



# **Occupational Therapist Assistant and Physiotherapist Assistant Program Standard**

The approved program standard for Occupational Therapist Assistant and Physiotherapist Assistant programs of instruction leading to an Ontario College Diploma delivered by Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (MTCU funding code 51502).

Ministry of Colleges and Universities  
February 2020

## Acknowledgements

The Ministry of Colleges and Universities acknowledges with thanks the significant contribution of the many individuals and organizations which participated in the development of this program standard. In particular, the Ministry of Colleges and Universities would like to acknowledge the important roles of

- all individuals and organizations which participated in the consultations
- the faculty, coordinators and deans of the Occupational Therapist Assistant and Physiotherapist Assistant (Ontario College Diploma) programs for their assistance throughout the project
- William Fallis, the Project Officer who led the development of the English vocational learning outcomes and Louise Campagna, the Project Officer who led the French review.

# Contents

Introduction	4
Development of system-wide program standards	4
Program standards	4
The expression of program standards as vocational learning outcomes	5
The presentation of the vocational learning outcomes	5
The development of a program standard	5
Updating the program standard	6
Vocational standard	6
Synopsis of the vocational learning outcomes	8
The vocational learning outcomes	10
Glossary	25
Essential employability skills	28
General education requirement	31

# Introduction

This document is the Program Standard for the Occupational Therapist Assistant and Physiotherapist Assistant programs of instruction leading to an Ontario College Diploma delivered by Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (MTCU code 51502).

## Development of system-wide program standards

In 1993, the Government of Ontario initiated program standards development with the objectives of bringing a greater degree of consistency to college programming offered across the province, broadening the focus of college programs to ensure graduates have the skills to be flexible and to continue to learn and adapt, and providing public accountability for the quality and relevance of college programs.

The Program Standards Unit of the Ministry of Colleges and Universities has responsibility for the development, review and approval of system-wide standards for programs of instruction at Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology.

## Program standards

Program standards apply to all similar programs of instruction offered by colleges across the province. Each program standard for a postsecondary program includes the following elements:

- [Vocational standard](#) (the vocationally specific learning outcomes which apply to the program of instruction in question),
- [Essential employability skills](#) (the essential employability skills learning outcomes which apply to all programs of instruction); and
- [General education requirement](#) (the requirement for general education in postsecondary programs of instruction).

Collectively, these elements outline the essential skills and knowledge that a student must reliably demonstrate in order to graduate from the program.

Individual Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology offering the program of instruction determine the specific program structure, delivery methods and other curriculum matters to be used in assisting students to achieve the outcomes articulated in the standard. Individual colleges also determine whether additional local learning outcomes will be required to reflect specific local needs and/or interests.

# The expression of program standards as vocational learning outcomes

Vocational learning outcomes represent culminating demonstrations of learning and achievement. They are not simply a listing of discrete skills, nor broad statements of knowledge and comprehension. In addition, vocational learning outcomes are interrelated and cannot be viewed in isolation from one another. As such, they should be viewed as a comprehensive whole. They describe performances that demonstrate that significant integrated learning by graduates of the program has been achieved and verified.

Expressing standards as vocational learning outcomes ensures consistency in the outcomes for program graduates, while leaving to the discretion of individual colleges, curriculum matters such as the specific program structure and delivery methods.

## The presentation of the vocational learning outcomes

The **vocational learning outcome** statements set out the culminating demonstration of learning and achievement that the student must reliably demonstrate before graduation.

The **elements of the performance** for each outcome define and clarify the level and quality of performance necessary to meet the requirements of the vocational learning outcome. However, it is the performance of the vocational learning outcome itself on which students are evaluated. The elements of performance are indicators of the means by which the student may proceed to satisfactory performance of the vocational learning outcome. The elements of performance do not stand alone but rather in reference to the vocational learning outcome of which they form a part.

## The development of a program standard

In establishing the standards development initiative, the Government determined that all postsecondary programs of instruction should include vocational skills coupled with a broader set of essential skills. This combination is considered critical to ensuring that college graduates have the skills required to be successful both upon graduation from the college program and throughout their working and personal lives.

A program standard is developed through a broad consultation process involving a range of stakeholders with a direct interest in the program area, including employers, professional associations, universities, secondary schools and program graduates working in the field, in addition to students, faculty and administrators at the colleges themselves. It represents a consensus of participating stakeholders on the essential learning that all program graduates should have achieved.

# Updating the program standard

The Ministry of Colleges and Universities will undertake regular reviews of the vocational learning outcomes for this program to ensure that the Occupational Therapist Assistant and Physiotherapist Assistant Program Standard remains appropriate and relevant to the needs of students and employers across the Province of Ontario. To confirm that this document is the most up-to-date release, please contact the [Ministry of Colleges and Universities](#)

## Vocational standard

All graduates of Occupational Therapist Assistant and Physiotherapist Assistant programs have achieved the [eleven vocational learning outcomes \(VLOs\)](#), in addition to achieving the essential employability outcomes and meeting the general education (GE) requirement.

## Preamble

The standard for the Occupational Therapist Assistant and Physiotherapist Assistant program that is offered at the colleges of applied arts and technology includes a foundation of vocational learning outcomes, essential employability skills, and general education requirements. Graduates, as entry-level workers, have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are necessary to perform their duties as an OTA, and as a PTA. This document relates to both OTA and PTA vocational learning outcomes. Graduates are practicing within their individual competencies corresponding to their educational preparations and learned skills during clinical fieldwork placements. They have a strong foundation in relevant principles and theory and in supervised practical experience in OTA and PTA roles. Upon successful completion of the program, graduates will receive an Ontario College Diploma.

Occupational therapist assistants and physiotherapist assistants (OTA&PTAs) are health care workers who work under the supervision of and in collaboration with occupational therapists and physiotherapists, respectively. Graduates assist these therapists to teach and enable clients to effectively cope with their limitations in movement, daily functioning, and activities whether temporary or permanent, during and following recovery. As health care team members, OTA&PTAs, under the direction and supervision of occupational therapists and physiotherapists respectively, work with individuals, families, and groups of varying abilities, and provide support and enable participation in meaningful activities across the lifespan. OTA&PTAs assist, as assigned within their competencies and according to the standards of practice for occupational therapists and physiotherapists, in the implementation of intervention/treatment plans and programs that have been developed by the occupational therapist or physiotherapist. Occupational therapy promotes clients' optimal independent function, with the purpose of enabling individuals to perform self-care, be productive, and to contribute to their environment. Physiotherapy improves and maintains clients'

functional independence and physical performance, and promotes fitness, health, and wellness. OTA&PTAs are responsible for the implementation of those activities/exercises that have been assigned to them. Under current legislation, occupational therapists and physiotherapists are legally accountable for the safe, effective, and efficient planning, delivery, and evaluation of the activities/exercises assigned to the OTA&PTAs.

Graduates demonstrate interpersonal and communication skills that respect the uniqueness of individuals. They work together with clients, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, and other health care and social service providers to enable clients to meet their own expected goals. Their behaviour is consistent with relevant legislation and the policies and procedures established by the **practice setting**\*. OTA&PTAs use judgment in making decisions; behave in an ethical manner; contribute to the development, implementation, and modification of occupational therapy and physiotherapy programs and services; and contribute occupational therapy and physiotherapy concepts and perspectives at health care team meetings. Becoming an OTA&PTA enables an individual to enter a dynamic and challenging career that offers opportunities in a variety of health and community settings. Graduates may find employment within health care facilities, community agencies, and private practices.

To be successful in OTA&PTA requires an ongoing commitment from the graduate to continue to update their knowledge and skills. There are opportunities for graduates to pursue further educational qualifications and degree completion. Graduates should contact individual colleges and universities for further details.

[\\*See Glossary](#)

Note: The [Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer](#) (ONCAT) maintains the provincial postsecondary credit transfer portal, [ONTransfer](#).

# Synopsis of the vocational learning outcomes

## Occupational Therapist Assistant and Physiotherapist Assistant (Ontario College Diploma)

The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to:

1. communicate appropriately and effectively, through verbal, nonverbal, written and electronic means, with clients, their **significant others\***, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, and members of the **interdisciplinary health care team\*** and others.
2. participate in the effective functioning of **interdisciplinary health care teams\*** to optimize client physical and occupational functions.
3. establish, develop, maintain, and conclude client-centred, therapeutic relationships.
4. promote a safe environment that prevents or minimizes potential physical or mental harm to the client, **therapist assistant\*** and others.
5. practice in a legal, ethical, and professional manner within the role of a **therapist assistant\***.
6. document client records in a thorough, objective, accurate, and timely manner within the role of the **therapist assistant\***.
7. engage in reflective practice and ongoing professional development activities to maintain and enhance competence.
8. perform the roles and responsibilities of the **therapist assistant\*** effectively through the application of relevant knowledge of health sciences, psychosocial sciences, health conditions, resource management, and clinical procedures.
9. contribute to the occupational therapist's or physiotherapist's assessment of the client and the development, implementation and modification of intervention/treatment plans.
10. maximize the client's **occupational performance\*** by accurately and safely implementing the interventions, and related tasks under the direction and supervision of the occupational therapist.
11. maximize the client's physical function by accurately and safely implementing the interventions, and related tasks under the direction and supervision of the physiotherapist.

[\\*See Glossary](#)

Note: The learning outcomes have been numbered as a point of reference; numbering



does not imply prioritization, sequencing, nor weighting of significance.

# The vocational learning outcomes

1. The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to: communicate appropriately and effectively, through verbal, nonverbal, written and electronic means, with clients, their **significant others\***, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, and members of the **interdisciplinary health care team\*** and others.

## Elements of the performance

- a. Protect confidentiality of all communications including written, verbal, and electronic forms by adhering to documentation legislation and the established **regulations\***, relevant to the **regulated professions of occupational therapists and physiotherapists\***, and **practice setting\*** policies and procedures.
- b. Communicate in a sensitive, accurate, credible, respectful, collaborative and professional manner, that is accepting of diversity e.g. gender, sexual orientation, disability, mental health status, appearance.
- c. Employ and adapt a variety of communication strategies and interpersonal techniques to meet the needs of the client, their **significant others\***, and health professionals, as directed by the occupational therapist or physiotherapist.
- d. Respond appropriately and encourage client questions by providing feedback within the professional scope of the **therapist assistant\***.
- e. Refer client's questions to the occupational therapist, physiotherapist, and/or **interdisciplinary health care team\*** members, as appropriate.
- f. Facilitate effective communication with clients through the use of communication **assistive technologies\*** (e.g. hearing aids) and by making appropriate adaptations to the environment, as directed by the occupational therapist or physiotherapist.
- g. Use appropriate technologies including computers, teleconferencing, and video conferencing, to communicate with clients and colleagues, as required within the **practice setting\*** and in collaboration with the occupational therapist or the physiotherapist.
- h. Speak and write clearly using appropriate terminology and accepted abbreviations as defined in the **practice setting\***.
- i. Provide verbal and written information about client treatment/intervention sessions to the occupational therapist, physiotherapist, or other health care providers in accordance with **relevant laws\***, **regulations\***, and policies and procedures of the **practice setting\***.
- j. Identify all significant changes in the clients' health status and communicate them promptly to the occupational therapist, physiotherapist, or other **interdisciplinary health care team\*** members.
- k. Ensure that the client, family members, **significant others\***, and caregivers understand the explanations provided by the occupational therapist or

physiotherapist that relate to the **therapist assistant's**\* assigned tasks.

- l. Give clear instructions and explanations to other health care providers to facilitate the client's optimal physical function and participation in meaningful activities.
- m. Utilize interpreter services when language is an issue, as directed by the occupational therapist or physiotherapist.

[\\*See Glossary](#)

2. The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to: participate in the effective functioning of **interdisciplinary health care teams\*** to optimize client physical and occupational functions.

## Elements of the performance

- a. Act interdependently and collaboratively as a health care team member while working within the **therapist assistant's\*** roles and responsibilities.
- b. Respect and support the contributions that clients and other health care providers bring to a team that enable clients and their **significant others\*** to work towards expected outcomes.
- c. Contribute to occupational therapy and physiotherapy interventions by providing observations and other relevant information to discussions during health care team meetings.
- d. Apply effective problem-solving and decision-making skills within the **therapist assistant's\*** roles when participating as a health care team member.
- e. Recognize and respond to situations that require further information and/or further consultation with occupational therapists, physiotherapists or other health care team members.
- f. Apply knowledge of group dynamics, effective participation, conflict resolution, and interpersonal communication to the development and functioning of teams.
- g. Ensure regular communication with the client, occupational therapist, physiotherapist, and other health care team members, as appropriate to the client situation.
- h. Contribute to the evaluation of services and programs provided by the health care team to promote the client's optimal health, well-being, quality of life, and potential to engage in meaningful activity.
- i. Assist the health care team with continuous quality improvement processes.
- j. Maintain professionalism when participating in committees, as part of the **interdisciplinary health care team\***.
- k. Contribute, as required, to the effective and efficient operation of the **practice setting\***, e.g. managing resources, purchasing equipment and supplies, and utilizing appropriate software programs and/or digital applications.
- l. Manage assigned caseload effectively by employing appropriate communication, organizational, prioritization, critical thinking and time-management strategies.
- m. Function effectively and professionally within the work setting.

[\\*See Glossary](#)

3. The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to: establish, develop, maintain, and conclude client-centred, therapeutic relationships.

## Elements of the performance

- a. Recognize the influence that attitudes, values, beliefs, and culture of the client and **therapist assistant\*** have on therapeutic relationships.
- b. Employ a client-centred approach that appreciates the uniqueness and diversity of the client population and includes realistic goals that enable participation in meaningful activities under the supervision of and in collaboration with the occupational therapist or physiotherapist.
- c. Establish rapport and build trust with clients by demonstrating a nonjudgmental, empathetic, affirming, respectful, sensitive and genuine approach.
- d. Engage clients and groups using interventions that are meaningful and reflective of their therapeutic goals.
- e. Recognize and maintain professional boundaries in client-centred relationships during and following the provision of service.
- f. Apply basic theory and principles of therapeutic relationships and group dynamics when working with clients and groups.
- g. Promote client collaboration and an understanding of the treatment/intervention plan by applying principles of teaching-learning and client-centred practice.
- h. Contribute to the empowerment of clients by encouraging their involvement in the development and description of intervention/treatment goals under the supervision of and in collaboration with the occupational therapist or physiotherapist.
- i. Use appropriate stress reduction and conflict resolution strategies to promote the well-being of the client, and others, under the supervision of and in collaboration with the occupational therapist or physiotherapist.
- j. Conclude the therapeutic relationship by applying appropriate theory, principles and practices, and upon the direction of an occupational therapist or physiotherapist.

[\\*See Glossary](#)

4. The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to: promote a safe environment that prevents or minimizes potential physical or mental harm to the client, **therapist assistant\*** and others.

## Elements of the performance

- a. Comply with **laws\***, **regulations\***, and established policies and procedures of the **practice setting\*** that are relevant to emergency measures such as, but not limited to fire safety, occupational health and safety, the handling and disposal of hazardous wastes, the prevention of injury, and the prevention of disease transmission.
- b. Report potential safety risks to the appropriate personnel, and complete the necessary/required paper work for near misses, incidents or hazards.
- c. Recognize signs of physical and/or emotional stress in clients, self, and others, and modify the contributing factors, where possible, to ensure safety.
- d. Use all **assistive technologies\*** correctly and safely including those related to client lifting and transferring.
- e. Apply best practices of body mechanics when moving, positioning, seating, ambulating, and transferring clients.
- f. Employ effective teaching strategies for clients and others to ensure client safety when moving, positioning, seating, ambulating, and transferring.
- g. Use safe and appropriate facilitation techniques and prescribed environment management when implementing physical and occupational-based treatments/interventions.
- h. Anticipate and effectively deal with potential safety risks for clients, self, and others by demonstrating sound judgment, problem-solving, and decision-making skills and by communicating, as necessary, with the occupational therapist, physiotherapist, or other team members.
- i. Advocate for staff rights for a safe and nonthreatening working environment.
- j. Contribute to the safe operation and maintenance of equipment, machines, and supplies in accordance with manufacturers' guidelines and the **practice setting's\*** policies and procedures, including a knowledge of WHMIS (Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System).
- k. Maintain a safe, clean, orderly, and accessible work environment in keeping with infection and prevention control standards.
- l. Monitor the client's condition and adapt the client's plan to ensure safety under the occupational therapist's or physiotherapist's supervision and assignment.
- m. Recognize and manage safety risks related to distress behaviour, e.g. anger agitation, which a client may exhibit during the course of a therapeutic intervention, under the supervision of and in collaboration with the occupational therapist or physiotherapist.

- n. Advocate for the client's safety within the health system, within the role of the **therapist assistant**\*
- o. Assist in health promotion and prevention strategies, as assigned by the occupational therapist or physiotherapist.

[\\*See Glossary](#)

5. The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to: practice in a legal, ethical, and professional manner within the role of a **therapist assistant\***.

## Elements of the performance

- a. Adapt one's roles and responsibilities as the **therapist assistant\*** to a variety of **practice settings\***.
- b. Advocate for the client, or support their advocacy efforts in the **practice setting\*** and the community as appropriate, within the role of the **therapist assistant\*** and complying with applicable **laws\*** and **regulations\*** to protect confidential information.
- c. Be accountable for one's own actions and behave in an ethical manner.
- d. Act responsibly in a self-directed, flexible, and adaptable manner within the **therapist assistant\*** role.
- e. Identify and communicate to the supervising therapist when a client's needs exceed the limits of one's knowledge, skill, or judgment.
- f. Seek out the occupational therapist or physiotherapist for guidance and appropriate supervision.
- g. Comply with applicable **laws\***, **regulations\***, and established policies and procedures of the **practice setting\***.
- h. Respect the client's dignity, privacy, and autonomy to make decisions regarding health, well-being, life quality, and **occupations\***.
- i. Comply with applicable **laws\*** and **regulations\*** relating to the obtainment of a client's informed consent to treatment.
- j. Apply appropriate knowledge of the legislative frameworks for the **regulated professions of physiotherapists and occupational therapists\*** to the roles and responsibilities of the **therapist assistant\***.
- k. Adapt roles and responsibilities according to standards<sup>1</sup> in occupational therapy and physiotherapy service delivery that relate to the **therapist assistant\***.
- l. Display appropriate professional attitudes and behaviours, with a clear respect for personal and professional boundaries.

---

<sup>1</sup> Please see the [Essential Competency Profile for Physiotherapist Assistants in Canada \(2012\)](#), and the [Practice Profile for Occupational Therapist Assistant \(2018\) - CAOT](#).



- m. Maintain client privacy in written and verbal communications.
- n. Apply professional soft skills, such as time management, establishing priorities, collaborating with others, and the proper use of equipment to the **practice setting**\*.

[\\*See Glossary](#)

6. The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to: document client records in a thorough, objective, accurate, and timely manner within the role of the **therapist assistant\***.

## Elements of the performance

- a. Ensure privacy and confidentiality of all client information including and not limited to reports, files, and records.
- b. Use correct terminology, abbreviations, and symbols as defined by the **practice setting\***, when completing documentation.
- c. Maintain accurate, legible, and relevant electronic and paper-based records, reports, files, and statistics.
- d. Contribute to documentation of records as requested by the supervising occupational therapist or physiotherapist.
- e. Document accurately through structured client notes, the observations e.g. subjective (voiced patient concerns) and objective (OTA&PTA observations, treatment assigned and completed, the client's response to treatment and your plan for the client, etc.) data, including the date, time, duration and signature, as determined by the occupational therapist and physiotherapist during the intervention/treatment session.
- f. Use electronic and paper-based methods to document client information for records, reports, and files, in compliance with documentation legislation and the established **regulations\***, policies and procedures relevant to the **regulated professions of occupational therapists and physiotherapists\***, as well as the **practice setting\***.
- g. Ensure that the client knows that they can access their records, and understand the steps to follow to access their records.

[\\*See Glossary](#)

7. The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to: engage in reflective practice and ongoing professional development activities to maintain and enhance competence.

## Elements of the performance

- a. Develop a plan for continuing professional education with the support of the occupational therapist, physiotherapist, and other health care personnel.
- b. Apply self-directed learning strategies to seek out resources and opportunities for maintaining and improving one's own competence.
- c. Seek out, select, and act upon constructive feedback from colleagues and from performance evaluations to improve job performance.
- d. Implement practices to promote one's own health and well-being that are based on self-knowledge, self-concept, self-esteem and related resources.
- e. Develop appropriate skills to anticipate and respond effectively to changes in one's work environment.
- f. Seek out information on changes in legislation and emerging best practices that affect the professional scope of the **therapist assistant**\*
- g. Engage in reflective practice to improve competence and job performance.
- h. Record and analyze reflective practice activities for one's professional development.
- i. Apply critical thinking and evidence-based approach to one's research activities.

[\\*See Glossary](#)

8. The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to: perform the roles and responsibilities of the **therapist assistant\*** effectively through the application of relevant knowledge of health sciences, psychosocial sciences, health conditions, resource management, and clinical procedures.

## Elements of the performance

- a. Apply knowledge of health sciences and of health conditions across the lifespan when participating in the treatment of client's movement, function, and activity.
- b. Apply knowledge of health and wellness to the recognition of significant changes in the client's health status and report these changes to the occupational therapist, physiotherapist, or other health care team member.
- c. Apply knowledge of physical, psychological-emotional, cognitive-neurological, socio-cultural, and environmental dimensions to promote the optimal independent function of clients.
- d. Apply the principles of developmental theory when providing therapeutic services.
- e. Apply the **International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF)\*** model, the Canadian Model of Occupational Performance (CMOP), or other relevant models to clinical practice and procedures.
- f. Apply the principles of normal and abnormal movement to functional activities, such as self-care, postural alignment, seating, transfers, gait, mobility, wheelchair mechanics, and wheelchair propulsion.
- g. Apply knowledge of age, stage of growth and development, and health status when identifying, reporting, and responding to client's alterations in movement and optimal independent function.
- h. Apply knowledge of mental health conditions and recognize their impact on resultant behaviour, e.g. Acquired Brain Injury and the impact to recall and comprehend instructions
- i. Apply knowledge of ergonomics, energy conservation, and work simplification when contributing to plans for promoting the client's optimal independent function, and carrying out treatment.
- j. Apply knowledge of resource management to maintain equipment and supplies, and track time for billing purposes.
- k. Seek assistance from the occupational therapist or physiotherapist, if the tasks assigned are outside one's skills, knowledge or abilities.

[\\*See Glossary](#)

9. The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to: contribute to the occupational therapist's or physiotherapist's assessment of the client and the development, implementation and modification of intervention/treatment plans.

## Elements of the performance

- a. Use appropriate digital applications to produce client instructions and other related materials, e.g. exercise programs, energy conservation, and assistive devices to assist in the implementation of the intervention/treatment plan, as determined by the occupational therapist or physiotherapist.
- b. Observe, monitor, and report to the occupational therapist or physiotherapist, the client's progress toward expected outcomes as identified in the intervention/treatment plan.
- c. Collect client information in order to contribute to the occupational therapist's or physiotherapist's client assessment and/or reassessment.
- d. Recognize and work with factors which may act as barriers or contraindications to optimal independent movement, function, or **occupational performance\*** and assist the occupational therapist or physiotherapist in the development and implementation of a plan to overcome these barriers.
- e. Implement the intervention/treatment plan by following established guidelines, policies, and procedures, and evidence informed practice.
- f. Assist in the education and training of clients, caregivers, support groups, and members of the health care team to understand the client's requirements to achieve optimal independent movement, function, and **occupational performance\*** as outlined in the intervention/treatment plan.
- g. Recognize and apply appropriate strategies and techniques to perform different tasks and **activities of daily living\*** as identified in the intervention/treatment plan.
- h. Employ effective teaching strategies for clients and others to ensure safety when transferring, lifting, moving, and positioning clients.
- i. Ensure consent from clients and among those involved when transferring, seating, moving, and positioning clients, as identified in the intervention/treatment plan.
- j. Recognize compensatory mechanisms exhibited by the client and correct these mechanisms, as appropriate, or teach appropriate techniques in consultation with the occupational therapist, or physiotherapist, and the client.
- k. Apply the concepts of listing problems and establishing goals, when following an intervention/treatment plan within the **practice setting\***.
- l. Distinguish between the role of the OTA&PTA, and the role of the supervising OT and PT, to ensure that only activities within the role of the **therapist assistant\*** are undertaken.

- m. Distinguish between personal and professional activities to ensure that only activities within the role of the **therapist assistant\*** are undertaken.
- n. Complete standardize testing (e.g. Berg Balance\*, Montreal Cognitive Assessment\*, as assigned by the physiotherapist or occupational therapist.
- o. Apply critical thinking when implementing any intervention, with consideration to indications, precautions and contraindications according to the current status of the client, and under the supervision of the physiotherapist or occupational assistant.

[\\*See Glossary](#)

10. The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to: maximize the client's **occupational performance\*** by accurately and safely implementing the interventions, and related tasks under the direction and supervision of the occupational therapist.

## Elements of the performance

- a. Assist the occupational therapist in the fabrication and modification of orthotics, aids, and other **assistive technologies\***.
- b. Assist the occupational therapist in the implementation of various **assistive technologies\*** including mobility aids and positioning devices as indicated in the intervention/treatment plan.
- c. Employ in a safe and efficient manner a variety of therapeutic approaches and activities associated with the promotion of the client's integration into the community, which could include the development of employment skills, social skills, and community mobility skills, in keeping with the intervention/treatment plan.
- d. Assist in the adaptation of and/or modification of the client's social, cultural, institutional, and physical environments in order to promote **occupational performance\***, as outlined in the intervention/treatment plan.
- e. Work with clients and/or caregivers individually and in groups, to implement occupational therapy programs that have been identified in the intervention/treatment plan.
- f. Assist the occupational therapist in the data gathering and planning of adaptations to the client's home, work, and community environments as outlined in the intervention/treatment plan.
- g. Employ principles of ergonomics, energy conservation, and work simplification into the daily routines of the client as identified in the intervention/treatment plan.
- h. Contribute to selecting and applying **occupations\*** as a therapeutic **modality\***, utilizing principles of activity analysis and activity grading/modification for the cognitive, physical, affective and spiritual domains.
- i. Enable clients to foster and promote abilities for meaningful **occupations\*** in the areas of self-care (e.g., **ADL\*** and **IADL\***), productivity, and leisure as outlined in the intervention/treatment plan.
- j. Apply **modalities\*** safely and appropriately within the established intervention/treatment plan, as assigned by the occupational therapist.

[\\*See Glossary](#)

11. The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to: maximize the client's physical function by accurately and safely implementing the interventions, and related tasks under the direction and supervision of the physiotherapist.

### Elements of the performance

- a. Assist the physiotherapist with the correct fitting and proper use of orthotics, ambulatory aids, and other **assistive technologies**\* as identified in the intervention/treatment plan.
- b. Assist the physiotherapist to plan adaptations to client's home, work, and community environments as outlined in the intervention/treatment plan.
- c. Apply knowledge of normal and abnormal movement, when transferring, lifting, moving, and positioning clients.
- d. Apply knowledge of normal and abnormal movement, when gait training with clients.
- e. Contribute to the development, implementation, and modification of therapeutic exercise and mobility programs as identified in the intervention/treatment plan, and under the supervision of the physiotherapist
- f. Apply knowledge of the various types and uses of exercise programs for different conditions and disorders as identified in the intervention/treatment plan.
- g. Work with clients and/or caregivers individually and in groups, to implement therapeutic exercise and mobility programs that have been identified in the intervention/treatment plan.
- h. Recognize signs of stress and apply knowledge of contraindications to modify or discontinue interventions and report this situation to the physiotherapist.
- i. Use knowledge of surface anatomy, physiology, and body landmarks when applying elements of the intervention/treatment plan.
- j. Apply **modalities**\* safely and appropriately within the established intervention/treatment plan, as assigned by the physiotherapist.

[\\*See Glossary](#)



# Glossary

**Activities of Daily Living (ADL):** the basic self-care activities that need to be completed on a daily basis; e.g., walking, transferring, self-feeding, grooming, bathing, dressing, and toileting.

**Assistive technology:** any device or product that is useful for a person's enhanced functioning and participation (Scherer, 2001). These products include devices that are designed or modified specifically for individuals with disabilities and those which are commercially available to the general population, which are also useable by persons with disabilities (WHO, 2001). Assistive devices can range from low technology devices that are relatively simple to construct and use, such as communication boards and dressing aids, to more complex high technology devices such as powered wheelchairs and myoelectric prostheses (Cook & Miller Polgar, 2008). Assistive technology includes the promotion of environmental access for all persons, including those with disabilities. Judicious use of assistive technology can minimize the need for assistance from another individual and may enable individuals with disabilities to remain in their homes (CAOT Position Statement Assistive Technology and Occupational Therapy, 2012).

**Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADL):** the activities related to independent living and can include preparing meals, managing money, shopping for groceries or personal items, performing light or heavy housework, doing laundry, using a telephone, transportation, and medication management.

**Interdisciplinary Health Care Team:** a team of health providers from various disciplines working toward a common goal of optimal client care.

**International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF)<sup>2</sup>:** a classification of the health components of functioning and disability. The ICF is structured around the following broad components:

- body functions and structure;
- activities (related to tasks and actions by an individual) and participation (involvement in a life situation);
- additional information on severity and environmental factors; and
- functioning and disability are viewed as a complex interaction between the health condition of the individual and the contextual factors of the environment as well as personal factors.

---

<sup>2</sup> [World Health Organization. \(2001\). International classification of functioning, disability, and health. Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization.](#)

**Laws:** include the relevant legislation enacted by the provincial and federal government. Current examples of such laws include the Regulated Health Professions Act, Personal Health Information Protection Act, Health Care Consent Act, Occupational Therapy Act, Physiotherapy Act, Public Hospitals Act, and Occupational Health and Safety Act.

**Modality:** a therapeutic intervention employed to promote movement and functioning. The therapist assistant applies a modality under the supervision of the occupational therapist or physiotherapist and according to the application parameters and intervention/treatment plan established by the occupational therapist or physiotherapist, and relevant principles, policies, and procedures. Examples of modalities may include any of the following, as well as others: superficial thermal and cryotherapy, hydrotherapy, ultrasound, muscle stimulation, short-wave diathermy, shockwave, mechanical traction, continuous passive movement, transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation and other forms of electrotherapy, ultraviolet light, laser, and interferential current<sup>3</sup>.

**Occupations:** groups of activities and tasks of everyday life, named, organized, and given value and meaning by individuals and a culture; occupations include all aspects of living that are considered age, culturally and socially relevant which include looking after themselves (self-care), enjoying life (leisure), and contributing to the social and economic fabric of their communities (productivity); the domain of concern and the therapeutic medium of occupational therapy (CAOT, 1997a, 2002); a set of activities that is performed with some consistency and regularity; that brings structure and is given value and meaning by individuals and a culture (Adapted from Polatajko et al., 2004; and Zimmerman et al., 2006).

**Occupational Performance:** the result of a dynamic, interwoven relationship between persons, environment, and occupation over a person's lifespan; the ability to choose, organize and satisfactorily perform meaningful occupations that are culturally defined and age appropriate for looking after oneself, enjoying life, and contributing to the social and economic fabric of a community (CAOT, 1997a; 2002, p. 181).

**Practice Setting:** the environment in which a therapist assistant is employed, including public and private community agencies; schools; client's home; private clinics; and acute, long-term rehabilitative facilities.

**Regulated Professions of Physiotherapists and Occupational Therapists:** occupational therapists and physiotherapists are regulated professions in Canada, and in Ontario occupational therapists and physiotherapists practices are regulated by the College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario and the College of Physiotherapists of

---

<sup>3</sup> Interferential current treatment is predominantly physiotherapy related.

Ontario, respectively.<sup>4</sup>

**Regulations:** components of legislation issued by executive order or by regulatory bodies of the government that have the force of the law; regulations help define and clarify the intent and practices of the law.

**Significant Others:** people identified by the client to be privy to client information and consultation sessions, for example family members, care givers, and persons granted the client's power of attorney or legal guardian.

**Therapist Assistant:** for the purposes of this document therapist assistants are health care workers who have graduated from an Occupational Therapist Assistant and Physiotherapist Assistant Program that is offered at an Ontario College of Applied Arts and Technology. Upon graduation they receive an Ontario College Diploma. They are commonly referred to as occupational therapist assistants and physiotherapist assistants<sup>5</sup>, and work under the supervision of and in collaboration with occupational therapists and physiotherapists.

---

<sup>4</sup> Although therapist assistants are not regulated health professionals, it is expected that they have knowledge of these two Colleges, the standards that apply to the regulated and unregulated professionals within them, and the conditions associated with the assignment of tasks by occupational therapists and physiotherapists.

<sup>5</sup> For the purposes of this report, occupational therapist assistants and physiotherapist assistants are also referred to as "OTA&PTAs".

# Essential employability skills

All graduates of the Occupational Therapist Assistant and Physiotherapist Assistant program of instruction must have reliably demonstrated the essential employability skills learning outcomes listed below, in addition to achieving the [vocational learning outcomes](#) and meeting the [general education requirement](#).

## Context

Essential Employability Skills (EES) are skills that, regardless of a student's program or discipline, are critical for success in the workplace, in day-to-day living and for lifelong learning.

The teaching and attainment of these EES for students in, and graduates from, Ontario's Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology are anchored in a set of three fundamental assumptions:

- these skills are important for every adult to function successfully in society today;
- our colleges are well equipped and well positioned to prepare graduates with these skills;
- these skills are equally valuable for all graduates, regardless of the level of their credential, whether they pursue a career path, or they pursue further education.

## Skill categories

To capture these skills, the following six categories define the essential areas where graduates must demonstrate skills and knowledge.

- Communication
- Numeracy
- Critical Thinking & Problem Solving
- Information Management
- Interpersonal
- Personal

## Application and implementation

In each of the six skill categories, there are a number of defining skills, or sub skills, identified to further articulate the requisite skills identified in the main skill categories. The following chart illustrates the relationship between the skill categories, the defining skills within the categories and learning outcomes to be achieved by graduates from all postsecondary programs of instruction that lead to an Ontario College credential.

EES may be embedded in General Education or vocational courses, or developed through discrete courses. However these skills are developed, all graduates with Ontario College credentials must be able to reliably demonstrate the essential skills required in each of the six categories.

<b>Skill category</b>	<b>Defining skills:</b>  Skill areas to be demonstrated by graduates:	<b>Learning outcomes:</b> The levels of achievement required by graduates.  The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to:
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reading</li><li>• Writing</li><li>• Speaking</li><li>• Listening</li><li>• Presenting</li><li>• Visual literacy</li></ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. communicate clearly, concisely and correctly in the written, spoken and visual form that fulfills the purpose and meets the needs of the audience.</li><li>2. respond to written, spoken or visual messages in a manner that ensures effective communication.</li></ol>
Numeracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understanding and applying mathematical concepts and reasoning</li><li>• Analyzing and using numerical data</li><li>• Conceptualizing</li></ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. execute mathematical operations accurately.</li></ol>
Critical Thinking & Problem Solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Analyzing</li><li>• Synthesizing</li><li>• Evaluating</li><li>• Decision making</li><li>• Creative and innovative thinking</li></ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. apply a systematic approach to solve problems.</li><li>2. use a variety of thinking skills to anticipate and solve problems.</li></ol>

Information Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gathering and managing information</li> <li>• Selecting and using appropriate tools and technology for a task or a project</li> <li>• Computer literacy</li> <li>• Internet skills</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. locate, select, organize and document information using appropriate technology and information systems.</li> <li>2. analyze, evaluate and apply relevant information from a variety of sources.</li> </ol>
Interpersonal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teamwork</li> <li>• Relationship management</li> <li>• Conflict resolution</li> <li>• Leadership</li> <li>• Networking</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. show respect for the diverse opinions, values, belief systems and contributions of others.</li> <li>2. interact with others in groups or teams in ways that contribute to effective working relationships and the achievement of goals.</li> </ol>
Personal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Managing self</li> <li>• Managing change and being flexible and adaptable</li> <li>• Engaging in reflective practices</li> <li>• Demonstrating personal responsibility</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. manage the use of time and other resources to complete projects.</li> <li>2. take responsibility for one's own actions, decisions and their consequences.</li> </ol>

# General education requirement

All graduates of the Occupational Therapist Assistant and Physiotherapist Assistant program must have met the [general education requirement](#) described below, in addition to achieving the [vocational](#) and [essential employability skills](#) learning outcomes.

## Requirement

The General Education Requirement for programs of instruction is stipulated in the [Credentials Framework](#) (Appendix A in the Minister's Binding Policy Directive Framework for Programs of Instruction).

In programs of instruction leading to either an Ontario College Diploma or an Ontario College Advanced Diploma, it is required that graduates have been engaged in learning that exposes them to at least one discipline outside their main field of study and increases their awareness of the society and culture in which they live and work. This will typically be accomplished by students taking 3 to 5 courses (or the equivalent) designed discretely and separately from vocational learning opportunities.

This general education learning would normally be delivered using a combination of required and elective processes.

## Purpose

The purpose of General Education in the Ontario college system is to contribute to the development of citizens who are conscious of the diversity, complexity and richness of the human experience; who are able to establish meaning through this consciousness; and who, as a result, are able to contribute thoughtfully, creatively and positively to the society in which they live and work.

General Education strengthens students' essential employability skills, such as critical analysis, problem solving and communication, in the context of an exploration of topics with broad-based personal and/or societal importance.

## Themes

The themes listed below will be used to provide direction to Ontario Colleges in the development and identification of courses that are designed to fulfil the General Education Requirement for programs of instructions.

Each theme provides a statement of Rationale and offers suggestions related to more specific topic areas that could be explored within each area. These suggestions are neither prescriptive nor exhaustive. They are included to provide guidance regarding the

nature and scope of content that would be judged as meeting the intent and overall goals of General Education.

### **Arts in society:**

Rationale:

The capacity of a person to recognize and evaluate artistic and creative achievements is useful in many aspects of his/her life. Since artistic expression is a fundamentally human activity, which both reflects and anticipates developments in the larger culture, its study will enhance the student's cultural and self-awareness.

Content:

Courses in this area should provide students with an understanding of the importance of visual and creative arts in human affairs, of the artist's and writer's perceptions of the world and the means by which those perceptions are translated into the language of literature and artistic expression. They will also provide an appreciation of the aesthetic values used in examining works of art and possibly, a direct experience in expressing perceptions in an artistic medium.

### **Civic Life:**

Rationale:

In order for individuals to live responsibly and to reach their potential as individuals and as citizens of society, they need to understand the patterns of human relationships that underlie the orderly interactions of a society's various structural units. Informed people will have knowledge of the meaning of civic life in relation to diverse communities at the local, national and global level and an awareness of international issues and the effects of these on Canada, as well as Canada's place in the international community.

Content:

Courses in this area should provide students with an understanding of the meaning of freedoms, rights and participation in community and public life, in addition to a working knowledge of the structure and function of various levels of government (municipal, provincial, national) in a Canadian and/or in an international context. They may also provide an historical understanding of major political issues affecting relations between the various levels of government in Canada and their constituents.



## **Social and cultural understanding:**

### **Rationale:**

Knowledge of the patterns and precedents of the past provide the means for a person to gain an awareness of his or her place in contemporary culture and society. In addition to this awareness, students will acquire a sense of the main currents of their culture and that of other cultures over an extended period of time in order to link personal history to the broader study of culture.

### **Content:**

Courses in this area are those that deal broadly with major social and cultural themes. These courses may also stress the nature and validity of historical evidence and the variety of historical interpretation of events. Courses will provide the students with a view and understanding of the impact of cultural, social, ethnic or linguistic characteristics.

## **Personal understanding:**

### **Rationale:**

Educated people are equipped for life-long understanding and development of themselves as integrated physiological and psychological entities. They are aware of the ideal need to be fully functioning persons: mentally, physically, emotionally, socially, spiritually and vocationally.

### **Content:**

Courses in this area will focus on understanding the individual: his or her evolution; situation; relationship with others; place in the environment and universe; achievements and problems; and his or her meaning and purpose. They will also allow students the opportunity to study institutionalized human social behaviour in a systematic way. Courses fulfilling this requirement may be oriented to the study of the individual within a variety of contexts.

## **Science and technology:**

### **Rationale:**

Matter and energy are universal concepts in science, forming a basis for understanding the interactions that occur in living and non-living systems in our universe. Study in this area provides an understanding of the behaviour of matter that provides a foundation for further scientific study and the creation of broader understanding about natural phenomena.

Similarly, the various applications and developments in the area of technology have an increasing impact on all aspects of human endeavour and have numerous social, economic and philosophical implications. For example, the operation of computers to process data at high speed has invoked an interaction between machines and the

human mind that is unique in human history. This and other technological developments have a powerful impact on how we deal with many of the complex questions in our society.

#### Content:

Courses in this area should stress scientific inquiry and deal with basic or fundamental questions of science rather than applied ones. They may be formulated from traditional basic courses in such areas of study as biology, chemistry, physics, astronomy, geology or agriculture. As well, courses related to understanding the role and functions of computers (e.g., data management and information processing) and assorted computer-related technologies should be offered in a non-applied manner to provide students with an opportunity to explore the impact of these concepts and practices on their lives.

## Permission to reproduce

Permission is hereby granted to the following institutions to reproduce this document, in whole or in part, in print or by electronic means, for the following specific purposes, subject to the conditions that follow.

1. By an Ontario College of Applied Arts and Technology for the purposes of implementation of the program standard within a college program, including for the purpose of informing students, potential students, program advisory committees or others about programs of study.
2. By an educational institution or school, for the purpose of informing prospective college students about programs of study at Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology.

### Conditions:

1. Every reproduction must be marked “© 2020, Queen’s Printer for Ontario” at the beginning of the document or any part of it that is reproduced.
2. No other uses may be made of the document.
3. The document may not be reproduced for sale.
4. The Ministry may revoke the permission to reproduce at any time.

For permission to copy this document, in whole or in part, for other purposes or by other institutions, please contact

Ministry of Colleges and Universities  
Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Branch, Program Standards Unit  
315 Front Street West  
16<sup>th</sup> floor  
Toronto, Ontario  
M7A 0B8

Or by e mail: [psu@ontario.ca](mailto:psu@ontario.ca)

Inquiries regarding specific Occupational Therapist Assistant and Physiotherapist Assistant programs offered by Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology in Ontario should be directed to the relevant college.

© 2020, Queen’s Printer for Ontario

ISBN: 978-1-4868-4044-1