

# ACCREDITATION PROCESS FOR NEW PROGRAMS

## III. A. 3. STEP THREE: THE INITIAL ON-SITE EVALUATION

### THE INITIAL ON-SITE EVALUATION

In preparation for the initial on-site evaluation, the program director may be requested to submit current information to update the initial Report of Self-Study previously submitted, including any additional materials requested in the Report of Initial Review. This material is submitted at least 2 months prior to the on-site. The members of the initial review team are generally assigned to serve as either an on-site evaluator or paper reviewer for the on-site visit.

At least two evaluators (members of the ACOTE, ACOTE Emeriti, or Roster of Accreditation Evaluators) conduct the 2½-day on-site evaluation. In emergency situations when a suitable replacement evaluator cannot be located, a qualified AOTA occupational therapy staff member may serve as one of the team members with the advance permission of the program director. A summary report of the visit is made by the evaluators at the final on-site conference and institution officials are given a copy of the Evaluators' Report of On-Site Evaluation at that time. To expedite preparation of the report for ACOTE review and action, the program director is requested to submit a copy of the report with any corrections or comments to the AOTA Accreditation Department within one week after the on-site evaluation. (Additional response time is available if needed.) A written response to the on-site visit may also be submitted if there are special considerations or circumstances the program director wishes to be brought to the attention of ACOTE. Additional material or documents will not be considered by ACOTE, however. ACOTE will only consider action on the program based on those materials the on-site team had the opportunity to review and discuss during the on-site visit.

### ACCREDITATION ACTION

Following Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE®) review of the Evaluators' Report of On-Site Evaluation and any comments submitted by the program director, action is taken to grant a status of either Accreditation or Accreditation Withheld. (Descriptions of each accreditation status are provided in ACOTE Accreditation Manual Section IV.C.) Notification of final action by ACOTE and copies of the Report of ACOTE are mailed to the chief executive officer, and copied to the dean and the program director. The ACOTE Certificate of Accreditation (if awarded) is mailed directly to the program director. Letters containing notification of Accreditation Withheld are sent certified mail, return receipt requested. Procedures for request for appeal of an ACOTE decision to withhold accreditation are found in ACOTE Accreditation Manual Section IV.D.

If ACOTE determines that further information related to the program's compliance with the Standards is required to enable a fair decision to be made regarding the accreditation of the program, it may defer action until the information is received. ACOTE may request materials by mail or schedule a second on-site evaluation or fact-finding visit. The cost of the visit shall be borne by ACOTE.

If areas of noncompliance are identified in the Report of ACOTE, the program will be required to submit a Plan of Correction. Subsequent Progress Reports will be required until all areas of noncompliance are corrected. (See ACOTE Accreditation Manual Sections IV.E.1. and IV.E.2.)

Following action to award initial accreditation, the next on-site evaluation is scheduled 5 or 7 academic years following the initial on-site evaluation, as determined by ACOTE. Five years will be the standard number of years for initial accreditation. Seven years will be the maximum number of years for initial accreditation of a program with no areas of noncompliance.

ACOTE may extend the accreditation term awarded from 5 to 7 years for programs cited with no more than two areas of noncompliance. This decision will be based on ACOTE's review of the Plan of Correction or Progress Report submitted by the program and a determination that the program has fully resolved all cited areas of noncompliance within 1 year of ACOTE's accreditation action on the program's Report of On-Site Evaluation. ACOTE will also consider any pre-existing areas of noncompliance as well as program changes that have occurred subsequent to the on-site evaluation that affect or are likely to affect the program's full compliance with the Standards, including student learning outcomes. ACOTE may decline to extend the accreditation term of a multi-site program if one or more of the program locations was accredited for a shorter term than the primary location.