

College of Occupational Therapists Pre-registration Education Standards

College of Occupational Therapists

Third edition



College of
Occupational
Therapists

First published in the United Kingdom in 2003 by The College of Occupational Therapists as 'College of Occupational Therapists standards for education: pre-registration education standards.'

Revised edition published in 2004.

This edition published in 2008 by The College of Occupational Therapists, 106–114 Borough High Street, Southwark, London SE1 1LB; www.cot.org.uk

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Author: College of Occupational Therapists; Category: Essential

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Acknowledgements

The College of would like to thank Professor Auldeen Alsop, Dr Gail Boniface, Fiona Douglas, Ruth Heames, Anne Lawson-Porter, Patricia McClure, Ian McMillan, Remy Reyes and Pauline Rowe for their assistance with the revision of this document.

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ISBN 978-1-905944-07-1

This document may also be downloaded from the BAOT website www.baot.org.uk

Typeset by Servis Filmsetting Ltd, Manchester
Printed and bound in Great Britain

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Introduction

The British Association of Occupational Therapists (BAOT) is the only professional body for occupational therapy in the United Kingdom. Through its membership of the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT), BAOT is the only professional body with the delegated authority to confer WFOT approval to programmes in the United Kingdom that lead to a professional entry-level qualification in occupational therapy.

WFOT approval of a pre-registration programme in occupational therapy in the United Kingdom is conditional to BAOT accreditation via the processes of the College of Occupational Therapists (COT or the College). It is important to note also that COT accreditation may only be granted to pre-registration programmes that are approved by the Health Professions Council.

The BAOT owns the professional body of knowledge for both historical and contemporary occupational therapy education and practice in the UK, as well as the occupational therapy professional and education philosophy. It works actively with the World Federation of Occupational Therapists, the Council of Occupational Therapists in the European Community (COTEC), and the European Network of Occupational Therapy in Higher Education (ENOTHE) in identifying and responding to current and emerging issues that affect professional education and practice at both European and international levels and that impact locally in the United Kingdom.

The College of Occupational Therapists, a subsidiary of the British Association of Occupational Therapists, was established for the promotion of the science and art of Occupational Therapy and the better training and education of practitioners. *It has the power to provide, support and encourage education, instruction and training in Occupational Therapy, and related activities, to promote uniformity in curricula in the training of persons intended for that profession ...* (Memorandum of Association – College of Occupational Therapists Limited). In relation to a programme of study leading to a professional qualification in occupational therapy, therefore, the College of Occupational Therapists has a responsibility for establishing standards to ensure that graduates from its accredited programmes are provided with the professional philosophy, knowledge and skills that would equip them for global, contemporary, safe and effective professional practice.

The *role* of the COT in relation to the standards is:

- To develop and maintain education and professional standards through its accredited education programmes.
- To guide and advance professional knowledge towards excellence and evidence-based practice.
- To promote standards of best practice.
- To develop professional learning and practice through leadership and innovation.

The COT Pre-registration Education Standards

The College of Occupational Therapists' Pre-registration Education Standards (henceforth referred to in this document as the 'Standards') are dynamic quality indicators against which the College would make a judgement on an individual programme's suitability for professional body accreditation. They incorporate the minimum standards for the education of occupational therapists set by the World Federation of Occupational Therapists. Graduates from COT accredited programmes therefore should be able to demonstrate enhanced attributes and fitness for professional practice that would enable them to seek professional employment locally, nationally and internationally.

The COT Standards support and facilitate the development of a curriculum leading to professional body accreditation (including WFOT approval) and regulatory body approval. They cover four main areas:

- Programme management and resources standards.
- Curriculum standards.
- Learning, teaching and assessment standards.
- Quality assurance and monitoring standards.

These main areas will apply to both the academic and the practice learning components of all programmes. Each standard has a list of criteria and associated guidance on the evidence required by the College to satisfy the Standards. Briefly, the College of Occupational Therapists Standards are as follows.

Standard 1: Programme management and resources standards

The institution's policy and procedures on the employment of the appropriate number of suitably qualified academic, professional practice learning and support staff with suitable experience, and on the provision of learning resources are able to:

- *Facilitate the achievement of learning outcomes by students.*
- *Monitor the observance of the professional code of ethics and conduct.*
- *Support the student experience.*
- *Enable the update and further development of the education programme.*
- *Influence service delivery.*
- *Contribute to the knowledge base of the profession.*

Standard 2: Curriculum standards

The curriculum content, design and delivery reflect the occupational therapy philosophy based on a sound educational rationale and the principles of the professional code of ethics and conduct. Graduates from the programme will be fit for contemporary and safe professional practice and able to identify their professional development needs.

Standard 3: Learning, teaching and assessment standards

The institution uses a range of methods and strategies that:

- *Supports the achievement of the learning outcomes.*
- *Supports the observance of the code of ethics and professional conduct and research governance.*

- *Employs rigorous and robust assessments that enable the student to demonstrate professional competence and safe practice commensurate to the level of study.*

Standard 4: Quality assurance and monitoring standards

The institution's annual quality assurance and enhancement processes include the evaluation of the programme by the professional staff, monitoring and feedback mechanisms, external examining procedures, and evaluation of student performance.

Purpose of the COT Pre-registration Education Standards

The COT Standards are intended to enhance rather than duplicate the standards set by the statutory bodies, currently, the Health Professions Council (www.hpc-uk.org), the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education for England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales (www.qaa.ac.uk), and Skills for Health (www.skillsforhealth.org.uk). Where there is duplication, the professional body wishes to emphasise the significance of the standard in relation to international standards and practice.

The Standards will therefore:

- Enable graduates of the College's accredited programmes to strengthen their professional philosophy and knowledge.
- Provide graduates with the opportunity to acquire the skills required for dynamic occupational therapy practice. The Standards should ensure that service users receive a high standard of professional intervention.
- Benefit the graduates' future professional practice, improve their employability, and provide them with an occupational therapy qualification that would enable them to practise in the UK and WFOT member countries.
- Provide guidance to education providers wishing to develop a programme of study that:
 - Would lead to a named pre-registration occupational therapy qualification.
 - Meets the minimum standards of the regulatory body for national practice.
 - Correctly interprets WFOT standards to reflect local, national and global circumstances.
- Serve as quality indicators for practice education providers who wish to conduct a self-assessment of their department's practice education provision.
- Support the continuing development of occupational therapy educators in both academic and practice settings.
- Ensure that the minimum requirements of occupational therapy stakeholders are met. The College's accredited programmes stakeholders include service users, students, education providers, education commissioners, sponsoring/funding agencies, service managers, potential employers, the Health Professions Council (HPC), the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education for England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales (QAA), the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT), and the European Network of Occupational Therapy in Higher Education (ENOTHE).

Qualities of the COT Pre-registration Education Standards

The COT Standards:

- Integrate academic theory and contemporary professional practice.
- Include realistic standards that identify and enhance fitness for profession and reflect local, national and international practice and provide a baseline to judge and improve quality.
- Are explicit about the need for programmes to address emerging issues – current examples being social inclusion, entrepreneurship, leadership, and public health – which would prepare students for contemporary practice in a dynamic environment.
- Employ a user-friendly template that provides guidance on evidencing the standards within the curriculum and learning resources documentation.
- Are sufficiently flexible to allow the profession to be proactive in addressing changes in contemporary practice.
- Are supportive to stakeholders without compromising professional standards.

Appendices

(These are also available to download from the College of Occupational Therapists' website: www.cot.org.uk)

Appendix 1 contains a summary of the College's guidance and expectations for pre-registration programmes.

Appendix 2 contains the College's professional requirements and recommendations.

Appendix 3 contains the College's accreditation process.

Appendix 4 is the guidance for the appointment of a director/professional subject lead in occupational therapy.

Key to abbreviations

AP(E)L	Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning
APPLE	Accreditation of Practice Placement Educators
BAOT	British Association of Occupational Therapists
COT	College of Occupational Therapists
COTEC	Council of Occupational Therapists in the European Community
ENOTHE	European Network of Occupational Therapy in Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HPC	Health Professions Council
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales
WFOT	World Federation of Occupational Therapists

Glossary

Accreditation	This is a quality process used by the College of Occupational Therapists to ensure that a programme of study has met the College's standards for pre-registration education for fitness for the profession (fit for award, practice and purpose).
Aegrotat degree	This is a degree that can sometimes be awarded when a candidate is unable to take his or her examinations because of illness and where it is deemed that had the candidate not been unwell, he or she would have passed. An aegrotat degree will not confer eligibility to apply for registration with the Health Professions Council or for professional membership of the British Association of Occupational Therapists.
Andragogy	This is the process of engaging adult learners in the structure of the learning experience.
Educational philosophy	This is the theoretical underpinning of the learning, teaching and assessment strategies and methods utilised on a programme.
Evidence-based curriculum	This is the programme of study where the learning experience draws on practice and theory to support the content offered.
External examiner	This is an examiner from an alternative setting appointed by the HEI whose role is to help the programme team assure the quality of the way the programme is delivered and assessed.
Formative assessment	This is a formal way of assessing a student's ability in a continuous way that does not necessarily transfer to the final grade or pass/fail decision.
Key stakeholders	These are those who are most interested in the development, content and outcomes of the programme, e.g. higher education institution academic quality and standards unit, students, academic staff, local occupational therapy managers and employers, service users, education commissioners, sponsoring bodies.
Lifelong learning	This is the development of the individual as a professional through learning, which involves a supportive process enabling the individual to engage with and acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes throughout his/her career.
Person-centred approach	This is a global term to explain the importance of the service user in the programme design and delivery.

Practice educator/ Professional practice educator	This is the person who is qualified to supervise students while they are on a practice placement. The professional practice educator normally will have undergone a practice educators' course (preferably the COT APPLE scheme or its equivalent) and will be familiar with the assessment regulations and processes in operation at the student's university.
Practice educator courses	These are courses offered to practice educators on the theory and practice of education that may lead to their accreditation as practice educators under the College of Occupational Therapists' Accreditation of Practice Placement Educators scheme (APPLE).
Practice learning outcome	This is a learning outcome set by the HEI, which students must achieve whilst on the practice placement but where the method of achievement is set by the practice placement educator, in conjunction with the HEI and the student.
Practice placement induction programme	This is a programme offered to all students on starting the practice learning experience covering organisational issues essential to the particular placement.
Pre-registration education	This is used to describe every programme of study that may be at undergraduate or postgraduate level, the successful completion of which leads to eligibility to apply for registration with the Health Professions Council and professional membership of the British Association of Occupational Therapists.
Professional practice co-ordinator	This is the person who normally co-ordinates the availability of practice placements and practice educators in the local region and regularly updates the higher education institutions.
Professional practice tutor	This is the academic tutor based at the higher education institution who manages and co-ordinates the practice placement learning elements of the programme, including the development of new practice placements and the training of practice educators.
Programme document	This is the document that describes the curriculum, educational philosophy, learning, teaching and assessment strategies employed, resources, regulations and procedures that apply to a programme of study for the particular award.
Role emerging placement	This is a student placement in settings where an occupational therapy service may not normally exist (see the COT Guidance Document – <i>Developing the occupational therapy profession: providing new work-based learning opportunities for students</i> (2006)).

Summative assessment	This is a formal way of assessing a student's ability, which normally relates to the final grade or pass/fail decision.
Supervision	This is the process of facilitating change in the learner that enables the process of assessment without itself being an assessment. Models of supervision refer to the different approaches to supervision, e.g. 1:1, 2:1, long-arm.

Standard 1: Programme management and resources standards

The institution's policy and procedures on the employment of the appropriate number of suitably qualified academic, professional practice learning and support staff with suitable experience, and on the provision of learning resources are able to:

- *Facilitate the achievement of learning outcomes by students.*
- *Monitor the observance of the professional code of ethics and conduct.*
- *Support the student experience.*
- *Enable the update and further development of the education programme.*
- *Influence service delivery.*
- *Contribute to the knowledge base of the profession.*

Criteria	Indicators and guidance	Source of evidence	Criteria met	Observations
1.1 The professional suite of programmes offered by the institution is headed by an experienced occupational therapist with higher education experience, a member who is in good standing with the professional body and able to lead the development of contemporary, creative and innovative occupational therapy and other related education programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A broad range of professional experience, with previous full-time academic appointment in higher education. • Capabilities under COT4 of the College's Post Qualifying Framework. See also Appendix 4: The director of the occupational therapy programme or professional programme lead. • An experienced member of the faculty directly responsible for developing the occupational therapy programme, coordinating the planning and administration of the programme, and supervising overall professional staff performance, and with authority to maintain educational standards. 			

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A member of the British Association of Occupational Therapists who facilitates and supports the active involvement of professional members of staff with the professional body. 			
<p>1.2 The institution employs a number of academic staff and professional practice tutors with suitable qualifications and experience to support and facilitate the entire learning required for professional practice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A clearly defined staffing strategy for the delivery of the professional programme over the period of accreditation. • The professional backgrounds and experience of academic and professional practice staff are congruent with the philosophy and purpose of the occupational therapy programme, and staff qualifications are appropriate to the level of the final award. • Applied occupational therapy elements of the programme are taught by occupational therapists with a range of professional and academic expertise and appropriate qualifications. • Occupational therapy staff CVs demonstrate active engagement in scholarship and research that contribute to the knowledge and evidence-base of the programme and the profession. • There is a sufficient number of qualified staff to deliver the programme(s), preferably within the COT recommended staff/student ratio of 1:15; there is a sound rationale if the recommended ratio is exceeded. 			
<p>1.3 The staffing strategy is sufficiently robust to resource the students' academic and professional practice experience in both statutory and non-statutory areas of practice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An occupational therapist member of staff has overall responsibility for the development of practice learning and opportunities in a wide range of practice settings. 			

Criteria	Indicators and guidance	Source of evidence	Criteria met	Observations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The higher education institution facilitates the development of practice educators under the COT APPLE scheme. • The higher education institution takes responsibility for developing the delivery of the APPLE scheme. • Clearly defined hours are identified for the preparation of practice educators for supervision of students. • Clearly defined teaching hours and strategy for contacting students and supporting their practice-based learning needs are identified. 			
<p>1.4 The staffing strategy takes account of the professional development needs of both academic and practice learning staff to support evidence-based practice and the further development of the programme.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a programme for staff development and staff CVs demonstrate their engagement with their professional development through research. • There is evidence that staff development activities impact upon the design and delivery of a contemporary and evidence-based curriculum and practice learning experience of students. 			
<p>1.5 The higher education institution demonstrates that there is a sufficient and diverse range of practice learning opportunities to support the curriculum.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is evidence that, where possible, each student can expect to gain practice experience with a range of people of all ages: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – From different socio-economic and cultural perspectives. – With recently acquired and long-standing occupational needs. – With different aspects of physical and psychosocial functioning. 			

<p>1.6 The educational resources and facilities are appropriate for the delivery of the curriculum.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a clear resource strategy in place for the delivery of the programme to ensure professional accreditation. 			
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Standard 2: Curriculum standards

The curriculum content, design and delivery reflect the occupational therapy philosophy based on a sound educational rationale and the principles of the professional code of ethics and conduct. Graduates from the programme will be fit for contemporary professional practice and able to identify their professional development needs.

Criteria	Indicators and guidance	Source of evidence	Criteria met	Observations
<p>2.1 The curriculum is designed to develop safe, competent occupational therapists who are fit for contemporary and developing professional practice and that reflects the contribution of occupational therapy in addressing the needs and requirements of current statutory, independent and voluntary sectors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The curriculum reflects current international and national reference standards and benchmarks. • The clear rationale for the curriculum model is based upon a sound educational philosophy that is compatible with the person-centred values of occupational therapy. • The programme document specifies the professional philosophy establishing the connections between occupation, health and wellbeing, and facilitates resourcefulness and self-reliance. • There is a clear rationale for the programme that reflects how it addresses unique local and national needs and priorities. • The induction programme in the academic and practice settings includes orientation to the service setting, including mandatory requirements, e.g. health and safety, and risk assessment issues. • There is evidence that key stakeholders are involved in curriculum development and implementation and that effective mechanisms are in place for consulting with education commissioners, practice educators, employers, practitioners, clients, carers, students and other professions in the design of the curriculum. 			

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is evidence that the curriculum reflects and can incorporate changes to health, social care and occupational drivers. 		
<p>2.2 The programme is designed to assure coherence and progression to entry-level professional competence and integrates academic and practice education elements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The integrity of the curriculum is reflected by the integration of knowledge, skills and attitudes throughout the programme. • Both academic and practice elements demonstrate progression towards professional competence. • The programme document demonstrates the requirement for students to successfully complete the equivalent of a minimum of 1000 hours of assessed practice placement learning in a range of practice settings (see WFOT minimum standards (2002) and COT Position Statement on APEL (2006)). 		
<p>2.3 The curriculum includes opportunities for inter-professional education in academic and practice settings as a means of developing teamwork skills, shared intervention and theory building.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The curriculum articulates how inter-professional learning is embedded into the curriculum. • The students' understanding of partnership working for effective service delivery is evident in their academic and practice assessments. • Refer to COT Position Statement on interprofessional education (2004). 		
<p>2.4 The curriculum is designed to facilitate the development of students' research skills to graduate level.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The curriculum demonstrates how research skills are taught and developed throughout the programme to equip graduates with the knowledge required to conduct research and to be skilled consumers of research. 		
<p>2.5 The curriculum embraces the principles of lifelong learning as an essential part of continuing professional and personal development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The programme document: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Describes how the concept of continuing professional and personal development is embedded and nurtured throughout the programme. – Describes how it supports the students' competence to practise. – Describes how students are enabled to document their plans and achievements. – Reflects the profession's current code of ethics and professional conduct. 		

Standard 3: Learning, teaching and assessment standards

The institution uses a range of methods and strategies that:

- *Supports the achievement of the learning outcomes.*
- *Supports the observance of the code of ethics and professional conduct and research governance.*
- *Employs rigorous and robust assessments that enable the student to demonstrate professional competence and safe practice commensurate to the level of study.*

Criteria	Indicators and guidance	Source of evidence	Criteria met	Observations
<p>3.1 The programme document describes the learning and teaching methods and assessment strategy that underpin the professional philosophy of occupational therapy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The educational programme embodies the beliefs and values of occupational therapy as evidenced in the learning, teaching and assessment methods. • Educational methods are consistent with the view of people as occupational beings (as articulated in the current COT Curriculum Framework). • The learning, teaching and assessment methods are designed to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Encourage independent learning and a sense of professionalism. – Address students’ needs in the context of widening participation and social inclusion, taking into account current legislation. • The learning, teaching and assessment methods demonstrate the use of information technology to enable learning in the academic and practice elements of the programme. • The learning, teaching and assessment strategies are outlined in the programme document and student handbook. 			

Standard 4: Quality assurance and monitoring standards

The institution's annual quality assurance and enhancement processes include the evaluation of the programme by the professional staff, monitoring and feedback mechanisms, external examining procedures, and evaluation of student performance.

Criteria	Indicators and guidance	Source of evidence	Criteria met	Observations
<p>4.1 Key stakeholders have confidence in the quality assurance and enhancement procedures in place.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality assurance processes demonstrate rigour and integrity, and enable continuous improvement. • Details of quality assurance processes include feedback from students, service users and stakeholders. • The programme annual report submitted to the College of Occupational Therapists includes the external examiners' reports and the higher education institution's response to their comments and recommendations. • Mechanisms are in place to provide evidence that future employers feel that graduates are fit for practice and employment. 			

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