

# Program Director News

*Updates from ACOTE and the AOTA Accreditation Department*

## RA passes motion for associate degree requirement for OTA programs

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At its April meeting in Long Beach, the Representative Assembly (RA) established that the official position of the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) is one that supports the associate degree as the requirement for entry to the field as an occupational therapy assistant. The RA further recommended that the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) implement a 5-year timeline for the existing

3 certificate level programs to transition to the associate degree level. This transition period may be extended for good cause.

The change was implemented in response to the increase in scope and complexity of practice at the OTA practitioner level. The growing body of knowledge and changes in the practice environment have led to increased demands in the educational requirements for occupational therapy assistants.

The move is also consistent with current policy of the Association that states: “The American Occupational Therapy Association supports multiple levels of occupational therapy education, including education at the associate degree level for occupational therapy assistants and professional level education at the master’s and doctoral degree levels for occupational therapists.” (AOTA Policy Manual #3.4, p. 51)

## ACOTE response to the associate degree requirement

In response to the Representative Assembly’s action, ACOTE adopted a policy that effective July 1, 2013, all occupational therapy assistant educational programs must be offered at the associate degree level in order to retain ACOTE accreditation.

In addition, the Council voted that effective May 10, 2008, ACOTE will only accept applications for new occupational therapy assistant (OTA) programs that are offered at the associate degree level.

There are 129 accredited

OTA programs in the United States. Currently, 126 programs are accredited at the associate degree level.

## OTA faculty requirements: Standard A.2.10.

“...THE OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSISTANT IS INVOLVED IN THE PROGRAM IN OTHER WAYS, AS A GUEST LECTURER, ADJUNCT FACULTY, OR TEACHING ASSISTANT.”

At the April meeting, ACOTE made the following change to the interpretive guide to clarify that an OTA must have a teaching role in OTA programs:

OTA Standard A.2.10. The faculty must include currently licensed or credentialed occupational therapists and

occupational therapy assistants.

IN A PROGRAM WHERE THERE ARE ONLY OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS ON FACULTY, THE PROGRAM MUST DEMONSTRATE THAT THE OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSISTANT IS INVOLVED IN THE PROGRAM IN OTHER WAYS SUCH AS GUEST LECTURER, TEACHING ASSISTANT, LAB ASSISTANT,

~~ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER, ETC. AS A GUEST LECTURER, ADJUNCT FACULTY, OR TEACHING ASSISTANT.~~

## Degree requirement for OTA program directors

At the April meeting, ACOTE amended the interpretative guide for OTA Standard A.2.2.

The Standard currently requires that the program director hold academic qualifications comparable to the majority of other program directors within the institutional unit. After July 1, 2012, this

requirement will be dropped when program directors will be required hold a minimum of a master’s degree.

The interpretive guide was amended with the following clarification: IF ALL, OR A CLEAR MAJORITY, OF PROGRAM DIRECTORS WITHIN THE UNIT TO WHICH THE

PROGRAM IS ASSIGNED HAVE MASTER’S **OR DOCTORAL** DEGREES PRIOR TO JULY 1, 2012, THEN THE OTA PROGRAM DIRECTOR MUST HOLD A **MINIMUM OF A** MASTER’S DEGREE.

It was NOT the intent of the “comparable academic qualifications” requirement to require an OTA program director to hold a degree beyond a master’s level.

## Call for nominations for ACOTE higher education administrator

“The higher education administrator represents the perspective of the higher education institutions in occupational therapy education.”

In response to accountability issues in higher education that require enhanced collaboration between specialized accreditors and institutional administrators, ACOTE voted last fall to add a new higher education administrator position to the Council.

The higher education administrator represents the perspective of the

higher education institutions in occupational therapy education in all ACOTE activities, deliberations, and decisions.

The higher education administrator member will be selected from the list of nominees submitted by the program directors. The ACOTE Chairperson, in consultation with the ACOTE Executive Committee and the AOTA

accreditation staff liaisons, will make the final appointment.

The call for nominations closes on June 27, 2008. The request for nominations announcement and nominations form are available online at the following link:

<http://www.aota.org/Educate/Accredit/Announcements.aspx>.

## Fieldwork contract versus MOU

The use of both of the terms “memoranda of understanding (MOU)” and “contract” to refer to the same document in the 2006 Standards has caused

confusion amongst stakeholders. On the advice of legal counsel, the Standards will be amended to consistently use the term “memoranda

of understanding” to describe the required document that articulates responsibilities of the sponsoring institution and fieldwork site.

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*“...amended to consistently use the term ‘memoranda of understanding’...”*

## Call for new RAE members

There's still time! Until June 27, 2008, you may submit your application for the Roster of Accreditation Evaluators (RAE).

For the positions to be filled in summer 2009, the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE®) is placing a strategic emphasis on the recruitment of a diverse pool of accreditation volunteers. Doctoral-

prepared practitioners and educators are strongly encouraged to apply.

All new RAE members will receive 2½ days of training at the Accreditation Evaluator Workshop on February 6-8, 2009. New members will learn how to review and evaluate programs using ACOTE Standards, policies, and procedures and suggest program enhancement methods.

If you or someone you know would be well suited for this exciting and important volunteer position, you may download the [Practitioner](#) or [Educator](#) Application for Membership from the ACOTE Accreditation Web site at [www.acoteonline.org](http://www.acoteonline.org) or request an application from AOTA accreditation staff by e-mail at [accred@aota.org](mailto:accred@aota.org) or by phone at 301-652-6611, ext. 2915.

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*“There's still time! Until June 27, 2008, you may submit your application for the Roster of Accreditation Evaluators (RAE).”*

## Additional location policy

In December 2007, ACOTE voted to defer the acceptance of any new applications for accreditation of additional locations (e.g., satellites) until more clearly defined policies and procedures for accreditation of additional locations could be developed.

Effective April 13, 2008, ACOTE voted to renew acceptance of new applications for accreditation of additional locations (e.g., satellites) subject to the revised policies and procedures.

One key component of these new procedures is that programs are now limited to 4 additional locations under the accreditation status of a primary location.

This policy was implemented to ensure the quality of the education provided at each accredited location under the direction and leadership of one program director.

Programs seeking accreditation for more than 4 additional locations

must identify a new primary location and apply as a new applicant program through the 3-step initial accreditation process.

As stated in the previous policy, all additional locations and the primary location are under the single accreditation status. Therefore, an area of noncompliance at any location will impact on the accreditation of all locations.

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*“...programs are now limited to 4 additional locations under the accreditation status of a primary location.”*

## Definition of additional location

*“An additional location is defined as a facility that is geographically separated from the primary location that offers any portion of the educational program (excluding fieldwork) on a face-to-face basis.”*

At the April meeting, ACOTE adopted the following new definition for an additional location:

An additional location is defined as a facility that is geographically separated from the primary location that offers any portion of the educational program (excluding fieldwork) on a face-to-face basis. All additional locations must meet the following criteria:

1. Students from the additional location must graduate with a degree from the primary location’s institution.
2. The program director from the primary location must be responsible for the administration of the program in conjunction with the site coordinator at the additional location.
3. The additional location must have the same mission, philosophy, and curriculum design as the primary location.

## Additional location site coordinator requirement

*“At each accredited additional location, a designated ‘site coordinator’ must be identified.”*

At the April meeting, ACOTE amended the interpretive language to Doctoral-Level and Master’s-Level Standard A.2.4. and OTA Standard A.2.5. to require that all additional locations have a designated “Site Coordinator.” This requirement will become

**effective on January 1, 2009.**

The amended language to the Standards is as follows:  
*AT EACH ACCREDITED ADDITIONAL LOCATION, A DESIGNATED “SITE COORDINATOR” MUST BE IDENTIFIED WITH A DOCUMENTED JOB*

*DESCRIPTION THAT ASSURES UNIFORM IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAM AND PROVIDES A MECHANISM FOR ONGOING COMMUNICATION WITH THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR. THE SITE COORDINATOR MAY BE EITHER A FULL-TIME OR PART-TIME APPOINTMENT.*

## Minimal faculty requirements at additional location

At the April meeting, ACOTE adopted the following interpretive language for Doctoral-Level and Master’s-Level Standard A.2.11. and OTA Standard A.2.13. to clarify the minimal staffing requirements for accredited additional locations:

*AT EACH ACCREDITED ADDITIONAL LOCATION*

*WHERE THE PROGRAM IS OFFERED, THE PROGRAM MUST HAVE AT LEAST ONE FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT (FTE) FACULTY POSITION.. THIS POSITION MAY BE SHARED BY SEVERAL INDIVIDUALS WHO TEACH AS ADJUNCT FACULTY AND HAVE ONE OR MORE ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES RELATED TO STUDENT ADVISEMENT,*

*FIELDWORK ADMINISTRATION OR SUPERVISION, COMMITTEE WORK, PROGRAM PLANNING, EVALUATION, RECRUITMENT, AND MARKETING ACTIVITIES. THE INDIVIDUAL DESIGNATED AS SITE COORDINATOR MAY SERVE AS ALL OR A PORTION OF THE ADDITIONAL FTE.*

## Number of accredited programs

	OT Doctoral	OT Master's	OTA
Accredited	5	142	129
Developing Program Status	0	0	2
Applicant	1	1	7
Total	6	143	138

## ACOTE defines "active sites"

At its April meeting, ACOTE voted to amend the interpretive guide to include a definition for "active fieldwork sites":

Doctoral, Master's, and OTA Standard B.10.10.: Documentation must be provided that each memorandum of understanding between institutions and active fieldwork sites is reviewed at least every 5 years by both parties. Programs must provide documentation that both parties have reviewed the memorandum of understanding.

*DOCUMENTATION THAT BOTH PARTIES HAVE REVIEWED THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING MAY INCLUDE A SIGNED AGREEMENT, LETTER, FAX, E-MAIL, OR OTHER WRITTEN DOCUMENTATION. TELEPHONE LOGS DO NOT PROVIDE SUFFICIENT DOCUMENTATION OF AGREEMENT. **ACTIVE FIELDWORK SITES ARE THOSE SITES AT WHICH A LEVEL I OR LEVEL II STUDENT HAS BEEN PLACED IN THE LAST 5 YEARS.***

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*"Active fieldwork sites are those sites at which a Level I or Level II student has been placed in the last 5 years."*

## Revision to Form A

At the April meeting, ACOTE approved a revision to the list of fieldwork practice settings on Form A to be consistent with the classification system being used on the recently revised Fieldwork Data Form. The new list is as follows:

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*"...to be consistent with the classification system being used on the recently revised Fieldwork Data Form."*

### OT Fieldwork Practice Settings:

- |                                        |                                      |                                 |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>1. Hospital-based settings</b>      | <b>2. Community-based settings</b>   | <b>3. School-based settings</b> |
| 1.1 In-Patient Acute                   | 2.1 Pediatric Community              | 3.1 Early Intervention          |
| 1.2 In-Patient Rehab                   | 2.2 Behavioral Health Community      | 3.2 School                      |
| 1.3 SNF/Sub-Acute/Acute Long-Term Care | 2.3 Older Adult Community Living     | <b>4. Other:</b>                |
| 1.4 General Rehab Outpatient           | 2.4 Older Adult Day Program          |                                 |
| 1.5 Outpatient Hands                   | 2.5 Outpatient/Hand Private Practice |                                 |
| 1.6 Pediatric Hospital/ Unit           | 2.6 Adult Day Program for DD         |                                 |
| 1.7 Pediatric Hospital Outpatient      | 2.7 Home Health                      |                                 |
| 1.8 In-Patient Psych                   | 2.8 Pediatric Outpatient Clinic      |                                 |

The revised FORM A is available online at the following link:

<http://www.aota.org/Educate/Accredit/Forms/GeneralUse/FormA.aspx> . The change becomes **effective on January 1, 2009.**

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We're on the Web!

See us at:

[www.acoteonline.org](http://www.acoteonline.org)

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### Important dates...

ACOTE Summer 2008 Meeting:  
July 31–August 3, 2008

ACOTE Winter 2008 Meeting:  
December 5–7, 2008

Accreditation Evaluators Workshop:  
February 6–8, 2009

ACOTE Spring 2009 Meeting:  
April 25–26, 2009

### Resources...

Available at  
[www.acoteonline.org](http://www.acoteonline.org):

- ACOTE Announcements & Newsletters
- ACOTE Standards
- Interpretive Guides
- ACOTE Policies & Procedures
- ACOTE Forms

## New staff at accreditation

On Tuesday, April 1st, the Accreditation Department was pleased to welcome Rose Devadason as our new Accreditation On-Site Coordinator.

Prior to joining the staff at

AOTA, Rose had worked at The Urban Institute in Washington, DC.

As her title suggests, Rose is responsible for all aspects of the accreditation on-site evaluation

program, including reviewer assignments, scheduling, preliminary on-site team selection, and related correspondence.

## Staff contact information

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## RAE workshop

ACOTE has limited spaces available for program directors and faculty to attend its annual 2½ day training workshop for new members of the Roster of Accreditation Evaluators (RAE). OT/OTA program directors and faculty who would like to attend the workshop and learn more

about the ACOTE accreditation process and the current accreditation Standards are invited to attend.

The workshop will be held February 6–8, 2009, in the Washington, DC area. The fee is \$750.00 (reduced to \$695.00 for programs scheduled for

on-sites in 2008/2009, 2009/2010, and 2010/2011).

Workshop spaces are assigned on a first-come, first-served basis. If you would like to attend the workshop, please contact Accreditation staff by e-mail at [accred@aota.org](mailto:accred@aota.org) or by telephone at (301) 652-6611 ext 2915.

## 2008–2009 Annual Accreditation Fees

Following a request from a number of program directors, the 2008/2009 invoices were mailed prior to the end of the current academic year. The invoices are dated July 15, 2008.

The 2008/2009 Annual

Fee will be \$2,725 for actively accredited programs and \$1,362 for programs on Inactive Status. The fee for additional locations (satellite campuses) is \$1,362 per location.

The full annual fee policy

is available on the ACOTE Accreditation section of the AOTA Web site at [www.acoteonline.org](http://www.acoteonline.org).

Any questions may be e-mailed to staff at [accred@aota.org](mailto:accred@aota.org).