



## Statement regarding the WFOT Minimum Standards for the Education of Occupational Therapists (revised 2016) related to COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic is having a profound impact on the lives, health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities worldwide<sup>1</sup>. Populations are needing to understand, adjust and compensate their daily routines in order to participate in their usual occupations or discover new ones. As a result, the delivery of occupational therapy practice, education and research are needing to adapt to accommodate the required changes to enable engagement, safety and wellbeing.

The COVID-19 pandemic has generated circumstances where the opportunity for direct contact with people has been restricted. Occupational therapy resources have been prioritised and deployed in accordance with local/national needs and service requirements. Education providers are delivering academic content through online learning, researchers adapting methodologies, recruitment and interventions to continue their investigations.

The World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT) Minimum Standards for the Education of Occupational Therapists have a long and influential history in the global development of the profession and provide a robust quality assurance mechanism for occupational therapy education.

Practice placements are an integral component of the Minimum Standards and an essential part of occupational therapy entry-level education, in which students learn to integrate knowledge, professional reasoning and professional behaviour and develop knowledge, skills and attitudes to the level of competence required of qualifying occupational therapists<sup>2</sup>.

The Minimum Standards require a minimum of 1000 practice placement hours to implement an occupational therapy process, or an aspect of an occupational therapy process involving human interaction with person or persons as client (individual, family, group or community, institution, agency or government)<sup>2</sup>.

A dynamic and flexible approach to how the 1000 hours is achieved has always been the intent of the Minimum Standards. Environments in which the practice placements occur differ across the world and remain sensitive to local resources, contexts and opportunities available for the delivery of the learning. The Minimum Standards do not require placement hours to be spent in specific types of facilities or environments, recognising that occupational therapists use a biopsychosocial approach when working with people, irrespective of a diagnosis or service setting.

The COVID-19 pandemic has required occupational therapists to develop new and innovative mechanisms for the delivery of services and through this has reinforced the need to identify and adapt learning opportunities. As stated in the Minimum Standards, it is imperative that students graduating from WFOT Approved Education Programmes are able to demonstrate and evidence the essential knowledge, skills and attitudes, ensuring local health and societal needs are considered<sup>2</sup>.

WFOT Approved Education programmes should continue to work with occupational therapists to develop strategies that enable placement learning to meet the 1000 hours practice placement requirement. Many education programmes use role play and simulation as a form of practice education. Other teaching strategies include problem-based case study work, video assessments and in-depth, evidence informed reflective practice. National occupational therapy associations and regulators should continue to recognise the relevance of evidence-based experiential learning and the conditions in which they are undertaken.

Educators, students and graduates should be encouraged to use these extraordinary circumstances to enhance unique and creative learning opportunities congruent with the client's unique context just as all occupational therapists are currently doing.

Additional resource:

WFOT has established a dedicated free online forum for educators to share and discuss alternative teaching and learning strategies in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. Available on the Occupational Therapy International Online Network (OTION): <https://wfot.link/covid19educators>

#### References

1 World Federation of Occupational Therapists Public Statement – Occupational Therapy Response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Available at <https://wfot.link/covidpublic>

2 World Federation of Occupational Therapists Minimum Standards for the Education of Occupational Therapists (revised 2016). Available at <https://wfot.link/mseot16>