associated with the four conceptual competency standards.

The 2019 competency standards place greater emphasis on the need for occupational therapists to be culturally responsive with respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, recognising and acknowledging the adverse impact of colonisation and its ongoing impact on the health and quality of life of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

These standards require occupational therapists to develop their cultural capabilities to support the self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. Cultural capability is a process of ongoing learning and reflection requiring therapists to understand their own culture and associated biases or blind spots to ensure their communication and actions are open and inclusive.

There is an explicit focus on cultural capability across all four standards with nine practice behaviours that need to be evidenced.

*Table 1: Expected behaviours related to cultural competency*

Competency Standard	Expected behaviours
<b>Professionalism</b>	1.5 Practices in a culturally responsive and culturally safe manner with respect to culturally diverse client groups. 1.6 Incorporates and responds to historical, political, cultural, societal, environmental and economic factors influencing health, wellbeing and occupations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. 1.9 Identifies and manages the influence of his/her values and culture on practice.
<b>Knowledge and learning</b>	2.4 Understands and responds to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health philosophies, leadership, research, and practices. 2.5 Maintains current knowledge for cultural responsiveness to all groups in the practice setting.
<b>Occupational therapy process and practice</b>	3.5 Selects and implements culturally responsive and safe practice strategies to suit the occupational therapy goals and environment of the client. 3.6 Seeks to understand and incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People's experience of health, wellbeing and occupations encompassing cultural connections.
<b>Communication</b>	4.3 Works ethically with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations to understand and incorporate relevant cultural protocols and communication strategies, with the aim of working to support self-governance in communities. 4.4 Uses culturally responsive, safe and relevant communication tools and strategies

A list of potential resources to support internationally-qualified occupational therapists and increase their understanding of historical, political, cultural, societal, environmental, and economic factors influencing the health, wellbeing, and occupations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders is available on the OTC website, and is provided to applicants with approval of the supervision agreement and confirmation of granting of limited registration.

However, within the Supervised Practice Plan we need to see evidence of how the applicant will respond to these factors. The internationally-qualified therapist will often seek support and direction from their supervisor to reflect and determine how they can respond. They may need assistance to connect with Aboriginal health workers and/or communities to discuss and reflect on how they can ensure their practice is culturally responsive.

Since the implementation of the new competency standards in 2019 Australian occupational therapists are increasingly undertaking CPD related to cultural capabilities. In addition, government and larger organisations often have mandatory cultural training. As part of the ongoing quality improvement process the OTC gathers feedback from supervisors. Since January 2022 supervisors have been asked if they perceive they have completed an appropriate level of cultural responsiveness training prior to undertaking the supervisor role. As can be seen in the pie chart the majority perceive they have undertaken an appropriate level of training.

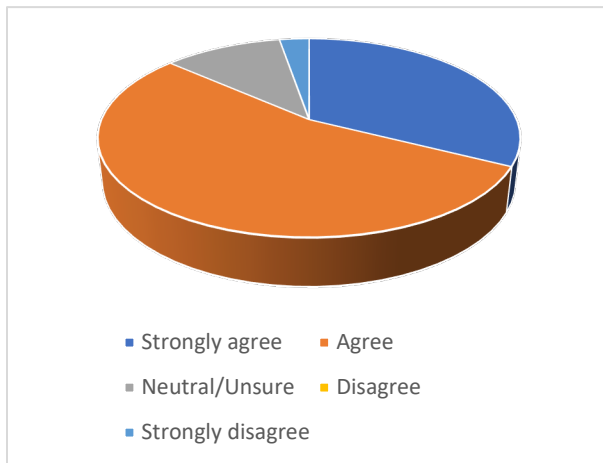


Figure 1: Supervisor feedback on cultural training undertaken prior to commencing supervision role

To support internationally-qualified occupational therapists achieve cultural capabilities the OTC has collaborated with Indigenous Allied Health Australia (IAHA) to enable access to a three-step training process that supports an increased awareness and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and inclusive ways of working together in providing quality health care. This training will soon be available to internationally-qualified applicants as well as being offered to supervisors if they need to update their skills or training on cultural capabilities.

## References

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