



Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE®)
American Occupational Therapy Association, Inc.
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Dear Prospective Applicant:

I am pleased to provide information regarding the accreditation process for developing occupational therapy educational programs and its impact on students enrolled in these programs. Universities and colleges generally contact AOTA headquarters early in their consideration of initiating an OT or OTA educational program. The accreditation process, which takes approximately two years, is designed to start before the first class of students enters the program and completed before the first class graduates.

An occupational therapy or occupational therapy assistant program must be accredited by the AOTA Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) prior to students' graduation for its students to be eligible to sit for the national certification examination offered by the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT). Therefore, students who enter developing programs are taking a risk that the program will not obtain accreditation and they will not be eligible to sit for the NBCOT certification exam.

Any program submitting a Letter of Intent to seek ACOTE accreditation must, prior to the admission of the first class of students into the program, obtain "Candidacy Status" (formerly "Developing Program Status") by submitting a Candidacy Application describing how the program plans to demonstrate compliance with the ACOTE Accreditation Standards for a Doctoral-Degree-Level Educational Program for the Occupational Therapist, a Master's-Degree-Level Educational Program for the Occupational Therapist, or an Associate-Degree-Level Educational Program for the Occupational Therapy Assistant. If the program obtains Candidacy Status, the next step is to enter into the "Initial Review Process" and continue through the accreditation process.

I would suggest that you speak with the director of any new program in which you are interested regarding the plans for the program and for application for accreditation. If the program has applied to seek accreditation, the program director will have received a tentative schedule of the accreditation process. This schedule delineates a sequence of required steps the program must complete before accreditation is granted.

You may ask the program director where the program is in the initial accreditation process and specifically whether the program has received Candidacy Status or Developing Program Status (if it is early in the process) or whether the program has received a Letter of Review (if it is midway through the process). The Letter of Review is used by ACOTE to provide feedback to a developing program prior to the initial on-site evaluation. The granting of a Letter of Review indicates that, on the basis of examination of the Initial Report of Self-Study and supplementary information available to the review committee, ACOTE has determined that the program is likely to meet the ACOTE Standards if fully implemented in accordance with its plans. This shall not be regarded as a form of pre-accreditation status, but is intended to provide an indication that program planning appears to be proceeding in a direction that will lead toward accreditation.

If you are uncomfortable with the risk involved in entering a developing program, it may be better for you to pursue one that is already accredited. However, the accreditation process is designed to facilitate development, and substantial support is provided to the program during the process.

I hope that this information is helpful to you. Please feel free to contact the AOTA Accreditation Department at accred@aota.org if you have additional questions. Best wishes in your pursuit of an occupational therapy or occupational therapy assistant degree!

Sincerely,

Sue Graves

Sue Graves
Assistant Director of Accreditation, AOTA