

The American Occupational Therapy Association, Inc.

Subject: AOTA-ACOTE Relationship

PURPOSE: To establish policy defining the independence and autonomy of ACOTE with respect to accreditation policy, accreditation procedures and the determination of accreditation status.

IT SHALL BE THE POLICY OF THE ASSOCIATION THAT:

1. Under the AOTA Bylaws, ACOTE is an Associated Advisory Council of the AOTA Board of Directors charged with establishing accreditation policy, procedures, and determining accreditation status. ACOTE is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) as a programmatic accreditor for the profession of occupational therapy. ACOTE has complete autonomy in establishing education standards¹ for the purpose of evaluating and accrediting educational programs, developing and implementing policies, rules and procedures for conducting accreditation reviews of educational programs, making accreditation decisions with respect to such educational programs, and providing for appeals of adverse accreditation decisions
2. The Representative Assembly is responsible for establishing professional standards and policies for AOTA and the profession², including the scope of the profession and professional practice and the entry level degree requirement for entry into the profession, as provided in the AOTA Bylaws.
3. ACOTE shall have authority and capacity to deploy sufficient resources in a manner that ensures ACOTE has adequate financial, staff, and operational resources to perform its accreditation functions efficiently and effectively within the overall AOTA budget. ACOTE's revenue will be derived from fees paid by education programs applying for accreditation and/or currently accredited by ACOTE. ACOTE will develop its operating budget based on its programmatic plans, projected revenue, and expenses. ACOTE's budget will be included within the overall AOTA

¹ Details of ACOTE policies and procedures are provided in the ACOTE Accreditation Manual (<https://www.aota.org/Education-Careers/Accreditation/Policies.aspx>)

² **Professional policies** are high-level statements related to the occupational therapy profession, including the scope of the profession and professional practice, and the degree level for entry into the profession.

Professional standards include quantitative and/or qualitative measures of the profession and/or professional practice**.

Operational policies are the statements that describe the operational and administrative requirements for conducting the business of AOTA. Operational policies are developed to comply with relevant requirements of the Internal Revenue Service, the jurisdiction where AOTA is incorporated (the District of Columbia), requirements related to human resources, conduct of business and best practices for 501(c) organizations, and financial and reporting requirements defined by FASB.

*Operational policies apply to all components of AOTA, all staff and volunteers, and consultants working for or on behalf of AOTA.

** Professional standards do not include quantitative and/or qualitative measures as contained in ACOTE's accreditation standards and policies

budget as a distinct program within AOTA. ACOTE shall prepare and submit an annual operational plan to support its budget. The ACOTE Chair and/or staff Director will be invited to participate in the AOTA Board review of the ACOTE budget.

4. AOTA will procure liability insurance for ACOTE's accreditation operations, accreditation decisions and actions, including the decisions of independent appeal panels. The costs for this coverage will be charged to the ACOTE budget. AOTA will indemnify ACOTE Council members, volunteers, staff, and independent appeal panel members for actions taken within the scope of accreditation.. AOTA shall also provide insurance coverage for accidental injury or death for ACOTE volunteers while traveling for ACOTE business.
5. Based on an ACOTE policy guided search process, ACOTE will offer recommendations for selecting a Director or Interim Director for the accreditation function, to ensure that the Director has the requisite knowledge and skills to support ACOTE functions. The Director and all other Accreditation staff shall be employees of AOTA and shall follow all AOTA Human Resources policies and procedures. AOTA recognizes that accreditation often require highly confidential and sensitive information and accordingly, the Director and all Accreditation staff , and any AOTA staff coming into contact with accreditation information , must protect the confidentiality of accreditation information and processes.
6. ACOTE and AOTA shall have clear and effective controls against conflicts of interest or even the appearance of conflicts of interest with respect to the independence and autonomy of ACOTE in its conduct of accreditation duties and its accreditation decisions. All AOTA Board, staff and consultants and all ACOTE members, staff, and consultants shall execute such conflicts of interest forms and make such disclosures as required by and in accordance with AOTA policy and ACOTE procedures.
7. Legal counsel has the requisite knowledge, skills and experience to support and represent ACOTE'S accreditation functions. As an Associated Advisory Council of the AOTA Board of Directors, ACOTE is not authorized to enter into any legal agreements or contracts, engage in any litigation, or otherwise take any action that is not in keeping with its status as a component within AOTA and not a separate legal entity. The AOTA Board and ACOTE will take steps to avoid any conflicts of interest. If a conflict of interest, or perceived conflict of interest arises, ACOTE policies and procedures will be utilized to determine if independent legal counsel for ACOTE is needed and to secure legal support, if required.
8. This Policy will be jointly reviewed by the AOTA Officers, Executive Director, the ACOTE Executive Council and Director of Accreditation at least every three years and/or when changes are made in requirements of the US Department of Education, CHEA or the DC laws for non-profit organizations that may affect this policy.

Definitions:

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**** Professional standards do not include quantitative and/or qualitative measures as contained in ACOTE's accreditation standards and policies

ACOTE – educational standards As an educational accrediting agency, ACOTE must have standards for accreditation that are sufficiently rigorous to ensure that it is a reliable authority regarding the quality of education provided by the programs it accredits. The education standards define the inputs, processes, and outcomes necessary to assure academic quality, student achievement, accountability for performance and transparency, and rigor and substantive and practical content of the educational programs for the occupational therapist and occupational therapy assistant. Educational standards are applied and compliance is evaluated through pre-accreditation and accreditation policies and procedures and standards for entry-level professional preparation. ACOTE's policies and procedures are subject to rigorous review and approval by both the U.S. Department of Education through its recognition process and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

APPROVED BY THE AOTA BOARD OF DIRECTORS JUNE 14, 2019