



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

Leanne LeClair, BHSc (OT); MSc; PhD
President, Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy University Programs
March 19, 2020

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

From: Academic Credentialing Council

Dear Occupational Therapy University Program Directors,

The Academic Credentialing Council (ACC) recognizes that Canadian university occupational therapy programs are working hard within the directives of their respective health authorities and institutions to manage the cancellation of in-person classes and suspension of fieldwork placements during the COVID-19 pandemic. We acknowledge the innovative work of all Canadian university occupational therapy programs at this time. In addition to shared concerns across all programs with navigating the current landscape whilst maintaining the integrity of your programs, we appreciate that one issue of immediate concern is the graduation of students who may or may not have received their full program by the usual graduation timeline. The ACC would like to work with programs to help with contingency planning for the health and safety of their students with the shared goal of upholding the Academic Accreditation Standards in the education of occupational therapy students in Canada.

Course-based education

Each program is making decisions about their courses and alternate methods of course delivery given local regulations, directives, timelines and available resources and technologies. While it is mandatory for accreditation status that programs maintain accreditation standards, we understand the need for a temporary change in how classes and courses are delivered during the pandemic. We also acknowledge that some classes and courses, such as practice skills and laboratory type, pose significant challenges when transitioning to online education. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the ACC:

- Requires that programs maintain records that track each course and all changes made to delivery, assessment, and evaluation methods.
- Does **not** require substantive change notifications for temporary course delivery changes during the pandemic.

Fieldwork education

At this time, students and programs are required to follow guidelines from institutions and health authorities regarding fieldwork placements. As per the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists Academic Accreditation Standards (2017), “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).

Given that experiential learning is fundamental to fieldwork education, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the ACC continues to require a minimum of 1000 hours of fieldwork hours. We recognize that if this minimum requirement is not completed it will affect student graduation dates. If programs are considering changes in the nature of fieldwork activities, they must notify the ACC ahead of time.

The ACC commends all programs for working tirelessly to support their students during this unprecedented time of managing the spread of COVID-19. Please direct any questions to the Director of Standards, Alison Douglas adouglas@caot.ca.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'SS' followed by a stylized surname.

Sara Saunders, Ph.D., OT (C), erg
Chair, [Academic Credentialing Council](#)
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cc. Elinor Larney (ACOTRO president)

cc. Catherine Backman (CAOT president)