



# Occupational Therapist Assistant and Physiotherapist Assistant Education Accreditation program: Development and update

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The Occupational Therapist Assistant and Physiotherapist Assistant Education Accreditation program (OTA & PTA EAP) is a collaborative initiative among the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT), the Canadian Occupational and Physical Therapy Educators Council (COPEC) and Physiotherapy Education Accreditation Canada (PEAC, formerly Accreditation Council for Canadian Physiotherapy Academic Programs). CAOT and PEAC are the Accreditation agencies for Canadian occupational therapist and physiotherapist education programs respectively, while COPEC is the organization of educators of Canadian OTA and PTA programs. Development of the accreditation program began in August 2010 with the hiring of a program manager. Over the past two years, program development has been steadily and consistently moving towards two pilot accreditation reviews scheduled for winter 2012. The purpose of this report is to outline the roles and responsibilities of the three participating parties and to provide an overview of activities to date.

## Roles and responsibilities of stakeholder groups

CAOT, COPEC and PEAC have all been involved in the OTA & PTA EAP since its inception. Each organization has a unique role contributing to the development and ongoing evolution of this accreditation program. The roles of each stakeholder group are as follows:

### COPEC:

- Requested initiation of the accreditation program,
- Is the recipient of the accreditation process,
- Funds the program through annual fees, and
- Contributed to the development of the initial Accreditation Standards.

### CAOT and PEAC jointly (ACCPAP & CAOT, 2009):

- Have developed and are managing the OTA & PTA EAP, collaborating with COPEC and other stakeholders as required,
- Recruited Steering Committee members (OTA & PTA EAP, 2011),

- Facilitated development of the initial Accreditation Standards, and
- Developed the Policies and Procedures for the operation of the OTA & PTA EAP.

### CAOT, PEAC and COPEC jointly:

- Provide membership to the Steering Committee,
- Provide membership to the Peer Review Teams for accreditation reviews, and
- Provide membership to the Joint Accreditation Committee (OTA & PTA EAP, 2011) and collaborate through this Committee to:
  - establish and review Accreditation Standards,
  - review accreditation reports and make accreditation award recommendations/ decisions, and
  - consider policies and procedures related to the OTA & PTA EAP.

### PEAC:

- Is responsible for leading the development process and administering the accreditation program, once established.

## Activity update

### Accreditation Standards

In 2009, 19 education programs signed on with the OTA & PTA EAP, providing funding to initial developmental activities. The framework for the program accreditation reviews is provided by the OTA & PTA EAP accreditation standards. These were developed through an iterative process consisting of multi-stakeholder input using focus groups and an electronic survey, and guided by the Standards Development Working Group. The standards are based on a 5+1 framework (Gelmon, O'Neil, & Kimmey, 1999); they include aspects of the CAOT and PEAC education accreditation standards and incorporate the OTA and PTA competency profiles. Draft 3 of the OTA & PTA EAP Accreditation Standards was finalized in December 2010 and will be used for the pilot accreditation reviews. The Standards will then be reviewed and finalized for

## About the author

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use in subsequent ongoing reviews. Draft 3 of the Standards has been translated into French and validated by a group of Francophone OTA and PTA educators.

### **Policies and Procedures**

The second cornerstone document of the OTA & PTA EAP, the Policies and Procedures, outlines the accreditation review processes, award procedures and mechanisms. The draft Policies and Procedures document, for use with the pilot reviews, was approved by the OTA & PTA EAP Steering Committee and presented to the Boards of CAOT and PEAC for approval/ratification in May 2011. The Policies and Procedures have been circulated to the members of COPEC and were discussed with this group at its annual meeting in Saskatoon in June 2011. Upon completion of the pilots, the Policies and Procedures will be reviewed according to the feedback received during their use and finalized for application with the programs during the accreditation review schedule.

### **Candidacy Status**

The first step in the accreditation review process is the program's application for Candidacy Status. To be eligible for Candidacy Status the program must provide evidence of the following:

- The program is authorized to provide post-secondary education,
- A diploma is granted to students successfully completing the program,
- The program head is a registered occupational therapist or physiotherapist, and
- There is an articulated curriculum framework, a designated program budget and identifiable program space.

By December 2011, it is anticipated that the 19 programs affiliated with the OTA & PTA EAP will have successfully attained Candidacy Status. A list of these programs will be available on OTA & PTA EAP section of the PEAC website ([www.peac-aepc.ca/OTA-PTA.html](http://www.peac-aepc.ca/OTA-PTA.html)).

### **Accreditation Reviews**

As mentioned previously, two pilot accreditation reviews are scheduled for early 2012; an evaluative framework has been developed to review documents and processes associated with the pilots. A preliminary schedule of on-site accreditation reviews has been developed with implementation to begin in the fall of 2012, once evaluation of the pilots is complete.

A Peer Review Team (PRT) training session was held for COPEC members at their annual meeting in Saskatoon in June 2011. Surveyor recruitment and training is ongoing with applications requested from CAOT, COPEC and PEAC for individuals willing to serve as PRT members. Information and application forms can be found on the OTA & PTA EAP section of the PEAC website (see above).

## **Committees**

### **Steering Committee**

The OTA & PTA EAP is guided by a steering committee which consists of representatives from CAOT, COPEC, PEAC and the program manager. The Steering Committee

meets on a monthly basis and is responsible for overseeing and guiding activities related to the development and implementation of the OTA & PTA EAP, establishing sub-committees as required and facilitating communication with stakeholder groups.

### **Joint Accreditation Committee**

The Joint Accreditation Committee (JAC) is responsible for determining accreditation awards and reviewing accreditation standards, policies and procedures on an ongoing basis. JAC members include representatives from CAOT, COPEC, PEAC and the public, and they will be appointed in the early 2012. The first meeting of the JAC is scheduled for spring 2012.

### **Communication**

Information related to the OTA & PTA EAP is posted on the PEAC website (see above) and is linked directly from the support personnel page of the CAOT website ([www.caot.ca/default.asp?pageid=1013](http://www.caot.ca/default.asp?pageid=1013)). Plans are in place to create a bilingual OTA & PTA EAP website, modeled after the PEAC website, where relevant documents and information will be posted as they are finalized after the pilots.

For more information on the OTA & PTA EAP, to apply for application to the program accreditation process and/or to submit an application to be a PRT member please contact Dawn Burnett, Program Manager OTA & PTA EAP at [dawnburnett@sympatico.ca](mailto:dawnburnett@sympatico.ca).

### **References**

- Accreditation Council for Canadian Physiotherapy Academic Programs & Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists. (2009). *Memorandum of Agreement respecting their roles and responsibilities regarding accreditation of support personnel education programs in Canada*.
- Gelmon, S., O'Neil, E., Kimmey, J., and the Task Force on Accreditation of Health Professions Education. (1999). *Strategies for change and improvement: The report of the Task Force on Accreditation of Health Professions Education*. San Francisco: Center for the Health Professions, University of California at San Francisco.
- Occupational Therapist Assistant and Physiotherapist Assistant Education Accreditation Program. *Policies and procedures – approved May 2011*.