

Position Statement
SPECIALISATION AND ADVANCED OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY COMPETENCIES

Introductory Statement of the purpose of this paper

This Position Statement reflects the focus by WFOT on ensuring safe and competent practice by occupational therapists worldwide and reflects advanced and specialist levels of practice.

This Position Statement reflects the WFOT Minimum Standards for the Education of Occupational Therapists. It is based on the WFOT Position Statements for *Entry –Level Competencies*, *Competency and Maintaining Competency* and *Scope and Extension of Practice*.

The Statement has drawn from two surveys of specialist competencies in WFOT member associations and acknowledges that while a number of member associations have a structure for recognition of advanced competencies, most associations and countries do not have a system or recognise advanced competencies.

Statement of the position being taken

The WFOT expects that any member association that recognises occupational therapy advanced or specialist competencies in their country must have a structure in place by which to accredit such levels of practice. This structure should include the requirements for gaining advanced or specialist status and have an approval process and should have a process for re-approval.

WFOT recommends the following structure and advises that all five components should be met.

1. The candidate must be a recognised OT and accredited as required in each country and a member of the national and/or local OT association
2. Experience of at least three years with at least half of these years in the area of specialty / advanced practice
3. Post Professional Masters level qualification:
 - an occupational therapy masters degree, or
 - generic masters and additional approved hours or points of occupational therapy content (from further education courses)
4. Structured clinical supervision program that includes defined education as a supervisor, supervised practice and experience supervising others
5. Professional profile and conveying competencies (knowledge, skills and attitude):
 - Written such as professional or scientific articles
 - Presentations at conference / congress
 - Workplace innovations and initiatives; professional development.

The components of the structure for each member association must be built on the local context. While a member association may adapt a system from another association, the specific components must be adapted to suit the local context, considering the need for occupational therapy services in that country.

Statement of the significance of the position to OT

This Position Statement is a response to ongoing requests for guidelines in specialist competencies that are beyond the entry-level competencies.

Competence at advanced levels of occupational therapy is required for occupational therapists to be considered to have the skills, knowledge and attitude to practice in specialist areas of occupational therapy.

A position statement for occupational therapists will inform the profession beyond entry-level competencies; i.e. define the requirements for competence in different practice settings for post professional training level. This position in the globalised occupational therapy world will allow for recognition and benchmarking of advanced and specialist levels across WFOT member countries.

Significance of the statement to society

The WFOT recommends that occupational therapists competently respond to changing environments and new demands within clinical practice and public health.

Occupational therapists are meeting the demand for more relevant and focussed practice in response to health care trends toward shorter hospital stays and home or community based health services. In the community, public health and prevention services are putting demands on occupational therapy services to expand and to be an agent for change for a more inclusive society.

Having occupational therapists with specialist and advanced competencies impacts on the quality and sustainability of the services. Efficient and sustainable person-centred services ensure that waste is minimised through relevant, specialised and advanced occupational therapy being provided.

Challenges and Strategies

A significant challenge is the ability of a member association to meet the components, particularly the achievement of a Masters Degree and further education requirements. Strategies to overcome this include the ability to undertake on-line degree courses or to link to masters courses in other countries.

Another challenge to the member associations is the process and administration required to accredit the applicants / candidates. Strategies here include the potential for member associations to 'group' together to administer the process using the expertise within each member association; this could be according to the WFOT Regional Groups.

A further challenge that may need to be addressed in member associations are any legal requirements associated with registration or regulations of an advanced or specialist level.

Conclusion

Advanced and specialist practice is important in the changing world; accompanied by advanced and specialist competencies to ensure that occupational therapy practice is relevant and sustainable.

To ensure that occupational therapists maintain competency to practice, the WFOT takes the position that any member association that recognises occupational therapy advanced or specialist competencies must have a structure by which to accredit such levels of practice.

References

1. WFOT (2002). Minimum Standards for the Education of Occupational Therapists. WFOT www.wfot.org
2. Specialist Application, Danish Association of Occupational Therapists www.etf.dk
3. The Norwegian Association of Occupational Therapists: Ergoterapeutenes Spesialistordning (2014) <http://www.ergoterapeutene.org/>
4. Canadian Association CAOT www.caot.ca
5. Occupational Therapy Competencies AOTI Project Office 2008

NB All references to be checked