



Accreditation for OTA & PTA Education in Canada



OTA & PTA Education Accreditation Program Joint Accreditation Committee:

S. Bressler, CAOT Representative & Presenter; L. Bainbridge, Chair & PEAC Representative; K. Koseck, Chair-Elect & OTA/PTA Educator; S. Hobson, Chair-Designate & CAOT Representative; D. Millette, PEAC Representative (Regulatory); T. Dignum, COPEC – PTA Educator; L. Stegne, Private – OTA/PTA Educator; J. Leonard, Public Representative; A. Gartner, Recent OTA/PTA Graduate; A. Douglas, CAOT Staff; K. Davidson, PEAC Staff; A. Walton, OTA & PTA EAP Program Manager

What is Accreditation?

The public recognition awarded to education programs that meet established standards of quality in teaching, student achievement, curriculum, academic support and other criteria

Why Accreditation?

The Canadian Occupational Therapist Assistant and Physiotherapist Assistant Educators Council (COPEC) identified the need for an accreditation program for Canadian OTA & PTA education to provide a measure of educational quality to students, employers and the public.

This was motivated by:

- observed trends toward employers seeking to hire only graduates of accredited programs
- awareness by employing/supervising OT's and PT's of the quality of graduates from accredited programs
- eligibility for membership with professional associations of graduates of accredited programs

Developing an Accreditation Process

In 2009, COPEC approached Physiotherapy Education Accreditation Canada (PEAC) and the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT) – accreditors for Canadian PT and OT education programs – to develop an appropriate accreditation program.

Standards and policies/procedures were developed and refined in collaboration with COPEC and other key stakeholders through an online survey, national focus groups, a Standards Working Group and an Advisory Committee.

Results

Pilot standards were finalized in 2010, and the first programs were reviewed in 2012.

Standards and policies are subject to an ongoing quality improvement process with input from all stakeholders. The outcome is greater consistency in decisions and higher standards of education.

There were 18 education programs who became early participants in the accreditation process.

Today, there are 27 Canadian programs from public and private colleges who are accredited or have candidacy status.

Purpose, Goals & Values

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, Respect, Quality, Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency

OTA & PTA education accreditation standards were developed based existing OTA and PTA competency profiles and with reference to OT and PT education accreditation standards.

Standards Overview

There are 5 standards common to both OTA and PTA education. They are:

- The Education Program and its Environment
- Faculty
- Students
- Program Evaluation
- Accountability

Standard 6 is focused on minimum entry level OTA and PTA competencies and is divided into two parts:

1. Standard 6 OTA is based on the *Practice Profile for Support Personnel in Occupational Therapy (2009)*
2. Standard 6 PTA is based on the *Essential Competency Profile for Physiotherapist Assistants in Canada (2012)*

CORE Criterion

The OTA & PTA EAP considers compliance with 8 of the criteria essential for accreditation. Education programs must demonstrate compliance with the Core Criteria to be accredited. Some of these CORE criterion include:

- The program is lead by a registered OT or PT.
- The program has adequate financial resources.
- Occupational therapy content is taught by a registered OT, and physiotherapy content by a registered PT.
- Fieldwork experiences in both OT and PT are provided.
- Minimum of 500 fieldwork hours are completed in the clinical setting which includes no less than 150 hours of practice time in each discipline for each student.
- Both a registered OT and a registered PT faculty advisor are available to students and preceptors.

Challenges and Conclusions

Ensuring sustainable fieldwork placement opportunities in both disciplines, and tracking fieldwork hours accurately for each discipline is very challenging for programs.

Accreditation is a measure of quality education and has resulted in broader recognition of OTA/PTAs as professionals who work under the supervision of regulated OT's and PT's.

OTA's and PTA's from accredited programs display core competencies and are valued members of the health care team in Canada.

Contact details:

For more information, please contact:



Amanda Walton
Program Manager
OTA & PTA EAP
info@otapta.ca
(226) 636-0632

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