

**Dalhousie University
School of Occupational Therapy
Fieldwork Education Manual**

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INTRODUCTION

This manual is meant for occupational therapy students, preceptors, and practice partners, and outlines the key details of the fieldwork program at the Dalhousie University School of Occupational Therapy.

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MSc(OT) PROGRAM

Mission and Vision

Educational and Professional Conceptual Framework

*** Content in this section was produced by the School of Occupational Therapy under the guidance of Dr. Lynn Shaw ***

	Values & beliefs
Professional Conceptual Framework	
Occupation is intricately connected with person, environment and well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occupation is both a means and an end, and is simultaneously individual and social • Occupational engagement is important to human wellbeing, including those occupations not deemed health-promoting • Occupation is shaped by individual interests and abilities, cultural values and expectations, social structures and power relations, political, economic and geographic contexts • Occupation in turn shapes individuals, communities, cultures, societies, political economies and histories
Professional behaviour is ethical practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional behaviours are skills that can be learned and are critical to being part of a self-regulated profession • Clinical reasoning, reflection and self-awareness are key to ethical decision making • Life-long learning is essential to identifying and filling gaps in skills and knowledge as practice expectations change over time • Critical reflexivity is key to constantly challenging personal, professional and institutional biases, holding ourselves, each other and the profession accountable
Justice and equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inequitable access to participation in meaningful occupations is an injustice that occupational therapists strive to address • Access to, engagement in, and performance of and meaning of occupations are influenced by individual capacities as well as social hierarchies of privilege and oppression (including colonialism, racism, classism, ableism, heterosexism, gender binarism, sexism, ageism, citizenship and the dominance of Western Eurocentric ideas and groups) • Occupational therapists address barriers to occupation at multiple levels
Educational Conceptual Framework	
Collaborative, coordinated, experiential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Careful coordination ensures logical, well-integrated developmental learning of knowledge, skills and behaviours across the curriculum

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration with practice partners and inter-professionally enables vital learner engagement • Experiential learning (experience, reflection, analysis, experimentation) is critical for professional education that demands skills, clinical reasoning and critical thinking • Field education, labs, and simulations are key to consolidating didactic and experiential learning
Respectful, reciprocal, progressive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respectful reciprocity is essential – between School and field; between evidence and practice; between theory and practice; between professions; among students, faculty and staff • A professional education program exploits the productive tension between meeting the needs of current practice contexts, employers and practitioners while moving the profession toward new visions, new ways of thinking and practicing
Just right challenge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An intellectually rigorous curriculum holds students to high academic and performance standards while offering multiple, flexible forms of teaching and evaluation to meet the needs of diverse learners (and educators) • Finding the ‘just right challenge’ urges students to learn from mistakes, always striving to exceed current abilities – good practice for life long professional learning • Developing skills for giving effective feedback, and for accepting and implementing critical feedback, are essential for professional education • Transformative learning rejects the ‘safe learning environment’ in favour of brave spaces in which to hold courageous conversations (Arao & Clemens, 2013), embracing a pedagogy of discomfort (Boler, 1999) that requires finding a critical edge where challenge is met with willingness to grow
Justice, equity, belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professions and professional education are enhanced through the presence and contributions of diverse learners and educators, including members of marginalized or oppressed groups • Expectations, ways of knowing, theories, assumptions, and practices in professional education have been shaped by the power relations of their creation, privileging some learners and marginalizing others; they require critical examination and transformation • Constant critical reflexivity is needed to steadily move toward curriculum content and pedagogy that embody justice and equity • Faculty development, community partnerships and institutional change are essential steps to achieve education that challenges oppression (colonialism, racism, Western cultural biases, cis-gender binarism, hetero-sexism, classism, ableism, ageism)

Approved at School Council – January 27, 2021

Curriculum

FIELDWORK COURSES

*In the event of a discrepancy between the description(s) below and the applicable course syllabus, **the course syllabus will be taken as correct.**

In line with the accreditation requirements established by the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT) and the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT), students complete more than 1000 hours of fieldwork learning in the entry-to-practice curriculum. At present, the fieldwork curriculum contains one part-time fieldwork course (OCCU 5112) and three full-time fieldwork courses (OCCU 5222, 6111 and 6222).

OCCU 5112

In this part-time, introductory fieldwork course, students typically complete **100 hours** of fieldwork time on placement through simulation and community-based activities.

OCCU 5222

In this first full-time fieldwork course, students typically complete **300 hours** of fieldwork education under the supervision of a licensed occupational therapist/preceptor.

OCCU 6111

In this second full-time fieldwork course, students typically complete **300 hours** of fieldwork education under the supervision of a licensed occupational therapist/preceptor.

OCCU 6222

In this third and final full-time fieldwork course, students typically complete **300 hours** of fieldwork education under the supervision of a licensed occupational therapist/preceptor.

PLACEMENTS

Affiliation Agreements

Prior to sending a student to a fieldwork site, there must be an active affiliation agreement on file. Affiliation agreements outline the responsibilities of the student(s), site(s) and the University and are mandatory in order for a fieldwork placement to proceed.

Fieldwork Site Profile (FS-Pro)

As part of the site approval process, the Dalhousie School of Occupational Therapy maintains an up-to-date copy of the Fieldwork Site Profile (FSPro) (APPENDIX). Each practice site is asked to complete the FSPro to outline the nature of the placements occurring at the site and the resources available to students at the site.

Pre-Placement Requirements

All students complete the Dalhousie Faculty of Health Immunization form (APPENDIX) upon entry to the program. Students also complete a criminal record check, vulnerable sector check and child abuse registry check upon entry to the program. Each fieldwork site may have additional pre-placement requirements, and it is the student's responsibility to provide relevant documentation to verify pre-placement requirements. These additional requirements are typically verified after a student is assigned to a specific placement site whose placement requirements exceed those outlined above.

Student Introductory Letter and Establishing the Relationship Questionnaire

Student introductory letter (APPENDIX) and Establishing the Relationship Questionnaire (APPENDIX).

Recruitment of Fieldwork Placements

Students are not permitted to recruit their own fieldwork placements. If a student is aware of a preceptor interested in offering a placement, that preceptor should be encouraged to make contact with the Dalhousie School of Occupational Therapy Fieldwork Coordinator.

Use of Vehicles While on Fieldwork Placement

Students or preceptors who use their own vehicle while travelling to or from a clinical education activity or event should be aware that there is no automobile coverage provided under Dalhousie's automobile policy. If a preceptor or student were driving a student or preceptor somewhere while on a clinical placement, the driver's automobile insurance policy would be the policy that would respond to an accident claim. They should notify their

broker/insurer to make sure they have adequate coverage. Dalhousie University recommends that anyone using their own vehicle for University business/study carry a minimum liability of \$2 million on their automobile policy. It should be noted that the occupational disability insurance would not apply if a student were injured while commuting to or from his or her clinical placement. The occupational disability insurance would only apply in a motor vehicle accident where the student was travelling as part of their clinical placement experience.

[Canadian Guidelines for Fieldwork Education in Occupational Therapy \(CGFE-OT\)](#)

*****Content in this section is taken verbatim from Canadian Guidelines For Fieldwork Education in Occupational Therapy (CGFE-OT) (ACOTUP, 2011).*****

“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;CUFE-ACOTUP Canadian Guidelines for Fieldwork Education in Occupational Therapy – v2011r 5
- 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.

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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);CUFE-ACOTUP Canadian Guidelines for Fieldwork Education in Occupational Therapy – v2011r 6
- 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.”

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

A full listing of the Dalhousie School of Occupational Therapy's current fieldwork policies and procedures can be found on your cohort's Brightspace page (e.g. OT Class of 2023).

Outlined below are the more frequently-encountered fieldwork policies. This is not an exhaustive list of policies. Each of the policies below is described in further detail on your cohort's Brightspace page.

Fieldwork Accommodations for Students With Disabilities

Student occupational therapists registered with the Student Accessibility Center (SAC) will be eligible to receive reasonable accommodations in Fieldwork learning experiences. Reasonable accommodations are determined by SAC on an individual basis with supporting documentation and recommendations from SAC.

Please refer to [Fieldwork Accommodations for Students With Disabilities policy](#) for more information.

Missed Time During Fieldwork

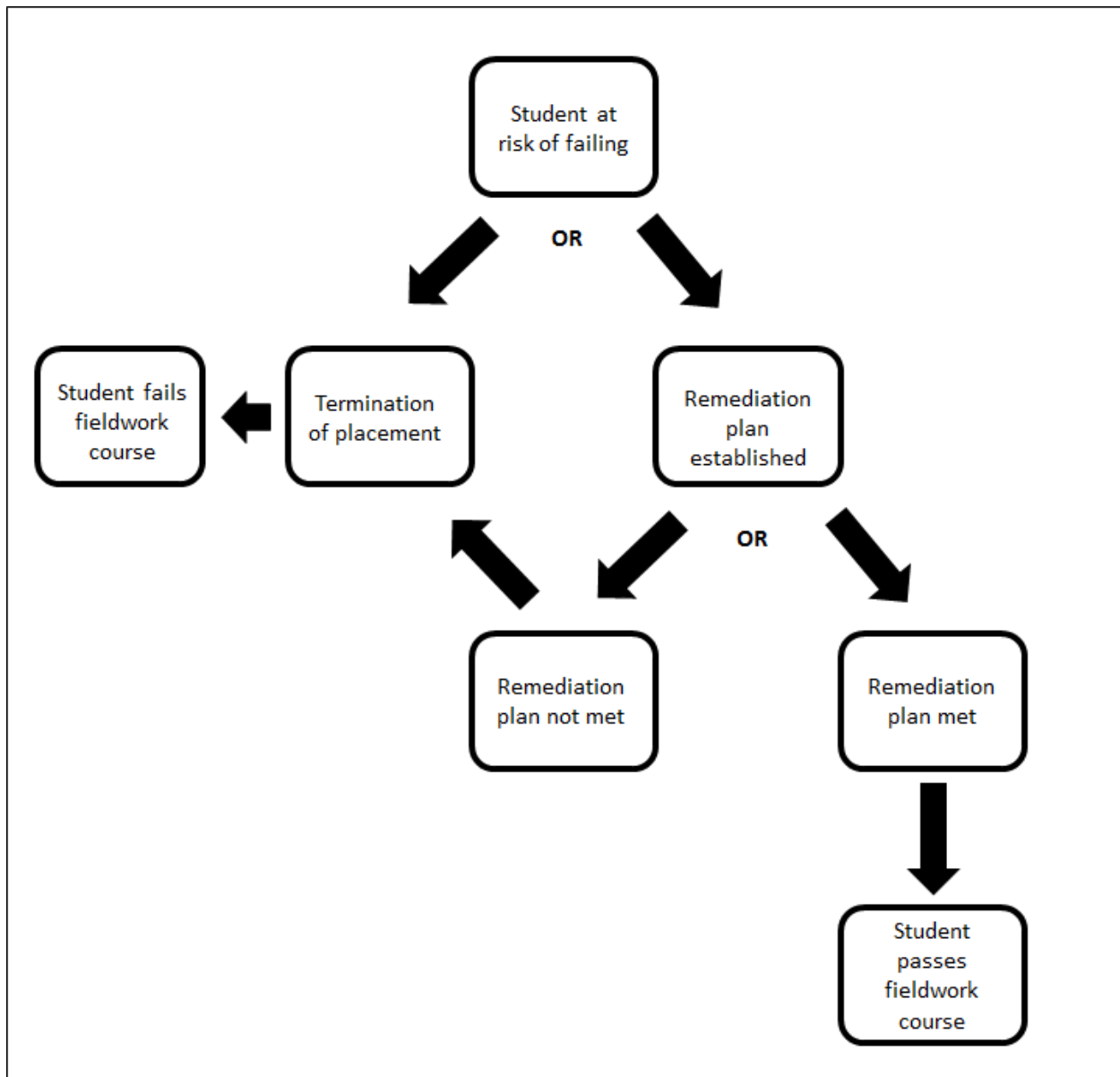
Students must complete the full number of designated fieldwork hours per fieldwork course.

Students must report any missed fieldwork hours to the Fieldwork Education Coordinator immediately to negotiate a plan for making up missed hours.

Please refer to [missed time during fieldwork policy](#).

Students at Risk of Failing a Fieldwork Placement

If at anytime a fieldwork preceptor identifies that a student occupational therapist is at risk of failing a fieldwork placement, the preceptor has two options for proceeding (see decision tree below):



Remediation Learning Plan Template

The table below outlines examples of potential concerns and performance objectives. One example of a concern and one example of a related goal/performance objective have been included for each of the seven CBFE-OT competencies. When drafting your own learning plan, you do not necessarily need to include an identified concern for each of the seven competencies.

Identified Concerns (Link to CBFE-OT competencies)	Goal/Performance Objective(s) (what the student needs to do to overcome the concerns)	Met	Not Met
Practice Knowledge: Demonstration of core therapeutic techniques	Student therapist will properly execute stand-pivot transfers for 5 clients by the end of week 8.		
Clinical Reasoning: Justification for assessment choice	Student therapist will justify why an assessment was chosen or not appropriate for 10 clients/patients using evidence based knowledge without coaching by the end of week 8.		
Facilitating Change With A Practice Process: Documentation of patient care	Student therapist will ensure that all documentation that can directly impact client/patient care is completed before leaving at the end of every day without coaching by the end of week 5.		
Professional Interactions and Responsibility: Interprofessional communication	Student therapist will present on three new clients at interprofessional team rounds by the end of week 8.		
Communication: Client communication	Student therapist will lead four intake interviews by the end of week 8.		
Professional Development: Ongoing learning	Before the end of week 8, student therapist will research three new medical conditions (relevant to caseload) and will summarize results of research for preceptor.		
Performance Management: Caseload management	Organize caseload each day by identifying the priorities for each client/patient on each day, to ensure that all necessary priorities are completed without coaching by the end of week 8.		

Preceptor Replacement Policy

If a preceptor who is directly responsible for a student occupational therapist's coaching and supervision becomes unavailable, whenever possible, another occupational therapist at the same site will assume the preceptor's responsibilities. If there is no alternate occupational therapist available at the same site, the preceptor must contact the Provincial Fieldwork Education Coordinator or School Fieldwork Education Coordinator.

Should a preceptor neglect the responsibilities in the Clinical/Fieldwork Education Agreement and/or the Preceptor Roles and Responsibilities in the applicable fieldwork course outline, the

preceptor will be removed from the role of a preceptor by the Provincial or School Fieldwork Education Coordinator. The Provincial or School Fieldwork Education Coordinator must: (a) report unacceptable preceptor performance to the preceptor's manager or appropriate person at the site, and (b) make arrangements for the student occupational therapist to have another preceptor.

Please refer to the [Preceptor Replacement Policy](#) for additional details.

RESOLVING ISSUES

Students at Risk for Failing a Fieldwork Placement

Please refer to the Students at Risk for Failing a Fieldwork Placement policy.

Student Issues With Preceptor

The professional behavior rubric (**APPENDIX**) can serve as a useful tool for facilitating these conversations.

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Competency-Based Fieldwork Evaluation for Occupational Therapists (CBFE-OT)

The competency-based fieldwork evaluation for occupational therapists (CBFE-OT; Bossers et al., 2002) is used to evaluate student performance on all fieldwork placements.

Preceptors will complete the CBFE-OT at midterm and final to evaluate student placement performance. As part of the final evaluation, preceptors will recommend whether the student should receive a passing grade for the placement. The course instructor of record and/or fieldwork coordinator has final authority in assigning a course grade. Please refer to individual course syllabi.

Professional Behavior Rubric

The professional behavior rubric (**APPENDIX**) can serve as a useful tool to facilitate conversations about student performance. The use of this tool is not mandatory, but you may find it helpful.

COVID-19

Please note that:

- Clinical placement availability may be affected per ongoing contingencies of COVID
- COVID vaccine may be required for clinical placement sites

Appendix A – Fieldwork Site Profile (FSPro)

Appendix B – Dalhousie Faculty of Health Immunization Form

Appendix C – Student Introductory Letter Template

Appendix D – Establishing the Relationship Questionnaire

Appendix E – Professional Behavior Rubric