



**Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists  
Association canadienne des ergothérapeutes**

Leanne LeClair, BHSc (OT); MSc; PhD  
President, Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy University Programs  
May 4, 2020

**To: OT university programs re COVID -19 contingency planning:**

**From: Academic Credentialing Council**

Dear Occupational Therapy University Program Directors,

We would like to thank the university programs and regulators for participating in information gathering meetings in April. We heard how programs and students continue to work vigilantly and creatively to enable student progress in the face of emergency health measures restricting in-person and experiential learning. We recognized the need of the public to continue to have competent entry-level occupational therapists. Additional guidance and clarification on contingency planning was requested and the ACC would like to provide the following.

**Deferral of progress reports due in 2020:**

The ACC **will** consider deferral of submission deadlines for any 2020 progress report at the request of the program. Programs can request a deferral by email to [rmcgovern@caot.ca](mailto:rmcgovern@caot.ca).

**Deferral of accreditation visits in 2020-2021:**

The ACC **will** consider deferral of any accreditation visit that occurs in 2020-21 at the request of the program. Programs can request a deferral by email to [rmcgovern@caot.ca](mailto:rmcgovern@caot.ca).

**Course-based education:**

The ACC recognizes that programs are continuing to adapt in-person curriculum to online delivery methods and this may continue into the fall. The ACC **does not require** any reporting of temporary revisions to online methods or curriculum scheduling, ensuring that each student meets all competencies in the Profile, and Essential Competencies or Référentiel de Compétences.

**Fieldwork education, Standard 2 (2.74)**

The ACC recognizes that university programs continue to follow emergency measures and health guidelines from institutions and health authorities regarding students in the health system. While Canadian programs have sought to ensure the highest quality fieldwork for their students, adaptations are being made.

The ACC **does not require** notification of any temporary fieldwork changes that are made until further notification by the ACC. This is with consideration that programs are ensuring that each student meets all competencies in the Profile and Essential Competencies (or Référentiel de Compétences) and completes the 1000 hours requirement. The ACC will continue to monitor the Canadian and international situation for university programs with regards to fieldwork, recognizing that restrictions

may lift for some programs before others, and will not require notification until further notice during the pandemic.

Given this, the ACC continues to uphold the WFOT and Canadian accreditation definitions of fieldwork. The WFOT definition of the 1000 hours “refers to the time each student spends implementing an occupational therapy process or an aspect of an occupational therapy process involving human interaction with person or persons as client”. The current Academic Accreditation Standards (2017) state “fieldwork education provides students of occupational therapy with opportunities to integrate knowledge and to acquire abilities and professional behaviors through a supervised and experiential learning experience” (p. 9). Regarding paid work counting toward fieldwork hours, it is important to note that OT students will not be allowed to register with a regulatory organization, in other words, an applicant cannot be registered unless they can demonstrate proof that they have completed their education program, including 1000 hours of fieldwork.

Discussion about non-traditional types of fieldwork (such as simulation, online modules, program planning) has highlighted the need for greater rigour in the Academic Accreditation Standards. The ACC will seek consultation with stakeholders and experts at a later date to describe various methods, seek evidence and discuss revisions or additional guidelines for the standard.

The ACC would like to thank programs for participating in consultations and looks forward to further work in support of high-quality OT education in the future. Please direct any questions to the Director of Standards, Alison Douglas [adouglas@caot.ca](mailto:adouglas@caot.ca).

Sincerely,



Sara Saunders, Ph.D., OT (C), erg  
Chair, [Academic Credentialing Council](#)  
Director, Occupational Therapy Program  
Assistant Professor (Professional), McGill University  
3654 Promenade Sir-William-Osler, Montreal, QC H3G 1Y5

cc. Elinor Larney (ACOTRO president)

cc. Catherine Backman (CAOT president)