

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST ASSISTANT & PHYSIOTHERAPIST ASSISTANT EDUCATION ACCREDITATION PROGRAM

OTA & PTA Programs 2014 Annual Report

Background

The Occupational Therapist Assistant and Physiotherapist Assistant Education Accreditation Program (OTA & PTA EAP) is responsible for the accreditation of occupational therapy assistant (OTA) and physiotherapy assistant (PTA) programs across Canada. As of December 2014 there were 32 affiliated education programs, in five provinces, that offered such training. This document summarizes key data from the 2014 annual review, providing an overview of OTA PTA education in Canada for 2014.

Overview of Programs

Thirty-one programs responded to the annual OTA & PTA EAP programs' survey (97 % response rate). As shown in Figure 1, ten programs (32 %) had been granted accreditation status and the remaining 21 programs (68 %) had received candidacy status. Programs overwhelmingly (n = 30, 97 %) offered dual profession degrees/diplomas; the one exception offered a Physical Therapy Assistant diploma.

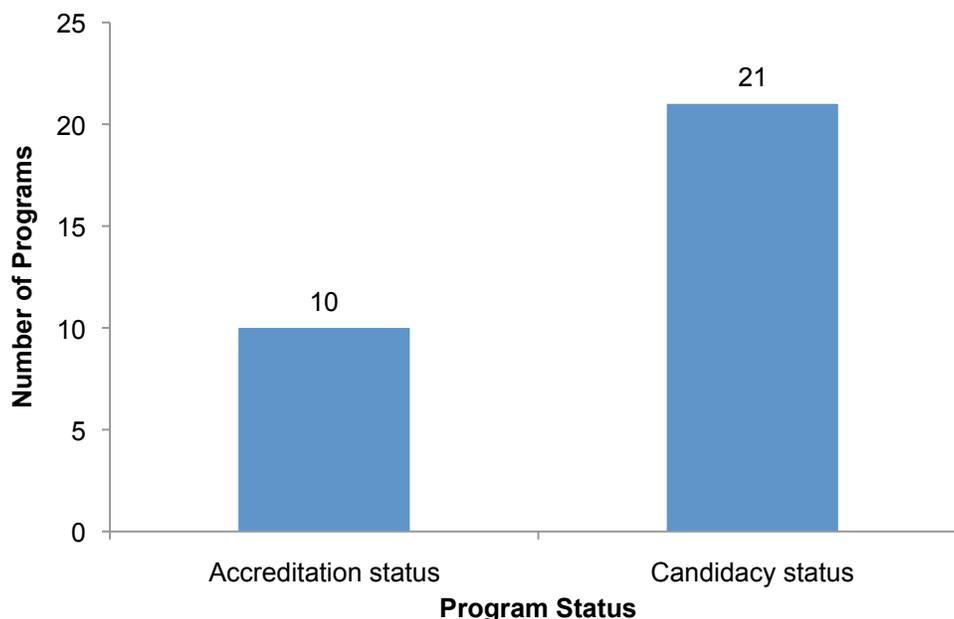


Figure 1: Status of OTA PTA Programs in Canada, as of December 2014. The majority of programs (n =21, 68 %) had been granted candidacy status.

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The average program length was 18.8 months (range = 15 – 25 months) and 18 programs were 15 months or 20 months long (Figure 2). In general, programs included a number of months when students were not participating in learning activities. The average number of months that students were on break was 2.2 months (range = 0 – 7.5 months). In some instances (n = 6, 19 %), learning was self-directed with students completing learning activities at their own pace. For one program this was the learning approach for all students. In the remaining five programs some students, ranging from 7 % to 60 %, completed tasks in this manner.

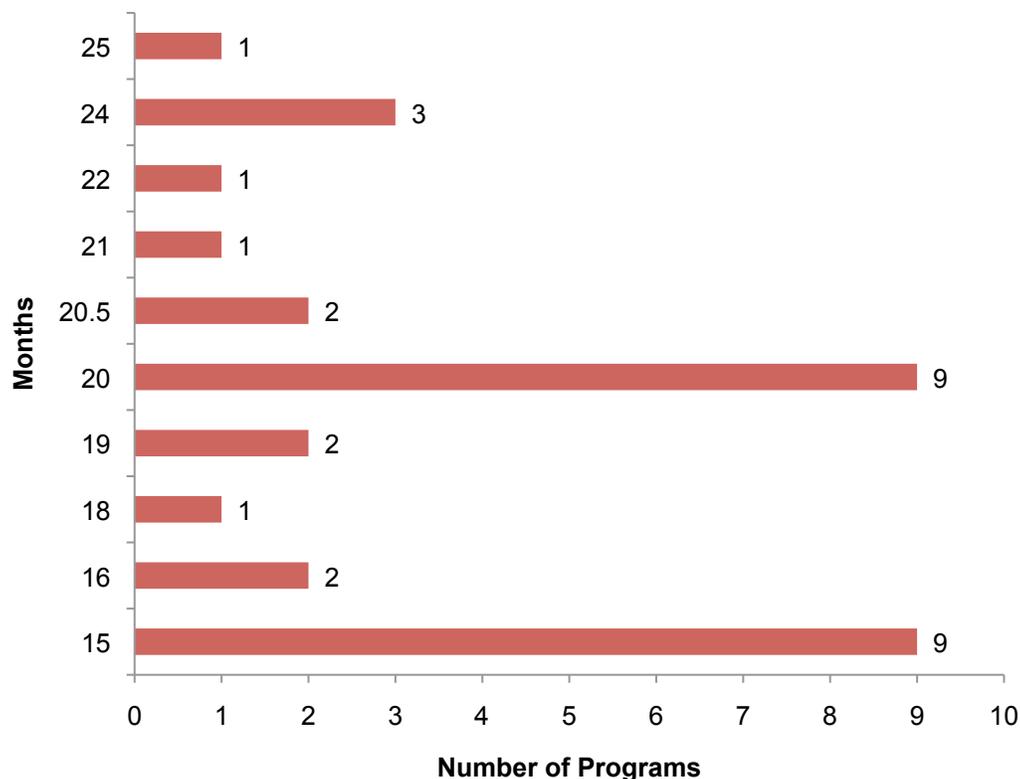


Figure 2: Total length of OTA PTA Programs in months. Program duration ranged from 15 months to 25 months, with an average length of 18.8 months.

Programs were asked to identify whether distance education or distributed education were used to deliver course content. Here, distance education was defined as “a teaching-learning situation in which the majority of instruction is offered in other than a face-to-face environment” and distributed education was defined as “a teaching-learning situation in which different cohorts of students in different geographical locations/campuses receive the same curriculum face-to-face with different instructors but standardized delivery and evaluation”. Twenty-three

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programs (74 %) used a traditional face-to-face teaching approach whilst eight programs did offer all (n = 3, 10 %) or some (n = 5, 16 %) their courses through distance education (Figure 3). For those five programs, 7 % to 90 % of course content was offered in this manner and was associated with language courses, Microsoft Office, Anatomy and Physiology, Clinical Kinesiology, and general elective courses. Programs must seek eligibility from the OTA & PTA EAP to include distributed education sites within the parent program's accreditation status and no programs had adopted a distributed education model.

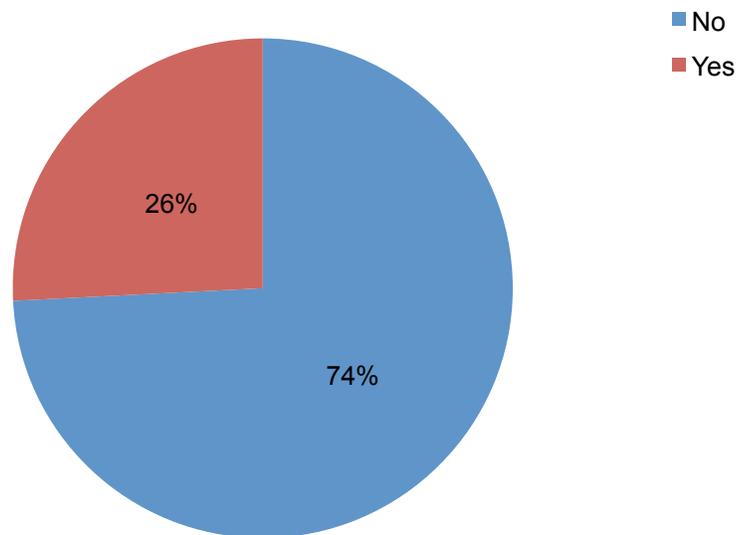


Figure 3: Number of OTA PTA Programs that offered course content through distance education. Eight programs (26 %) used this mode of delivery for all (n = 3, 10 %) or for a portion of their program (n = 5, 16 %).

Clinical fieldwork experience is a component of all OTA PTA programs in Canada. Per student, the average number of supervised clinical experience hours was 555 hours (range = 435 – 800 hours). In agreement with data above physiotherapists provided all the supervision of clinical experiences in one program (PTA diploma), corresponding to the 435 hours of supervised clinical experience. Accreditation requirements for this program stipulate that students must complete a minimum of 350 hours. As shown in Figure 4, physiotherapists supervised a greater number of clinical experience hours as compared to those supervised by only occupational therapists. On average, physiotherapists supervised 276 hours (50 %, range = 90 – 600 hours) of clinical experience per student whilst occupational therapists supervised 156 hours (28 %, range = 0 – 280 hours) and combined supervision was 123 hours (22 %, range = 0 – 600). For 18 programs (58 %), a portion of clinical experience hours were considered as combined

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OTA/PTA and for one program this type of supervision represented 87 % of the total number of clinical experience hours.

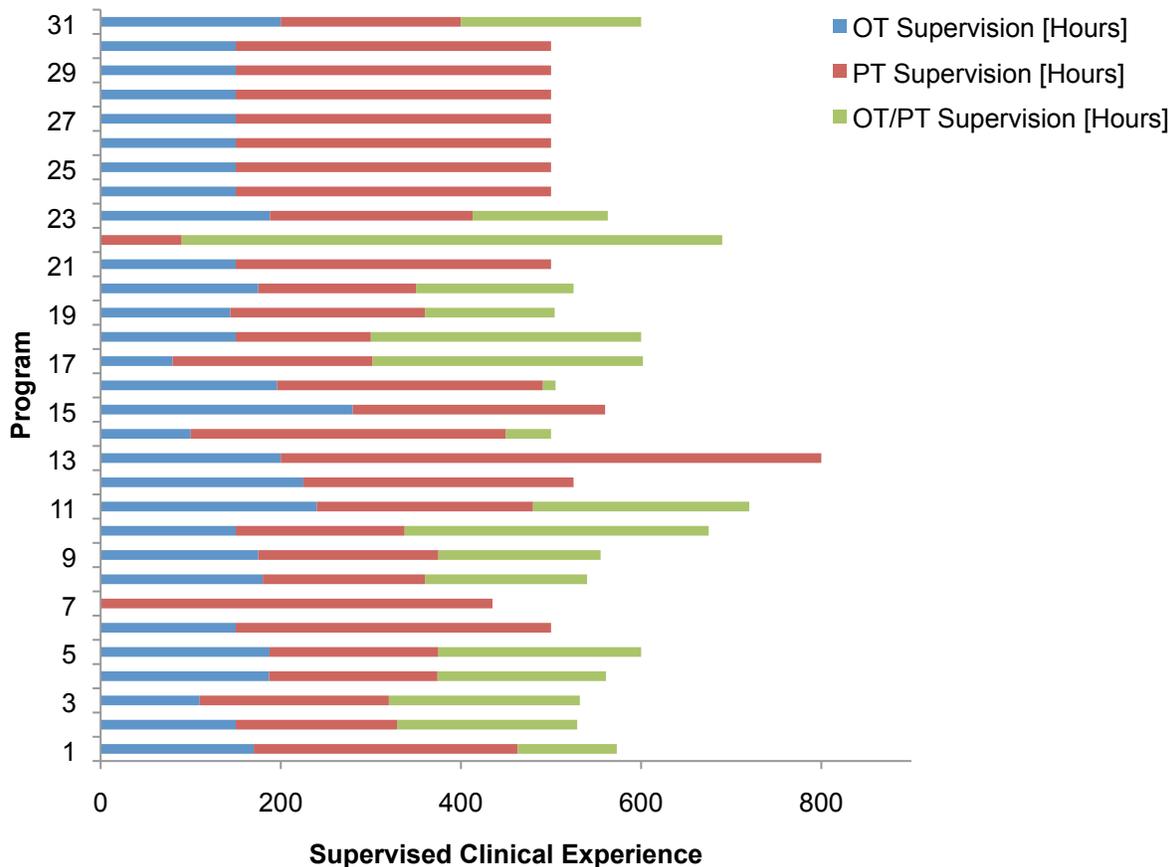


Figure 4: Number of supervised clinical fieldwork experience hours per OTA/PTA Program in Canada. Occupational therapists, physiotherapists, or both professionals provided supervision for clinical fieldwork experiences.

Admissions

The 31 affiliated education programs received a total of 3,391 applications (mean = 109 applications, range = 0 – 466 applications) with the anticipation of starting degrees/diplomas in 2014 (Figure 5). However, from the current data it is not possible to ascertain whether an applicant submitted an application to multiple affiliated education programs. There were two programs (6 %) that did not accept and/or receive any applications for this calendar year. Eight hundred and seventy-seven students were offered admissions to the 29 programs (mean = 28, range = 0 – 92 students admitted); this represented an overall admissions rate of 26 %. Some programs (n = 14, 45 %) were unable to accept all qualified applicants due to a limited number of spots within programs.

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Programs were prompted to identify the applicable admissions requirements from a list of ten criteria. Programs differed in the number of requirements associated with admissions, for one program successful applicants had to meet eight criteria whereas another program required applicants to meet only one requirement (Table 1). All but one program required applicants to be a high school graduate or the equivalent ($n = 30, 97\%$). Other frequently required admissions criteria or considerations were: Mature student ($n = 23, 74\%$), Clear criminal record ($n = 19, 61\%$), and Immunization records ($n = 16, 32\%$). In addition to the ten listed criteria some programs also required applicants to take an entrance test ($n = 10, 32\%$) and have a minimum grade for English, Biology, and Mathematics ($n = 3, 10\%$).

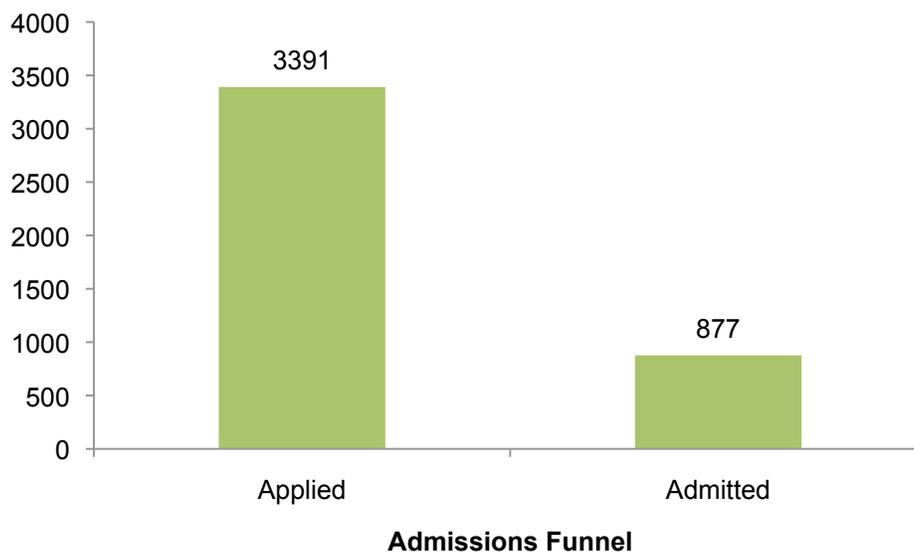


Figure 5: Admissions funnel for the 31 OTA PTA Programs across Canada. A total of 3,391 applications were received for a 2014 start date. Of these, 877 applicants were admitted into programs representing an admissions rate of 26 %.

Table 1: Admissions requirements for OTA PTA Programs across Canada. The majority of programs required applicants to have graduated from high school or the equivalent. The 'Other' specified requirements included an entrance test and minimum grade requirements for high school English, Biology, and Mathematics.

Admissions Criteria	Number of Programs (%)
High school graduate or equivalent	30 (97)
Mature Student	23 (74)
Clear Criminal Record	19 (61)
Other	18 (58)
Immunization Records	16 (52)
Negative TB Test	15 (48)

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Interview	12 (39)
Minimum Overall GPA	6 (19)
First Aid	5 (16)
Volunteer Hours	4 (13)
Reference Letter	2 (6)

Tuition for the affiliated education programs also differed. As can be seen in Figure 6, the anticipated tuition for an entire OTA PTA degree/diploma ranged from \$2680.28 to \$21,365.00, representing approximately an eight-fold difference in tuition costs. The mean tuition for OTA PTA programs was \$10,051.06. From a historical perspective, 2014 tuition costs were similar to those of 2013 where the only difference was seen for the lowest tuition cost (Figure 7). A greater increase was observed between 2012 and 2013, where the highest tuition cost rose three-fold from \$7,104.00 to \$21,356.00. However, it is important to note that this rise corresponded with an increase in the number of affiliated education programs (20 to 30), and the addition of a number of privately funded programs to the list of affiliated education programs in 2013.

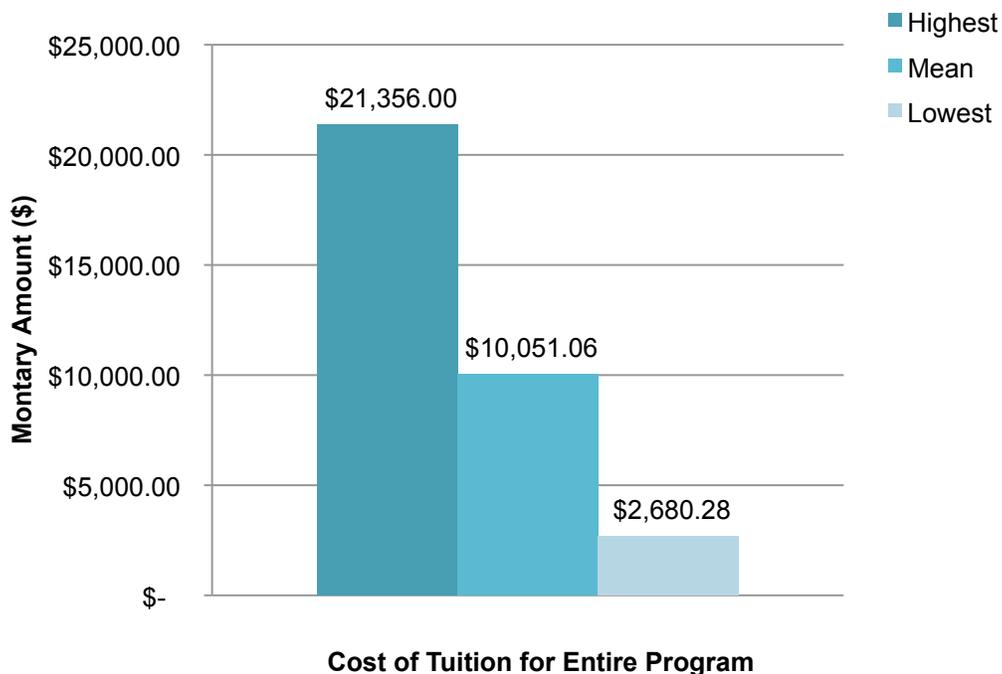


Figure 6: Cost of tuition to complete OTA PTA degree/diplomas across Canada. The mean tuition cost was \$10,051.06 and tuition costs ranged from \$2680.28 to \$21,356.00.

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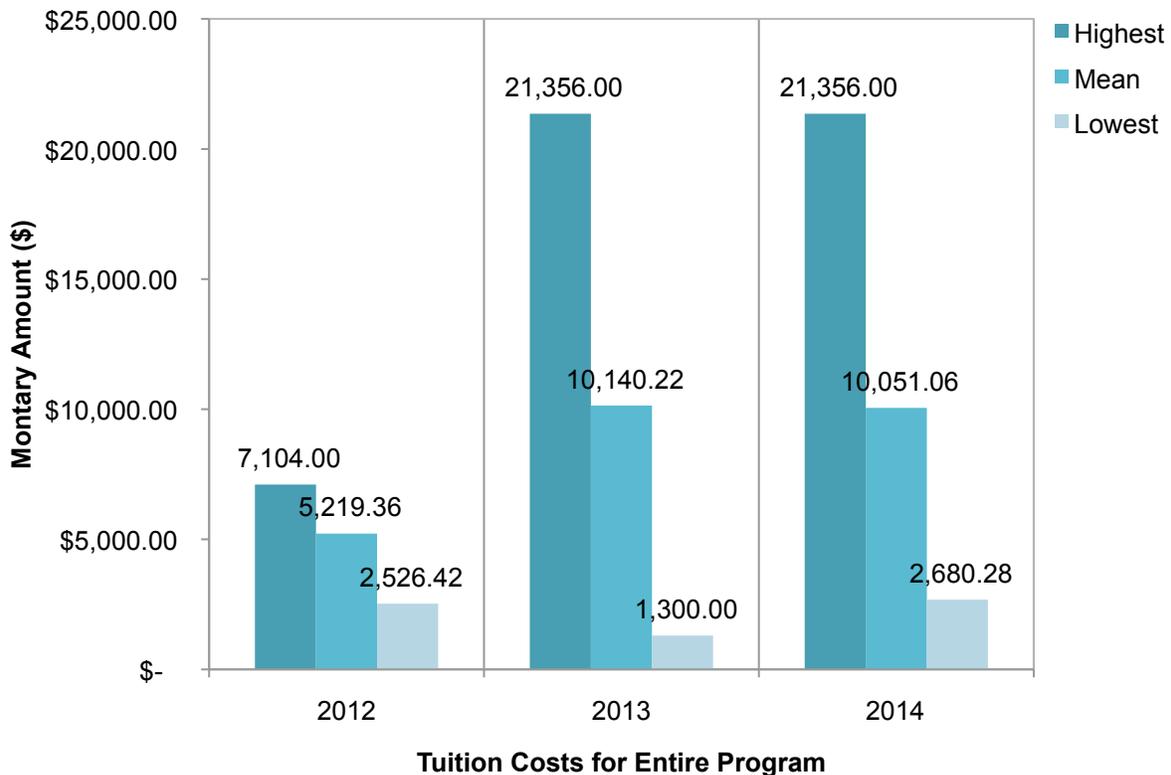


Figure 7: Tuition Costs for OTA PTA Programs across Canada from 2012 to 2014. The lowest tuition cost was in 2013 (\$1,300) and the highest cost remained unchanged from 2013 to 2014.

Enrolment

As depicted in Figure 8, there were 1,559 students enrolled (mean = 52 students) in 30 OTA PTA programs in 2014 and students were predominately female (n = 1,283, 82 %). Three programs (n = 3, 10 %) had no males enrolled and only one program had a student population where males represented greater than 50 % of students enrolled.

Student Retention and Graduation

Twenty-seven programs graduated 544 students in 2014. However, there were 378 students who left programs prior to graduation corresponding to an attrition rate of 41 %. The highest attrition rate was 69 %, whereas there were seven programs with attrition rates of nine percent or less. In terms of graduate employment outcomes, 18 programs had 75 % or more of their graduates working as OTA/PTAs, seven programs had between 50 % and 74 %, one program had 33 % of their graduates working in the field of occupational therapy and physiotherapy, and five programs had 24 % or less of their graduates working as OTA/PTAs (Figure 9). It should be noted that four of these five programs did not graduate students in 2014.

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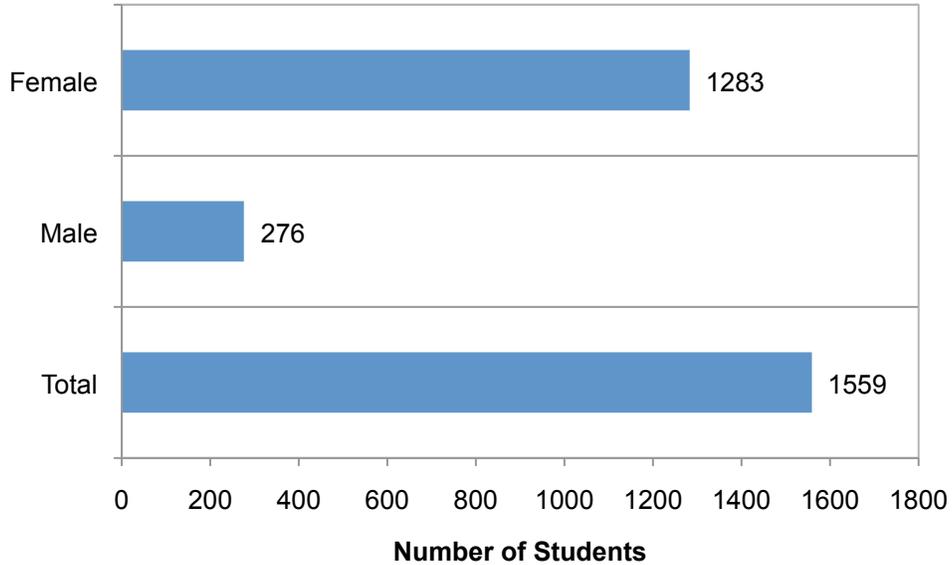


Figure 8: Demographics of students enrolled in OTA PTA Programs across Canada. There were a total of 1,559 students in 30 programs; one program currently had no students enrolled. The majority of students were female, with males representing only 18 % (n = 276) of the student body.

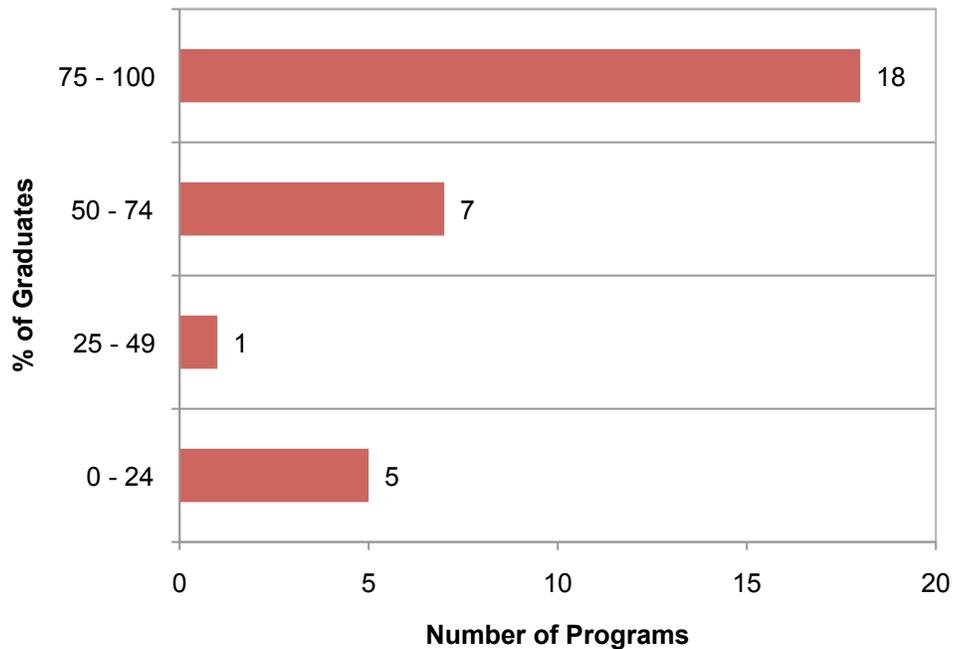


Figure 9: Percent of graduates from OTA PTA Programs in Canada working as OTA/PTAs. There were 18 programs (58 %) that reported having 75 % or more of their graduates working at OTA/PTAs.

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Faculty and Staff

OTA PTA programs relied upon academic faculty, contract faculty, and additional instructors for the delivery of educational content. For the 31 programs, there was an equal number of academic physiotherapists and occupational therapists ($n = 53$) and this was associated with 24.8 FTE and 22 FTE, respectfully (Table 2). However, there were two programs that did not report any physiotherapists as academic faculty and one program that did not report any occupational therapists as academic faculty. In 2014, 23 programs employed 96 contract faculty (12.7 FTE) and 17 programs employed 117 additional instructors (7.9 FTE). Support personnel represented 123.8 FTE and were shared with other programs at 29 of the 31 affiliated education programs. Finally technical personnel, such as librarians and IT resource people, represented a further 131.24 FTE. All these personnel were shared with other programs at the 31 affiliated education programs.

Table 2: Number of academic faculty, contract faculty, instructors, support staff, and technical staff within OTA/PTA Programs and the accompanying FTE.

	Number of Personnel	Number of FTE
Physiotherapists	53	24.8
Occupational Therapist	53	22
Contract Staff	96	12.7
Additional Instructors	117	7.9
Support Staff	NA	123.8
Technical Staff	NA	131.24
<i>Total</i>	319	322.44

Contact Information

For more information about the data presented in this document or about the OTA PTA EAP, please contact Kathy Davidson at kathy.davidson@otapta.ca. A list of all affiliated education programs is available at the respective [OTA PTA EAP website](#).