



Occupational Therapist Assistant & Physiotherapist Assistant Education Accreditation Program

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Introducing the 2023 Accreditation Standards for Canadian Occupational Therapy Assistant and Physiotherapy Assistant Education Programs

NOVEMBER 2024

The OTA & PTA EAP is proud to launch our revised *2023 Accreditation Standards for Canadian Occupational Therapy Assistant and Physiotherapy Assistant Education Programs*. These standards will be applied to accreditation reviews scheduled after June 1, 2025.

Accreditation Standards provide the criteria for the initial and ongoing development and evaluation of OTA and PTA education programs. They also provide a frame of reference to ensure that relevant issues are addressed. Accreditation of OTA and PTA education programs provides assurance to students, employers and the public that graduates are competent to provide safe, ethical, and effective care. Education programs who hold accreditation status demonstrate their commitment to quality education and continuous improvement.

We invite you to read the Acknowledgements where we recognize all those who tremendously contributed to the review, revision, development, and approval of these standards. We are grateful for their professionalism, their expertise, and above all their commitment to this project despite the challenges that presented themselves during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Methodology

In 2018, several surveys were circulated to interested and affected parties of the OTA & PTA EAP as part of a consultation process to identify areas importance for the 2019-2024 OTA & PTA EAP Strategic Plan. It was identified that a comprehensive look at the integrity of the 2018 revisions of the OTA & PTA EAP Standards was required to identify duplication of criterion requirements, appropriate location of criterion within each standard, and consistency of information.

An Expression of Interest (EOI) was released in June 2020 detailing the proposed plan to further revise the OTA & PTA EAP Accreditation Standards 1-5 and to lead the Standards Review Sub-Committee (SRS). ECO Canada was chosen as the expert consultant to lead the project. The SRS had a pan-Canadian composition with diverse representation from the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT), the Canadian Occupational Therapist Assistant and Physical Therapist Assistant Educators Council (COPEC), Physiotherapy Education Accreditation Canada (PEAC), as well as educators, regulators, accreditors, peer reviewers, and practicing OTs, PTs, OTAs and PTAs. Their collective qualifications, background and experience in education, accreditation and healthcare were fundamental to the process.

The first meeting of the SRS was held in October 2020, with an aim to complete the revision by the end of 2021 and rollout in 2022. However, due to challenges experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, staff changeover, and committee changeover, the deadlines of this project were considerably delayed.

Upon approval of the final revision of the *2023 Accreditation Standards for Canadian Occupational Therapy Assistant and Physiotherapy Assistant Education Programs* by the CAOT and PEAC Board of Directors, the standards were translated, and the translation was independently verified. The number of criteria within Standards 1-5 is now 38, reduced from 47, with 10 criteria designated as CORE.

Standards, Criteria and Evidence

The aim of the revised 2023 OTA & PTA EAP Accreditation Standards was to review and streamline Standards 1-5 to reflect current education and professional practice environments. The SRS was tasked with maintaining the 5+1 model but considered renaming existing standards and moving some criteria as a step towards reinforcing the value of accreditation as a continual quality improvement process. The format for criteria was revised with the removal of sub-criteria and instead separated into individual criterion. To remove duplication, not all criteria have explanatory notes; only where required to provide additional information.

Standard 6 is dependent on the practice/competency profiles for OTAs and PTAs, and therefore will be revised in the future, when these profiles are updated.

“Documents/documentation” was included as a comprehensive term to include, but not limited to, meeting minutes, reports, spreadsheets, redacted emails, surveys, strategic plans, policies and procedures, terms of reference and/or governance documents. This allows programs to submit the type of documentation that best demonstrates compliance with the criteria.

Standard 1

Standard 1 has been renamed as “Educational Program, Leadership, and Accountability” and has undergone substantive changes, now containing 12 criteria, including four (4) Core Criterion. Non-substantive changes were made to Criterion 1.1 and Criterion 1.2. Additional clarifications have been added to the examples of evidence and explanatory notes of the remaining criteria. These changes include:

Criterion 1.3 (CORE)

- This was Criterion 1.4 from the 2018 revision, which has been revised for clarity.

Criterion 1.4 (CORE)

- This was Sub-Criterion 1.4.1 from the 2018 revision, which has been revised for clarity.
- *Examples of Evidence* suggest documentation that outlines the roles and responsibilities of the program lead/leadership and implementation of leadership roles will assist with illustrating compliance.

Criterion 1.5

- This was Criterion 1.3 from the 2018 revision, which has been revised for clarity.
- *Examples of Evidence* suggest the addition of information on availability of resources to support faculty in various areas relating to professional development, academic activities, and personal benefits and supports will assist in illustrating compliance.

Criterion 1.6

- The focus of this new criterion is on how equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) are promoted within the program. The program may have a standalone policies and processes, or they may align with the institution's policies and processes directly.
- *Examples of Evidence* suggest documentation that outline program or institution-wide policies on EDI, availability to staff, faculty, and students, as well as reference(s) to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and relevant national and international agreements addressed by the program would assist in illustrating compliance.

Criterion 1.7

- The focus of this new criterion is on how the program and/or institution identifies and addresses racism, discrimination, and/or harassment amongst staff, faculty, and students.
- *Examples of Evidence* suggest documentation that detail the action taken by the program to identify and address these cases, as well as documentation to demonstrate discussions to identify and address these cases would assist in illustrating compliance.

Criterion 1.8 (CORE)

- This was Criterion 1.5 (CORE) from the 2018 revision, which has been revised for clarity. Specifically, programs offering distributed education/distanced learning no longer need to provide evidence to demonstrate access technological supports and/or resources to faculty, staff, and students.

Criterion 1.9

- This was Criterion 1.6 from the 2018 revision, which has been revised for clarity. Specifically, the suggested evidence focuses on the supports available to faculty and students and the qualifications and/or job descriptions of these supports. There is no longer a focus on enhancing the technological infrastructure or how faculty and students access web-delivered courses and orientation materials.

Criterion 1.10

- This was Criterion 1.7 from the 2018 revision, which has been revised for clarity.

Criterion 1.11

- This was Sub-Criterion 3.1.1 and Criterion 5.3 from the 2018 revision, which has been revised for clarity. These criteria were similar in nature, and therefore required the same evidence to be submitted. These criteria have now been amalgamated to reduce redundancy.

Criterion 1.12

- This was Criterion 1.9 from the 2018 revision, which has been revised for clarity.

Standard 2

Standard 2 has been renamed as “Program Faculty and Learning Resource” and has undergone substantive changes, now containing seven (7) criteria, including three (3) Core Criterion. Additional clarifications have been added to the examples of evidence and explanatory notes. These changes include:

Criterion 2.1

- This criterion no longer contains sub-criterion when compared to the 2018 revision and has been revised for clarity.

Criterion 2.2 (CORE)

- This was Sub-Criterion 2.1.1 from the 2018 revision, which has been revised for clarity.

Criterion 2.3 (CORE)

- This was Sub-Criterion 2.1.2 from the 2018 revision, which has been revised for clarity.

Criterion 2.4 (CORE)

- This was Sub-Criterion 2.1.3 from the 2018 revision, which has been revised for clarity.

Criterion 2.5

- The content of Criterion 2.5 from the 2018 revision has been removed from the 2023 Standards. The focus of this new criterion is to demonstrate recruitment and selection strategies and processes of program faculty.
- *Examples of Evidence* suggest documentation outline the established process and criteria for selection and evaluation, how to address bias, and practices of transparency would assist in illustrating compliance.

Criterion 2.6

- The content of Criterion 2.6 was Criterion 2.3 from the 2018 revision, which has been revised for clarity.

Criterion 2.7

- This was Sub-Criterion 2.2.1 from the 2018 revision, which has been revised for clarity.

Standard 3

Standard 3 has been renamed as “Student Admissions, Development and Resources” and has undergone substantive changes, now containing five (5) criteria. There is now no Core Criterion in this standard. Additional clarifications have been added to the examples of evidence and explanatory notes. These changes include:

Criterion 3.1

- The content of Criterion 3.1 was Criterion 5.4 and Sub-Criterion 5.4.1 from the 2018 revision, which has been revised for clarity.

Criterion 3.2

- This was Criterion 3.3 from the 2018 revision, which has been revised for clarity.

Criterion 3.3

- This was Criterion 3.5 from the 2018 revision, which has been revised for clarity.

Criterion 3.4

- The content of Criterion 3.4 from the 2018 revision has been moved to Standard 4. The content of Criterion 3.4 in the 2023 Standards was Criterion 5.1 from the 2018 revision, which has been revised for clarity.

Criterion 3.5

- This was Criterion 3.6 from the 2018 revision, which has been revised for clarity.

Standard 4

Standard 4 has been renamed as “Curriculum Development and Teaching Practices” and has undergone substantive changes, now containing 11 criteria, including now three (3) Core Criterion. Additional clarifications have been added to the examples of evidence and explanatory notes. These changes include:

Criterion 4.1

- This was Criterion 1.8 from the 2018 revision, which has been revised for clarity. The content of this criterion is no longer split into sub-criteria and now focuses on how the program prepares graduates for employment or further studies with a formal curriculum plan. The content of the sub-criteria from the 2018 revision has either been identified as new criteria or removed from the 2023 Standards.

- *Examples of Evidence* suggest the addition of internal and external review of program competency outcomes would assist in illustrating compliance.

Criterion 4.2

- This was Criterion 2.4 from the 2018 revision, which has been revised for clarity.

Criterion 4.3

- This was Criterion 3.2 from the 2018 revision, which has been revised for clarity.

Criterion 4.4

- The content of Criterion 4.4 from the 2018 revision has been moved to Standard 5. The focus of this new criterion is to demonstrate how external interested and affected parties are formally engaged in curriculum development and review processes of the program.
- *Examples of Evidence* suggest examples of engaged external interested and affected parties, and documentation where external interested and affected parties have provided their input in curriculum planning and how this input is considered would assist in illustrating compliance.

Criterion 4.5

- The focus of this new criterion is for the program to provide a course syllabus for each course of the program. The information in the syllabus includes the purpose of the course, learning outcomes, an outline of course content, methods of instruction and assessment, requirements for completion, grading system, and materials needed.
- *Examples of Evidence* suggest syllabi for all courses within the program, including clinical education/fieldwork would assist in illustrating compliance.

Criterion 4.6

- This was Sub-Criterion 1.8.3 from the 2018 revision, which has been revised for clarity.

Criterion 4.7

- The focus of this new criterion is for the program to demonstrate a documented and formal process for faculty to request new and/ or additional resources.
- *Examples of Evidence* suggest documentation that outlines the process for faculty to request new and/or additional resources and the process for review of such requests, and documentation from those who oversee faculty requests for new and/or additional resources would assist in illustrating compliance.

Criterion 4.8 (CORE)

- This was Sub-Criterion 3.4.1 from the 2018 revision, which has been revised for clarity. There is no longer required evidence for this criterion.
- *Examples of Evidence* suggest documentation that enforces completion of the required hours prior to graduation and aggregate data detailing fieldwork hours completed by students for the three (3) most recent cohorts would assist in illustrating compliance.

Criterion 4.9 (CORE)

- This was Sub-Criterion 3.4.2 from the 2018 revision, which has been revised for clarity. There is no longer required evidence for this criterion.
- *Examples of Evidence* suggest documentation that enforces completion of the required hours prior to graduation and aggregate data detailing fieldwork hours completed by students for the three (3) most recent cohorts would assist in illustrating compliance.

Criterion 4.10 (CORE)

- This was Sub-Criterion 3.4.3 from the 2018 revision, which has been revised for clarity. There is no longer required evidence for this criterion.
- *Examples of Evidence* suggest documentation outlining the roles and responsibilities of designated faculty member(s) noting availability to students and preceptors, CV for designated faculty member(s), and proof of registration as an occupational therapist or physiotherapist an unrestricted practice permit with their appropriate regulatory college body would assist in illustrating compliance.

Criterion 4.11

- This was Criterion 4.2 from the 2018 revision, which has been revised for clarity. There is no longer required evidence for this criterion.

Standard 5

Standard 5 has been renamed as “Program Evaluation and Continual Improvement” and has undergone substantive changes, now containing three (3) criteria. There is now no Core Criterion in this standard. Additional clarifications have been added to the examples of evidence and explanatory notes. These changes include:

Criterion 5.1

- This was Criterion 4.1 from the 2018 revision, which has been revised for clarity.

Criterion 5.2

- The content of Criterion 5.2 from the 2018 revision has been removed from the 2023 Standards. The content of Criterion 5.2 in the 2023 Standards was Criterion 4.2 from the 2018 revision, which has been revised for clarity.

Criterion 5.3

- This was Criterion 4.3, Sub-Criterion 4.3.1, and Criterion 4.4 from the 2018 revision, which has been revised for clarity. The themes of these criteria were similar in nature, and therefore have now been amalgamated to reduce redundancy.

In Summary

We at the OTA & PTA EAP extend our thanks to all who provided their input during the revision of the standards. We look forward to working with education programs, peer reviewers, and committee members as we prepare to implement these standards.