



Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists Association canadienne des ergothérapeutes

July 9, 2020

Request for Proposals

Background:

The Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT) governs the accreditation of entry-level occupational therapy programs in Canada. The CAOT has an association mandate to advocate for and support its occupational therapist and occupational therapist assistant members. Information about the program is found on the [CAOT website](#).

The Board of Directors of CAOT oversees policies and standards revisions and approves accreditation decisions only in respect of compliance with procedures. Accreditation awards recommendations are made at the Academic Credentialing Council (ACC) after reviewing reports submitted by site visit teams. The ACC also has autonomous decision making over procedures. It recommends policy and standards revisions to the CAOT Board of Directors. Current members of the ACC include: Chair, Chair elect/past chair, academics (3), representatives to the Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy University programs (ACOTUP) (2), representative(s) of the Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy Regulatory Organizations (ACOTRO) (1 or 2) a public member with experience in accreditation (1), and a non-academic such as an employer or professional practice leader (1).

Purposes of OT accreditation:

- serves to maintain consistent national standards;
- ensures quality professional education;
- supports the growth and development of educational programs and the occupational therapy profession.
- monitors educational standards worldwide so as to assess trends and ensure better graduate mobility

Context:

The historical background of accreditation in occupational therapy began with the first program at the University of Toronto in 1926 and second at McGill in 1950. Between 1926 and the 1950s, the Canadian Medical Association made all decisions about occupational therapy education, with the first written standards in 1959 (Bridle, 1979). The value of accreditation was envisioned by the CAOT at the time as important for ensuring standardized and high-quality education across Canada. Accreditation decisions were made by the medical council which was compromised of physicians and beginning in 1972 formally included CAOT. Gradually OTs began to become more involved in the accreditation process until 1978, when CAOT authored its own accreditation procedure and own Standards in the subsequent year. At this time, there was no self-regulation of occupational therapists in Canada, and the CAOT took “responsibility for assuring that entry-level occupational therapists registered by that association are

competent” (Bridle, 1979, p.206). Entry to practice requirements included graduation from a CAOT accredited program. Since this time, in the 1980s and 90’s, provincial regulatory bodies arose, with the mandate of protection of the public. Provincial regulatory bodies each are required to follow their own self-regulation acts, which require the regulator to determine entry to practice standards.

Currently, all Canadian occupational therapy regulatory bodies require graduation from an approved education program, and they all use CAOT accreditation as a proxy for the approval. Most, except Quebec, also require passing the National Occupational Therapy Certification Exam (NOTCE). Through a similar history, the NOTCE was also governed by CAOT and recently CAOT has entered into individual contracts with each regulator as a third-party provider of the exam. These written agreements also describe a process of involvement of the regulators in governance of the exam, through the Exam Oversight Committee.

Likewise, regulator involvement in accreditation has recently been increased. In 2018, a non-voting guest position was added to ACC to include a regulatory member of ACOTRO. In 2019, the Terms of Reference of the ACC were revised to add voting members of up to 2 representatives of ACOTRO. Currently, ACOTRO has elected to send one member due to time constraints and workloads.

Also in the past month, amid calls for greater accountability regarding colonialism, white supremacy, and racism, CAOT has received feedback on its [Position Statement on Diversity](#) (2014). Feedback included calls for accreditation to ensure occupational therapy educational standards require teaching on these topics and better inclusion of persons of color and those who have been historically marginalized in the admissions to programs.

The Project

The ACC would like to review its governance model, specifically with respect to minimizing conflicts of interest and partnering with the university programs, the regulatory bodies and the association. Governance needs to support the development of standards and policies that are respectful of the diversity of program pedagogies, while providing decisions that are fair and transparent. The accreditation process needs to remain nimble to adjust in crisis while ensuring that all stakeholders are present when adjustments are made. Accreditation must support and encourage a diverse occupational therapy workforce. It must understand the roots of racism, and marginalization and promote inclusivity of indigenous persons, persons of color and persons with disabilities. It must enable ongoing co-construction by educators, regulators and association members to ensure that the profession continues to evolve while providing high quality occupational therapy services for the Canadian public.

The scope of the project should include:

- Current structure of the accreditation program: review of public documents, policies and procedures and description of formal and informal lines of accountability, review of previous e-scan of accreditation governance models.
- Meeting with an **Accreditation Strat Plan Steering Committee** comprising a member of CAOT board of Directors and members of ACC.
- Stakeholder interviews: a) group interviews separately for university program chairs, regulators, students, association board of directors, accreditation staff b) individual interviews with

President of ACOTUP, ACOTRO, association CEO, staff, president. Possible topics: what is their involvement, do they feel their voice is needed and/or heard, how do we ensure historically marginalized persons are heard? What do they value? What do they see as the weaknesses of the program?

- Prioritization of pressure points (what is most important for a strong accreditation program)
- Analysis of selected governance models in light of our pressure points including composition of governing bodies, mandates for revising standards, strategic planning, policies, procedures, program evaluation, agendas, and administering contracts and fees.

Deliverables

- Scan of accreditation governance models with comments on best practices, conflict of interest and feasibility
- Summary of themes arising from stakeholder interviews
- Prioritization of pressure points
- A summary table of the strengths and weaknesses of each of the governance models in light of our pressure points and best practices

Approximate Timeline:

Item	Date
Response to RFP	Aug 3rd, 2020
Steering Committee selection of consultant	Aug 14, 2020
Review of deliverables	Aug 21, 2020
Review of current program	Sep 11, 2020
Environmental scan	Sep 30, 2020
Stakeholder interviews	Oct 30, 2020
Draft report	Nov 30, 2020
Final report	Dec 18, 2020

Requirements:

Provide a cover letter outlining interest in this project; a resume or summary of projects of a similar nature that have been successfully delivered; a draft project plan and a project budget. References to be provided upon request.

Response to the RFP should be received no later than **5PM ET August 3, 2020**, addressed to:
Dr. Alison Douglas, Director of Standards, Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists email:
adouglas@caot.ca

Questions may be directed to adouglas@caot.ca

Reference: Brindle, M.J. (1979). Standards: Who Needs Them? Setting Standards for the Education of Occupational Therapists. *Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 46(5), 206-10.