

Canadian Guidelines for Fieldwork Education in Occupational Therapy (CGFEOT)

Guiding Principles, Responsibilities and
Continuous Quality Improvement Process

Presented by the

Committee on University Fieldwork Education
(CUFE)
Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy University Programs
(ACOTUP)

Approved by UFCC, ACOTUP and CAOT
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A Vision for Canadian Occupational Therapy Fieldwork Education

The Committee on University Fieldwork Education (CUFE) of the Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy University Programs (ACOTUP) has reviewed the national guidelines for fieldwork education in response to a number of developments. Feedback from fieldwork partners, shifts in health care environments, changes in occupational therapy practice, and the new profile and core competencies of practice have highlighted the need to update the Canadian Guidelines for Fieldwork Education in Occupational Therapy (CGFEOT) and reduce administrative procedures while continuing to promote excellence in fieldwork education.

Quality improvement is a systems process whereby identified critical indicators can be measured and monitored. The documentation process proposed in the CGFEOT aims to monitor the numerous activities which have been deemed essential to the support and development of a quality experience for all stakeholders in occupational therapy fieldwork education. The 2011 revised version of the CGFEOT is intended to guide fieldwork partners in developing an effective environment for learning, together with fieldwork education resources and student learning opportunities. In addition, the CGFEOT will guide universities in determining appropriate fieldwork education experiences that enable students to integrate academic and fieldwork learning throughout their professional development.

In updating the CGFEOT, CUFE members aim to implement a process which promotes quality and accountability and reflects current best practice in fieldwork education. The guidelines have incorporated input from a variety of sources: consultation with fieldwork partners on the challenges and benefits of providing fieldwork education, a visioning experience by university fieldwork coordinators to identify factors for effective management of fieldwork education, and a review of national and international documents. CUFE acknowledges the commitment of its fieldwork partners (fieldwork sites, fieldwork educators, on-site fieldwork coordinators, and other team members) in continuing to support a high quality fieldwork education program.

Section 1 of the guidelines includes principles to promote optimum fieldwork education. Section 2 presents the responsibilities of fieldwork education partners: students, preceptors and university programs. Finally, section 3 proposes tools and processes for supporting quality in fieldwork education.

Section 1: Principles Guiding the Canadian Occupational Therapy Fieldwork Experience

These guidelines are intended to ensure that each Canadian occupational therapy fieldwork experience provides excellent learning opportunities and resources and an optimum environment for learning. Students acquire abilities and professional behaviors as well as new knowledge while engaged in fieldwork education. Students, preceptors, onsite fieldwork coordinators, university professors and university fieldwork coordinators are expected to collaborate in linking fieldwork experiences to what students have learned in class. Therefore, it is important to share a common vision for fieldwork education.

The fieldwork experience should:

- ❑ Be a collaborative learning experience among students, clients, fieldwork educators, onsite fieldwork coordinators and university programs;
- ❑ Be mutually beneficial to students and fieldwork educators;
- ❑ Be accepted as an essential part of professional growth for both students and fieldwork educators and fieldwork site;
- ❑ Occur in a positive learning environment;
- ❑ Consider the teaching methods and learning styles of both students and fieldwork educators;
- ❑ Consider students' learning objectives in relation to their professional development within the context of the fieldwork environment;
- ❑ Support students to account for their learning;
- ❑ Enable students to link theory with practice;
- ❑ Enable students to take an active role within the site;
- ❑ Promote satisfaction for both students and fieldwork educators regarding the fieldwork experience;
- ❑ Occur anywhere the roles and functions of an occupational therapist can be developed and integrated.

Section 2: Responsibilities of Fieldwork Education Partners

Students are expected to:

- ❑ Take responsibility for their learning experience and the direction of that experience in partnership with fieldwork educators, onsite fieldwork coordinators, university professors and university fieldwork coordinators;
- ❑ Set personal and professional goals before the beginning of the fieldwork experience. Review and adjust them throughout the placement;
- ❑ Do preparatory readings before and during the fieldwork experience;
- ❑ Uphold legal standards and the Codes of Ethics at all times (CAOT, professional regulatory body, fieldwork site, university program);
- ❑ Comply with site and university policies and procedures;
- ❑ Increase their understanding of and respect the roles and functions of other team members;
- ❑ Develop competencies for the application of the occupational therapy process;
- ❑ Increase their understanding of the systems in which occupational therapists practice;
- ❑ Learn how occupational therapists contribute to the service delivery team;
- ❑ Increase their understanding of and promote the roles and functions of occupational therapists;
- ❑ Develop confidence and competence in their practice of occupational therapy;
- ❑ Communicate with the university fieldwork coordinator/professor any time during their fieldwork experience if they encounter challenges in developing their competency profile;
- ❑ Provide feedback to fieldwork educator based on their fieldwork learning experience.
- ❑ Provide feedback and an evaluation of their fieldwork experience to their university fieldwork professor/ coordinator following each placement;

Fieldwork educators are expected to:

- ❑ Act as role models for students;
- ❑ Become familiar with the university fieldwork education program (learning objectives, educational tools, fieldwork evaluation tool, expected student performance in accordance with placement level) and with the supervision process;

- ❑ Offer a welcoming environment, a comprehensive orientation and provide space for student use, as available within the site's resources;
- ❑ Clearly inform students of what is expected of them, appropriately grade responsibilities and expectations and be available to students to offer appropriate supervision;
- ❑ Offer regular and timely feedback based on student performance, including recommendations for improvement;
- ❑ Offer a positive and comprehensive learning environment to enable student development within the core competencies required for occupational therapy practice;
- ❑ Assist students to develop a good understanding of their professional growth with respect to core competencies as described in the *Profile of Occupational Therapy Practice in Canada (CAOT, 2007)* by allowing and promoting time for guided reflection;
- ❑ Meet with students to discuss and evaluate their performance at the mid-term and end of the fieldwork education experience;
- ❑ Communicate with the university fieldwork coordinator/professor at any time during the placement if the student encounters significant challenges;
- ❑ Provide to university fieldwork coordinator/professor a current fieldwork site profile describing learning opportunities and resources;
- ❑ Provide feedback by completing a questionnaire with respect to their experience as fieldwork educator (student preparedness, impact of the supervisory experience, administrative support availability, evaluation of pedagogical needs, etc.) and submit it to the university fieldwork coordinator.

University fieldwork coordinators/professors are expected to:

- ❑ Assist students to develop a good understanding of their professional growth with respect to core competencies as described in the *Profile of Occupational Therapy Practice in Canada (2007)* by offering fieldwork preparation (e.g. orientation and resources) and debriefing sessions (e.g. integration of theory with practice) to students;
- ❑ Provide fieldwork educators with orientation and educational resources related to the university academic and fieldwork education programs and the supervision process;
- ❑ Coordinate offers and requests for placements and whenever possible match students and sites according to students' academic and fieldwork profiles and interests;
- ❑ Ensure students make suitable choices with regard to establishing a varied fieldwork education profile (clienteles and fieldwork settings);

- ❑ Offer ongoing support and problem solving to students and fieldwork educators in dealing with student learning challenges;
- ❑ Recognize fieldwork partners who contribute time and expertise in supervising students;
- ❑ Provide sites with a fieldwork agreement, either temporary or long term, describing the liability and responsibilities of each party;
- ❑ Ensure students are provided with appropriate liability coverage and work site insurance;
- ❑ Regularly assess the content and quality of supervision given and provide recommendations to fieldwork sites and feedback to fieldwork educators.
- ❑ Regularly assess the content and quality of the environment in which the placement occurs to ensure appropriate resources are available and provide recommendations to fieldwork sites.

Section 3: Tools and Processes to Support Quality in Canadian University Occupational Therapy Fieldwork Education

To support the quality of Canadian occupational therapy fieldwork education, the following tools and processes are recommended:

1. The university fieldwork coordinator/professor will ensure that any site used for occupational therapy student fieldwork education has read Section 1 and 2 of this document.
2. The university fieldwork coordinator/professor will provide each site with a fieldwork site profile to complete. The aim of this profile is to provide important information to the university which enables an understanding of the student learning experience within the site. In light of this intent, the fieldwork site profile is completed by the site representative after consultation with administrators, program managers, professional coordinators, fieldwork educators and all persons involved in the fieldwork education experience. This document will be requested within a reasonable timeframe as determined by both the site contact person and the university fieldwork coordinator. The following list describes information to be provided:
 - Site and contact information
 - Characteristics of occupational therapy services
 - Learning opportunities and resources
 - Administrative resources
 - Site requirements for students
 - Amenities
3. Following each fieldwork placement, students should complete a fieldwork site evaluation form. The aim of this evaluation process is to gain an understanding of how the student's learning experience at the site contributed to his or her professional development.

4. Considering the important formative role assumed by preceptors, universities must support preceptor professional development as related to fieldwork education. It is strongly recommended that the university fieldwork coordinator/professor collect and analyze preceptor feedback pertaining to quality and availability of university support for fieldwork education including preparedness of students for their fieldwork experience. For this reason, the aim of this process is two-fold. First, to gain an understanding of the preceptors needs and offer university based support. Second, to contribute to upgrading curricular content in accordance with the evolving nature of occupational therapy practice.
5. On a regular basis (to be determined by the university), the university fieldwork coordinator will review the documents pertaining to particular fieldwork sites: the fieldwork site profile, the relevant student fieldwork site evaluation forms, and the relevant preceptor experience evaluations. The university fieldwork coordinator will compile and analyze the available information and share a summary with the fieldwork site contact person. It is recommended that the university fieldwork coordinator will provide this feedback to the site at least once every 5 years.
6. If issues with a fieldwork site arise, the university fieldwork coordinator/professor, in conjunction with the fieldwork site contact person, will propose a plan for improving or optimizing the student learning opportunities. When such a plan is put forth, a timeframe will be set regarding improvements to be made to ensure the future quality of the fieldwork education experience for students.

Depending upon specific needs and programs developed, it is anticipated that each university will be responsible for designing and implementing additional quality improvement measures that are deemed appropriate for their region.