

# The Development of an Access and Registration Framework for Internationally Educated Occupational Therapists



The Development of an Access and Registration Framework for Internationally Educated Occupational Therapists (IEOTs) is a twelve-month initiative, which began in January 2007, and is funded by the Government of Canada's Foreign Credential Recognition Program. The project is led by a Steering Committee of three associations, including the Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy Regulatory Organizations (ACOTRO), the Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy University Programs (ACOTUP), and the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT). Representatives from Human Resources and Social Development Canada and Health Canada serve as advisors.

This initiative is a follow-up to the report entitled *Enabling the Workforce Integration of International Graduates: Issues and Recommendations for Occupational Therapy in Canada* (hereinafter Workforce Integration Project), and addresses selected recommendations to ensure the successful integration of IEOTs into the workforce.

## The objectives of the initiative are to:

- Identify the pathway(s) followed by IEOTs, from the point of initial consideration of immigration to Canada, to successful registration as an occupational therapist, and finally to integration into the occupational therapy workforce;
- Describe the types of activities and processes involved at key points on the pathway(s); and
- Define the necessary processes and supports for assisting the IEOT to move through the pathway to registration and integration into the profession.

## The Framework

The Access and Registration Framework for IEOTs presents the overall pathway an IEOT is required to follow to practice occupational therapy in Canada, and recognizes that there are differences between provinces/territories in the licensing and registration of candidates. The framework establishes the context to implement actions, and identify the key roles and responsibilities of the stakeholder groups in the occupational therapy community.

## Internationally Educated Occupational Therapists

Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy Regulatory Organizations  
Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy University Programs  
Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists



It is important to note that the elements within each component of the framework are not final or complete. They serve as a starting point for implementation.

There are five components to the framework and a number of decision points along the pathway. The five components include information, assessment, preparation and support, entry into the occupational therapy workforce/provisional registration, and integration into the occupational therapy workforce. Each component in turn is defined by a number of elements.

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## Information was gathered in two phases:

### Phase One

- Analysis of published and unpublished (grey) literature related to challenges and initiatives in the Internationally Educated Health Professional (IEHP) environment;
- Consultations with key informants of health professions (physicians, nurses, medical radiation technologists, pharmacists, physiotherapists, midwives, medical laboratory technologists) and Atlantic Canada's IEHP program to identify best practices and/or success factors for IEHP initiatives;
- Identification of the potential components of the framework.

### Phase Two

- Validation and confirmation of the proposed framework through:
  - a survey of members and stakeholders;
  - consultations with stakeholders.

Based on the development of the Framework and in consultations with relevant stakeholders, the following recommendations were developed:

### **Recommendation One: Create one information gateway**

Accurate, timely, and consistent information for the IEOTs about coming to Canada and the steps for assessment for registration/licensure are key to a more efficient process. The profession should provide one portal with all the relevant information, and potential assessment and educational tools.

### **Recommendation Two: Standardize the assessment of the IEOTs to enhance fairness in recognizing international qualifications**

Similar approaches to the assessment of credentials and competencies would ensure consistent entry standards for occupational therapists across the country. A collaborative approach among occupational therapy regulators and stakeholders would facilitate planning and maximize the use of resources and time.

### **Recommendation Three: Develop programs, processes, and tools to support the knowledge and competency development of the IEOTs to meet assessment requirements**

Academic upgrading, language training, supervised fieldwork, mentoring, and orientation courses to the Canadian health system are examples of programs needed to assist IEOTs to meet assessment requirements.

### **Recommendation Four: Establish appropriate workplace supports for the IEOTs**

Once an IEOT is eligible for licensure/certification, successful integration into the workforce and ongoing professional development require workplace system supports such as orientation, mentorship, and continuing education. Professional support provided by provincial/territorial and national occupational therapy associations and employers is also important to the successful professional development of the IEOTs in Canada.

### **Recommendation Five: Provide financial support to IEOTs**

This may include support for tuition, child care if needed, housing and other similar needs.

### **Recommendation Six: Secure funding to begin to develop the tools and programs that comprise the framework**

### **Recommendation Seven: Complete periodic evaluations of the Framework**

Evaluations are needed to ensure that materials and processes are meeting the needs of the IEOTs and other stakeholder groups such as regulatory bodies and employers. Evaluation plan(s) should be designed early so that results will be used to continuously enhance the material and processes.

## Next Steps

The Steering Committee will continue to guide initiatives to implement and evaluate the Framework.

## Project Priorities for 2008

- Develop a competency-based assessment to standardize the assessment of the IEOTs and enhance fairness in recognizing international qualifications.
- Develop an occupational therapy information portal to provide access and coordination of information for IEOTs.
- Develop and pilot implementation of supervised practice and mentoring to facilitate the successful workforce integration for IEOTs.

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