

# ACCREDITATION PROCESS FOR NEW PROGRAMS

## III. A. 2. STEP TWO: THE INITIAL REVIEW

### LETTER OF REVIEW

The Letter of Review is a process used by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE®) as a mechanism for providing feedback to a developing program prior to the initial on-site evaluation. A program must have obtained Developing Program Status prior to proceeding with the initial review. 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 reviewers, ACOTE has determined that the program is likely to meet 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 Educational Program for the Occupational Therapy Assistant if fully implemented in accordance with its plans. This shall not be regarded as a form of preaccreditation status, but is intended to provide an indication that program planning appears to be proceeding in a direction that will lead toward ACOTE accreditation. The program must allow time in its timeline for submission of the initial Report of Self-Study after the first class of students has completed some coursework in the occupational therapy or occupational therapy assistant curriculum component.

### FEES

An initial review fee (payable to AOTA) should accompany the initial Report of Self-Study. Payment must be received by the AOTA Accreditation Department prior to ACOTE scheduled action on the initial review of the program or the initial review will be cancelled. Information regarding current fees is located in ACOTE Accreditation Manual Section V.A. and appears in the ACOTE Accreditation section of AOTA's Web site ([www.acoteonline.org](http://www.acoteonline.org)).

### THE INITIAL REVIEW

The reviewers assigned to the initial review team review the materials sent from the program director. The program director may be requested to provide additional written information to the review team to clarify or enhance submitted materials. After conducting a complete review of all submitted materials, each reviewer submits a comprehensive evaluation to the review team coordinator. A Composite Report of the Initial Review Team is prepared by the review team coordinator for presentation to ACOTE.

### ACOTE ACTION ON INITIAL REVIEW

At its next scheduled meeting, ACOTE takes one of the following actions:

- **LETTER OF REVIEW GRANTED**

The proposed program would appear to meet the Standards if fully implemented in accordance with the plans of the sponsoring institution. An on-site evaluation will be conducted before the first class completes the academic curriculum.

- **LETTER OF REVIEW DENIED**

One or more of the Standards are not met and there does not appear to be evidence of the ability to comply within the immediate future.

- **LETTER OF REVIEW DEFERRED**

Information received from the program is incomplete and/or insufficient for evaluation. Supplementary information is requested for consideration at a subsequent ACOTE meeting.

<b>PROCEDURES FOLLOWING ACTION ON INITIAL REVIEW</b>
--

Following action by ACOTE relative to the granting of a Letter of Review, the Chairperson of ACOTE sends the results of the review to the chief executive officer, with copies to the dean and program director. Included in this letter of notification is a copy of the Report of the Initial Review, which lists the strengths of the program and details the concerns of ACOTE.

A. If a **LETTER OF REVIEW** has been **GRANTED**:

1. AOTA Accreditation Department staff contacts the program director to schedule an on-site evaluation prior to graduation of the first class. This on-site evaluation must occur while students are still on campus. A reasonable effort is made in scheduling to allow for ACOTE action on the Report of On-Site Evaluation prior to the actual graduation date.
2. Procedures for on-site evaluation are followed according to those outlined in ACOTE Accreditation Manual Section III.A.3.
3. In preparation for the initial on-site evaluation, the program director may submit an update of the previously submitted initial Report of Self-Study or may submit an entirely new report. In preparing updated/new self-study materials, the program should be guided by the Report of Initial Review, as provided with the Letter of Review notification.

B. If a **LETTER OF REVIEW** has been **DENIED**:

1. No further action is taken by ACOTE unless the appropriate institutional official and the program director send a Letter of Intent to proceed with the accreditation process within 30 days of receipt of notification of denial.
2. At the end of the 30 days, if no request has been received from the program, the program is removed from Developing Program Status and the accreditation process for that program is considered terminated.
3. The sponsoring institution is responsible for informing the students in the occupational therapy program that there is no assurance that the program will be accredited prior to their graduation. Because failure to receive accreditation would affect the students' eligibility to sit for the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy certification examination, it is imperative that students be notified by the institution of the options for protecting certification eligibility (e.g., transfer to an accredited program).
4. The institution retains the option of proceeding with the initial on-site evaluation by notifying the AOTA Accreditation Department in writing of the intent to proceed. Should the institution choose to do so, the dates of the on-site evaluation are established as described in A.1. above. A complete updated initial Report of Self-Study must be submitted.

5. Procedures for on-site evaluation are followed according to those outlined in ACOTE Accreditation Manual Section III.A.3.
6. The application review and initial review processes may be repeated. The program may submit a Letter of Intent to reenter the accreditation process from the beginning. A second application fee and initial review fee are charged. A due date for submission of new self-study materials would then be established by ACOTE. In preparing new self-study materials, the program should be guided by the Report of Initial Review, as provided with the letter of notification.

***NOTE: There is no guarantee that the accreditation process can be repeated in time to complete accreditation action prior to the graduation of the first class of students.***

C. If **ACTION** has been **DEFERRED ON A LETTER OF REVIEW**:

1. The program receives, along with the notification of deferral, a list of concerns identified by ACOTE in reaching their decision and a due date for submission of supplementary information that addresses the concerns.
2. The supplementary information is reviewed at the next meeting of ACOTE, at which time a decision will be made to either grant or deny the Letter of Review. A program may have action on the Letter of Review deferred only once.
3. The sponsoring institution is responsible for informing the students in the occupational therapy program that there is no assurance that the program will be accredited prior to their graduation. Because failure to receive accreditation would affect the students' eligibility to sit for the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy certification examination, it is imperative that students be notified by the institution of the options for protecting certification eligibility (e.g., transfer to an accredited program).
4. If the program does not respond by the due date for submission of supplementary materials (see #1 above) or if the Letter of Review is denied following the second review, the program is removed from Developing Program Status and the accreditation process for that program is considered terminated.