IV. A. 2. THE ON-SITE EVALUATION

COMPOSITION OF EVALUATION TEAM

A single location on-site evaluation is conducted by a team of 2 individuals who are members of the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE®) or Roster of Accreditation Evaluators (RAE). In emergency situations when a suitable replacement evaluator cannot be located, a qualified and trained AOTA accreditation staff member may serve as one of the team members with the advance permission of the program director. For occupational therapy programs, both evaluators are typically occupational therapists. For occupational therapy assistant programs, one or both evaluators may be an occupational therapy assistant. One team member is an academic educator; the other team member is a practitioner. Current qualified public members of ACOTE may also be assigned to serve as on-site evaluators. When an on-site evaluation includes additional locations, a 2-person team is assigned to the primary location and at least 1 individual is assigned to each additional location.

Prior to the selection of the team, the program director is provided with a list of potential evaluators. This is a list of individuals representing academic education and occupational therapy practice who have been trained as accreditation evaluators. ACOTE members also serve in the pool. The program director is instructed to strike names of individuals who are perceived to have a conflict of interest with the program. In addition, the program director is invited to strike up to five names without cause.

The on-site evaluators are selected from those remaining on the list by the ACOTE Executive Committee in collaboration with the AOTA Accreditation staff. A sincere effort is made to "match" team members to the program and institution being evaluated. Factors affecting the selection include the type of expertise needed (e.g. distance education experience), the type of institution that houses the program, the need to avoid conflict of interest, and geographic proximity. The team's responsibility is to study the information provided concerning the educational program and the requirements for accreditation, and to carry out an objective and impartial assessment of the quality of the occupational therapy program seeking accreditation.

One of the representatives is designated as the team chairperson and serves as the official spokesperson of the team during the evaluation process, assuming primary responsibility for checking the final arrangements before the on-site evaluation; reviewing the suggested schedule and recommending changes, if appropriate; and overseeing whatever follow-up activities are indicated. For on-site evaluations to programs with multiple locations, there will be one team chairperson assigned for the on-site visit encompassing all sites.

ON-SITE EVALUATION SCHEDULE

On-site evaluations are usually scheduled for 2½ days, with visitors generally arriving the evening before the visit begins and departing in the early afternoon on the third day. Monday to Wednesday is the preferred time frame, as it allows the visitors to take advantage of the less expensive (Saturday night stay over) airfares with only one additional night's stay.

For weekend programs or programs located on more than one campus, adjustments to the schedule are made in collaboration with the program director. ***Any other request to alter the length of the on-site evaluation must be submitted in writing to the ACOTE at least 9 months prior to the scheduled visit***.

The program director prepares a tentative schedule for the on-site evaluation, using the sample schedule (following this section) and adjusting it to most appropriately represent the program.

The schedule should include interviews with the following individuals:

- The program director, for the purpose of mutual orientation and discussion of administrative responsibilities.

- The program director and occupational therapy faculty as a group for discussion of mission, philosophy, strategic plan, curriculum design, program evaluation, and organization of the program.

- Occupational therapy faculty members to discuss their administrative, advisory, and teaching responsibilities as related to the occupational therapy program, the objectives and content of courses, the means of evaluating student performance, and relevant plans and activities of the faculty for the future. For these interviews, the faculty may be grouped as appropriate for discussion of the curriculum content areas.

- Key faculty from other disciplines to discuss their administrative, advisory, and teaching responsibilities as related to the occupational therapy program, the objectives and content of the courses, the means of evaluating student performance, and relevant plans and activities of the faculty for the future. For these interviews, the faculty may be grouped as appropriate for discussion of the curriculum content areas.

- The academic fieldwork coordinator to determine the selection process for fieldwork placements, the extent of collaboration with fieldwork educators, and how students are monitored and advised during fieldwork.

- A representative sample of fieldwork educators from nearby facilities to give the team members an opportunity to learn firsthand the role of the fieldwork educators in the students' educational experiences and to discuss their role in student educational experiences as well as their observations of student performance.

- Employers of program graduates to determine whether the graduates were adequately prepared for entry-level practice.

- The college/university president and/or designated administrative officer to discuss the mission of the institution and compatibility with the program's mission.

- The administrator to whom the program director is directly responsible (e.g., dean of the school of allied health) for orientation of the team members to the university and school or college.

- Representatives from each class in the program to discuss their views of the program and courses. Each group should be scheduled separately if possible.

- Recent graduates and students in fieldwork experience settings to discuss their views of the program, courses, fieldwork experiences, and preparation for entry-level practice. Each group should be scheduled separately if possible.

The program director should arrange an effective and efficient schedule with faculty interviews arranged so that each instructor is interviewed and each Standard is addressed. Previous experience demonstrates that it is helpful in some instances for the team to have individual interviews with key instructors, and in other instances, for them to meet in groups (e.g., when several teach together). The structure of these sessions depends on faculty size and grouping for teaching. ACOTE recognizes that each program uniquely integrates the requirements of the *Standards* into its curriculum design and that the design should affect the schedule.

When the schedule is complete, it should indicate the name, highest degree, and title for each interviewee; the name and catalog number of the course(s) taught; and the Standard(s) being covered.

In scheduling the interviews with fieldwork educators, the program director should keep in mind that it is not necessary to have all fieldwork educators from affiliating centers present at the interview. A representative sample of local fieldwork educators is suggested. If possible, at least one fieldwork educator from each major area of practice is desirable. In addition, the fieldwork educators should represent facilities that provide both Level I and Level II fieldwork experiences.

When planning and scheduling the meeting between the on-site team and fieldwork educators and employers of program graduates, the program director should plan for approximately 1 hour of discussion. Timing should be so that it is least disruptive to the work schedules of the participants. It is usually not advisable to schedule meetings in conjunction with meals; however, a lunchtime meal may be an alternative for fieldwork educators and employers

who have to travel great distances (i.e., schedule meetings for lunch and a block of time immediately following the meal).

In situations where time and distance preclude in-person interviews, the program director should consider options such as telephone interviews, conference calls to several locations where fieldwork supervisors and employers can gather easily, and teleconferences.

Students, fieldwork educators, and employers may not be knowledgeable about the accreditation process. The program director should inform them of the purpose of the visit and the interviews and the types of questions that the team might ask. Typical questions may include the following:

To the Students:

- How are the institutional services? Counseling? Financial aid? Health services?
- Are faculty members available on a regular basis outside of the classroom? Is there privacy for advising?
- How are the library resources and availability of materials and equipment?
- How have the liberal art courses been? Availability? Has the content prepared you for occupational therapy courses?
- How do you like the sequence of courses? Does it make sense?
- How do you like the evaluation process for the program? What do you do? Any changes that you have helped to facilitate?

To the Fieldwork Educators and Employers:

- How are fieldwork placements made? What is the selection process?
- How do you ensure a cross section of client and facility experiences?
- How do you ensure that fieldwork educators are familiar with the program's objectives for fieldwork experiences?
- Describe your due process system for a student failing a Level I or Level II fieldwork experience.
- Do you feel program graduates were adequately prepared for entry-level practice?

In addition to the interviews, 1 hour and 45 minutes should be set aside on the first day for review of student records; evaluations of student performance (including examinations); fieldwork data; and published documents providing a description of the program, selection and retention information, rights and appeal mechanisms, institutional safety policies, and so on. This time will also be used for a tour of laboratories and the library. A short period should be left free for the team to review materials at the end of each day, and no meetings or activities of any nature should be scheduled for the evenings.

On the morning of the third day, the schedule should also allow time for the team to meet with the program director to review their findings and complete the report.

The tentative on-site schedule should be uploaded to the ACOTE Online (https://acote.aota.org/login) Self-Study Home tab at least one month prior to the on-site evaluation. Should there be suggestions for change of the tentative schedule, the team chairperson will submit them to the program director for consideration.

The program director should finalize the schedule with the on-site evaluation team chairperson prior to confirming appointments because the team chairperson may wish to make adjustments to the schedule. After the team chairperson has been contacted and the schedule is confirmed, a final copy should be uploaded to the ACOTE Online (https://acote.aota.org/login) Self-Study Home tab prior to the on-site evaluation.

SAMPLE SCHEDULE

Please note: This schedule is only a sample to facilitate planning for the on-site visit. Program directors, in consultation with the on-site team chairperson, may modify the schedule as institutional, faculty, and on-site team member needs dictate. Please see notes at the end of the schedule for other details.

FIRST DAY

8:00 - 8:30 a.m.	Team with program director.
8:30 - 10:00 a.m.	Team with program director and faculty: Overview of mission, philosophy, strategic plan, curriculum design, and program evaluation system of the occupational therapy/therapy assistant program.
10:00 - 10:15 a.m.	Break.
10:15 - 12:00 noon	Team reviews student records* and evaluations of student performance, including classroom assignments, examinations, fieldwork data, graduate and employer survey data, and certification examination results. Program director should have available student outcome data, program materials, meeting minutes, curricular files, selection and retention information, rights and appeals mechanisms, institutional safety policies, and so on. (Team may divide for this session). **To comply with HIPAA regulations, please ensure that no identifiable patient health information is included in student files.*
12:00 - 1:00 p.m.	Team alone for lunch.
1:00 - 2:45 p.m.	Team meets with individual faculty/groups of faculty in the order courses occur in the curriculum. The team should experience the content and sequence as would the students in the program.
2:45 - 3:00 p.m.	Break.
3:00 - 3:45 p.m.	Team meets with the academic fieldwork coordinator.
3:45 - 4:45 p.m.	Team meets with recent graduates and/or Level II fieldwork students. (A breakout room may be required if team decides to divide).
4:45 - 5:45 p.m.	Team meets with Level I and II fieldwork educators and employers of program graduates (6-10 of each). Academic fieldwork coordinators are not expected to be present. (Consider options for scheduling interviews with fieldwork educators and employers, especially in situations where time and distance preclude in-person interviews. Such options may include telephone interviews, conference calls to several locations where fieldwork supervisors and employers can gather easily, and teleconferences).
5:45 - 6:00 p.m.	Team wraps up the day with program director.

SECOND DAY

8:30 - 9:00 a.m.	Team with program director
9:00 - 9:30 a.m.	Team with college/university president and/or designated administrative official, e.g., vice president for academic affairs, dean of medical school. (Be sure to allow for travel time in the schedule if office is located at a distance).
9:30 - 10:00 a.m.	Team meets with administrator to whom the program director is directly responsible

	(e.g., dean of the school of allied health).
10:00 - 10:15 a.m.	Break.
10:15 - 11:00 a.m.	Team meets with students—concurrent groups with 6-10 representatives from each level.
11:00 - 12:00 noon	Team tours college, teaching/learning areas, laboratories, faculty offices, library/ resource center, and other areas as necessary (i.e., admissions office, learning center, etc.)
12:00 - 1:00 p.m.	Team alone in working lunch.
1:00 - 3:30 p.m.	Individual faculty conferences as requested by team chairperson and further record review as necessary.
3:30 - 4:30 p.m.	Team prepares ROSE report.
4:30 - 5:00 p.m.	Team meets with program director.

THIRD DAY

8:00 - 9:00 a.m.	Team finalizes the Report of On-Site Evaluation (ROSE) and meets with the program director to review it. Wrap-up conference with program director.
9:00 - 10:00 a.m.	Team discusses program enhancement ideas with the program director and faculty as needed.
10:00 - 10:30 a.m.	Team presents final report to the president (or designated representative), dean, program director, and faculty. Students and others interested may attend at the invitation of the program director. The report will be presented electronically, so it is helpful if an LCD projector and screen is available for the exit conference.

ADDITIONAL NOTES TO CONSIDER:

- The optimum number of individuals available for interview by the on-site team for each meeting is 10 or more. Please note that if the number falls below 6, there is potential that the on-site may need to be rescheduled.
- It is helpful to have a laptop computer and printer available to the team for all days of the on-site visit.
- Please prepare a tentative list of individuals (in a Word document) who will be interviewed as a part of the schedule. Full names, credentials, and titles are helpful since these names will be included on the Evaluators' Report of On-Site Evaluation. Although changes may occur, having a tentative list facilitates the process for the team. The list of fieldwork educators should include the facility in which they work. It would also expedite the preparation of the final report if this list was made electronically available to the on-site team chairperson on the morning of the first day of the site visit.
- To assure reasonable representation of participants from key constituent groups, consider alternatives to the above schedule if necessary. Consult with the team chairperson regarding scheduling alternatives.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE ON-SITE TEAM

Travel

The program director is asked to furnish local transportation information to the team (i.e., best method of reaching the institution, specific routes for those driving, recommendations regarding renting a car, taking a taxi, using public transportation, etc.). Team members will make their own travel arrangements and notify the program director of their plans and schedules.

Accommodations

The program director is asked to make room reservations for the on-site team at least 3 months prior to the on-site at a convenient, moderately priced hotel or motel. Because the team generally works in the room during the evenings, it is helpful if the team chairperson's room has a table or desk or the hotel has an alternate work area. Program directors will be notified by AOTA Accreditation staff of the evaluators' preference for single or double rooms.

Reservations should be made for a minimum of three (3) nights, commencing the day before the on-site evaluation is scheduled to begin. The on-site team may request an additional night depending on travel arrangements. When selecting a hotel for the on-site team, program directors are asked to select one that is moderately priced, but safe, clean, and comfortable.

Confirmation of reservations with the name, address, and telephone number of the hotel or motel should be sent to each team member and a copy to AOTA Accreditation staff. AOTA and on-site evaluators are responsible for all of the team's expenses (i.e., travel, hotel, and meals). Reimbursement of any expenses incurred by the team is handled directly through AOTA. ***The host school does not pay for any of the team's expenses as those costs are incorporated into the annual accreditation fee***.

Telephone Contacts

Team members and AOTA Accreditation staff should be sent the office and home telephone numbers of the program director, or another number for weekends and evenings, in the case of an emergency prior to the on-site visit.

In addition, the program director is asked to furnish team members and AOTA Accreditation staff with telephone numbers at which the team members may be reached in case of emergency during the visit.

Meeting Room

It is extremely helpful to have a secure room assigned to the team. Arrangements should be made for all interviews and conferences to be held there, with the exception of those with the president and/or dean. In this way, time is not lost in moving about. This room should be equipped with adequate lighting, a large table, chairs, a telephone, and light refreshments. If telephone interviews are scheduled as part of the on-site evaluation, please ensure that there is a speakerphone available and that any codes, passwords, or special dial features are made known to the team.

Preparation of the Report of On-Site Evaluation

The Report of On-Site Evaluation (ROSE) is prepared while the on-site is taking place. The on-site team often prefers to have a laptop and printer available for their personal use while conducting the on-site to prepare the ROSE. It is requested that the program director communicate with the chairperson of the on-site team prior to the visit to determine the need for computer and/or printer availability.

THE ON-SITE EVALUATION

The well-planned on-site evaluation visit usually proceeds smoothly. The team generally meets with the program director briefly at the beginning and end of each day for a brief report on their progress, needs, concerns, and so on. The team chairperson keeps the program director apprised of any additional information that the team determines it needs or any changes desired in the schedule (e.g., to pursue a particular area of concern).

The Interviews

The evaluators use the Program Evaluation Checklist as a resource in conducting the interviews. Their observations on the following points contribute to their final decisions relative to compliance with the *Standards*:

1. The degree of support from the administration for the occupational therapy program.

2. The degree of support from the institutional teaching faculty for the occupational therapy program.

3. The level of responsibility afforded the program director

- for faculty selection, development, and retention;
- for budget development and control; and
- for program development, general effectiveness, and evaluation.

4. The program director's and faculty's understanding and ability to articulate the

   - program's mission (goals, strategic plan), and
   - institution's mission (goals, strategic plan).

5. The faculty's understanding and ability to articulate the program's

   - philosophy,
   - strategic plan,
   - curriculum design,
   - course objectives, and
   - integration of fieldwork into the curriculum.

6. The faculty's understanding and ability to articulate program evaluation emphasizing student outcomes.

7. The students' ability to express their perception of their roles as therapists or assistants and their values and attitudes toward the profession.

8. Appropriate opportunities for fieldwork experience during and following the didactic program.

9. Future plans for the occupational therapy program:

   - systematic and periodic program evaluation,
   - continuing professional development, and
   - support from the administration.

THE EXIT CONFERENCE

On the third morning, prior to exit (final) conference, the team meets in executive session to review its findings and draft the Evaluators' Report of On-Site Evaluation. Following this, generally 10:00-11:00 a.m., a summation conference is held with the chief executive officer of the institution (or designated representative) and the program director. At this time, the on-site team presents its findings. Other administrative officers, faculty, fieldwork educators, employers, and students may be present at the invitation of the program director or designee.

The team's exit report is based on the Evaluators' Report of On-Site Evaluation and includes

- major strengths of the program,
- suggestions for enriching or broadening the program, and
- areas of noncompliance with the *Standards*.

Subsequent procedures leading to final action on the program are described. It should be noted that the Evaluators' Report of On-Site Evaluation is subject to modification by ACOTE.

Following the exit conference, an electronic copy of the Evaluators' Report of On-Site Evaluation (ROSE) is left with the program director with a request that any factual errors in the report be indicated. A written response to the on-site visit may be submitted if there are special considerations or circumstances the program director wishes to be brought to the attention of ACOTE. Additional material or documents will not be considered by ACOTE, however. ACOTE will only consider action on the program based on those materials the on-site team had the opportunity to review and discuss during the on-site visit. To expedite preparation of the report for ACOTE review and action, the program director is requested to submit any corrections or comments regarding the report to the AOTA Accreditation Department within 1 week after the on-site evaluation. (Additional response time is available if needed). This information is shared with ACOTE prior to action. If no corrections are to be made, the AOTA Accreditation staff should be notified of this fact so that the review process may proceed.

PROCEDURES FOR EMERGENCIES DURING ON-SITE EVALUATIONS

In the event that an emergency situation arises during the on-site evaluation or an on-site evaluator is for any reason unable to complete his or her team responsibility, the team chairperson will meet with the program director and appropriate administrators to determine if the on-site evaluation should continue or be terminated and rescheduled.

- If the evaluation team chairperson determines that the evaluation process could satisfactorily continue and be completed and institutional personnel agree, the on-site evaluation will be continued.

- If the evaluation team chairperson determines that the evaluation process has been too seriously affected to continue and institutional personnel agree, the on-site evaluation will be terminated and rescheduled.

If circumstances call for additional consultation before reaching a final decision, the team chairperson will contact the ACOTE Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, and/or senior AOTA Accreditation staff. Such circumstances should be documented in the Report of On-Site Evaluation (ROSE).

PROGRAM SITE VISIT QUESTIONNAIRE

Following the on-site evaluation visit, the program director, dean, and chief executive officer are asked to complete a Web-based Program Site Visit Questionnaire (PSQ) regarding the accreditation process (available on the "Accreditation Surveys, Forms, and Templates" section of the ACOTE Web page (www.acoteonline.org). This questionnaire is the primary mechanism for ongoing monitoring of the perceptions of the academic community regarding the ACOTE accreditation process and its value to the program and the institution. Information from these questionnaires is compiled and used in modifying accreditation procedures. A candid response is therefore appreciated. The completed questionnaires are not seen by ACOTE prior to its taking final action on the program.

ACOTE ACCREDITATION ACTION

Unless deferred, accreditation action on the Report of On-Site Evaluation is taken by the ACOTE at the next scheduled meeting following the visit. Within 4 weeks of the ACOTE meeting, the chief executive officer, dean, and program director are sent an electronic copy of the action letter which includes notification of the accreditation status accorded to the program, a Certificate of Accreditation (if awarded), and the final Report of the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education. It should be noted that the Report of the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education may differ from the Evaluators' Report of On-Site Evaluation presented at the conclusion of the visit. For example, the ACOTE may act to change one or more "Suggestions" to "Areas of Noncompliance" or vice versa based on its analysis of the findings. If areas of noncompliance were identified in the final report, the program will be required by ACOTE to submit a Plan of Correction by a specified date, usually 2½ months after the ACOTE meeting. (See ACOTE Policy IV.E.1. Plans of Correction.)