

Occupational Therapist Assistant & Physiotherapist Assistant Education Accreditation Program

MARCH 26, 2020 • Sent on behalf of the Joint Accreditation Committee

COVID-19 – Changes to OTA & PTA EAP Standards and Policies Guidance for Education Programs

Dear everyone

Thank you very much for reaching out to keep us up to date on the strategies you and your institutions are taking to ensure that your students can continue their studies, and graduate with the competencies to provide safe, ethical, and effective care. We appreciate the strain that this is creating and have been able to make progress in relaxing our Standards and Policies.

On March 24, 2020, the Joint Accreditation Committee (JAC) met by teleconference to discuss changes to the standards and policies due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. These recommended changes focused on OTA & PTA educators' concerns about maintaining Accreditation Status, specifically related to Core Criterion 3.4 (required fieldwork hours) and Substantive Change Reporting.

Having discussed the risks to students' education and public safety, as well as strategies considered by various accreditation agencies, the JAC has received approval from the CAOT and PEAC Boards on the following changes. Please note that these changes are considered temporary due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Reducing Required Fieldwork Hours

Education programs may temporarily reduce the required clinical/fieldwork hours by 10%, i.e., 450 total hours with 135 hours in OTA and 135 hours in PTA, for students currently enrolled in the program.

Note: If a program normally requires more than 450 clinical/fieldwork hours no further hours are required. We trust that programs will monitor their students' progress to ensure that the necessary competencies are met within the 450 hours.

Conditional Graduation

Where institutional policies allow, programs may consider conditional graduation for current students who have completed a minimum of 2/3 of the total required hours and 2/3 of the required hours in each discipline. Issuing of the diploma or certificate may be delayed until the required hours are completed at the workplace under the supervision of a registered occupational therapist or physiotherapist. This allows OTA & PTA students to enter the workforce earlier which may be required as Canada grapples with caring for those affected by COVID-19.

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Waiving Substantive Change Reports

During the COVID-19 pandemic, temporary changes made by programs with respect to online delivery, adjusting curriculum sequencing, and fieldwork experiences **will not require** a substantive change report.

Further Clarification of Alternative Clinical-Fieldwork

Alternative clinical/fieldwork hours (previously referred to as make-up or contingency hours) should not exceed 135 of the students' total fieldwork hours. We trust program coordinators and faculty to identify activities that will meet the required competencies. We are not requiring approval of these.

Notes:

- Any clinical/fieldwork experiences should build skills that contribute to achieving a specific competency and reflect, as much as possible, the realistic/practical work that occurs in a practice/work setting.
- Programs may use and are encouraged to use many activities to simulate practice and make full use of all available technologies include the Internet, cellular phones, and email communication.

Accreditation Reviews

Postponement of accreditation reviews are being considered. Alternatives such as using video conferencing and other technologies to conduct virtual onsite reviews are options. We will contact each program and make decisions on a case-by-case basis as several factors will influence the final decision, including the program's desire to proceed as soon as possible or not.

The spread and scale of the COVID-19 virus and its impacts on OTA & PTA education change daily and may require us to consider further adjustments. A "Frequently Asked Questions" handout will be finalized after our teleconference with you tomorrow, March 27, 2020 at 1:00 pm Pacific time.* We look forward to meeting with you.

With kind regards,



Lesley Bainbridge
Joint Accreditation Committee Chair



Mary Clark
Program Manager

***Q & A Session on COVID-19 and Accreditation Standards and Policies**

Friday, March 27 @

1:00 PM Pacific, 2:00 PM Mountain, 4:00 PM Eastern, 5:00 PM Atlantic and 5:30 PM in Nfld/Lab

Please join our meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/609720109>

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