

Position Statement
RECOGNITION OF FORMER EDUCATIONAL STATUS

Introductory statement of the purpose of the paper

The WFOT Minimum Standards for Education of Occupational Therapists and the Approval process for programmes are being updated (2014). Part of this updating process agreed by Council is to change the minimum credential awarded to the level of a baccalaureate degree or equivalent.

While there is a broad understanding by Member Organisations of why this is both appropriate and desirable, there is also a firm commitment to providing continued support to those with a diploma credential. The vast majority of Member Organisations are situated in countries where a baccalaureate degree is either in place or being developed. However, there are other states within which the societal climate is such that moving from a diploma credential is not in the foreseeable future.

Statement of the position being taken

The World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT) supports all alumni of the WFOT Approved occupational therapy educational programmes who graduated at a diploma level by applying the description of “having graduated from an equivalent programme” for purposes of credential recognition and readiness to practice. Persons should not be permitted to call themselves Occupational Therapist when they have not graduated from an appropriate occupational therapy educational programme.

Statement of the significance of position or issue to occupational therapy

There has been marked movement over the past decade with many member countries granting a baccalaureate degree credential. In addition, several member countries are now awarding a masters level entry credential which is required for practicing in the profession. As the accepted and expected credential levels continue to evolve, the need for recognition of the innate value and expertise of practitioners already in the field of occupational therapy is critical. Graduates prepared at the diploma level are often the majority of occupational therapy practitioners within a specific country.

Statement of the significance of the position to society when appropriate

The occupational therapists that graduated in the earlier years are the mainstay of the profession and represent the legacy and growth of occupational therapy knowledge and skills since the initial acceptance of the profession within the relevant context. It is imperative that these therapists remain respected and valued for what they know, what they can do and what they offer society as a whole. The societal impact also includes the economic investment in this component of the health professional workforce that needs to be respected. This also includes the occupational therapists who were the founding members of inaugural educational programmes that now offer a more advanced credential than the founders hold.

Substantiating rationale for the position

As the WFOT Minimum Standards for Education of Occupational Therapists are ratified in its most current form, it is essential that this position is clearly articulated and well understood by all Member Organisations. This position reflects the intention and value of recognising achievement, collaboration and unity of purpose within the Federation.

Challenges

- The WFOT is aware that some countries are not prepared to upgrade their occupational therapy educational programmes.
- Advanced studies need to be accessible.
- Discrepancies in occupational therapy practice
- Associations should encourage the implementation of strategies.

Strategies

- Seek to implement access to those who want to update their education level.
- A transition period should be allowed to countries facing legislative issues.
- Qualify occupational therapy educators in higher level and promote research opportunities (see Position Statement on Academic Credentials for Occupational Therapy Educators, CM2008)