

Overview of Roles and Responsibilities of the Doctoral Capstone Coordinator

The doctoral capstone coordinator (DCC) is one of the leadership positions in an occupational therapy (OT) program. The DCC maintains the primary responsibility for creating, implementing, and overseeing a capstone experience that is in compliance with the Accreditation for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) D Standards and is defined as a core faculty member (A.2.5) (ACOTE, 2018). The individual possesses expertise in teaching and curricular design and redesign, capstone procedure development and implementation, student advisement and coordination of faculty advisors, and administration of the capstone. The DCC is skilled at program evaluation and will evaluate the outcomes of the capstone in collaboration with the program director (PD) and academic fieldwork coordinator (AFWC), per ACOTE Standards (ACOTE, 2018). To be successful in this leadership position, the individual is a visionary and innovative thinker.

This position is best met as a faculty member available during all 12 months of the year due to the nature of the capstone process.

The DCC is a member of the American Occupational Therapy Association's (AOTA's) Academic Leadership Council (ALC). This body meets twice a year in the spring and fall, where ideas are shared, current issues are discussed, and opportunities are offered to stay current on educational practices.

ACOTE (2018) Standard A.2.5 defines the qualifications and responsibilities necessary to hold the role of DCC, which includes designation as a core faculty member. ACOTE defines core faculty as "faculty whose job responsibilities, at a minimum, include curriculum design, teaching, and student advisement."

Additionally, per ACOTE (2018) D.1.1, the DCC is responsible for ensuring the capstone process integrates with the academic program's curricular design.

ACOTE (2018) Standard A.2.5 requires that the DCC has **sufficient release time** to fulfill the duties of the DCC. Each university and program will define release time in a different manner and will map back to each university/program's mission, vision, and structure.

This document is meant to provide administrators with things to consider when creating workload. Some activities, such as contract management and student records, may be offloaded to an administrative assistant overseen by the AFWC/DCC.

Essential Skills and Functions of the DCC include (but are not limited to) the following.

- **Leadership and effective communication skills.** The DCC coordinates and collaborates closely with the AFWC and the PD, as well as the faculty advisors and capstone mentors. The DCC possesses the ability to lead a group of faculty and community partners to achieve shared goals, maintaining focus on student benchmarks and deliverables.
- **Visionary and innovative thinking.** Through innovative and creative thinking, the DCC may expand occupational therapy into additional emerging professional practice areas that have not previously utilized occupational therapy as part of their service delivery model. They will develop new opportunities for inter-professional learning and collaborative practice.
- **Strong organizational skills and understanding of curriculum design.** The DCC:

- Creates the capstone manual and procedures for the doctoral capstone (project and experience) and ensures that the capstone matches the program's curriculum design.
 - May also serve as the course coordinator for each section of capstone preparation courses if workload permits.
 - Oversees and designs the program evaluation component for the capstone, including determining the evaluation metrics as well as monitoring outcomes of student performance as they progress through their doctoral capstone experience.
 - Ensures quality control for the doctoral capstone projects and experiences, ensuring equal rigor across cohorts of students and compliance with requirements of both the university and ACOTE Standards.
- **Experience mentoring, advising, and supervising students.** The DCC:
 - Advises students on topics, sites, and viable options available for the capstone.
 - May coordinate the matching process between students and faculty mentors/advisors.
 - Visits partner sites during capstone experiences as needed to foster the partnership's sustainability and ensure the experience meets expectations.
 - May dedicate time toward remediation in the case that students are experiencing difficulties.
- **Ability to manage higher level administrative tasks like administrative leadership**, including but not limited to the following:
 - Demonstrates knowledge of institutional review board requirements of the university and community sites, intellectual property, authorship rights, and considerations for patents and/or trademarks.
 - Understands the complexities of experiential learning, with the ability to navigate natural contexts and ambiguity.
 - Is knowledgeable about employment regulations and reimbursement models.
 - Initiates the creation of affiliation agreements with new capstone sites.
 - Markets the program to outside partners, educating and mentoring clinical site mentors, particularly about the OTD degree and the value-added of the doctoral capstone experience and doctoral education.
 - Ensures the sustainability of community partnerships, ensuring mutual benefit to the partner site, mentor, students, and academic program.

Reference:

Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (2018). 2018 Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE®) Standards and interpretive guide (effective July 31, 2020). *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 2018, Vol. 72(Supplement_2), 7212410005p1–7212410005p83 <https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2018.72S217>

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