



**ACCREDITATION STANDARDS
FOR
AUSTRALIAN ENTRY- LEVEL
OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY EDUCATION
PROGRAMS**

Date of effect: January 1, 2020

The Accreditation Standards for Australian Entry-Level Occupational Therapy Education Programs (December 2018) replace the Accreditation Standards for Entry-Level Occupational Therapy Education Programs (December 2013).

Acknowledgement:

The Occupational Therapy Council of Australia Ltd gratefully acknowledges the original work undertaken by the Australian Dental Council, which provides the foundation for the Accreditation Standards for Australian Entry-Level Occupational Therapy Programs (December 2018).

w otcouncil.com.au

e Accreditation@otcouncil.com.au

p +61 484 091 870

Occupational Therapy Council of Australia Ltd
PO Box 615
Kalamunda WA 6926
ABN 50 377 833 627

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.

Introduction

1. The Occupational Therapy Council of Australia Ltd

The Occupational Therapy Council of Australia Ltd (the OTC) is the body appointed by the Occupational Therapy Board of Australia (OTBA) as the accreditation authority for occupational therapy under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act 2009 (National Law).

The OTC is an independent organisation established to:

- assess whether a program of study, and the education provider that delivers the program of study, provide people who complete the program with the knowledge, skills and professional attributes to practise the occupational therapy profession in Australia
- assess the qualifications and skills of internationally-qualified occupational therapists to practise in Australia.

The OTC's program accreditation functions include:

- development and ongoing review of the accreditation standards for the purpose of accreditation of programs and providers under the National Law
- assessment of programs of study, and the education providers that provide the programs of study leading to qualifications as an occupational therapist, to determine whether the programs meet approved accreditation standards
- monitoring programs of study and the education providers that provide the program of study to ensure they continue to meet the accreditation standards.

All programs accredited by the OTC are assessed against the Accreditation Standards for Australian Entry-Level Occupational Therapy Education Programs (December 2018) [the Accreditation Standards (December 2018)].

Entry-level occupational therapy education programs in Australia must be accredited by the OTC and then subsequently approved by the OTBA for students to undertake study in an approved program and graduates of the program to be qualified for registration with the OTBA.

The competency standards referred to in this document are the occupational therapy competency standards published by the OTBA. The OTBA competency standards describe the standards expected for competent practice by occupational therapists for registration and regulation of the profession by the OTBA.

2. Program Accreditation under National Law

Under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act 2009 [s48 (1)], an accreditation authority for a health profession may accredit a program of study if, after assessing the program, the authority is reasonably satisfied:

- a. *the program of study, and the education provider that provides the program of study, meet an approved accreditation standard for the profession*

or

- b. *the program of study, and the education provider that provides the program of study, substantially meet an approved accreditation standard for the profession and the imposition of conditions on the approval will ensure the program meets the standard within a reasonable time.*

The Accreditation Standards (December 2018) are used to assess whether a program of study, and the education providers that provides the program of study, provide people who complete the program with the knowledge, skills and professional attributes to practise occupational therapy in Australia.

3. Review of the Accreditation Standards

Under the National Law, the OTC is required to ensure that accreditation standards are contemporary and relevant; therefore, the standards are reviewed regularly. These Accreditation Standards (December 2018) replace previous Accreditation Standards (December 2013) which were effective from December 1, 2013.

In undertaking the review of accreditation standards, the OTC ensured changes were made in accordance with good regulatory practice, following guidelines set by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA). There was wide-ranging consultation and opportunity for stakeholders to provide input into the standards. In addition, statutory requirements have been addressed, the standards are considered fit for purpose and consistent with local and international best practice.

The Accreditation Standards (December 2018) have been developed to:

- meet the requirements for the development of accreditation standards as required by the National Law
- take account of relevant regulatory changes in the higher education sector, including the Higher Education Standards Framework (HESF) 2015, and key messages arising from review of Accreditation Systems in the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme and more broadly in higher education
- reflect contemporary views on measuring quality in education, in particular with a focus on assessing outcomes
- incorporate the World Federation of Occupational Therapists Minimum Standards for the *Education of Occupational Therapists (revised 2016)*.

Occupational Therapy Australia (the occupational therapy professional association) has responsibility for accrediting programs to determine if they meet the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT) Standards. The OTC and Occupational Therapy Australia have an agreement whereby the OTC provides accreditation reports to Occupational Therapy Australia. Occupational Therapy Australia has a streamlined process in which it determines whether or not a program meets the minimum standards and can be listed as WFOT approved. The WFOT provides an international benchmark for occupational therapy education, and graduation from a WFOT approved program supports international mobility of graduates.

In addition, the review process was conducted with consideration of:

- the Quality Framework for the Accreditation Function (Forum of Australian Health Professions Councils and Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency, 2013), the principal reference document for national boards to assess the work of accreditation authorities
- the Council of Australian Governments Principles for Best Practice Regulation (COAG, 2014)
- the High Level Accreditation Principles (2016) developed by the Health Professions Accreditation Collaborative Forum
- Universities Australia and Professions Australia Joint Statement of Principles for Professional Accreditation (2016)

- the experience of other registered health professions in applying similar accreditation standards.

4. The Accreditation Standards

The Accreditation Standards (December 2018) comprise five domains:

1. Public safety
2. Academic governance and quality assurance
3. Program of study
4. The student experience
5. Assessment

Each domain includes a standard statement.

Each standard statement is supported by a number of criteria. The criteria are indicators, which set out expectations of an accredited program to meet the standard. The criteria are not intended to be sub-standards, rather pointers to evidence of meeting the standard. When assessing a program the OTC will consider whether or not each criterion is met, and will take an on balance view of whether the evidence presented overall demonstrates the particular standard as a whole is met.

New programs and established programs will be assessed against the same accreditation standards (although the processes used for assessment and the evidence collected may be varied according to context).

Examples of evidence that could be provided to demonstrate the standards have been met are available in a separate evidence guide, available at www.otcouncil.com/accreditation

The Australian occupational therapy competency standards published by the Occupational Therapy Board of Australia are available at
www.occupationaltherapyboard.gov.au/competencies

The OTC program accreditation process assumes ongoing compliance with the HESF for the accreditation and delivery of programs of study, including meeting the requirements of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF). Education programs at all levels of the AQF, accredited by the OTC, must demonstrate the breadth and depth of knowledge, skills and application, volume of learning and research as stipulated in the AQF.

5. Accreditation Standards for Entry-Level Occupational Therapy Programs

Domain: Public safety	
Standard One: Assuring public safety is paramount in program design and implementation.	
Criteria:	
1.1	Protection of the public and provision of safe, ethical and competent client-centred services are prominent amongst the guiding principles of the occupational therapy educational program, practice education and student learning outcomes.
1.2	Appraisal and management of students' fitness to practise during the program is effective.
1.3	Students have achieved relevant pre-requisite occupational therapy professional knowledge, skills and behaviours before interacting with the public or providing client services as a component of the program.
1.4	Competent and sufficient supervision is provided for students by occupational therapists and other suitably qualified supervisors to enable students to practise safely.
1.5	Robust quality and safety policies and processes consistent with relevant regulations and standards are in place for all practice education placements and experiences.
1.6	Systems are in place to ensure clients or substitute decision-makers give informed consent for services provided by students.
1.7	The education provider requires staff and students to demonstrate ethical and professional conduct.
1.8	The education provider complies with its obligations under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act 2009, or equivalent national framework.
Domain: Academic Governance and Quality Assurance	
Standard Two: Academic governance and quality improvement systems are effective in developing and delivering sustainable, high-quality occupational therapy education.	
Criteria:	
2.1	Robust academic governance arrangements are in place for the occupational therapy program, are inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and include processes for systematic monitoring, review and improvement.
2.2	Program design and implementation is informed through collaboration and consultation with key stakeholders including the occupational therapy profession, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, consumers, employers and other health and human service experts.
2.3	Program quality improvement processes include student evaluations, internal and external academic and professional peer review, feedback from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, consumer feedback and outcome information from new graduates.
2.4	Contemporary and emerging developments in occupational therapy and broader health, disability and human service education and practice are incorporated into the curriculum in a timely manner.

Domain: Program of Study	
Standard Three: Program design, delivery and resourcing enable students to achieve the required occupational therapy learning outcomes, attributes and competencies.	
Criteria:	
3.1	A contemporary educational framework informs the design and delivery of the program.
3.2	The program philosophy and design embed concepts of occupation and occupational therapy shared by the national and international community of occupational therapists.
3.3	The curriculum structure and content is coherent, informed by theory, research and practice relevant to occupational therapy.
3.4	The program develops a commitment to life-long learning and assesses students' skills in critical thinking, professional reasoning and self-reflection.
3.5	The program and student learning outcomes address the occupational therapy competency standards published by the Occupational Therapy Board of Australia.
3.6	The quality, quantity, duration and diversity of practice education experiences are sufficient to ensure graduates are competent to practise across a range of client groups and environments reflective of current and emerging contexts.
3.7	Learning and teaching methods are informed by evidence, and designed and delivered to ensure occupational therapy students achieve the required learning outcomes.
3.8	Cultural capability is integrated within the program and clearly articulated in student learning outcomes, and consistent with the cultural diversity of Australian society.
3.9	The program and student learning outcomes are guided by agreed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' health curriculum national principles and cultural capabilities.
3.10	The perspectives of consumers/service users/clients inform the design, delivery and evaluation of the program.
3.11	Graduates are competent in research literacy for the level and type of program.
3.12	The application of principles of interprofessional learning for collaborative client-centred practice is a learning outcome of the program.
3.13	The academic team is suitably qualified and experienced to deliver the components of the program it teaches and assesses, and the staffing complement is sufficient to support the student cohort to achieve graduate competencies.
3.14	Learning environments, facilities, resources and equipment support the effective delivery of the program and the achievement of the learning outcomes.

Domain: The student experience	
Standard Four: Students are provided with equitable and timely access to information and support relevant to their occupational therapy program.	
Criteria:	
4.1	Program information is accurate, clear and accessible.
4.2	Admission and progression requirements and processes are fair, equitable and transparent.
4.3	The academic learning needs of occupational therapy students at risk of unsatisfactory progress are identified and support provided.
4.4	Students are informed of and have access to personal support services provided by qualified personnel, including during practice education placements.
4.5	Students have opportunities to be represented within the deliberative and decision-making processes of the program.
4.6	Equity and diversity principles are demonstrated and promoted in the student experience.
4.7	Specific consideration is given to the recruitment, admission, participation and completion of the occupational therapy program to groups under-represented in the program, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.
Domain: Assessment	
Standard Five: Graduates have demonstrated achievement of all program learning outcomes, including the requirements for safe, ethical and competent occupational therapy practice.	
Criteria:	
5.1	There is a clear relationship between learning outcomes and student assessment strategies.
5.2	The scope of assessment covers all learning outcomes required to ensure graduates are safe, ethical and competent to practise.
5.3	Learning outcomes are mapped to the required occupational therapy attributes and competency standards, and assessed.
5.4	Assessment is fair, valid and reliable in measuring student achievement of learning outcomes.
5.5	Contemporary, evidence-informed assessment tools are used including direct observation in academic and practice education settings.
5.6	Program management and co-ordination, including moderation procedures, ensure consistent and appropriate assessment and feedback to students.
5.7	Staff who assess students in academic and practice education contexts are suitably qualified and experienced for their role.

6. References

COAG Principles for Best Practice Regulation (2014).

Forum of Australian Health Professions Councils and Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (2013). *Quality Framework for the accreditation function*.

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