

What are the responsibilities of the AOTA Board of Directors, the RA & ACOTE?

The governance structure and processes are described in AOTA's governing documents: our Bylaws and in Policies & Procedures. The Board has ultimate authority for governing and managing the affairs of AOTA and all its components. ACOTE is an associated advisory council, reporting to the Board, responsible for developing standards and processes related specifically to accrediting educational programs. AOTA Bylaws place the responsibility for developing professional policy and standards with the RA.

Who is recognized by the US Department of Education (USDE) & CHEA as the accrediting body for OT?

AOTA-ACOTE is the entity recognized as the accrediting body for OT and OTA education programs. ACOTE cannot be recognized on their own as they are not a separate legal entity.

Does the USDE stipulate who sets entry level for a profession?

The Department of Education does not dictate which body can mandate the entry level for OT. That decision is left to the profession and, under AOTA's bylaws, that decision belongs to the RA.

Does the USDE require that ACOTE be separate and independent from AOTA?

The requirement for an accrediting agency to be separate and independent applies to bodies that accredit institutions (e.g. universities, colleges) and not programs. AOTA-ACOTE is recognized as the programmatic accrediting body for occupational therapy by both USDE and CHEA.

What are the USDE and CHEA requirements about independence of ACOTE from other aspects of AOTA?

USDE and CHEA require that the accrediting body within a professional association have full responsibility for developing the standards, policies and procedures specifically related to the accreditation of educational programs. This includes matters such as the accrediting body being responsible for developing accreditation processes and materials and the AOTA Board and other committees having no involvement or oversight in reviewing or making recommendations related to a specific program. USDE and CHEA also require that the accrediting body have sufficient funds and resources to manage the accreditation function.

Do other professions have structures like AOTA-ACOTE?

Yes. Many associations, including APTA, ASHA, and American Psychological Association have accrediting bodies that are part of the professional association. Like AOTA, these organizations place decisions about professional policy including entry level into the profession with a body similar to the RA. These organizations are also recognized by USDE and CHEA.

Why did the decision to move to a single point of entry into the profession bypass the RA?

The AOTA Board of Directors, as part of their fiduciary responsibility asks questions and receives guidance from Association legal counsel. The Executive Director hires Association legal counsel. In November 2017, the Interim Executive Director believed it to be in the Association's best interest to obtain new legal counsel. The review and due diligence work of AOTA's new legal counsel, a firm with extensive expertise in association governance and the work of associations including accreditation, indicated that the ACOTE decision bypassed the governance process and steps should be taken to consider this important policy through appropriate processes.

Was the RA involved in decisions about entry level in the past?

The RA was involved in decisions about entry level for decades. This included passing Resolution J in 1999, which moved the entry level for OT to the post baccalaureate level. (see timeline on back for other examples)

Additional Information: <https://www.aota.org/AboutAOTA/Get-Involved/BOD/ACOTE-Mandate-Background-Materials.aspx>
<https://www.aota.org/AboutAOTA/Get-Involved/BOD/FAQs-ACOTE-Mandate.aspx>

Timeline of RA Engagement on Entry Level Issues 1999-2016

- 1999 RA passes Resolution J, which recommends moving to the post-baccalaureate entry level for OT and requests ACOTE to determine the feasibility of doing so, the timelines and standards.
- 2006 RA adopts two motions to review policies on Support of Graduate Education and Education for Occupational Therapists and Occupational Therapy Assistants and to extend the ad hoc panel to explore outcomes of OT/OTA degrees
- 2007 RA receives and rejects motions to require a Master's degree entry level to the profession and to establish an ad hoc committee to consider two points of entry for the OT.
- 2008 RA adopts motion to support the associate degree for entry level for the OTA and recommends to ACOTE to implement a 5-year transition timeline for the existing three certificate level programs.
- 2011 RA adopts motion from BPPC revising Policy 3.4 ENTRY-LEVEL EDUCATION OF OTS AND OTAS and Policy 3.8 Support of Graduate Education
- 2013 RA adopts motion for the Speaker to establish an ad hoc committee to investigate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of changing the OTA entry level degree from the current associate degree to either 1) include both the associate degree and bachelor's degree as options for OTA education, or 2) elevate the entry level degree exclusively to the bachelor's degree
- 2016 RA adopts motion to request the Commission on Education revise: 1)Blueprint for Entry-Level Education to Reflect Current Practice Framework considering OT and OTA dual-entry degrees; 2)OTA and OT Model Curriculum to Address Different Entry-Level Degree Programs