American
Occupational Therapy
Association

Advanced Certification Recertification Handbook

Effective January 2023

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General Information

American Occupational Therapy Association

The American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) is the national professional association established in 1917 to represent the interests and concerns of occupational therapy practitioners and students of occupational therapy and to improve the quality of occupational therapy services.

Current AOTA membership is approximately 65,000, including occupational therapists, occupational therapy assistants, and occupational therapy students. Members reside in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and internationally.

AOTA represents 230,000 occupational therapy practitioners and students in the United States.

AOTA's major programs and activities are directed toward assuring the quality of occupational therapy services, improving consumer access to health care services, and promoting the professional development of members.

AOTA educates the public and advances the profession by providing resources, setting standards, and serving as an advocate to improve health care. AOTA is based in North Bethesda, MD.

Occupational Therapy Advanced Certification Commission

The Occupational Therapy Advanced Certification Commission (OTACC) is an Associated Advisory Commission (Council) within AOTA, responsible for developing policies and procedures and guiding the overall management and essential decisions of the Advanced Certification Program. Essential certification decisions under the purview of the OTACC include eligibility requirements; standards for acquiring advanced certification and for maintaining certification; the development, administration and scoring of examinations; selection of subject matter experts (SMEs); and disciplinary determinations.

About Advanced Certification

AOTA's Advanced Certification Program is designed to recognize occupational therapy practitioners who demonstrate advanced skills, knowledge, and practice experience. Using an exam-based process, advanced certification provides an objective method to distinguish therapists with knowledge of current, evidence-based practice and commitment to continuing professional development in a specific area of practice.

Overview

This candidate's guide is intended for use by occupational therapy practitioners who hold current AOTA Board or Specialty certification (BCG, BCMH, BCP, BCPR, SCDCM, SCEM, SCFES, SCLV, or SCSS). This guide provides information on AOTA's Advanced Certification recertification processes: requirements, application procedures, review and follow up, and related policies.

Purpose of Recertification

OTACC is dedicated to enhancing, progressing, and promoting the occupational therapy profession by recognizing occupational therapy practitioners who demonstrate advanced skill and knowledge in a specific practice area. OTACC requires certification maintenance to protect the quality and integrity of the certification programs, as knowledge and skills required for professional performance change over time. This maintenance process encourages credential holders to remain current on advances in their specific area of practice, and in turn encourages provision of the highest quality services to the public and profession.

Recertification Requirements

In spring 2021, OTACC developed and approved the following requirements for recertification. Beginning January 1, 2023, these requirements apply to those who obtained initial certification by portfolio (prior to 2021) and to those who obtained initial certification by exam (2021 and after).

Recertification is required every 5 years in order to maintain certification and to continue to use your advanced certification credential (BCG, BCMH, BCP, BCPR, SCDCM, SCEM, SCFES, SCLV, or SCSS). The following requirements must be met to be eligible for recertification:

- Certified or licensed by, and in good standing with, an AOTA-recognized credentialing or regulatory body.
- At least 1,500 hours of experience in the certification area within the last 5 years—may include direct intervention, supervision, teaching, research, consultation, administration, case or care management, community programming, or activities supporting professional organizations in area of certification.
- At least 60 contact hours in professional development activities in the certification area within the last 5 years—may include CE courses, academic coursework, independent learning, mentorship, fieldwork supervision/capstone mentoring, professional writing, presentation and instruction, and other activities as outlined in the approved activity chart in Appendix A. These hours should be in addition to (not part of) the 1,500 hours of experience in the certification area.

Those who obtain an advanced certification in 2021 or after will be expected to meet the recertification requirements as stated above.

For those who currently hold an advanced certification (received initial certification prior to 2021), the requirements above will be phased in over the next 6 years. Please refer to the Advanced Certification Recertification webpage for requirements specific to your renewal year.

Recertification Deadline

You may apply for recertification up to 6 months before or after your certification expiration date. The 6 months after your expiration date are considered a grace period so that you can collect your documentation and submit your application (and cannot be used for additional time to complete professional development activities). Any professional development activities collected after your expiration date will apply toward your next recertification application. No matter when you recertify in the 6 months before or after your certification expiration date, your new recertification date will always be 5 years from your previous recertification date. For example, if your certification is set to expire on 6/30/2024 and you submit your recertification application on 10/31/2024 (within the grace period), your new recertification date will be 6/30/2029.

If you do not submit a complete recertification application within the 6 months after your certification expiration date (grace period), your certification will expire, and you are no longer considered certified through AOTA's Advanced Certification Program.

Recertification Fee (Effective beginning with 2023 renewal cycles)

- $250 AOTA Member/$375 nonmember

Recertification Process

Step 1: Application Submission
Step 2: Application Review
Step 3: Recertification Decision
Step 4: Certification Cycle
Step 5: Certification Maintenance

General Application Instructions

You can apply to recertify using our online application system.
Step 1: Log in or create an account with AOTA: https://myaota.aota.org.

Step 2: Check your contact information and ensure that your first and last name, credentials, and email are correct. If changes are needed, select "Update Contact Info" under Settings.
Step 3: Go to https://www.aota.org/career/advanced-certification-program/recertification.
Step 4: Select the "Apply Now" button.
Step 5: Complete the application online and upload the required documents.
Step 6: Submit payment online.

Completing the Application

When submitting your application, please ensure that your information at myaota.aota.org is updated. This is where we will obtain your name and location for the AOTA Advanced Certification Directory on the website. Additionally, AOTA will use your email address as the primary identifier in your online profile and for communications, including recertification reminders. Your email address will be attached to all online records, so it is best to choose a permanent email address for this purpose. If you use a work email address, please remember to update it if you change employers.

A link to the online application is available at https://www.aota.org/career/advanced-certification-program/recertification. You will need to log in using your AOTA account information or create a new account with AOTA. The online application will then take you through the following pages:

- Applicant Information page
- Verification of experience hours in certification area (upload)
- Professional development activity documentation (upload)
- Applicant Attestation
- Review and Payment

The online application allows you to save your progress on each page; you do not have to complete the entire application in one session. At the end of the online application, you will be directed to AOTA's payment portal. Note that the review process will not start until applications are complete and payment has been processed.

Submitting Payment

As noted above, the final section of the online application will direct you to AOTA's payment portal.

Confirmation of Receipt of Application

Within 1 business day of receipt of your application and payment, you will receive an auto-generated email from members@aota.org confirming that your application and payment were received. Note that this auto-generated email will go to the email associated with your AOTA account.

Procedures for Application Review

After your application, supporting documents, and payment are received, applications will be reviewed to determine whether all renewal requirements have been met. Certificants will receive email notification of their recertification status (approved, more information needed, or denied) within 30 business days of application submission.

Incomplete Applications

If your application is incomplete, you will be notified by the AOTA Advanced Certification office, and the missing information must be provided before processing can continue. If the missing information is not submitted within 30 business days of request, your application will be considered withdrawn, and you will be required to begin a new application in the future if you want to pursue recertification. You will be issued a refund of the recertification fee, minus a $25 processing fee.

Application Rejection

Applications for recertification will be rejected for failure to meet renewal requirements or falsification of application information. Rejected applicants will be refunded the recertification fee, minus a $25 processing fee.

Application Withdrawal/Cancellation

To withdraw or cancel a recertification application, please email certification@aota.org. There is a $25 processing fee for withdrawn or cancelled applications.

Appeals of Certification Decisions

Candidates have the right to appeal an initial adverse decision made by the Advanced Certification Program regarding eligibility for certification or recertification. Note that failure of a candidate to meet an established deadline may not be appealed. Failing an exam, on its own, is not sufficient grounds for appeal. An appeal must be submitted in writing within 30 business days following the date of notification of the adverse decision. The appeal should include date of adverse decision, reason for the appeal, details of the circumstances (including relevant supporting materials), and candidate's email address and phone number. Appeals should be sent to the AOTA Advanced Certification Program via email at certification@aota.org. All appeals will be addressed by the OTACC within 30 business days of receipt. Individuals will be notified of OTACC's decision within 10 business days of determination.

Decisions about appeals made by the OTACC will be final.

Nondiscrimination Policy

AOTA's Advanced Certification Program endorses the principles of equal opportunity and non-discrimination. The Advanced Certification Program does not discriminate with regard to age, gender, ethnic origin, race, religion, disability, marital status, veteran status, sexual orientation, or any other category protected by federal or state law.

Failure to Recertify

If you do not complete the recertification process within 6 months of your certification expiration date, you are no longer considered certified through AOTA's Advanced Certification program. You may not use AOTA Advanced Certification credentials (BCG, BCMH, BCP, BCPR, SCDCM, SCEM, SCFES, SCLV, or SCSS), and you cannot present yourself to the public as holding an advanced certification through AOTA.

Recertification Audit

Your Advanced Certification Recertification submissions are subject to random audit no later than 60 days after you recertify your credential.

The recertification audit serves as a method to ensure that credential holders are meeting the standards to maintain the knowledge and skills needed to remain current in their designated certification area.
Please maintain copies of your records for 1 year after recertifying your credential in case you are randomly selected for an audit.

Special Circumstances

If you have experienced exceptional medical or personal circumstances that have impacted your ability to meet the recertification requirements, please contact certification@aota.org BEFORE your certification renewal date. OTACC will evaluate each case individually.

Restriction of the use of Advanced Certification Credentials

To be eligible to use the Advanced Certification credentials (BCG, BCMH, BCP, BCPR, SCEM, SCDCM, SCFES, SCLV, or SCSS), an individual must continue to meet recertification requirements. When using an Advanced Certification credential, please note that the credential should always appear immediately after the occupational therapy designation (i.e., OT/L, OTR) and may not be used at any time without the occupational therapy designation.

The following identifies the correct order for the credential:

1. Name

2. Academic designation (if appropriate)

3. Occupational therapy designation

4. BCG, BCMH, BCP, BCPR, SCEM, SCDCM, SCFES, SCLV, or SCSS

5. Other credentials or designations

Example: Jane Doe, MA, OTR/L, BCP, FAOTA

In the event of withdrawal, suspension, or revocation of certification for any reason, individuals must refrain from any use and/or further promotion as certified unless otherwise authorized by AOTA.

Individuals must comply with the relevant provisions of the certification. Individuals must only make claims regarding certification that are within the scope for which the certification has been granted.

Complaints against credential misuse should be documented in writing and sent to certification@aota.org. The Advanced Certification Program will follow all policies and procedures to determine the validity of the complaint and notify the person misusing the credential. AOTA will take steps, including legal action, to prevent credential misuse.

Credential Verification
The names of current certificants will be published on the AOTA website, searchable by certification type and state.

Records Retention
AOTA retains an electronic copy of your recertification application for 2 years.

Reporting Changes to Eligibility Status
If there are changes to your eligibility status during your certification period (e.g., if your state license and/or NBCOT certification are revoked), you must notify AOTA at certification@aota.org.

Code of Ethics
Certificants are expected to abide by the AOTA Occupational Therapy Code of Ethics.

Contact Information and Communications
It is your responsibility to keep your contact information updated with AOTA. Your AOTA account can be updated at myaota.aota.org. This is where we will obtain your name and location for the AOTA Advanced Certification Directory on the website. Additionally, AOTA will use your email address as the primary identifier in your online profile and for communications, including recertification reminders. Your email address will be attached to all online records, so it is best to choose a permanent email address for this purpose. If you use a work email address, please remember to update it if you change employers.

Appendix A: AOTA Advanced Certification Approved Recertification Activities

You may renew your certification by demonstrating continued competency through the following activities.

Note: All recertification activities should clearly relate to your area of advanced certification, and you will be asked to provide a brief statement of relevance for each activity submitted.

KNOWLEDGE AND GROWTH			
Activity	**Contact Hours**	**Required Documentation**	**Additional Comments**
Continuing Education Courses (area of practice related to your board or specialty certification)	1 contact hour for each hour or equivalent unit that is awarded by the provider	Certificate of completion or similar documentation including name of course, date, instructor, organization, location, and number of hours attended, and amount of CE credit earned	
Academic Coursework (area of practice related to board or specialty certification and in occupational therapy or related content)	10 contact hours per credit (e.g., a 3-credit academic course would equal 30 contact hours)	Official transcript indicating successful completion of the course, date, and a description of the course from school catalog or course syllabus	
Independent Learning (area of practice related to your board or specialty certification)	1 contact hour for 10 hours spent on an independent study activity In general, a minimum of 8 to 12 pages is equivalent to an hour of reading	Documentation including title, authors, publisher, time spent, and date of completion. Include a statement that briefly summarizes the article and how the information can be translated into practice.	Example: Peer-reviewed journals, preparation for a certification examination

MENTORSHIP AND EDUCATING OTHERS

Activity	Contact Hours	Required Documentation	Additional Comments
Peer Mentorship (as mentor or mentee) (area of practice related to your board or specialty certification)	1 contact hour for 10 hours spent in mentored activities related to achieving goals over a minimum of 2 months	name of mentor and mentee, copy of signed agreement, dates, hours, focus of mentorship activities, and outcomes	
Level II Fieldwork Supervision	3 contact hours for each Level II FW student	Documentation including verification from school with student name, school, and dates of fieldwork or the signature page of the completed student evaluation form.	Evaluation scores and comments should be deleted.
OT Capstone Mentorship	1 contact hour for 5 hours mentoring OT student in fulfillment of capstone requirements	Documentation including verification from school with student name, school, and dates of fieldwork or the signature page of the completed student evaluation form.	Evaluation scores and comments should be deleted.
Presentation and Instruction (area of practice related to your board or specialty certification)	Credit for presentation time plus up to 2 hours preparation for each hour of presentation.	Documentation including a copy of official program/ schedule/syllabus including presentation title, date, hours of presentation and audience.	Single presentation can only be counted once; cannot count course instruction as part of primary role as educator
Professional writing (area of practice related to your board or specialty certification)	14 hours—author of book 10 hours—author of book chapter 10 hours—editor of book 10 hours—author peer-review article 5 hours—author invited article 5 hours—editor of peer-reviewed journal or professional article	Documentation including full reference of publication including title, author, editor, and date of publication or copy of acceptance letter if not yet published	

RESEARCH AND IMPLEMENTATION OF EVIDENCE

Activity	Contact Hours	Required Documentation	Additional Comments
Research (area of practice related to your board or specialty certification)	1 contact hour for each 10 hours spent on development or implementation of research project	Documentation including verification from primary investigator with name of project, dates of participation, objective or project and applicant's role on project	**Includes data collection and analysis**
Evidence-Based Project (area of practice related to your board or specialty certification)	1 contact hour for each 10 hours spent on development or implementation of EBP project	Documentation including verification from project manager or administrator with name of project, dates of participation, objective of project, and applicant's role on project.	
Grants (area of practice related to your board or specialty certification)	1 contact hour for each 10 hours spent on grant proposal	Documentation including name of grant proposal, name of grant source, objectives of program, and verification from author (if other than applicant).	

RESEARCH AND IMPLEMENTATION OF EVIDENCE *(continued)*

Activity	Contact Hours	Required Documentation	Additional Comments
Research (area of practice related to your board or specialty certification)	1 contact hour for each 10 hours spent on development or implementation of research project	Documentation including verification from primary investigator with name of project, dates of participation, objective or project and applicant's role on project	Includes data collection and analysis
Evidence-Based Project (area of practice related to your board or specialty certification)	1 contact hour for each 10 hours spent on development or implementation of EBP project	Documentation including verification from project manager or administrator with name of project, dates of participation, objective of project, and applicant's role on project.	
Grants (area of practice related to your board or specialty certification)	1 contact hour for each 10 hours spent on grant proposal	Documentation including name of grant proposal, name of grant source, objectives of program, and verification from author (if other than applicant).	

LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT			
Activity	**Contact Hours**	**Required Documentation**	**Additional Comments**
Professional Roles (area of service related to your board or specialty certification in occupational therapy or related field)	2 contact hours for participation on a committee or board for 1 year minimum	Documentation including name of committee or board, name of organization, purpose of service, and applicant's role.	Participation must be validated by organization or committee.
Community engagement (area of service related to your board or specialty certification)	1 contact hour for every 10 hours of participation in community organizations or events	Documentation including name of committee or board, name of organization, purpose of service, and applicant's role.	Participation must be validated by organization.

Notes:

1. The 60 hours required for recertification can be obtained in one activity type or across several activity types.
2. The 60 hours of professional development should be in addition to (not part of) the 1,500 hours of experience in the certification area.
3. If an advanced certificate or certification (related to your area of Board or Specialty certification) was earned or renewed during your 5-year renewal cycle, and <u>CE was provided as part of that process</u>, you can count those hours under *Continuing Education Courses*. Example: AOTA Professional Certificate.
4. If an advanced certificate (related to your area of Board or Specialty certification) was earned or renewed during your 5-year renewal cycle, and academic credit was provided as part of that process, you can count those credits under *Academic Coursework*. Example: UAB's Graduate Certificate in Low Vision; USC's Executive Certificate in Home Modification.
5. Hours spent preparing for a certification examination not otherwise accounted for through CE or academic coursework can be counted under *Independent Learning*.