

**Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy University Programs
Association canadienne des programmes universitaires d'ergothérapie
ACOTUP/ACPUE**

**Position Paper on Entry-to-Practice Education
July, 2005**

Background

ACOTUP/ACPUE is a council of occupational therapy academics, representing the 13 occupational therapy university programmes in Canada¹. During 2001 Strategic Planning, the ACOTUP/ACPUE mission was stated as:

"ACOTUP/ACPUE is a national organization that promotes and develops occupational therapy education and research with an understanding of issues within a global context."

Within this mission, ACOTUP/ACPUE members have a major interest and have expertise in developments that change the standards for occupational therapy education.

ACOTUP/ACPUE and CAOT have a collaborating agreement to address issues of mutual interest. Moreover, ACOTUP/ACPUE members, with governments, employers, and citizens are major stakeholders in decisions about occupational therapy education standards because changes impact funding levels, market place conditions, employment opportunities, and control in planning for health human resources.

Changes in Occupational Therapy Entry to Practice Credential

The Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT) is responsible for the national academic accreditation of entry to practice programmes in Canada. In November 2001, CAOT announced that, effective in 2008, CAOT will only accredit occupational therapy educational programmes that lead to a master's degree. The implication is that by 2010 all Canadian graduates wishing to enter practice as an occupational therapist must hold a master's degree. Graduation from a professionally accredited educational programme is typically one criterion for eligibility to write the national certification examination and application for registration by provincial regulatory organizations. The main rationale in support of this decision was a need to enhance the educational competencies required to practice as an occupational therapist in the current and increasingly complex health care environment.

CAOT engaged in consultation with various stakeholders, primarily within the profession, in making the decision to change educational requirements. CAOT made the decision after two Ontario programmes had already made the change, and after the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) had made a similar decision, placing the Canadian decision in the international arena of reciprocity within the free trade zone of North America. Individual ACOTUP/ACPUE members participated in some of these consultations.

¹ The 13th programme is at the Université de Sherbrook, admitting the first cohort in September 2007.

ACOTUP/ACPUE Position

As an organization, ACOTUP/ACPUE supports the efforts of Canada's occupational therapy programmes to develop quality educational and research programs as a basis for retaining national academic accreditation with CAOT. ACOTUP/ACPUE is also an organizational vehicle for communication with CAOT, and with other stakeholders to promote and develop occupational therapy education and research with an understanding of issues within a global context, congruent with the ACOTUP/ACPUE mission.

ACOTUP/ACPUE considers that the change in occupational therapy education impacts on all stakeholders, including governments, employers and others outside the profession who hold interests in the financial and legislative matters associated with occupational therapy services in Canada. Given that all Canadian occupational therapy university programmes have already changed or are in the process of changing to offer master's level entry programmes, ACOTUP/ACPUE is committed to fostering an ongoing dialogue with all stakeholders. The ongoing dialogue can provide a forum for monitoring and examining the impacts of change.

ACOTUP/ACPUE will involve all stakeholders in consultations and discussions regarding professional education. ACOTUP/ACPUE will ensure that the perspective of students, educators, practitioners, clients/consumers, government, employers and society at large are all considered in the evolution of occupational therapy education and research in Canada. ACOTUP/ACPUE recognizes the need for accurate information and data collection, and periodically collects basic information from occupational therapy programmes in Canada.

ACOTUP/ACPUE recommends that professional organizations and government agencies develop a collaborative strategy to collect data on occupational therapy human resources, specific for educational preparation, models of service delivery, and costs. Possible areas for ongoing study include:

- Supply, demand and utilization of occupational therapists in Canada, with regional distributions, and data on the impact of transition to master's entry-level (MEL) education on access on Canada to qualified occupational therapists
- outcomes of various service delivery models in the public and private sectors (different mixes of occupational therapists, support personnel, inter-professional teams and the effect on client outcomes in publicly and privately funded service systems)
- programme evaluation data on different approaches to occupational therapy education.

C.Backman, E. Townsend, L. Trudel, for ACOTUP/ACPUE, July 5, 2005