IV. B. 1. ADDITIONS OR CHANGES

MINOR AND SIGNIFICANT PROGRAM CHANGES

When an institution having an accredited entry-level occupational therapy or occupational therapy assistant educational program makes a decision to change the program, the following review procedures apply:

- Minor Program Changes or Additions
  Minor program changes or additions should be detailed in a letter to the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE®), c/o the AOTA Accreditation Department. A scanned, signed copy of the letter may be sent electronically to accred@aota.org. This information will be forwarded to the ACOTE reviewers assigned to the program and the program will be notified if any additional information is required. There is no separate accreditation action necessary for such changes. Minor program changes include the following:
  - admission requirements and selection criteria
  - changes to the frequency of student admissions (e.g., not admitting students for one admission cycle or reducing admissions from once a year to every other year)
  - curricular adjustments
  - changes between quarter/semester systems
  - move to new facilities within the current administrative unit on the same campus (include information on how the change of location affects compliance with the Standards, such as the impact on classrooms, laboratory, storage, offices, and space for private advising of students)
  - physical resources
  - changes in the table of organization

- Significant Program Changes or Additions
  Significant program changes or additions require ACOTE review and approval prior to the admission of students into the new/changed program. The following are considered to be significant program changes or additions:
  - addition of a student cohort
  - addition of a weekend or evening cohort
  - addition of an extended or part-time cohort
  - addition of a distance learning cohort*
  - a planned increase in headcount enrollment of 50% or more within one institutional fiscal year
  - addition or change of participating colleges in an accredited consortium
  - move to new facilities within the current administrative unit, but at a different campus (include information on how the change of location affects compliance with the Standards, such as the impact on classrooms, laboratory, storage, offices, and space for private advising of students)

  Programs must submit a letter to ACOTE, c/o the AOTA Accreditation Department, that requests approval for the significant change. The letter must be signed by the program director and the administrator to whom the program director reports and may be sent electronically to accred@aota.org. The letter must include the following information:
  - the proposed addition or change;
  - the requirements for institutional/state approval of the addition or change and the status of that approval;
  - the month/year the proposed addition or change would occur; and
  - the accommodations to support the addition/change, including implications for 1) faculty, mentors, or other support staff composition, 2) resources, 3) budget, 4) curriculum design, 5) admission information and criteria, 6) course sequence, 7) course content, and 8) fieldwork.

  *If the proposal includes the addition of a distance learning or online cohort, the program must also address, in depth, Standard A.2.19 which states:

If the program offers distance education, it must include

- *a process through which the program establishes that the student who registers in a distance education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the program and receives academic credit;*
- *technology and resources that are adequate to support a distance-learning environment; and*
- *a process to ensure that faculty are adequately trained and skilled to use distance education methodologies.*

The program must also describe how the proposed change reflects the philosophy of learning (Standard A.6.5) the mission of the institution (Standard A.6.6), and the curriculum design (Standard A.6.7). In addition, any other Standards that are impacted by this change must be addressed, including but not limited to:

A.2.24.	Equipment and Supplies
A.2.25.	Evaluative and Treatment Methodologies
A.2.26.	Library/Reference Materials
A.2.27.	Instructional Aids and Technology
A.3.6.	Evaluation Content and Methods
A.3.7.	Evaluation on a Regular Basis
A.3.8.	Student Support Services
A.4.1.	Accurate Program Publications

Upon review of the submitted information by ACOTE, the program will be notified whether the accreditation status of the existing program will accrue to the addition or change or if additional information is required. The accreditation status of the existing program will not accrue to the additional/changed program until ACOTE accreditation review procedures are successfully completed. Note: Only ACOTE accredited programs will be approved for significant change requests. When considering significant change requests, ACOTE will consider any outstanding areas of noncompliance.

DETERMINATION OF A MINOR CHANGE OR SIGNIFICANT CHANGE

If it is not clear whether the change is classified as a minor change or a significant change, the program must submit a letter to the ACOTE Chairperson, c/o the AOTA Accreditation Department, that requests clarification. The letter must be signed by the program director and the administrator to whom the program director reports and may be sent electronically to accred@aota.org. The letter must include information about the proposed addition or change, the requirements for institutional/state approval of the addition or change, and the status of that approval. That information will be reviewed by the ACOTE Executive Committee and a determination of the applicable policy will be made and communicated to the program.

ACCREDITED OT MASTER'S-DEGREE-LEVEL PROGRAMS CHANGING TO AN OT DOCTORAL-DEGREE-LEVEL PROGRAM

Accredited master's-degree-level occupational therapy programs that are planning to change to an entry-level doctoral program must follow a separate accreditation procedure for the new doctoral-degree-level program. ACOTE review and acceptance of the OT Doctoral-Degree-Level Candidacy Application is required prior to the admission of students into the doctoral curriculum. The accreditation status of the existing program does not accrue to the doctoral program until the procedures for accreditation of a doctoral program are successfully completed.

STEP 1: THE APPLICATION REVIEW

An accredited master's-degree-level program seeking accreditation for a new doctoral-degree-level program will follow the steps outlined in ACOTE Policy III.A.1. Step One: The Application Review, including submission of the Letter of Intent, Letter of Intent Data Form, and OT Doctoral-Degree-Level Candidacy Application.

The program applying for Candidacy Status for a new entry-level doctoral program must document in the Letter of Intent that it meets the following criteria:

1. The master's degree program must be currently accredited by ACOTE and hold no areas of noncompliance.

2. The program must provide evidence of all necessary approvals to offer the doctoral degree from the institution, the educational licensing and/or governing board(s) of the state(s) in which the program is to be offered, and the institutional accrediting body. In cases where no approval is needed, statements to that effect from the relevant body are required.
3. The program director must possess all of the experience and credentials required for a doctoral-degree-level educational program.

ACOTE may elect to waive the 12-program cap on submission of Candidacy Applications for currently accredited master's-degree-level programs changing to the doctoral-degree-level as well as the fees related to initial accreditation.

If the Application documents that the program meets the requirements for Candidacy Status and indicates the program's potential to achieve compliance with the Standards, the action will be to grant Candidacy Status. As soon as the institutional officials receive notification from ACOTE that the program has been granted Candidacy Status, they may admit students into the doctoral-degree-level program according to the approved timeline and move on to the second step, which is the initial review. AOTA will officially list the doctoral program as having Candidacy Status.

If the information received from the applicant is incomplete and/or insufficient for evaluation, the program's application will be deferred. Supplementary information is requested for consideration at a subsequent ACOTE meeting.

The program will be denied Candidacy Status if 1) the program does not meet the requirements for Candidacy Status, or 2) the Application does not indicate the program's potential to achieve compliance with the Standards. If Candidacy Status is denied, the program will not be able to admit students and will not be eligible to proceed to the initial review step. The program may reapply for Candidacy Status by submitting a new Letter of Intent and starting the initial accreditation process again.

STEP 2: THE INITIAL REVIEW

New OT doctoral-degree-level programs that have been granted Candidacy Status may proceed into Step 2 of the Initial Accreditation process, the Initial Review. The program will be required to submit a Report of Self-Study that addresses compliance with all of the *ACOTE Accreditation Standards for a Doctoral-Degree-Level Educational Program for the Occupational Therapist.*

Assigned reviewers will conduct a comprehensive assessment of the program's compliance with the *ACOTE Accreditation Standards* and will make a recommendation to ACOTE regarding the status of the program. If ACOTE determines that the proposed program appears to be in substantial compliance with the *ACOTE Accreditation Standards for a Doctoral-Degree-Level Educational Program for the Occupational Therapist*, ACOTE may grant a status of accreditation without conducting an initial on-site evaluation. Factors that ACOTE will consider when making this decision include the history of the OT master's-degree-level program, the date of the last on-site evaluation, the date of the next scheduled on-site evaluation, and the ACOTE Standards that were in effect when the program had its last on-site evaluation.

STEP 3: THE INITIAL ON-SITE EVALUATION

If ACOTE determines that an initial on-site evaluation must be conducted prior to making an accreditation decision, the process will follow the steps outlined in ACOTE Policy III.A.3. The Initial On-Site Evaluation. Since the accredited occupational therapy master's degree program has been paying Annual Accreditation Fees that are designed to cover the cost of the on-site visit, no initial on-site fee will be charged.

CHANGES OF PROGRAM SPONSORSHIP OR INSTITUTION'S NAME

As required by Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE®) Accreditation Standard A.1.5, institutions must submit notification of the transfer of program sponsorship or change of the institution's name to ACOTE, c/o the AOTA Accreditation Department, within 30 days of the sponsorship transfer or change of the institution's name. This notification must include details of the transfer or change, the impact on the occupational therapy or occupational therapy assistant program, and the regional/national accreditation status of the new sponsoring institution. A scanned, signed copy of the letter may be sent electronically to accred@aota.org.

This information will be forwarded to the ACOTE reviewers assigned to the program and the program will be notified if any additional information is required. There is no separate accreditation action necessary for such changes if the program is remaining within the current facility with no change in resources or delivery model. NOTE: If the new sponsoring institution plans to relocate the program to a different institution within the next 5 years, it must apply for separate accreditation through the initial accreditation process described in ACOTE Manual Section III.A.

ADDITIONS/CHANGES REQUIRING SEPARATE ACCREDITATION ACTION

In any of the following situations, programs must apply for separate accreditation through the initial accreditation process described in ACOTE Manual Section III.A.:

1. An institution with an accredited occupational therapy master's or doctoral program seeks to add a new occupational therapy assistant program.
2. An institution with an accredited occupational therapy master's program seeks to add a new occupational therapy doctoral program.
3. An institution with an accredited occupational therapy assistant program seeks to add a new occupational therapy master's or doctoral program.

NEW ADDITIONAL LOCATIONS

Accredited occupational therapy and occupational therapy assistant programs that are planning to seek accreditation for an additional location must follow the initial accreditation process described in ACOTE Manual Policy IV.B.2. Additional Locations.