

Background on the Development of ACOTE Standards for OTD Programs July 2006

In May 2005 at the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) Annual Conference & Expo in Long Beach, California, the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE®) Educational Standards Review Committee (ESRC) presented its analysis of the data collected from all constituent parties regarding the draft ACOTE Standards for an Accredited Educational Program for the Occupational Therapist and Occupational Therapy Assistant. This information summarized constituent concern about the proposed requirements for program directors, program faculty, academic fieldwork coordinators, publication of program outcomes, content specificity, and proposed new Standards for the accreditation of programs offering the occupational therapy doctorate (OTD).

The ESRC recommendations regarding doctoral programs raised a number of significant questions and concerns that required thorough evaluation and thoughtful consideration by both ACOTE and AOTA. After an extensive review of the ESRC's recommendations and stakeholder comments, ACOTE and AOTA jointly agreed to several important points.

First, AOTA's Representative Assembly has the responsibility for addressing and establishing professional policy for AOTA. The matter of current Association policy relating to educational requirements for entry into the profession was determined in 1999 through adoption of Resolution J, which stated that "the official position of AOTA is one that supports a postbaccalaureate degree in occupational therapy as the required level of professional entry into the field of occupational therapy." This continues to be the Association policy and allows both the master's and professional doctoral degree as postbaccalaureate degrees for entry.

Subsequent to receiving the ESRC recommendations, ACOTE established a new body, the ACOTE OTD Standards Committee, to fully explore all issues relating to the occupational therapy clinical doctorate, and allow for fact finding, solicitation and review of input and recommendations from the full range of stakeholders, and ultimately the development of specific accreditation standards for OTD programs. The OTD Standards Committee is comprised of the following representatives:

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| Chairperson/ACOTE Practitioner Rep: | Neil Harvison, PhD, OTR |
| Vice-Chairperson/ACOTE Educator Rep: | Sheama Krishnagiri, PhD, OTR/L |
| COE Educator/Entry-Level OTD Rep: | René Padilla, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA |
| COP Practitioner Representative: | Stefanie Bodison, MA, OTR/L |
| Post-Professional OTD Rep: | Carol Niman Reed, EdD, OTR, FAOTA |
| Allied Health Dean Representative: | Richard E. Oliver, PhD |
| AOTA Staff Liaison: | Sue Graves |

The OTD Standards Committee held its first meeting on November 12–13, 2005, at AOTA Headquarters. The Committee reviewed all of the survey results and letters received regarding the OTD Standards, established a timeline for the development of OTD Standards, reviewed all draft master's level OT Standards to identify areas where doctoral level requirements were needed, and developed a survey to send to the communities of interest.

After ACOTE's review and approval, a call for comment was disseminated to all communities of interest in January 2006. All feedback received was compiled for review by the OTD Standards Committee during its March 2006 meeting. The committee reviewed and discussed all OTD survey responses, written correspondence, official AOTA documents, and the draft master's-degree OT Standards, and developed recommendations for the draft Standards for an Accredited Educational Program for the Clinical Occupational Therapy Doctorate (OTD).

In April 2006, OTDSC representatives presented a report on the OTD Standards to ACOTE, educational program directors, and other constituent groups at AOTA's Annual Conference & Expo in Charlotte, North Carolina. Comment was also accepted at the Standards Open Hearing on Thursday, April 27, 2006.

In May 2006, all constituent groups were invited to comment on the Draft Standards for the Clinical Occupational Therapy Doctorate (OTD). That feedback and all correspondence received was compiled and reviewed by the OTDSC at its meeting on June 17-18, 2006. After review and discussion of the OTD survey responses, comments from the Standards Open Hearing in Charlotte, written correspondence, official AOTA documents, and the revised draft master's-degree OT Standards, the committee further refined the draft Standards for an Accredited Educational Program for the Clinical Occupational Therapy Doctorate (OTD). Those revised OTD Standards have been forwarded to ACOTE for review at its August 1-3, 2006 meeting and a survey on key areas will be disseminated in September 2006. Final adoption of the new OTD Standards is anticipated to occur at the December 2006 ACOTE meeting.

Until OTD Standards are adopted, ACOTE will continue to defer the accreditation of any new entry-level doctoral occupational therapy programs.