

## Recommended International Fieldwork Timelines for Academic OT/OTA Programs and Fieldwork Sites

**Purpose:**

1. Provide a recommended timeframe for academic OT/OTA programs, students, and fieldwork sites to develop fieldwork site relationships.
2. Introduce items to consider in the development of international fieldwork experiences, ensuring the relationship is ready for student exchange.

**Introduction:** The document is meant to be used as a guide for developing a successful fieldwork partnership between academic OT/OTA programs and fieldwork sites. Use this document to provide a timeframe guide for developing this relationship. This process takes time, and planning for international fieldwork should be undertaken well ahead of the anticipated date of the fieldwork experience in order to ensure a productive experience for all, resulting in a cooperative, successful partnership. Developing this relationship is one aspect of preparation for a successful international fieldwork. It is recommended that issues identified in the accompanying documents and guides be addressed as well.

Timeframe	Academic OT/OTA Program	OT/OTA Student	Fieldwork Site
1.5 years prior to fieldwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop/review contract with potential fieldwork site</li> <li>• Determine academic OT/OTA program curriculum requirements for student participation in international fieldwork</li> <li>• Work with campus International Studies office for international contracts, student travel requirements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan for fieldwork abroad experience: finances, program considerations, graduation requirements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact with academic OT/OTA program; confirm ability to accommodate fieldwork student(s)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce program to students</li> </ul>		
1 year prior to fieldwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Request information from fieldwork site about client demographics, health practices and policies, expectations of student performance, accommodations, and living expenses</li> <li>• Meet with interested students</li> <li>• Screen interested students for eligibility to participate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply for study abroad status through university</li> <li>• Explore possible supporting coursework</li> <li>• Meet with faculty coordinator(s) about international fieldwork</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide requested information to academic OT/OTA program</li> </ul>
6 months prior to fieldwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet with students to orient them to the experience and monitor progress of arrangements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtain/renew passport if necessary</li> <li>• Obtain student visa if necessary</li> <li>• Meet with faculty coordinator(s)</li> <li>• Health exam and immunizations, if needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist student/academic OT/OTA program in arranging student accommodations</li> </ul>
3 months prior to fieldwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet with students to monitor progress of arrangements</li> <li>• Confirm status of fieldwork contract with university and fieldwork site</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research health care system</li> <li>• Obtain supplemental international health insurance</li> <li>• Register for fieldwork</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confirm supervisory, fieldwork educator, arrangements and evaluation procedures with student and</li> </ul>

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During fieldwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Periodic check-in with student</li> <li>• Periodic check-in with fieldwork site, fieldwork educator, and/or supervisor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check-in with academic OT/OTA program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate with academic OT/OTA program regarding student performance</li> </ul>
Following completion of fieldwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete post-experience evaluation</li> <li>• Communicate with fieldwork site on plans for future students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete post-experience evaluation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete post-experience evaluation</li> <li>• Communicate with academic OT/OTA program on plans for future students</li> </ul>

***Considerations for arranging international fieldwork experiences:***

- Determine whether the fieldwork site is “traditional”—i.e., has an occupational therapy practitioner on-site with an accompanying traditional supervisory structure, or is “non-traditional”—i.e., an occupational therapy practitioner not on-site full-time or no occupational therapy practitioner is present at the site.
- Evaluate the ability of individual students to function in less-supervised settings—factors such as confidence, independence, strong critical thinking skills, strong interpersonal skills, adventurousness, strong academic and clinical performance, cultural awareness/competence, flexibility, and fluency in the local language would support student success in a less supervised setting. Students who do not have these attributes should be encouraged to seek out a more traditional setting or, in some cases, should not embark on an international fieldwork at all.

- Understand the nature of the individuals receiving services at the fieldwork site—primary and secondary health issues, social, cultural, and political issues impacting the agency, the clients, and the surrounding community. Supporting elective coursework or selected readings or assignments can help students develop contextual knowledge to prepare them to work more effectively at the fieldwork site. Student safety could be an issue at some sites.
- Determine how the fieldwork experience will compare with domestic fieldwork, particularly in preparation for students taking the NBCOT exam—some international fieldwork experiences may need to be taken as optional 3<sup>rd</sup> fieldwork if the nature of the experience will not contribute to areas assessed on the exam.
- Ascertain whether the presence of U.S. fieldwork students would be a benefit or detriment—some countries are severely limited in the number of fieldwork sites for their own students and a U.S. fieldwork student could take away a valuable fieldwork slot. In addition, the presence of a student can create expectations for continuing services that cannot be met after the student leaves. Further, consider if a student is likely to create more work and stress for already overworked clinicians. These are concerns that may often go unexpressed in negotiating for a fieldwork site, so the academic OT/OTA program U.S. faculty member must investigate these issues prior to agreeing on a contract.
- Clinical supervisors need to understand the performance expectations for students placed at their agency and may need to be oriented to the evaluation methods used by the academic OT/OTA program prior to or during placement.

**Resources:**

Nation Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT). [www.nbcot.org](http://www.nbcot.org)

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