

Fieldwork Education Information for EVERYONE... New ACOTE Standards for Fieldwork Education

Most occupational therapy practitioners work in facilities or institutions that are regulated, certified, accredited, or otherwise influenced by national or state agency guidelines. Occupational Therapy Educational programs must follow standards for education established by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE). On January 1, 2008, new standards of education were implemented for all occupational therapy education, including doctoral level, entry level masters, and occupational therapy assistant programs. The new standards related specifically to fieldwork education have a significant impact on all occupational therapy practitioners that are involved in both level one and level two fieldwork education. The following standards should be of particular interest for all fieldwork educators, fieldwork supervisors, clinical education coordinators, or any other title that is used within a facility to identify therapists who have direct contact with any level of occupational therapy students, as these standards have the most impact on educational programs and the fieldwork sites. Academic Fieldwork Coordinators (AFWCs) must be able to show compliance with these standards in order for the educational programs to remain accredited by ACOTE. Following are four examples of the standards which are applicable to the OTD, MOT and OTA fieldwork education programs and will require increased communication between the fieldwork site and the educational program to show evidence that these standards are in compliance.

B.10.4.	Ensure that the academic fieldwork coordinator is responsible for advocating the development of links between the fieldwork and didactic aspects of the curriculum, for communicating about the curriculum to fieldwork educators, and for maintaining contracts and site data related to fieldwork placements.
B.10.5.	Demonstrate that academic and fieldwork educators collaborate in establishing fieldwork objectives, identifying site requirements, and communicating with the student and fieldwork educator about progress and performance during fieldwork.
B.10.14.	Ensure that the fieldwork experience is designed to promote clinical reasoning and reflective practice, to transmit the values and beliefs that enable ethical practice, and to develop professionalism and competence in career responsibilities.
B.10.15.	Provide Level II fieldwork in traditional and/or emerging settings, consistent with the curriculum design. In all settings, psychosocial factors influencing engagement in occupation must be understood and integrated for the development of client-centered, meaningful, occupation-based outcomes. The student can complete Level II fieldwork in a minimum of one setting if it is reflective of more than one practice area, or in a maximum of four different settings.

The entire list of fieldwork standards can be found at <http://www.aota.org/Educate/Accredit/StandardsReview.aspx> . All academic fieldwork coordinators in Ohio are combining resources to assist fieldwork sites in developing or re-developing level one and level two fieldwork programs for compliance with the new ACOTE Standards. The Ohio Academic Fieldwork Coordinators' Consortium was recently formed to organize the efforts of all 14 OT educational programs in the State of Ohio. This consortium met in May, 2008 and is working on a "game plan" to effectively and efficiently share information with fieldwork educators and practice settings. For more information or to talk with an AFWC in your area, please contact Georganna Miller at millerg@xavier.edu . Watch the next issue of OT NEWSBREAK for more information on fieldwork education.