

# PROGRAM ACCREDITATION HANDBOOK

revised 2017

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST ASSISTANT & PHYSIOTHERAPIST ASSISTANT  
EDUCATION ACCREDITATION PROGRAM





# PREFACE

The purpose of this handbook is to provide information about the accreditation of occupational therapist assistant and physiotherapist assistant education programs in Canada including the evaluative standards and elements, and the policies and procedures of the accreditation program.

The handbook is intended for the use of occupational therapist assistant and physiotherapist assistant education program faculty and staff who are preparing for accreditation review, members of the accreditation Peer Review Teams, college/university administrators and members of the public who have an interest in the quality of occupational therapist assistant and physiotherapist assistant education in Canada.

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# INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND INFORMATION

## The Purpose of Accreditation

Accreditation is both a process and a condition. The process involves an integrated system of continuous assessment, evaluation, and improvement to comply with specified standards. The condition or state of being accredited provides a credential to the public and employers, affirming that a program has accepted and is fulfilling its commitment to educational quality. Four main functions of the OTA & PTA EAP are to:

1. establish criteria for evaluation of occupational therapist assistant and physiotherapist assistant education programs
2. conduct assessments that encourage colleges/universities to maintain and improve their programs
3. determine compliance with established criteria for accreditation
4. provide ongoing consultation to occupational therapist assistant and physiotherapist assistant education programs

## The Development of Accreditation for OTA & PTA Education in Canada

The Occupational Therapist Assistant and Physiotherapist Assistant Education Accreditation Program (OTA & PTA EAP) is a collaborative initiative of the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT), the Canadian Occupational Therapist Assistant and Physiotherapist Assistant Educators Council (COPEC) and Physiotherapy Education Accreditation Canada (PEAC). CAOT and PEAC are the accreditation agencies for Canadian occupational therapist and physiotherapist education programs respectively, while COPEC is the organization of educators of Canadian OTA & PTA education programs.

In 2009, 19 education programs signed on with the OTA & PTA EAP, following several years of discussion led by COPEC regarding the need for accreditation of these educational programs. The commitment of these original 19 programs provided funding to the initial developmental activities. A Program Manager was appointed by CAOT and PEAC in September 2009.

The pilot OTA & PTA EAP accreditation standards were finalized in December 2010 and were used for the pilot accreditation reviews in early 2012. Revisions to the standards based on evaluative feedback from the pilot reviews were finalized in the fall of 2012 and applied to programs undergoing accreditation reviews beginning in the fall of 2013. A similar process took place in the development of the policies and procedures of the accreditation program.

## Accreditation: Values and Operational Principles

In its operations, the OTA & PTA EAP adheres to the Association of Accrediting Agencies of Canada (AAAC) Guidelines for Good Practice and believes in:

Collaboration: authentically engage key stakeholders

- Engage national stakeholders in **collaborative development** of standards
- Collaborate in **constructive conflict resolution** when necessary
- Facilitate a platform of **open discussion, respectful dialogue, consensus building, and collective support for decisions**

Respect: demonstrate inclusivity and value differences and diversity at individual, program and societal levels

- Support **diversity** in Canadian society through the lens of gender, language, culture, ethnicity, geography, and religion
- Collaborate in **constructive conflict resolution** when necessary

Quality: foster continuous quality improvement and excellence

- Foster **self-reflection** and growth within the OTA & PTA profession
- Embrace **critical reflection** of its practices and policies
- **Pilot** new standards and changes, and **communicate** the results clearly and in a timely fashion
- Model **flexibility** by adapting processes and standards to changing times while upholding quality in education
- Support the **right to quality** education
- Recognize programs for **innovation** within the framework of national standards

Fairness: apply standards, policies and processes consistently and objectively at all times

- Allow opportunities for **remediation and improvement**
- Ensure **consistency** in decision making

Accountability: demonstrate responsible decision-making and resource management

- Perform its business always in an **ethical manner** that generates **trust**
- Demonstrate **honesty** in all of its dealings
- Uphold the **highest confidentiality** in its practices and processes
- Conduct business in a **fiscally responsible and accountable** manner
- Model **flexibility** by adapting processes and standards to changing times while upholding quality in education
- Offer an **appeal process** that is fair, timely and objective

Transparency: inspire confidence through openness, communication and integrity

- Create **user-friendly** and helpful written documents and resources
- Communicate **clearly and respectfully** in all written documents and verbal encounters
- Ensure **wide and transparent distribution** of publicly available materials related to the accreditation process

## Guidelines for Good Practice

As members of the Association of Accrediting Agencies of Canada (AAAC), PEAC and CAOT are committed to ensuring that the operations of the OTA & PTA EAP are consistent with the *Guidelines for Good Practice in the Accreditation of Professional Programs*. The *Guidelines* are available for review on the home page of the AAAC website (<http://aaac.ca>).

## Conflict of Interest

The OTA & PTA EAP expects individuals who conduct business on its behalf to avoid real, potential or perceived conflict of interest in all aspects of the work completed. Details about the steps taken to ensure avoidance of conflict of interest are provided in policy [ACC-02 Conflict of Interest](#).

## The Standards Framework

The framework for the Accreditation Standards for Occupational Therapist Assistant and Physiotherapist Assistant Education Programs in Canada is based on the “5 + 1” model described by the Task Force on Accreditation of Health Professions Education<sup>1</sup>. This model comprises five standards considered common to accreditation of professional education programs and requires that all programs:

- work closely with their practice communities and the public to prepare a workforce that can respond to and meet community needs
- provide appropriate, periodic, and ongoing faculty development and evaluation
- regularly assess the competencies and achievements of students and graduates
- maintain an effective process of continuous self-assessment, planning, and improvement
- communicate information and accurately represent themselves to the public to ensure accountability and consumer choice

An additional standard, the “+1” component of the model, permits accreditation programs to develop a standard specific to the profession(s).

The OTA & PTA EAP accreditation standards and criteria were adopted for Canadian occupational therapist assistant and physiotherapist assistant education programs through an iterative process, including feedback from focus groups, a broad national electronic survey consultation with stakeholders, and ongoing input from the OTA & PTA EAP Steering Committee, Standards Development Working Group and Advisory Committee. The standards include aspects of the CAOT and PEAC education accreditation standards and incorporate the Practice Profile for Support Personnel in Occupational Therapy (2009) and the Essential Competency Profile for Physiotherapist Assistants in Canada (2012).

Overall, the standards and criteria are intended to focus on the assessment of outcomes as the means of validating a program’s activities and guiding and improving efforts towards the achievement of its mission and goals.

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<sup>1</sup> Gelmon, S., O’Neil, E., Kimmey, J., and the Task Force on Accreditation of Health Professions Education. (1999). *Strategies for Change and Improvement: The Report of the Task Force on Accreditation of Health Professions Education*. San Francisco: Center for the Health Professions, University of California at San Francisco.



## The Continuum of Education Standards and Quality

Accreditation of Canadian occupational therapist assistant (OTA) and physiotherapist assistant (PTA) education programs is supported by three groups: academic OTA and PTA programs throughout Canada (some of which are members of COPEC), CAOT and, PEAC. A continuum of guidelines and standards is developed and maintained by these three groups through representation in the Joint Accreditation Committee (JAC) to ensure the competency of entry-level practitioners. Guiding documents and processes along the continuum include:

- Practice Profile for Support Personnel in Occupational Therapy, CAOT 2009<sup>2</sup>
- Profile of Occupational Therapy Practice in Canada, CAOT 2007<sup>3</sup>
- Essential Competency Profile For Physiotherapist Assistants in Canada, NPAG 2012<sup>4</sup>
- Essential Competency Profile for Physiotherapists in Canada, NPAG 2009<sup>5</sup>
- PEAC Accreditation Standards, Policies & Procedures<sup>6</sup>
- CAOT Accreditation Standards, Policies & Procedures<sup>7</sup>

## Stakeholders in the Accreditation Process

Accreditation must be a relevant and responsive process, continually evolving to incorporate changes in the education and practice environments. Therefore, it is a process that requires input from and is of value to a variety of stakeholders. For *educators*, accreditation provides validation of the education program, an opportunity for faculty professional development, and a framework for quality improvement in education. For the *profession*, accreditation provides an opportunity to influence the education process and work towards consensus around evaluation standards and consistency of learning outcomes. For *students, employers and the public*, accreditation provides a measure of educational quality.

## Roles and Responsibilities of Stakeholder Groups

CAOT, COPEC and PEAC have been involved in the OTA & PTA EAP since its inception. Each organization has a unique role contributing to the development and ongoing evolution of this accreditation program. The roles of each stakeholder group are as follows:

### CAOT and PEAC jointly:

- developed and now govern the OTA & PTA EAP, collaborating with COPEC and other stakeholders as required
- recruited steering committee members during development of the program
- facilitated development of the pilot accreditation standards
- approve revisions to the accreditation standards
- developed the pilot policies and procedures for the operation of the OTA & PTA EAP
- approve revisions to the policies

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<sup>2</sup> Available on the [CAOT website](#)

<sup>3</sup> Available on the [CAOT website](#)

<sup>4</sup> Available on the [NPAG website](#)

<sup>5</sup> Available on the [NPAG website](#)

<sup>6</sup> Available on the [PEAC website](#)

<sup>7</sup> Available on the [CAOT website](#)

#### COPEC:

- requested initiation of the accreditation program
- is the recipient of the accreditation process
- funds the program through annual accreditation fees (non-COPEC-member education programs also pay annual accreditation fees to the OTA & PTA EAP)

#### CAOT, PEAC and COPEC jointly:

- provide membership to the Peer Review Teams (PRT) for accreditation reviews
- provide membership to the JAC and collaborate through this committee to:
- review and revise accreditation standards
- review accreditation reports and make accreditation award recommendations
- develop, review, and revise policies and procedures related to the OTA & PTA EAP

#### PEAC:

- is responsible for administering the accreditation program

### Quality Monitoring of the Accreditation Program

OTA & PTA EAP ensures continued effectiveness and reliability of the accreditation program through an established quality-monitoring program. To comply with the quality-monitoring program, all participants are required to complete evaluations related to their participation in the accreditation process. The surveys are designed for education program faculty and staff and all PRT members to provide input and suggestions for improvement regarding the accreditation process, and feedback about the performance of each PRT member. The OTA & PTA EAP prepares summaries of all evaluations completed. PRT members receive summaries of evaluations of their performance completed by the faculty and staff of the education program, as well as by their fellow PRT members. The JAC and OTA & PTA EAP staff use results of the evaluations to monitor and improve the quality of accreditation processes. OTA & PTA EAP staff use results of the evaluations to guide changes in accreditation processes and ensure that quality services are provided.

### Funding of the Accreditation Program

The only source of funding for the accreditation program is the annual fees paid by programs with accreditation status and by those seeking candidacy status. OTA & PTA EAP will seek additional support (e.g. grants), for special projects as required.

### Services offered by OTA & PTA EAP

The following services are offered by OTA & PTA EAP to assist programs through the accreditation process:

- OTA & PTA EAP Program Accreditation Handbook
- electronic copies of documents and forms
- consultation about accreditation processes and requirements
- training and consultation to assist development of Self Study Reports (SSRs)
- training for PRT members via online education modules and through personal contact with OTA & PTA EAP staff

- sample reports for education programs and for PRTs to guide in report-writing

In addition, the following services are offered for stakeholders in the accreditation process:

- an Annual Report published by PEAC in June each year to provide updates for stakeholders about the OTA & PTA EAP, and accreditation issues and trends
- a directory of accredited Canadian occupational therapist assistant and physiotherapist assistant education programs, and of programs with candidacy status
- a website to provide current information about the accreditation program and with links to other sites related to accreditation
- a central resource for education materials about accreditation and related issues

# OVERVIEW OF THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS

## The Accreditation Process

### 1. Candidacy Status

As per policy *ACC-14 Candidacy Status*, the education program applies for and receives candidacy status which confirms that:

- a certificate/diploma is granted by the educational institution
- the education program is affiliated with an institution authorized under applicable law to provide postsecondary education
- the individual responsible (i.e., program head/coordinator/director) for the OTA & PTA education program is a registered occupational therapist or physiotherapist registered with no conditions with the appropriate provincial regulatory body.
- the education program includes 500 OTA/PTA practicum hours, of which 150 hours are OTA hours and 150 hours are PTA hours (single discipline programs must include 350 fieldwork hours)
- the education program has ensured that clinicians within the program's catchment area are able to provide the number of placements required for the program's students.
- There is
  - a curriculum framework document and an articulated educational philosophy
  - a designated sustainable budget
  - identifiable program space

Candidacy status is granted by the Joint Accreditation Committee.

### 2. Letter of Intent for Accreditation Reviews

The education program submits a letter of intent to OTA & PTA EAP to participate in a full accreditation review (offsite and onsite). A template Letter of Intent is available in Appendix 1. The Peer Review Team (PRT) is selected and the review is scheduled.

### 3. Program Self Study Report

The education program prepares the Self Study Report (SSR) which is submitted to the OTA & PTA EAP electronically.

### 4. Offsite Accreditation Review

The education program SSR is circulated to the four-member PRT (an occupational therapist, an occupational therapist OTA/PTA educator, a physiotherapist and a physiotherapist OTA/PTA educator). The PRT members review the evidence for compliance with all standards, with a focus on compliance with Standard 6. Compliance with 80% of the criteria in Standard 6 OTA and Standard 6 PTA based on submitted evidence is necessary in order to warrant proceeding to an onsite visit. Should there be insufficient evidence to demonstrate 80% compliance with the criteria in Standard 6 OTA and Standard 6 PTA, the PRT may request

that the program submit additional evidence before a decision to proceed with the onsite accreditation review can be made. Deferral of the onsite visit may be necessary (*ACC-16 Decision to Proceed Following Offsite Review*). An offsite review teleconference is held with the OTA & PTA EAP Program Manager and the PRT to draft the offsite review report. Within two weeks of the offsite review, the report is forwarded to the education program to assist in its preparation for the onsite visit, and, if necessary describe additional information /documentation requested by the PRT.

## 5. Onsite Accreditation Review

The PRT carries out the onsite accreditation review validating evidence of compliance with all standards. Standard 6 OTA and competencies are reviewed by the two occupational therapists of the PRT; Standard 6 PTA and competencies are reviewed by the two physiotherapists of the PRT. The report reflects the position of the PRT members on the level of validating evidence of compliance with profession specific Standard 6 and competencies.

Following the visit, the PRT does not make a recommendation regarding the program's overall accreditation award. Its role is to gather and verify evidence, and to identify compliance with individual criteria within the standards.

## 6. Peer Review Team (PRT) Submits Onsite Report to OTA & PTA EAP

Within two weeks of the onsite review, the PRT report is submitted to OTA & PTA EAP where it is formatted and edited for consistency.

## 7. Edited Report sent for Education Program Review

The final report is sent to the education program. The program responds to the PRT report to correct any misinformation.

## 8. Joint Accreditation Committee

The Confidential Accreditation Dossier is prepared; the dossier consists of the program's Self Study Report, the PRT report, and the program's response to the PRT report, along with a copy of the Accreditation Standards and the decision-making policy *ACC-03B Accreditation Decisions*. Two members of the JAC are selected as the Primary Reviewers to prepare a summary of these documents and a recommended accreditation award status for presentation and discussion at the next JAC meeting.

## 9. Accreditation Recommendation

The JAC makes an accreditation award recommendation following review of all documents in the Accreditation Dossier, including the Primary Reviewers' report (*ACC-03 Accreditation Decisions*). The possible accreditation awards include:

- Accreditation:
  - Fully Compliant
  - Partially Compliant
  - Probationary
- Non-Accreditation

- Deferral

## 10. Accreditation Decision

The accreditation award recommendation is sent to the Boards of PEAC and CAOT for final review. The Boards of PEAC and CAOT review the recommendation and award an accreditation status.

The education program is notified in writing of the accreditation award decision and the required follow up in an official Accreditation Review and Status Report (AR & SR).

# COMPONENTS OF THE ACCREDITATION REVIEW

## Candidacy Status

Application for candidacy status is a pre-requisite for occupational therapist assistant and physiotherapist assistant education programs to enter the accreditation process. While candidacy status denotes a formal affiliation of the education program with the OTA & PTA EAP, it does not assure future attainment of accreditation status.

Education programs interested and prepared to begin the accreditation process by applying for candidacy status (*ACC-14 Candidacy Status*) must complete the necessary application form (*FORM-01*), preliminary report (*FORM-02*) and evidence as described on the OTA & PTA EAP website, along with the candidacy status fee (*GUIDE-03 Fee Schedule*). In the preliminary report, the program must provide evidence that:

- a certificate/diploma is granted by the educational institution
- the education program is affiliated with an institution authorized under applicable law to provide post-secondary education
- the individual responsible (i.e., program head/coordinator/director) for the OTA & PTA education program is a registered occupational therapist or physiotherapist registered with no conditions with the appropriate provincial regulatory body
- the education program includes 500 OTA/PTA fieldwork hours, of which 150 hours are OTA hours and 150 hours are PTA hours (single discipline programs must include 350 fieldwork hours)<sup>8</sup>
- The education program has ensured that clinicians within the program’s catchment area are able to provide the number of placements required for the program’s students
- There is:
  - a curriculum framework document and an articulated educational philosophy
  - a designated sustainable budget
  - identifiable program space

The purpose of the preliminary report is for the program to demonstrate its compliance with the criteria for candidacy status, and to provide early indications of readiness to proceed to a full accreditation review. The preliminary report should provide evidence (not only narration) that addresses each of the above criteria. It is submitted electronically to the OTA & PTA EAP and will be reviewed by OTA & PTA EAP staff within one month of submission to ensure there is sufficient evidence of the program’s compliance with the criteria. The program may be requested to submit additional information based on this review.

The preliminary report will be then reviewed by the JAC to determine the program’s compliance with the criteria. While no judgment of the likelihood of accreditation will be made, one of the following decisions will be made:

- a) The program demonstrates compliance with the criteria and candidacy status is awarded
- OR**
- b) The program does not demonstrate compliance with the criteria and candidacy status is not awarded

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<sup>8</sup> Fieldwork hours must be hours supervised by a registered OT or PT, and include an evaluation of student competence. Observational or “shadowing” hours should not be included in the 500 hours.

Programs who do not meet candidacy status criteria will be given feedback regarding areas of non-compliance. The candidacy status application fee will not be returned. If the program still wishes to participate in the accreditation process, it must re-submit its preliminary report to address the areas where deficiencies were identified. Re-submission of a preliminary report within two years of the initial submission must be accompanied by a \$200 administrative fee. If re-submission occurs more than two years after the initial submission, it must be accompanied by a second full candidacy status application fee.

As per *ACC-09 Disclosure* and *ACC-14 Candidacy Status*, should programs with candidacy status choose to publish their candidacy status, the following text **must** be used:

*The (name of program/institution) has candidacy status and can now take the next step towards accreditation by the OTA & PTA EAP. Having candidacy status does not mean that the (name of the program) will be accredited once the process is finished, but the first step is complete.*

OR

*The (name of program/institution) is seeking accreditation by the Occupational Therapist Assistant & Physiotherapist Assistant Education Accreditation Program (OTA & PTA EAP) of the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists and Physiotherapy Education Accreditation Canada. The program has been granted candidacy status, which denotes an affiliation with the OTA & PTA EAP and is a pre-requisite for accreditation of the education program. Candidacy status does not assure that the (name of program) will be granted accreditation status once the program undergoes a full accreditation review.*

## Letter of Intent

It is the responsibility of the program coordinator of the education program to submit, following receipt of confirmation of candidacy status AND 12-18 months before the end of an accreditation term, a Letter of Intent indicating that the program will participate in the accreditation review process. Upon receipt of the Letter of Intent, OTA & PTA EAP will collaboratively set the dates for the onsite accreditation review with the education program, and set the due date for the Self Study Report. A template for the Letter of Intent is provided in Appendix 1.

## Self Study Report

Preparation and submission of the Self Study Report (SSR) is a requirement for an education program prior to an accreditation review. The main purpose of the SSR is to provide an opportunity for the education program to:

- provide evidence about the program's compliance with accreditation standards
- systematically review the program and assess its outcomes
- identify areas of strength
- identify areas where strategies may need to be developed to improve or maintain program quality

The SSR will also be used by:

- members of the PRT during preparation and completion of the offsite and onsite reviews
- members of the JAC in the decision-making process about the program's accreditation status



- faculty and staff of the education program to assist with program and curriculum development

The SSR is submitted to OTA & PTA EAP electronically.

### **Guidelines for the Preparation of the Self-Study Report**

The SSR provides the key source of evidence upon which the OTA & PTA EAP determines the program's compliance with the standards (this is substantiated by interviews and observation during the onsite review conducted by the PRT). It is therefore essential that in developing the content of the SSR, every effort is made to describe, clearly and explicitly, the specific evidence showing how the program meets each standard/criterion.

The SSR should be considered as a guide to the program; it assists the reader in understanding the program in its environmental context and shows how the evidence provided is linked and integrated to demonstrate compliance. It is not sufficient just to provide a list of links, appendices or documents related to each criterion. The SSR must provide the program's 'story', in narrative or descriptive terms, explaining how the evidence provided demonstrates the program's compliance with the criterion.

Preparation of the SSR is not intended to be labour-intensive. It is intended that the program has an on-going system of evaluation and quality assurance. In this way preparation of the SSR should involve compilation of existing documents or relevant excerpts from documents to serve as evidence of compliance with the accreditation standards rather than creation of the documents themselves. Many programs find, especially with the preparation of their first SSR, that it takes approximately 10-12 months to compile all the evidence necessary to complete the SSR by the due date

Preparation of the SSR should involve all stakeholders in the education program, including permanent faculty and contract instructors, staff, students and preceptors. Completion of the SSR (or sections of it) is often delegated. OTA & PTA EAP staff will be available for consultation as required. However, it is the responsibility of the education program to submit the completed SSR electronically to OTA & PTA EAP on or before the due date, approximately five months prior to the scheduled onsite review. Some generic tips for creation of the SSR are available in [\*GUIDE-10 – General Tips for Preparing an SSR\*](#) on the OTA & PTA EAP website.

### **Content of the Self Study Report**

The SSR is a narrative report. The SSR must be based on the OTA & PTA EAP accreditation standards and indicate the outcomes of the program's self study. The following sections must be included in the SSR and are described in more detail below:

- I. Introduction/Overview
- II. Standards and criteria
- III. Summary
- IV. List of evidence and appendices

It is in the best interest of the program to create a document which is easily navigated and which has clear labels and/or links to relevant appendices. This will facilitate the PRT members' review of the document and help make their experience as reviewers as effortless as possible.

## I. Introduction/Overview

A brief overview of the education program and its context/environment can be included in this section as well as the overall perception about the compliance of the program with the accreditation standards and criteria from the point of view of those involved in the report preparation.

Some, if not all, readers of the SSR may not be from the same province as the education program. It is helpful to those readers to include within the *Introduction* such information as the program's ministerial and provincial contexts if it is relevant to compliance with accreditation standards. For example, be sure to note whether the program's choices in providing evidence are due to ministry requirements and, as such, may be less flexible in terms of making change. Also, be sure to describe the regulatory standards for assignment of task/scope of practice for OTAs and PTAs in the program's province as they may differ from those familiar to the reader.

This section of the SSR must include commentary about how the program has addressed any issues identified in past Accreditation Review and Status Reports (AR & SRs) since the previous accreditation review (if applicable). Copies of any previous AR & SRs since the last full accreditation review should be provided as evidence onsite.

## II. Standards and Criteria

This section is where the program **must address each accreditation standard, criterion by criterion.** The criteria in each standard must be addressed in this section in a narrative or descriptive format. The program is expected to provide evidence (usually in the form of appendices) with regards to each criterion and a narrative explaining how the evidence demonstrates compliance. The PRT members should understand from the narrative why the particular piece of evidence was chosen for inclusion. The program, in this section, has an opportunity to reflect upon its compliance and identify any areas where compliance is weak. Activities or plans that are underway to address these weaker areas should be described. Through the narrative description, the reader should be able to understand clearly how the evidence provided demonstrates the program's compliance with the criterion.

Example:

### **Standard 1, Criteria 1.1:**

**The educational program is situated in an institution authorized under applicable law to provide postsecondary education.**

The OTA and PTA Program situated in the Faculty of Health Sciences at Western Memorial College, is authorized under the Educational Law of Specific Province to provide postsecondary education. This is confirmed by the following link xxxxxxxxxx to the Provincial website with the list of education institutions authorized to provide postsecondary education. This is further demonstrated by the letter from the province (see Appendix 1.1) which confirms the status of this program within this legislation.

When providing evidence, it is helpful to PRT members when the program provides only the **most applicable** evidence for a particular criterion, rather than an exhaustive list of appendices and evidence. It is recognized that evidence for some criteria, especially those in Standard 6, may span several (or all) courses; it is recommended that the program choose only **the MOST relevant** evidence be referenced in the SSR narrative.

Programs often find that content is repetitive when creating the narrative for the standards. It is important to recognize that when the PRT members are focussing their review of the SSR in preparation for the onsite visit, they will divide the sections/standards of the SSR between them, and while each member will read the entire document, a primary PRT member will be assigned to one or more standards for a more detailed review. Therefore, repetition between standards will not be as obvious, and in fact, creating the SSR in a way that allows the narrative for each standard to stand alone can create a document that is better understood by the PRT members.

In the standards document, each criterion includes examples of evidence and explanatory notes. This information is meant to assist the program in identifying the relevant evidence to support each criterion and is not intended to demonstrate the format in which the SSR is written. Each program can adapt the style to suit its preference; while developing content that is clear and easily navigable. **It is essential however that the content is written in a narrative or descriptive style explaining clearly how/why the evidence provided demonstrates the program's compliance with each criterion and an easy way for the reader to immediately access the identified supporting documents or links.**

### III. Summary

This section provides an opportunity for the program to summarize information about its compliance with the accreditation standards, to reflect upon the program, and to indicate its strengths and future plans.

### IV. List of Evidence and Appendices (SSI Form-8)

A list of the documents submitted as evidence of compliance with the accreditation standards and criteria must be provided in this section. The list should also indicate materials that will be made available in the PRT meeting room during the onsite review.

A document may be listed as evidence for more than one criterion. Therefore, each document should be numbered and the document number can be used to cross-reference the evidence to a criterion and the SSR.

It is recognized that some materials the program provides as evidence for compliance may be confidential. All PRT members are bound to comply with the OTA & PTA EAP policies relating to confidentiality.

## Format of the Self Study Report

The Self Study Report represents a permanent record of the status of the program at the time of application for accreditation. It should be a single self-contained document that can be archived for future reference by the OTA

& PTA EAP, and shared easily and securely among peer reviewers and Joint Accreditation Committee members. The SSR and all related documentation must be available throughout the six year accreditation cycle in the format it was provided at the time of submission, and with the identical content. Document retention policies require an archived version in its entirety to be held securely by the OTA & PTA EAP. For this reason, the OTA & PTA EAP can no longer accept SSRs that are created within or linked to the institutions Learning Management System or other online platforms.

It is the role of the education program to lead the PRT members clearly to the evidence available. The SSR must be formatted in a way that is easily navigable for the PRT. Reviewers do not always progress through the Self Study Report in a linear fashion as they often return to different sections, passages, and documents as they complete the full review. It is important that the PRT be able to find the information they are looking for as quickly and easily as possible.

For this reason, the OTA & PTA EAP requires the Self Study Report be formatted according to the following requirements:

### **File Type and Structure**

- The SSR should be presented as a single PDF file. Appendices themselves may be in other formats within a PDF portfolio. It is recommended that programs source a PDF expert for assistance in formatting as applicable.
- The body of the SSR is a narrative with easily navigable links to relevant appendices
- Tables and graphs should be used when they are helpful for clarity and conciseness in presenting data related to the criteria.
- There should be clear and concise instructions to reviewers about how to open and navigate through the SSR.
- Each document/link should be quick to open and easy to read.
- Complex, colorful background patterns and images can obstruct the readability of text on a page and should be avoided.
- Scanned documents should be saved as PDF or easily accessed image files rather than text files.

### **Font Size, Margins and Spacing**

- The font size should be no smaller than 11 point
- Line spacing should be set at no less than 1.15sp to ensure readability
- The page margins of the narrative should be set at one (1) inch

### **Table of Contents**

- Include a Table of Contents with ready links to the different parts of the SSR
- Create a shortcut to return to the Table of Contents from any point in the SSR.
- The electronic cover page or a page in the Table of Contents must include the following information:
  - The date the report was created.
  - The software and version(s) used to create the self-study.

## Linking Parts of the SSR

- Provide direct links to all evidence/documentation provided for each criterion/standard.
- Ensure that links to supporting documents open the documents in their own window.
- Establish links that enable reviewers to easily transition back and forth through the sections, appendices, specialty areas, and documentation in the SSR. If, when clicking the link, the reader is taken to a new location in the document or to a new document altogether, it must be made clear how to return to the original location once review is complete.
- When referencing and linking to an appendix in the narrative, use the file name of the appendix as it appears in the document tree. (i.e.: “as evidenced in 1.2.1 ABC College Organizational Chart). The reader should be able to find to locate an appendix by its title in the list of documents if necessary.
- Include the file name (i.e.: 1.2.1 ABC College Organizational Chart) on the document itself to allow easy identification should the reader choose to print some documents.
- When linking to a specific section of an appendix, establish links that take the reader directly to the specified section of the document (i.e.: if referencing a specific exam question, link to the location in the document that displays that question rather than to the top of the exam document).
- Ensure that hyperlinks remain active following transfer to the OTA & PTA EAP. **Hyperlinks to documents which are separate from the main document, on a memory key or elsewhere on a computer or server, will not work when the main document is saved on a new computer/memory key or uploaded to the OTA & PTA EAP’s secure file sharing system. Hyperlinks must be set up to link to locations within the single PDF file and its appendices.** It is the program’s responsibility to ensure that any links within the SSR remain active following submission.

## Security

- The SSR and any related appendices must be password protected at the document level prior to submission and the password must be shared with the OTA & PTA EAP in a separate email.

A sample of selected sections of an SSR is available on the OTA & PTA EAP website.

## Self Study Report Inventory

The Self Study Report Inventory (SSI) includes the list of documentation that must be submitted with the SSR, as well as standardized forms.

The OTA & PTA EAP provides standard forms related to evidence for the evaluative criteria, that must be submitted at the same time as the SSR, but not within the SSR itself, including:

- i) SSR-Form 1: Program Contact Information
- ii) SSR-Form 2: Signature Form
- iii) SSR-Form 3: Program Personnel Profile
  - A summary of faculty and staff employed by the program, academic and professional qualifications.
- iv) SSR-Form 4: Student Profile
  - Number of students enrolled in each year of the program

- Number of students successfully completing the program and their employment
- v) SSR-Form 5: Course Profile
  - Includes a summary of course title, course number, academic credit, number of lecture/lab/clinical hours, texts/resources
- vi) SSR-Form 6: Clinical/Fieldwork Education Program Profile
  - A list of facilities for which there are affiliation agreements with the program to provide fieldwork education for students
- vii) SSR-Form 7: Standard 6 – Criteria/Course Form OR Competency Matrix
- viii) SSR-Form 8: Inventory of Evidence Submitted / Available onsite

In addition, the following must be included in the submission (usually as appendices to the SSR):

- i) Financial summary (criterion 1.5 – CORE)
- ii) All course outlines for most recent complete academic year
- iii) A current institutional calendar
- iv) Curriculum Vitae of academic faculty
- v) List of faculty members/instructors who hold part-time and sessional appointments

### Submission of the Self Study Report

The program should submit both the SSR (Self Study Report) and SSI (Self Study Inventory) electronically to the OTA & PTA EAP on or before the due date provided. There are 2 options available for electronic submission of your documents:

- a) By uploading to an institution server (or DropBox-type cloud site), and providing OTA & PTA EAP staff with access temporarily to allow for download of the document.

**OR**

- b) By requesting a secure link from OTA & PTA EAP staff which allows temporary access to upload the completed SSR to the OTA & PTA EAP's secure file sharing system.

### The Offsite Review

The PRT conducts the accreditation reviews of the education program. More detailed information regarding the PRT is available in Section 5.0. The team conducts an offsite review and, approximately 12 weeks later, an onsite review of the education program. The primary purpose of the offsite review is to review evidence provided in the SSR for compliance with all standards, and to recommend whether the program is prepared to move forward with the onsite visit. If, upon review of the documents, the PRT deems that the education program is likely to meet at least 80% of the criteria in Standard 6 in each discipline, to be verified at the onsite review, the PRT will recommend that the program proceeds to the onsite accreditation review (*ACC-16 Decision to Proceed Following Offsite Review*). An offsite review report is prepared and sent to the education program coordinator with the goal of highlighting those areas to be verified during the onsite visit, and to request any additional information as determined by the PRT.

## Deficiency in Standard 6 OTA and PTA

If the PRT's review of the SSR and documentation reveals that the program is not likely to meet at least 80% of the criteria in Standard 6 in both disciplines, the program will be informed that the onsite review will be delayed until there is evidence to indicate that the Standard 6 criteria are sufficiently met (*ACC-16 Decision to Proceed Following Offsite Review*). The program will be given up to one year to provide the required evidence to fulfill these criteria. A schedule will be set for the program's submission of a report addressing the identified deficiencies. The program's report will be reviewed by the PRT, and its results will be communicated to the program via the Program Manager. Once the Standard 6 criteria are deemed to be sufficiently met, the date of the onsite visit is scheduled. If, after a period of one year, there is insufficient evidence to indicate that the program is likely to meet at least 80% of the criteria in Standard 6, the accreditation process will be terminated and the program will be required to re-apply for candidacy status and accreditation review.

## The Onsite Review

The onsite review conducted by the PRT takes place over two and a half days, typically Sunday afternoon to Tuesday. The purpose of the onsite review is for the PRT to:

- verify and supplement evidence provided by the education program in the SSR
- assess the program within the context of its environment
- prepare and submit a report to the JAC about evidence of the program's compliance with the OTA & PTA EAP accreditation criteria

**The PRT does not provide a recommendation about the program's overall accreditation status. This is the responsibility of the JAC.**

Components of the onsite review include interviews with:

- faculty, staff, students and graduates of the education program
- college/university administrators and other faculty involved in teaching OTA and PTA students
- practitioners/preceptors who provide clinical education placements
- employers of graduates

The onsite review also provides the opportunity for PRT members to assess components of the education program that are not conducive to the written word.

A schedule for the onsite visit is developed by the education program, with input from OTA & PTA EAP staff and the Chair of the PRT. A sample schedule for the onsite visit is provided in Appendix 2. A draft of the schedule should be prepared approximately four months prior to the onsite visit in time for review by the PRT during the offsite review teleconference. The schedule may be modified as the scheduled visit approaches, and in some cases, during the visit itself.

## Tips to prepare for the onsite visit

The following are suggestions to facilitate the planning and success of the onsite visit. These have been gathered from the experiences of PRT members and education program faculty and staff.

- OTA & PTA EAP arranges all travel and accommodation for the PRT members and may ask the education program for hotel recommendations in close proximity to the program.
- It is the responsibility of the education program to arrange transportation for the PRT to and from the hotel to the college/university each day of the visit. This can be by taxi, personal vehicle, or walking (by mutual consent). These arrangements will be facilitated by OTA & PTA EAP staff.
- It is the responsibility of the education program to provide snacks and lunch for the PRT during the time the members are on campus. OTA & PTA EAP staff will provide information regarding any dietary preferences or restrictions.
- Ensure that at least two rooms are available if at all possible at the college/university for the PRT throughout the onsite visit:
  - i) a secure room where computers and other personal items can be left, where food will be served, and where any documentation provided as evidence of compliance with OTA & PTA EAP standards and criteria can be made available. Internet should be available.
  - ii) a second room to be used for scheduled interviews
- Appoint a faculty or staff person to be the time-keeper, responsible for giving the team a five-minute warning at the end of an interview, and available to gather the next interviewees for a quick transition into the interview room.
- Ensure travel time to interviews/visits offsite is accommodated in the schedule (e.g.: after a break or lunch, or with travel clearly marked in the schedule).
- Meetings with students and student executive members should include students from all years of the program, and the student leadership representatives from each year. The PRT will expect a minimum of 20% of the students from each year of the program at the student meeting.
- Meetings with recent graduates of the program should include graduates no more than three years from their graduation.
- Meetings with groups of faculty members should not include the program coordinator or others in supervisory roles, in order to facilitate open conversation.
- Faculty meetings/interviews should include contract and sessional faculty in addition to permanent/core faculty. Meetings with faculty members should include *all* non-supervisory faculty, including those who may have been interviewed previously as a representative of a different component of the program (Fieldwork Coordinator, Curriculum Committee chair, etc.). Discussions in the faculty member group meeting will cover new topics.
- Providing some information to potential interviewees (especially students, new graduates, employers, clinical preceptors who may be unfamiliar with the goal of accreditation) may be helpful in diffusing the anxiety they have regarding the focus group. Suggested information to share:

*The purpose of the focus groups is to validate information that the program has provided in its Self Study Report, to explore areas where there may be gaps or additional information required. Depending on the participants, members of the Peer Review Team will ask questions about the nature of the program, committees and processes; the students/ graduates; the support received from the program when supervising students; and the nature of the relationship of the program with faculty,*



*administration, the college as a whole, etc. The questions will be related to the accreditation standards and criteria looking for validation and additional information. The tone of the focus groups is very collaborative, informal, and non-threatening.*

## Closing Meeting

At the end of the onsite review, the PRT members will meet with the program coordinator of the education program and others, as determined by the coordinator, for a brief closing meeting.

The purpose of the closing meeting is to:

- i) thank those who participated in activities related to the onsite review
- ii) provide examples of three strengths of the program and three concerns, as a brief summary of the visit (the program will receive a copy of the report once it is complete)
- iii) provide information about the next steps in the accreditation review process

The purpose of the closing meeting is NOT:

- i) for the program to provide last-minute evidence or rebuttal of the PRT's summary
- ii) for the PRT to make any recommendations or decisions about the program's overall accreditation status. Any remarks by members of the PRT must not be construed as indicating accreditation status or the position of the OTA & PTA EAP

## Peer Review Team Report

Members of the PRT prepare a report following the onsite visit and submit it to the OTA & PTA EAP. Included in the report is information about evidence of the program's compliance with accreditation standards, identified strengths, areas for improvement, and related compliance concerns. Comments will also be included.

The PRT report expands on the SSR by describing the PRT's verification of evidence listed in the SSR, and by describing evidence gathered by the PRT in documents and interviews onsite. The PRT report does not include any recommendation about the program's overall accreditation status, but does report regarding their analysis of the program's strength of compliance with each individual standards and criteria. The submitted PRT report is included as one document within the accreditation dossier provided to the JAC for decision-making.

Once submitted to the OTA & PTA EAP by the PRT Chair, the PRT report is reviewed by OTA & PTA EAP staff for formatting and consistency, and is then forwarded to the education program for review.

## Program Response to the Peer Review Team Report

Faculty and staff of the program being accredited are provided an opportunity to review the PRT report and provide a narrative response. The review of the PRT report by the program is intended for the program to correct factual errors (spelling, errors in names or attendees at meetings, other grammar errors) in the report, and not to provide new, updated, or more detailed information available since the visit date. It is acceptable for the education program to direct the JAC to evidence contained within the Self Study Report that provides evidence not identified in the PRT report. The Program Response is a stand-alone narrative document and is essential to the decision-making process. A sample Program Response is available on the OTA & PTA EAP website.

The program submits its response to OTA & PTA EAP electronically. The submitted Program Response is added to the accreditation dossier for review by the JAC.

## Decision-making Regarding Accreditation Status

OTA & PTA EAP staff prepares the confidential accreditation dossier, which includes the education program's Self Study Report, the Peer Review Team Report, and the Program Response to the PRT Report, for review by JAC members.

The JAC is a standing committee of both PEAC and CAOT. Its membership comprises individuals nominated from the following groups or organizations:

- Canadian Association of Occupational Therapy (CAOT) (2)
- Physiotherapy Education Accreditation Canada (PEAC) (2 – one member representing the physiotherapy regulators)
- Canadian Occupational and Physical Therapy Educators Council (COPEC) (2)
- OTA/PTA educator in a privately funded institution (1)
- Recent (within three years) OTA/PTA graduate (1)
- The public (1)
- Non-voting – OTA & PTA EAP Program Manager (1); CAOT staff liaison (1); PEAC staff liaison (1)

One additional member may be appointed to the JAC if required. A member may be removed from the JAC by the Chair (or Chair-designate/Chair-Elect) and the Program Manager in collaboration with the member's nominating organization (if applicable).

The JAC meets twice a year. Recommendations about a program's accreditation status are made based on information included in the confidential accreditation dossier.

A copy of the confidential dossier for each program being reviewed is distributed to JAC members prior to the meeting at which an accreditation award recommendation will be made. It is the JAC's role to review all relevant information provided in the accreditation dossier and make a recommendation about the program's accreditation status.

The JAC appoints two committee members to act as Primary Reviewers for each program's accreditation dossier for which a recommendation is being made. The Primary Reviewers receive the confidential accreditation dossier and a summary template. The role of the Primary Reviewers is to:

- review the program's confidential dossier
- present a summary of the PRT's views about the program's compliance with the accreditation standards and criteria
- present a summary of the education program's response to the PRT report
- present a summary about their views of the program's compliance with the accreditation standards and criteria
- make an initial determination of the level of the program's compliance with each accreditation criterion

### Criterion Met:

Feedback to the program; a response is not required.

#### Example

##### Standard 6 OTA/PTA Competencies

###### Criterion Met:

The accreditation documentation clearly indicates that there are objectives and supporting evidence for all criteria in Standard 6. The program may wish to consider ways and means whereby these various objectives and their supporting evidence can be easily tracked for future reference and accreditation reviews.

### Criterion Partially Met:

This designation should be used when the team is able to confirm through a review of evidence that the program is in partial compliance with the criterion, and *improvement is needed to achieve full compliance*.

#### Example:

##### Criterion 1.5 (CORE):

**The program has adequate financial resources to achieve its stated goals and objectives and assure its continuing operation.**

###### Criterion Partially Met:

At the time of the accreditation review, a program's current budget is balanced but it is recognized that cuts to the program are imminent, and the budget next fiscal year will be in deficit.

#### Example:

##### Criterion 2.1:

**The number and qualifications of faculty meet the program's mission, goals, and objectives through education administration, curriculum development, instructional design and delivery, and evaluation of outcomes.**

###### Criterion Partially Met:

At the time of the accreditation review, a program relied on a small number of faculty for implementation of the curriculum, carrying out many committee responsibilities and for all the program development. While several additional instructors were engaged on contract to have a high level of involvement in program development and implementation, as well as to participate in various program committees, they had an insecure status as their contracts were renewed annually, thus putting the longer term quality of the program at risk.

### Criterion Not Met:

This designation should only be used when the team is unable to find sufficient evidence that supports a program's compliance or when the evidence provided does not demonstrate compliance with the criterion.

## Example

Criterion 3.4.2 (CORE):

**CORE**

**Clinical/fieldwork education includes no less than 30% (150 hours) of the total time in each discipline for each student.**

Criterion Not Met:

A program provides evidence that 4 students did not complete the minimum required 150 fieldwork hours in OTA-specific practice.

Following a discussion which takes into consideration all documents relevant to a program's accreditation review, the JAC's accreditation status recommendation is recorded as a motion in the JAC meeting minutes. The accreditation status recommendation will be forwarded from the JAC (through the Program Manager) to the Boards of PEAC and CAOT, which award accreditation status ([\*ACC-03B Accreditation Decisions\*](#)).

### CORE Evaluative Criteria

The OTA & PTA EAP considers compliance with eight CORE accreditation criteria essential for accreditation. An education program must demonstrate compliance with the established CORE criteria to be granted full or partial accreditation. Non-compliance with one or more of the CORE criteria will result in probationary accreditation, or non-accreditation. *Note: Programs being evaluated using the pilot standards (i.e. those having completed a full accreditation onsite visit prior to October 2013) should reference the pilot accreditation standards which do not include CORE criteria.*

- Criterion 1.1      **CORE** The educational program is situated in an institution authorized under applicable law to provide postsecondary education in Canada.
- Criterion 1.4      **CORE** The program lead is a registered occupational therapist or physiotherapist who has the ability to provide leadership for the faculty, staff, and students and management of the program.
- 1.4.1    The program lead has adequate authority and resources to administer the program.
- Criterion 1.5      **CORE** The program has adequate financial resources to achieve its stated goals and objectives and assure its continuing operation.
- Criterion 2.1      The number and qualifications of faculty meet the program's mission, goals, and objectives through education administration, curriculum development, instructional design and delivery, and evaluation of outcomes.
- 2.1.1    **CORE** The occupational therapy content of the curriculum is overseen and taught by a registered occupational therapist with relevant academic and professional qualifications.
- 2.1.2    **CORE** The physiotherapy content is overseen and taught by a registered physiotherapist with relevant academic and professional qualifications.

- Criterion 3.4      **CORE** The program provides clinical education/fieldwork experiences in occupational therapy and physiotherapy that enable students to achieve the learning outcomes.
- 3.4.1      **CORE** Clinical/fieldwork education includes a minimum of 500 hours in the clinical setting.
- 3.4.2      **CORE** Clinical/fieldwork education includes no less than 30% (150 hours) of the total time in each discipline for each student.
- 3.4.3      **CORE** A registered occupational therapist faculty advisor is available to students and preceptors on issues related to occupational therapy practice in fieldwork. Similarly, a registered physiotherapist faculty advisor is available to students and preceptors on issues related to physiotherapy practice in fieldwork.

### Accreditation Status Awards

There are three options for accreditation decisions (*ACC-03B Accreditation Decisions*):

- i) **Accreditation**
  - a. Fully Compliant
  - b. Partially Compliant
  - c. Probationary
- ii) **Non-Accreditation**
- iii) **Deferral of Decision**

Decisions about these options are made based on the following parameters about a program's compliance with the OTA & PTA EAP evaluative criteria:

- **Criterion Met**

The program is in full compliance with the criterion. Recommendations for continued improvement may be shared. There is no requirement for a response via a Progress Report.
- **Criterion Partially Met**

Improvement is needed in order to achieve full compliance with the criterion. One or more Progress Reports will be required.
- **Criterion Not Met**

There is insufficient evidence to demonstrate compliance with the criterion OR required improvements have not been made (Progress Reports only). One or more Progress Reports will be required.

### Accreditation Decisions

The decision options and related conditions are outlined in *ACC-03 Accreditation Decisions* and include:

#### **Accreditation Fully Compliant**

A program meets 100% of the evaluative criteria in each of the eight standards (i.e.: no Criterion Not Met).

Award:      Accreditation

Options: Progress report required only in the event that one or more criteria are identified as Partially Met, and until all criteria are fully Met

**Accreditation Partially Compliant:**

A program meets all of the established CORE criteria (i.e. there is evidence to indicate that all CORE criteria have been fully or Partially Met)

**AND**

A program demonstrates compliance with 80% of the evaluative criteria in Standard 6 (OTA)

**AND**

A program demonstrates compliance with 80% of the evaluative criteria in Standard 6 (PTA)

**AND**

A program demonstrates compliance (i.e.: fully or Partially Met) with 80%-100% of the evaluative criteria in a minimum of three of the remaining standards and 50-79% of the evaluative criteria in a maximum of two standards

Award: Accreditation

Options: Progress reports required until the all criteria are fully Met. Failure to demonstrate evidence of progress towards full compliance may result in a change to probationary accreditation. Progress reports are required in 6 to 24 months from the date of the accreditation decision.

**Probationary Accreditation**

A program demonstrates compliance with less than 100% of the established CORE criteria (i.e. one or more CORE criteria are Not Met).

**OR**

Fewer than 50% of the evaluative criteria in one standard are fully or Partially Met (i.e. more than 50% of the evaluative criteria in one standard are Not Met).

**OR**

A program demonstrates compliance with 80% of Standard 6 but fewer than 80% of the evaluative criteria in three or more remaining standards are fully or Partially Met (i.e. more than 20% of the evaluative criteria in three or more standards are Not Met).

**OR**

A program fails to demonstrate evidence of progress from partial towards full compliance.

**OR**

A program fails to demonstrate evidence of progress from probationary towards partial or full compliance.

Award: Accreditation

Options: The maximum length of time a program can maintain probationary accreditation status is two years. Failure to demonstrate evidence that all evaluative criteria are fully or Partially Met by the end of this time period will result in non-accreditation status. The timeframe may be

extended by the OTA & PTA EAP if the program is able to demonstrate significant progress toward becoming compliant with accreditation standards and criteria.

A Progress Report will be required within 3 to 12 months of the accreditation award depending on the severity of the identified deficiencies. When a program demonstrates significant progress towards resolution of all outstanding areas, the OTA & PTA EAP may modify the program's accreditation status to partially or fully compliant.

Failure to demonstrate significant progress within the period specified in the Accreditation Review and Status Report will result in non-accreditation status at any time in the two-year probationary period. If an additional onsite review is required, the program will be responsible to pay any related expenses, and will be invoiced a \$2500 administrative fee.

### **Non-Accreditation**

A program does not meet the requirements for probationary accreditation

**OR**

A program with probationary accreditation has failed to demonstrate sufficient progress within the specified period (i.e. fails to meet requirements as outlined in the AR & SRs)

Options: A program may re-apply to initiate a full accreditation review at any time following the notice of non-accreditation status. When a program re-applies for a full accreditation review, it will have to provide evidence in its application that the identified areas of non-compliance have been addressed. A program remains non-accredited until a full accreditation review is completed and a change in accreditation status is made.

### **Deferral of Decision**

A decision will be deferred if it is deemed that further information is required from the program before a decision can be taken, or when extenuating circumstances impact upon the program or accreditation process. If an additional onsite review is required, the program will be responsible to pay for any related expenses, and will be invoiced a \$2500 administration fee.

## Accreditation of New Education Programs

If a new program wishes the first class of students to be considered as graduates from an accredited program, the accreditation process must be completed and an accreditation award decision made and awarded before any students graduate from the program. For this reason, at the time of the accreditation review, the program will be unable to fully comply with evaluative criteria 3.4, 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4. New programs may be awarded probationary accreditation status while accumulating evidence to demonstrate stronger compliance with the evaluative criteria.

## Notification of Decisions Made about a Program’s Accreditation Status

Following any decisions made by the Boards of Directors of PEAC and CAOT in relation to a program’s accreditation status, an official report and letter will be prepared by the OTA & PTA EAP and forwarded to the program. The report, in the form of an *Accreditation Review and Status Report (AR & SR)*, will include the following information:

- name of the program, and the institution
- accreditation status
- effective date for the accreditation status
- explanation of the reasons for the decision about accreditation status
- the extent to which the program is in compliance with the OTA & PTA EAP accreditation standards and criteria, including an explanation for the findings
- commendations
- action required by the program

This report will be addressed to the institution administrator responsible for the program (e.g. Dean/Director of the department) with a cc to the program coordinator. The letter accompanying the AR & SR will contain an acknowledgement form, to be copied onto institutional letterhead, signed and returned electronically to the OTA & PTA EAP, within two weeks of receipt of the AR & SR, acknowledging receipt of the accreditation decision and required action.

## Probationary Accreditation

Probationary Accreditation status is granted when a program has been found to have significant areas of non-compliance and/or partial compliance with the accreditation standards and criteria or when the program has not addressed required actions as outlined in the previous AR & SR.

The OTA & PTA EAP will provide the program coordinator, the administrator to whom the program coordinator reports and the administration with written documentation about the probationary accreditation status. This documentation will include specific information about how the program is judged to be in non-compliance or partial compliance and a deadline date for the program to become compliant with the accreditation standards and criteria. Within two weeks of receipt of the AR & SR, the program coordinator and the administrator to whom the program coordinator reports are required to inform the faculty, instructors, staff, students enrolled in the program and students seeking enrollment in the program about the probationary accreditation status. The OTA & PTA EAP will request evidence of notification.

The required language to be used to notify students, and potential students, of the probationary accreditation status is:

*The Occupational Therapist Assistant and Physiotherapist Assistant Education Accreditation Program (OTA & PTA EAP) is responsible for accrediting OTA/PTA education programs. The (Program NAME at Institution NAME), following the most recent (Accreditation Review visit/Progress Report submission), has received notice from the OTA & PTA EAP that the program has been awarded Probationary Accreditation Status. Probationary status is awarded when*



*deficiencies are identified with respect to compliance with some of the accreditation standards and criteria.*

*(Program NAME) will be working towards fixing these identified deficiencies, with the goal to be awarded Partial or Full Accreditation status. In the unlikely event that the (Program NAME) is awarded non-accreditation status in the future, students in their graduating year who successfully complete the program within the original time frame scheduled for their graduation, will be considered as graduates of an accredited program. All other students enrolled in the program will not be considered graduates of an accredited program if (Program NAME) is awarded non-accreditation status before their graduation.*

*Details regarding accreditation decisions, including probationary accreditation status, can be found on the OTA & PTA EAP website (otapta.ca). Any questions can be directed to (Program NAME) (faculty member name).*

The maximum length of time a program can maintain Probationary Accreditation status is two years. The program will be required to submit Progress Reports, at specified times, to indicate progress towards becoming compliant with the accreditation standards and criteria. An onsite review visit may be required to assess the program's compliance. If this is the case, the program will pay the expenses of the onsite review, and will be invoiced a \$2500 administration fee.

### **Probationary Accreditation Status → Accreditation, Partially or Fully Compliant:**

A change of status from probationary to partially or fully compliant would occur when a program demonstrates significant progress towards resolution of all outstanding areas. This change can take place at any time within the two years.

### **Probationary Accreditation Status → Non-Accreditation**

The OTA & PTA EAP may withdraw the program's Probationary Accreditation status if the following situations occur:

1. The program fails to demonstrate evidence of substantial compliance with the accreditation standards and criteria within the specified reporting time; or
2. The JAC receives clear evidence that circumstances exist that further jeopardize the capability of the program or the institution to provide an acceptable educational experience for the students.

This change can take place at any time within the two-year probationary period.

## **Non-Accreditation**

When non-accreditation status is being granted, the following conditions will apply:

1. Effective Date of Decision

The decision shall become effective thirty (30) days after the date on which the official notification of the decision is sent to the institution. If the institution appeals the accreditation decision (see ACC-04

Accreditation Decision Appeal Process), the effective date of the decision shall be the date upon which the appeal process is completed.

## 2. Notification regarding non-accreditation

The OTA & PTA EAP will provide written notification to the program coordinator, the administrator to whom the coordinator reports, and the administration, that will include specific information about where the program is judged to be non-compliant and/or in partial compliance with the accreditation standards and criteria and the basis for the decision of non-accreditation.

The written notification of the change in accreditation status will: a) advise the institution that it has the right to appeal the decision; and b) provide institution with a copy of policy ACC-04 Accreditation Decision Appeal Process.

Within two weeks of the effective date of the decision, the program coordinator and the administrator to whom the program coordinator reports are required to individually inform the faculty, instructors, staff, students enrolled in the program and students seeking enrollment in the program about the Non-Accreditation status. The OTA & PTA EAP will request evidence of notification.

The required language to notify students of the non-accreditation status decision is:

*The Occupational Therapist Assistant and Physiotherapist Assistant Education Accreditation Program (OTA & PTA EAP) is responsible for accrediting OTA/PTA education programs. The (Program NAME at Institution NAME), following the most recent (Accreditation Review visit/Progress Report submission), has received notice from the OTA & PTA EAP that the program is deemed non-accredited, due to lack of compliance with the Accreditation Standards and criteria.*

*Students in their graduating year who successfully complete the program within the original time frame scheduled for their graduation will be considered as graduates of an accredited program. All other students enrolled in the program will not be considered graduates of an accredited program upon graduation.*

*Details regarding accreditation decisions can be found on the OTA & PTA EAP website (otapta.ca). Any questions can be directed to (Program NAME) (faculty member name).*

Within two weeks of the effective date of the decision, the program must remove any statement identifying the program as accredited by the OTA & PTA EAP from its website and in all publications.

## 3. Impact of Non-Accreditation on students

If a program with accreditation, fully or partially compliant loses accreditation status, students who started in the program will be considered as graduates of an accredited program, if the program respects certain conditions. The conditions, may, for example, specify requirements for academic education of fieldwork and will be specified by the JAC on a program-by-program basis.

If a program with probationary accreditation loses accreditation status, the impact on students enrolled in the program on the effective date of the non-accreditation is as follows:

- Students in their final year of study will be considered to be graduates of an accredited program, if they successfully complete the program within the original time frame scheduled for their graduation
- Students not in their final year of study will not be considered graduates of an accredited program

If a program admits students while under probationary accreditation and the program moves to non-accreditation status, those students will be considered as graduates of a non-accredited program. Therefore, it is critical that those students seeking enrollment in the program are informed of the program's probationary accreditation status as required by the OTA & PTA EAP (see p 29).

#### 4. Re-application for accreditation

Should a program awarded non-accreditation status wish to re-apply for accreditation, the program will be required to wait a minimum of one year from the effective date of the decision. Following the one-year wait period, the program must re-apply for and be awarded candidacy status before being scheduled for a full accreditation review and accreditation decision.

Upon formal request, the JAC may consider an expedited review. The formal request should outline in detail how the program has addressed the deficiencies identified in the notice of non-accreditation. An administrative cost of \$200 to file a formal request will apply.

## Publication of Accreditation Decisions

### Publication by OTA & PTA EAP

All final decisions made in the fiscal year (January 1 to December 31) about candidacy status and accreditation awards will be published in the PEAC Annual Report. The list will include start/end dates of candidacy status awards, and start/expiry dates of accreditation awards.

The full list of education programs affiliated with the OTA & PTA EAP will be published on the OTA & PTA EAP website and will include start/end dates of candidacy status awards, and start/expiry dates of accreditation awards.

### Publication by the Education Program

Education programs are required to publish their accreditation status, as part of their responsibility to maintain compliance with the accreditation standards. This information must be easily accessible for prospective and current students and other stakeholders/partners in the education program, and must be visible on the program's website.

As per ACC-09 Disclosure, the required text for publishing this information is

*The (name of program) at (institution) has been accredited by the Occupational Therapist Assistant and Physiotherapist Assistant Education Accreditation Program, in collaboration with Physiotherapy Education Accreditation Canada (PEAC) and the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT). The status of Accreditation was granted to the program on (date decision was taken) for the period until (the end of the accreditation cycle).*

When and wherever an education program makes public disclosure of its accreditation status, it must include the full name, address and contact information for OTA & PTA EAP as: *Occupational Therapist Assistant and Physiotherapist Assistant Education Accreditation Program, c/o PEAC, Suite 26, 509 Commissioners Road West, London, Ontario, N6J 1Y5, (226) 636-0632, www.otapta.ca.*

Should the program choose to make public the contents of its accreditation reports, including the *Accreditation Review and Status Report*, the report must be published in full.

### **Publication of Decision – Non-Accreditation**

When non-accreditation is awarded to a program, the program and the institution must publish the fact that the program received a non-accreditation status. This must include:

- individual notification to all prospective students, and to all students (see required text p.31) enrolled in the program at the time the non-accreditation status was awarded
- publication on the program’s web site

The required language to notify students of the non-accreditation status decision is:

*The Occupational Therapist Assistant and Physiotherapist Assistant Education Accreditation Program (OTA & PTA EAP) is responsible for accrediting OTA/PTA education programs. The (Program NAME at Institution NAME), following the most recent (Accreditation Review visit/Progress Report submission), has received notice from the OTA & PTA EAP that the program is deemed non-accredited, due to lack of compliance with the Accreditation Standards and criteria.*

*Students in their graduating year who successfully complete the program within the original time frame scheduled for their graduation, will be considered as graduates of an accredited program. All other students enrolled in the program will not be considered graduates of an accredited program upon graduation.*

*Details regarding accreditation decisions can be found on the OTA & PTA EAP website (otapta.ca). Any questions can be directed to Program NAME faculty member.*

The OTA & PTA will identify the education program as non-accredited on the list of affiliated education programs on the OTA & PTA EAP website. Notice of non-accreditation will be included in PEAC’s Annual Report.

## Timelines for Accreditation Activities

Information about the typical accreditation process and timelines for completion of related activities is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Accreditation Program Activities and Timelines – all activities

Accreditation Activity	Timeline for Completion of Activity	Lead Responsibility
<b>Prior to onsite review</b>		
<b>1. Planning for accreditation</b>		
Submit Letter of Intent to OTA & PTA EAP	12 months prior to onsite review	Education Program
Provide consultation for accreditation activities	Throughout accreditation process	OTA & PTA EAP
Schedule date for on-site peer review in consultation with program	10 -12 months prior to on-site review	OTA & PTA EAP
Select members of PRT in consultation with program	10 months prior to on-site review	OTA & PTA EAP
<b>2. Program Self Study</b>		
Complete Self-Study Report and submit electronically to OTA & PTA EAP	5 months prior to onsite review	Education Program
Distribute to PRT members	2 months prior to offsite review teleconference	OTA & PTA EAP
<b>3. Offsite Review</b>		
Review Self Study Report and complete offsite review via teleconference	3 months prior to onsite review	PRT OTA & PTA EAP
Complete offsite report	2 weeks following offsite review teleconference	PRT
Forward offsite report to education program	Upon receipt of offsite report	OTA & PTA EAP
<b>4. Onsite Visit</b>		
Confirm schedule for site visit in consultation with the OTA & PTA EAP and PRT Chair	In time for offsite review teleconference	Education Program PRT Chair
Prepare materials for review as requested in the offsite report	In time for onsite review	Education Program
Conduct onsite visit	At scheduled time	PRT

Following Onsite Review		
5. Post Review Survey		
Send evaluation survey link to program for completion	Immediately	OTA & PTA EAP
Complete post-review survey	Upon receipt of URL	Education Program
6. PRT Report		
Preparation of report and submission to the OTA & PTA EAP	Within 2 weeks of the onsite visit	PRT OTA & PTA EAP
Send evaluation survey link to PRT for completion	Immediately upon receipt of PRT report	OTA & PTA EAP
Complete post-review survey	Immediately upon receipt of URL	PRT
Forward report to education program for review	Immediately upon receipt of PRT report	OTA & PTA EAP
Respond to the report	2 weeks following receipt	Education Program
Prepare Accreditation Dossier	Immediately upon receipt of Program Response	OTA & PTA EAP
Following PRT Report Completion		
7. Decision-making re: Accreditation Status		
Review Accreditation Dossier and make accreditation award recommendation	At scheduled JAC meetings twice annually	JAC
Forward accreditation award recommendation and required documentation to PEAC and CAOT	Within 2 weeks of JAC meeting	OTA & PTA EAP
Review recommendation and make accreditation award decision	At next scheduled Board meeting	CAOT & PEAC
Notify education Program, Program administration, Peer Review Team members, JAC members	Within 6 weeks of receipt of accreditation award decision	OTA & PTA EAP
Publish results	Within 2 weeks of receipt of accreditation award decision	OTA & PTA EAP
Destruction of all materials (electronic and hard copy) related to the review, and completion/ submission of FORM-06	Within 4 weeks of receipt of accreditation award decision Upon notification by the OTA & PTA	Education Program PRT JAC

## Onsite Review: Responsibilities of the Education Program

Information about the responsibilities of the education program during the accreditation process and related timelines for completion of activities are provided in Table 2.

Table 2. Education Program Responsibilities

Responsibility / Activity	Completion
<b>Before the onsite review</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>Time before visit:</b></span>	
Forward Letter of Intent to OTA & PTA EAP	12 months
Review PRT and approve member	10 months
Submit Self Study Report by due date	5 months
Review PRT offsite report and prepare for onsite review based on feedback	3 months
Develop schedule for onsite visit with PRT Chair and OTA & PTA EAP	4 months
Schedule all required meetings and interviews, including booking meeting rooms	At least 4 months
<b>During the Onsite Review</b>	
<p>Meet with PRT at hotel Sunday at 4:00pm, day prior to onsite visit</p> <p>Provide transportation to and from the hotel/campus for PRT each day, or make alternative mutually agreed-upon arrangements.</p> <p>Provide orientation/tour for PRT to program site and introduce PRT to program faculty and staff.</p> <p>Provide secure room with Internet access for PRT to review materials</p> <p>Provide additional room to conduct interviews</p> <p>Discuss any special arrangements or revisions to schedule and adapt the schedule as required</p> <p>Facilitate adherence to the planned schedule</p> <p>Introduce PRT to personnel when visiting outside of the program</p> <p>Be available to provide information or other support to PRT as required</p> <p>Arrange for mid-day meal and breaks as required</p>	

Responsibility / Activity	Completion
Arrange for transportation as required to clinical facilities, and/or other campus locations	
<b>Following the onsite review</b>	<b>Time after visit</b>
Distribute evaluation survey (provided by OTA & PTA EAP) to appropriate faculty and staff	1-2 weeks
Receive the PRT report for review	2 weeks
Submit Program Response electronically to the OTA & PTA EAP	4 weeks

### Onsite Review: Responsibilities of OTA & PTA EAP

Information about the responsibilities of the OTA & PTA EAP during the accreditation process and related timelines for completion of activities are provided in Table 3.

Table 3. Responsibilities of the OTA & PTA EAP

Responsibility / Activity	Completion
<b>Before the onsite review</b>	<b>Time before visit:</b>
Receive Letter of Intent from program	12 months
Schedule date for onsite visit	12 months
Appoint PRT members and Chair	10 months
Forward PRT names to education program and receive approval	10 months
Ensure all forms (Confidentiality/Conflict of Interest) are signed and submitted by the PRT	9 months
Schedule date for offsite review teleconference	8 months
Provide access to OTA & PTA EAP education modules to PRT	8 months
Receive Self Study Report from education program	5 months
Distribute copy of Self Study Report to PRT members	4 months
Participate in offsite review teleconference	3 months



Responsibility / Activity	Completion
Organize travel and accommodation for PRT members (including meeting room at hotel for PRT)	3 months
<b>Following the onsite review</b>	<b>Time after visit</b>
Send post-visit evaluation survey link to program	Immediately
Receive PRT report from PRT	2 weeks
Send evaluation survey link to PRT for completion	2 weeks
Review/edit PRT report for consistency	2 weeks
Send PRT report to education program for review/clarification	2 weeks
Receive Program Response to PRT report from the education program	4 weeks
Prepare accreditation dossier for JAC, and Boards of PEAC CAOT	For respective meeting dates
Summarize evaluations	8 weeks
Notify program of accreditation award decision	Upon notification of accreditation award decision
Notify PRT of accreditation award decision and request destruction of confidential information	Upon notification of accreditation award decision

# REQUIREMENTS FOR MAINTAINING ACCREDITATION STATUS

It is the responsibility of the education program to maintain compliance with the candidacy status criteria and/or accreditation standards. In order to maintain candidacy or accreditation status once awarded, education programs must ensure compliance with the following requirements:

- i) submission of Progress Reports as required in the AR & SR (accredited programs only)
- ii) submission of an annual accreditation report (online survey)
- iii) payment of an annual fee (invoiced by the OTA & PTA EAP in mid-December each year, payment due by February 28) (*GUIDE-03-Fee Schedule*)
- iv) reporting of any substantive change in an education program which may affect compliance (*ACC-07 Substantive Change*)
- v) publication of accreditation status using required text (*ACC-09 Disclosure*)
- vi) use of approved text to publicly disclose candidacy status, if choosing to publish candidacy status (*ACC-09 Disclosure, ACC-14 Candidacy Status*)

Failure to comply with these requirements will result in a program being placed on administrative probation, and may result in non-accreditation status, or, in the case of a program with candidacy status, termination of the program's affiliation with the OTA & PTA EAP (*ACC-11 Administrative Probation*).

## Progress Reports

The AR & SR serves as the official position of the OTA & PTA EAP regarding the accreditation status of an education program. The OTA & PTA EAP will request that a program submit a Progress Report when the decision is made that a program has:

- accreditation status, fully compliant, with one or more criteria identified as Partially Met  
OR
- accreditation status, partially compliant  
OR
- probationary accreditation

Programs requested to submit Progress Reports are provided a due date for submission.

## Content of Progress Reports

The Progress Report is a narrative report. The AR & SR will include information about the required content of the Progress Report. The AR & SR includes comments about each evaluative criterion that the program must address and a request for information and examples of evidence to indicate the program's compliance with the criterion – programs should refer to the accreditation standards for examples of evidence. The program must provide a significant level of detail and analysis about the evidence it provides in the Progress Report to indicate how the evidence demonstrates the program's compliance with the accreditation standards. A sample Progress Report is available on the OTA & PTA EAP website. If there is a question about content of the AR & SR, it is the program's responsibility to request clarification from the OTA & PTA EAP.

## Submission of Progress Reports

The AR & SR will indicate the date by which the Progress Report is to be submitted electronically to OTA & PTA EAP.

## Failure to Submit a Progress Report

Failure to submit the Progress Report by the specified date will result in a program being placed on administrative probation, and may result in non-accreditation status (*ACC-11 Administrative Probation*).

## Accreditation Decisions Based on the Progress Report

Progress Reports will be reviewed at JAC meetings twice annually on a schedule similar to that of full onsite accreditation reviews. The accreditation dossier provided to JAC members and the appointed Primary Reviewers will include the most recent AR & SR outlining the requested content of the Progress Report, the submitted Progress Report, and the Primary Reviewers' report. Assessment of program's compliance with accreditation standards will be based on the accreditation Standards document used at the time of the original onsite accreditation review (Pilot or 2012 or 2012 (2016 revision)).

The accreditation award decisions which could be made by the OTA & PTA EAP following review of the accreditation dossier include:

### Accreditation, Fully Compliant:

Request: A second Progress Report will be required if one or more criteria are identified as Partially Met. Failure to adequately address the responses required in the first Progress Report may result in a change to partially compliant, probationary or non-accreditation status.

### Accreditation, Partially Compliant:

Request: Progress Reports will be required until a program demonstrates evidence of full compliance with all of the evaluative criteria. Failure to demonstrate progress towards full compliance may result in a change in accreditation status to probationary or non-accreditation.

### Probationary Accreditation:

The maximum length of time a program can maintain probationary accreditation status is two years. Failure to demonstrate evidence that all evaluative criteria are fully or Partially Met by the end of this time period will result in non-accreditation status. The timeframe may be extended by the OTA & PTA EAP if the program is able to demonstrate significant progress toward becoming compliant with accreditation standards and criteria

A Progress Report will be required within 3 to 12 months of the accreditation decision. When a program demonstrates significant progress towards resolution of all outstanding areas, the OTA & PTA EAP may modify the program's accreditation status to partially or fully compliant any time within the two-year probationary period.

Failure to demonstrate significant progress within the period specified in the AR & SR will result in non-accreditation status at any time within the two-year probationary period. If an additional onsite review is required, the program will be responsible to pay any related expenses, and will be invoiced a \$2500 administrative fee.

For all reviews of submitted Progress Reports, the accreditation decision will be provided to the education program in a new AR & SR, addressed to the institution administrator responsible for the program (e.g. Dean/Director of the department) with a copy to the program coordinator.

## Annual Accreditation Reports

Programs with either candidacy status or accreditation status are required to submit annual accreditation reports. The purpose of the report is to collect descriptive data for inclusion in a comprehensive database about occupational therapist assistant and physiotherapist assistant education in Canada.

OTA & PTA EAP will notify each program once a year and provide the necessary survey link for completion.

## Annual Fee

Programs are invoiced each year by the OTA & PTA EAP. Payment is due within 60 days of receipt of the invoice (typically by February 28). There are no additional fees charged at the time of the onsite review, with some exceptions (e.g. those with distributed education sites).

After the due date, the annual accreditation fee increases by 10%, and failure to submit the annual accreditation fee + 10% within 45 days of the due date will result in the program being placed on administrative probation (*GUIDE-03 Fee Schedule*).

## Reporting of Substantive Change

If a program undergoes changes that impact its compliance with candidacy criteria or accreditation standards, the OTA & PTA EAP must be notified within two months of the implementation of the change. Any change which alters the circumstance under which the program was accredited will necessitate a reassessment. Categories of substantive change include:

1. Change in contact information.
2. Change that impacts on compliance with candidacy status criteria:
  - d. Change in authorization/registration status of affiliated institutions to provide post-secondary education
  - e. Change in program leadership
  - f. Change in fieldwork resulting in fewer than 500 OTA/PTA fieldwork hours
  - g. Major curriculum revision, including pedagogy
  - h. Change in financial resources
  - i. Change in physical location or space

3. Change that impacts on compliance with accreditation standards:
  - a. Change in program governance or administrative structure
  - b. Change in program leadership
  - c. Change in financial resources
  - d. Substantive curriculum revision<sup>9</sup>
  - e. Change in fieldwork resulting in fewer than 500 OTA/PTA fieldwork hours
  - f. Substantive change in faculty complement
  - g. Change in physical location or space
  - h. Change in diploma, degree or program offered
  - i. Decision not to admit a class of students
  - j. Plans for temporary or permanent closure of the program
4. Change in number or nature of distributed sites or addition of new programs (ACC-08 Distributed Education)

Failure to notify OTA & PTA EAP of substantive changes within the required time period will result in the program being placed on administrative probation (ACC-11 Administrative Probation). In many cases, submission of documents may be sufficient for the reassessment. Procedures describing the written information required when submitting a report of substantive change are provided in policy ACC-07 Substantive Change.

### Publication of Accreditation Status

Accredited education programs are required to publish their accreditation status; this information must be easily accessible for prospective and current students and other stakeholders/partners of the education program (see p. 31 for required text) (ACC-09 Disclosure).

Failure to publish accreditation status as per these requirements will result in the program being placed on administrative probation.

### Use of Approved Text to Publish Candidacy Status

The publication of candidacy status is optional for an education program. However, should the education program choose to publish its candidacy status, the required text (see p. 11) must be used (ACC-14 Candidacy Status).

Failure to use the approved text will result in the program being placed on administrative probation.

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<sup>9</sup> Curriculum is defined as the list of subjects composing a structured training and/or educational program organized into a course, courses or work experiences that develop the knowledge, skills and abilities of learners. The curriculum has an implicit or explicit set of goals and objectives with respect to learning outcomes. This could be a pictorial model or figure identifying concepts and links between concepts (CAOT, 2005).

# THE PEER REVIEW TEAM

## Composition and Role of the Peer Review Team

The OTA & PTA EAP maintains a list of qualified PRT members who can be appointed as members of a PRT. Each PRT comprises four members:

- one occupational therapist representing the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT)
- one occupational therapist OTA/PTA educator
- one physiotherapist representing Physiotherapy Education Accreditation Canada (PEAC)
- one physiotherapist OTA/PTA educator

The PRT for single-discipline programs (e.g. PTA) will be composed of two members of the program's discipline.

The responsibilities of the members of the PRT are to:

- complete an offsite and onsite review of an OTA & PTA education program
- verify and supplement evidence provided by the education program in the Self Study Report
- assess the program within the context of its environment
- prepare and submit a report about the program's compliance with the OTA & PTA EAP accreditation standards

*The PRT does not make a recommendation concerning the program's overall accreditation status*, but does report regarding the level of compliance with individual standards and criteria.

PRT members are selected at least ten months in advance of the onsite review. PRT members are selected from the OTA & PTA EAP pool of trained reviewers, considering any specific needs of the education program and other factors such as geography, language preference and conflict of interest. Members of the PRT are directly accountable to the OTA & PTA EAP, and to the Boards of Directors of PEAC and CAOT.

## PRT Member Nomination

The OTA & PTA EAP maintains a list of qualified PRT members who can be appointed when needed to a Peer Review Team. Each PRT for OTA/PTA education programs consists of four members, including one physiotherapist OTA/PTA educator and one occupational therapist OTA/PTA educator.

In order to ensure availability of PRT members at the time of an accreditation review, it is necessary that education programs with candidacy status or accreditation status strongly encourage and support their educators who meet the PRT member eligibility criteria (*GUIDE-05 Eligibility to Become a PRT Member*) to submit the required application form and documentation in order to be included in the pool of PRT members.

## Eligibility for Appointment to the Pool of PRT Members

The following general criteria are used to select individuals who can be appointed to the pool of PRT members (*ACC-01 Appointment to the Pool of PRT Members*).

All applicants must:

- be registered occupational therapists or physiotherapists
- OR
- be an individual with a background in occupational therapy or physiotherapy who was registered to practice the profession by a Canadian regulatory authority within the preceding ten (10) years and was in good standing at the time of resigning registration
- have a minimum of five years' experience as an occupational therapist or physiotherapist
- be willing to accept the responsibilities related to conducting the accreditation review including:
  - commitment to the confidentiality policies
  - acknowledgement of any conflict of interest
  - review of the program's SSR and all related materials
  - ability to objectively collect, analyze, and communicate all pertinent data related to the offsite and onsite reviews
  - acceptance of responsibility for own behaviour and actions

PRT members representing CAOT and PEAC must:

- be approved by their respective organization to be a PRT member
- have experience supervising and/or administering programs employing OTAs and/or PTAs

PRT members representing OTA/PTA educators must:

- have a minimum of five years' experience as an OTA/PTA educator
- be working a minimum of 90 hours per year in an education program

OR

- have worked a minimum of 90 hours per year in an education program within the past 3 years

**NOTE:** Sessional or contracted instructors, as well as full- and part-time faculty in OTA/PTA education programs are eligible to apply to become PRT members.

## Selection and Appointment of Peer Review Team Members

### Peer Review Team Member

The OTA & PTA EAP Program Manager selects members of the PRT from the pool of eligible PRT members in consultation with PEAC and CAOT. Subsequently, the program coordinator of the education program undergoing review provides approval of all PRT members. An education program, for just cause, may request a replacement of any PRT member.

### Peer Review Team Chair

The PRT Chair is selected by the OTA & PTA EAP Program Manager from the pool of eligible PRT members in consultation with PEAC and CAOT.

The following specific criteria are used as guidelines for appointment of the Chair:

- proficiency in the language of instruction of the program, including both oral and written communication
- participation as a PRT member for at least one previous review
- positive past performance review(s) as rated by education programs and other PRT members

Every effort will be made to include an experienced PRT Chair as a member of the PRT the first time a reviewer acts as a PRT Chair. The experienced Chair will serve as a mentor to the less experienced Chair.

## Conflict of Interest –Peer Review Team Members

Individuals, including PRT members, who conduct business on behalf of the OTA & PTA EAP must be committed to the values of the organization. Equity is one such value whereby policies and processes are applied fairly, consistently and objectively at all times. In support of this value and good practices, the OTA & PTA EAP strives to avoid conflict of interest, or the appearance of conflict of interest, in all aspects of its activities.

PRT members are expected to declare a conflict of interest in participating in an accreditation review if he or she:

- is or was an employee of the institution being accredited
- is serving or has recently served in the capacity as a consultant, or clinical or honorary faculty member of the institution being accredited
- has a monetary or personal interest in the outcome of an accreditation decision for institution being accredited
- has close personal or professional relationships with individuals in the program at the institution being accredited
- has or a member of his or her immediate family be involved with the education program of the institution being accredited either as a student, staff or faculty member

Individuals who participate in any aspect of OTA & PTA EAP activities (including PRT members) are expected to recognize relationships in which they have an actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest and disclose such conflicts to the OTA & PTA EAP.

A JAC member who was a PRT member for the review of the program for which accreditation status is being considered may participate in the discussion to clarify the PRT report and to answer questions. The member must avoid adding any new information during the meeting, and must abstain from voting regarding the program's accreditation status.

Upon appointment to the PRT, all members are asked to review the OTA & PTA EAP Conflict of Interest policy (*ACC-02 Conflict of Interest*) to carefully consider whether they are eligible to serve on the PRT. PRT members complete *FORM-09 Conflict of Interest Declaration*.

## Confidentiality

Participation in the offsite review, the onsite review, and all related processes and materials are considered to be of a highly confidential nature. Therefore, PRT members are not authorized to discuss activities of the specific review, or related documents and the findings of the review except with other members of the PRT, OTA & PTA EAP staff and other JAC representatives as appropriate. Documentation relating to an accreditation review must



be protected through use of locked filing cabinets, password protection on computers/laptops, password protected USB keys, and use of only those third-party service providers approved by the OTA & PTA EAP. Any confidential documents sent via email must be password protected, with the password sent in a separate email. ([ACC-06 Electronic Storage of Confidential Documents](#))

Any information or materials acquired through accreditation processes must not be used for purposes other than accreditation matters, unless permission is granted from the education program or institution, and the OTA & PTA EAP.

Once a decision is made regarding the accreditation status of an education program by PEAC and CAOT, PRT members are advised of the decision and are asked to dispose of all materials related to the accreditation review by shredding hard copies, and/or deleting all electronic documents. PRT members are required to sign a form confirming they have complied with this policy and return the form to the OTA & PTA EAP ([FORM-06 Confirmation of Document Disposal - PRT](#)).

PRT members (prior to each accreditation review) and JAC members (annually) sign a confidentiality agreement with the OTA & PTA EAP ([FORM-04 Confidentiality Agreement – PRT](#) and [FORM-05 Confidentiality Agreement – JAC](#)).

## Roles of the PRT Members

The PRT members have responsibilities to:

- review the PRT Handbook including the accreditation standards
- review the education program's SSR and all supporting documentation prior to the offsite review
- complete two online training/education programs
- participate in an orientation teleconference with the PRT members shortly after receipt of the SSR for review
- participate in the offsite review teleconference and collaborate to write the offsite review report
- participate in a PRT meeting at the hotel the day before the review to discuss the schedule for the onsite review, areas of compliance requiring clarification, development of a plan for verification, and selection of questions for the onsite interviews
- participate and/or lead interviews with program faculty, staff and students, clinicians, and administrators
- collect required data and make observations
- collaboratively write the PRT report

In addition to the general PRT responsibilities, the PRT Chair has the overall responsibility for completion of the accreditation review and specifically has responsibilities to:

- act as the official spokesperson for the PRT
- work with the program coordinator and the OTA & PTA EAP to establish the schedule for the onsite review; consult with the program coordinator regarding any required changes to the schedule during the onsite review
- allocate responsibilities for PRT members for required activities to complete the onsite review
- lead the PRT meetings before, during and, if necessary after the onsite review
- be familiar with any previous reports and accreditation decisions related to the program being reviewed

- collaboratively write and submit the final PRT report

Additional tips and suggestions for the PRT Chair can be found in [GUIDE-09 PRT Chair – Tips and Suggestions](#).

## Orientation and Training Programs

Orientation and training for PRT members is provided by OTA & PTA EAP and includes the following:

- completion of a generic online training program developed by the Association of Accrediting Agencies of Canada (AAAC) for accreditation assessors<sup>10</sup>
- completion of an OTA & PTA EAP specific education module online
- provision of the OTA & PTA EAP PRT Accreditation Handbook
- teleconference orientation meeting prior to the accreditation offsite review for the purpose of team building, description of expectations for the offsite review, planning for the onsite review and delegation of PRT member responsibilities
- sample reports to guide report writing
- ongoing access to resources, i.e., access to the online training programs for one year, PRT Handbook on the OTA & PTA EAP web site.

## Onsite Review: Responsibilities of the PRT

Information about the responsibilities of the PRT during the accreditation process, and related timelines for completion of activities are provided in Table 4.

Table 4. Peer Review Team Responsibilities

Responsibility / Activity	Completion
<b>Before the onsite review</b>	<b>Time before visit:</b>
Complete two online training modules	5 months
Participate in an orientation teleconference	5 months
Receive and conduct general review of the SSR and participate in offsite review teleconference meeting	3-5 months
PRT Chair works with OTA & PTA EAP and education program coordinator to develop schedule for onsite visit	3-4 months
Prepare PRT offsite review report and submit to OTA & PTA EAP	2-3 months
Conduct review of the education program SSR and begin to draft PRT onsite review report	2-4 weeks

<sup>10</sup> Both the online training program developed by the Association of the Accrediting Agencies of Canada (AAAC) AND the OTA & PTA EAP online course must be completed by new PRT members prior to the orientation teleconference scheduled five months prior to the onsite visit; the fees to access the programs are paid by the OTA & PTA EAP.

Responsibility / Activity	Completion
<b>During the onsite review</b>	
<p>PRT Chair consults with education program coordinator throughout the visit about the schedule and any special arrangements</p> <p>Participate in PRT meeting Sunday (day before site visit begins)</p> <p>Conduct/participate in interviews and tours of facilities as required</p> <p>Participate in PRT meetings to discuss findings and reach consensus on PRT report</p> <p>Complete the draft of the PRT report</p>	
<b>Following the onsite review</b>	<b>Time after visit</b>
Collaborate to prepare the final PRT report and submit to the OTA & PTA EAP	2 weeks
Complete the onsite review evaluation survey (link provided by the OTA & PTA EAP)	2 weeks
Destroy/delete copies of confidential material as instructed by OTA & PTA EAP	Following notification of final accreditation decision

*(this template should be copied onto the program's institutional letterhead for submission)*

The Program Name at *Institution Name* intends to initiate the OTA & PTA EAP accreditation review process.

Date of expiry of current accreditation status (if applicable):

*Date*

In order to initiate the process, the *Program Name* at *Institution Name* acknowledges the following:

- Review and understanding of the Program Accreditation Handbook
- Review of the examples of a Self Study Report for reference
- Review and understanding of the format, content, and method of submission required for the Self Study Report and Self Study Inventory
- Acceptance of the timelines for submission of key documentation in the accreditation process including
  - confirmation of PRT members
  - Self Study Report and Self Study Inventory
  - onsite visit schedule
  - receipt of PRT offsite review report and necessary follow up
  - receipt of PRT onsite review report
  - submission of Program Response
- Responsibilities of the program with respect to the onsite visit
  - arrangement of all interviews and interviewees as outlined in the onsite visit schedule
  - transportation of the PRT between the hotel and campus each day
  - provision of snacks and lunch for the team day
  - booking of meeting space for the PRT as described in the Program Accreditation Handbook
- Availability of OTA & PTA EAP staff to provide assistance/guidance when required

The *Program Name* at *Institution Name* acknowledges that if it does not comply with the timelines and responsibilities referred to above, the review will not proceed and any costs associated with travel arrangements by the accreditation team will be reimbursed to the OTA & PTA EAP by the *Program Name* at *Institution Name*.

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*Name of Education Program Coordinator*

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*Title of Education Program Coordinator*

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*Signature*

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*Date*

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*Name of Administrator*

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*Title of Administrator*

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*Signature*

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*Date*

## Appendix 2 - Sample Onsite Schedule

The schedule below is a guide to assist in planning the onsite visit. The timing, participants and order of activities may vary according to the characteristics and needs of individual programs.

### Day 1

Time	Place	Participants/Activity
14:00	Hotel	PRT coordination meeting
16:00	Hotel	Program coordinator (includes overview of curriculum, and discussion re. issues raised in the offsite report) <sup>11</sup>
18:00	Hotel	PRT coordination meeting

### Day 2

Time	Place	Participants
8:00-8:30	Onsite	Tour of program/ equipment/ lab/ library resources etc.
8:30-9:00	Onsite	Introductory meeting with the faculty (all in one group). PRT Chair introduces team, provides overview of accreditation program, purpose and value of accreditation, and objectives for the onsite visit <sup>12 13</sup>
9:00-9:45	Onsite	Meeting with those responsible for admissions
9:45-10:15	Onsite	BREAK
10:15-11:45 <sup>14</sup>	Onsite	OTA Faculty OTA Fieldwork coordinator PTA Faculty PTA Fieldwork coordinator
11:45-13:00	Onsite	LUNCH
13:00-13:30	Onsite	Administrative support staff
13:30-14:00	Onsite	Individuals responsible for learning resources (librarian, technology)
14:00-14:45	Onsite	Year 1 students <sup>15 16</sup>
14:45-15:30	Onsite	Year 2 students
15:30-16:00	Onsite	BREAK
16:00-17:00	Onsite	OTA Fieldwork preceptors <sup>17</sup> PTA Fieldwork preceptors
17:00-17:30	Onsite	Employers <sup>18</sup>
17:30	Onsite	Program coordinator (optional) <sup>19</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Introductions, opportunity for PRT to gather information about the broad context of the program, includes overview of curriculum and discussion of issues raised in the offsite report, discuss any questions that the program coordinator may have.

<sup>12</sup> If the faculty/staff is small, this meeting may be omitted as all relevant faculty may have already met the team.

<sup>13</sup> Faculty meeting should not include the program coordinator or any individual to whom program faculty report to allow for more open discussion

<sup>14</sup> Some PRTs prefer to meet with all faculty + fieldwork coordinator(s) first and split into discipline-specific groups after 30 minutes

<sup>15</sup> Year 1 and Year 2 students may be interviewed concurrently by two groups of PRT members

<sup>16</sup> See program handbook for minimum required number of students from each year

<sup>17</sup> Scheduling this meeting at the end of the day facilitates preceptors' attendance. Providing food is also an incentive!

<sup>18</sup> Scheduling this meeting at the end of the day facilitates employers' attendance. Providing food is also an incentive!

<sup>19</sup> Opportunity to modify tomorrow's schedule if necessary based on today's interviews

Time	Place	Participants
18:00-22:00	Hotel	PRT coordination and report writing

### Day 3

Time	Place	Participants
8:00-8:30	Onsite	Program coordinator if required
8:30-9:00	Onsite	Recent graduates
9:00-10:00	Onsite	Program Advisory Committee (PAC) or representatives
10:00-11:00	Onsite	Meetings with faculty outside of the program who are involved in teaching OTA/PTA students <sup>20</sup>
11:00-12:00	Onsite	Meeting with the department Chair/Dean/Administrator
12:00-12:30	Onsite	Closing meeting <sup>21</sup> with program coordinator and others as determined
12:30-13:30	Onsite	LUNCH
13:30 -17:00	Onsite/ Hotel	PRT meeting - report preparation time
18:00-22:00	Hotel	PRT meeting – report preparation time

<sup>20</sup> This group may include faculty from nursing etc. who teach the OTA/PTA students.

<sup>21</sup> Closing meeting is to thank the program and provide examples of three strengths and three areas of concern, next steps and timelines. No information regarding overall compliance or overall accreditation status is provided by the PRT.

