

FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT
Evaluation of Graduate Programs
Occupational Therapy
Faculty of Health Sciences
Cyclical review period: 2022–2023
Date: June 7, 2023

I. Evaluated program

- Master of Health Sciences in Occupational Therapy

II. Evaluation process (outline of the visit)

- The Final Assessment Report on the aforementioned program was prepared based on the following documents: (a) the self-study brief produced by the academic unit; (b) the report produced by the two external reviewers following their virtual visit; and (c) commentary from Rose Martini, Program Director; Mary Egan, Director of the School of Rehabilitation Sciences; and Lucie Thibault, Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences.
- The virtual review took place on February 9 and 10, 2023. The two external reviewers were Nadine Larivière, full professor in the occupational therapy program at the Université de Sherbrooke; and Lise Poissant, honorary professor (retired) in the occupational therapy program at the Université de Montréal. The reviewers received a copy of the comprehensive self-study report that had been presented and discussed at the program Assembly on August 24, 2022.
- During their visit, the two reviewers met with Lucie Thibault, Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences; Mary Egan, Director of the School of Rehabilitation Sciences; Rose Martini, Program Director; Mélanie Côté, Coordinator, Accreditation, Program Assessment and Curriculum Review Processes; André Beauchemin, Vice-Provost, Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (acting); two groups of students (1st and 2nd year); five regular professors; two long-term appointment professors; support staff members; four part-time professors (course leaders and problem-based approach tutors); three clinical supervisors; and the research librarian.

III. Summary of reports on the quality of the program¹

IDENTIFICATION OF STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES

STRENGTHS

- The occupational therapy program is a career-oriented program accredited by the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT). The curriculum is aligned with the requirements and standards of practice set by the CAOT. Its components compare favourably with those of other occupational therapy programs in Canada, as detailed in the following.
- The courses at each level are integrated well into the curriculum. Course sequencing promotes synergy throughout the program. In addition, instruction (theory and labs) in the courses in the program is closely tied to practical training (internships).
- The teaching team is very close-knit, with team spirit facilitating execution and implementation of the program.
- Strong alignment between competencies to be learned and choice of teaching methods.

¹ Based on the documents prepared during the assessment process and often cited textually.

- Only French-language occupational therapy program in Ontario and in the mainly English-speaking provinces.
- Good cohort size allowing for flexibility in teaching, with personalized follow-up for each student.

CHALLENGES

- Student-professor/teaching staff ratio continues to be below the Canadian standards recommended by the CAOT.
- The number of regular professors would need to be increased in order to be better aligned with the number of students.
- The program is working to find a more satisfactory way (for students and professors alike) to meet CAOT indicator 9.22 concerning participation in student research.
- Personal support from administrative staff is limited, preventing resources on strength from handling work to be done during busier periods (e.g., start of fall term, production of schedules, introduction of new systems) or when colleagues are absent (e.g., holidays, sick leave). The result is increased stress levels for the administrative support staff, the program directors and the teaching staff.

IV. Program improvements²

The program under review meets the standards of the discipline. The following recommendations aim to maintain or increase the level of quality of the program.

Recommendation numbering follows the numbering used in the external review report.

Recommendation 1: Enhance the status of long-term appointment teaching staff and deploy them more effectively.

Recommendation 2: Add at least one more administrative clerk.

Recommendation 3: Continue developing engagement tools to support the continuous improvement of the program.

Recommendation 4: Have a structured plan for communicating with stakeholders, for example about the upcoming move.

Recommendation 5: Continue efforts to make the program more attractive and to increase admissions.

Recommendation 6: Review institutional objective concerning professional master's program (scholarly project).

V. Action plan

The directors (School and program) have prepared a detailed action plan that is already being implemented. The plan takes into account recommendations 2 to 6 from the external review, with which the School concurs. Recommendation 1 was set aside owing to a misunderstanding of the collective agreement governing employment contracts for long-term appointment professors³. However, the unit is committed to communicating expectations and staying attuned to the needs and concerns of long-term appointment teaching staff.

² Based on the external review report.

³A complete and detailed response is included in the action plan.

VI. Conclusion

This is a well-managed academic program that provides students with a high-quality education. Strengths noted by the external reviewers include the solid structure of the program, which is described as unique owing to its French-language nature in a bilingual environment. Students also receive a high-quality, career-oriented education. In addition, the considerable synergy in the curriculum and the close supervision provided underscore the high quality and the competitiveness of the occupational therapy program. Suggestions for improvement are constructive for the most part, i.e., the feedback seeks to improve an already successful program, and does not suggest that fundamental changes are necessary.

Given this positive assessment, the Committee would like to thank all of the participants for the assessment of the program. The Committee would also like to congratulate the unit on the thoroughness of its efforts and on the quality of the self-study report. It also notes the quality of the report produced by the external reviewers.

Schedule and timelines

A progress report is to be submitted by March 31, 2026.

The next self-assessment cycle will take place in 2029–2030, with the self-study report to be submitted by June 15, 2029.

Unit Response to the External Review Report and Action Plan

Faculty:

- Faculty of Health Sciences

Department:

- School of Rehabilitation Sciences (SRS)

Program evaluated:

- Master of Health Sciences in Occupational Therapy

Cyclical review period:

- 2016–2022

Date:

- April 24, 2023

General comments:

On March 13, 2023, the director of the occupational therapy program received the external review report that was produced as part of its cyclical review. We are pleased with the positive assessment of our graduate program. Since the Occupational Therapy graduate studies program is committed to providing an exceptional education and research experience, we are pleased to note that, according to the external reviewers, our Master of Science in Occupational Therapy program “uses a wide range of teaching and learning methods to foster knowledge acquisition and to provide a satisfactory student experience,” and that “there are close-knit ties between the director, the teaching staff and students, with frequent interactions and good receptiveness to feedback and/or requests that are made.” The report makes no mention of any major problems with the program, learning objectives, the courses or management of the program. The report makes six recommendations, three of which are considered high priority and require immediate action. We take all of the recommendations seriously, and we are certain that the proposed action plan will make our graduate program even stronger. The recommendations, our responses and the Office of the Dean’s responses are presented below.

Recommendation 1: Enhance the status of long-term appointment teaching staff and deploy them more effectively.

Unit response:

We would like to offer the following clarifications concerning the reviewers' suggestions:

1.1 Review their contracts and better align their workload with the number of days/weeks.

Twenty-one credits over three days is a very heavy workload.

There is nothing in the collective agreement or in the contracts of the long-term appointment (LTA) professors stipulating that they have to cover 21 credits over three days. The agreement makes no mention of the number of days of work.

Moreover, teaching loads are discussed with LTA professors. Those discussions take into account the LTA professors' area of expertise and their interest in certain courses. The number of days of instruction per week depends on the calendar of courses ultimately included in the LTA professors' workload. While an LTA professor can teach several days a week over the course of a term, that same professor may end up teaching very little or not at all in another term.

It should also be noted that the 21 credits are not wholly allocated for teaching. Some of the credits are allocated for work duties (e.g., participation in program assemblies) and supervision of clinical and non-traditional internships. A typical course load for an LTA professor consists of six, three-credit courses (as opposed to seven), in accordance with the collective agreement.

1.2 Clarify their responsibilities with everyone concerned (director, professors) and ensure that their contracts recognize their contributions outside the classroom.

As noted in the preceding item, teaching loads are discussed with LTA professors. The 21 credits are not allocated wholly for teaching. Some credits are allocated for internship supervision, and others, for administrative duties. The program already recognizes LTA professor participation in committees through credits for their work duties (e.g., participation in program assemblies is worth one credit).

1.3 Add another person if needed.

Since the program has few regular professors, adding a regular professor would take priority. While we recognize the significant contribution made by LTA professors, we feel that two LTA positions are sufficient for our needs. One of the two LTA professors has requested a dispensation for the purpose of working half-time only. She may be able to resume working full time eventually.

Decanal response:

1.1 Review their contracts and better align their workload with the number of days/weeks.

Twenty-one credits over three days is a very heavy workload.

To clarify and rectify the statement about teaching 21 credits over three days, we wish to state that the 21-credit workload for LTA professors is spread out over 12 months. Weekly courses may be taught over a three-day period. However, members are notified about their workload several months before courses start. They can also voice their concerns to the program leadership, the School and their union. Workload-related provisions in the Association of Part-Time Professors of the University of Ottawa collective agreement are complied with. We are grateful for the significant contribution made by LTA professors in the occupational therapy program.

1.2 Clarify their responsibilities with everyone concerned (director, professors) and ensure that their contracts recognize their contributions outside the classroom.

We feel that the program leadership's explanations and the Office of the Dean's comments in the previous item are thorough.

1.3 Add another person if needed.

We agree that hiring a regular professor takes priority. We plan to hire such a professor in July 2024, given the vacancy resulting from the retirement of a professor in another program at the School of Rehabilitation Sciences.

We intend to allocate the position to the occupational therapy program.

Priority *: 1

Actions to be undertaken:

Continue communicating expectations and being sensitive to the needs and concerns expressed by LTA professors.

Assigned to:

Program Director School
Director

Timeline:

Ongoing

Program changes? No

Recommendation 2: Add at least one more administrative clerk.
<p>Unit response:</p> <p>2.1 Engage with officials to build a case.</p> <p>The program concurs with this need. The program notes that it is difficult for a single administrative position to support the professors, directors and students in all four programs (three professional master’s programs with four different curricula, and a PhD program). The lack of administrative support means that the directors have to perform administrative tasks that could be handled by administrative staff. The program realizes that it is difficult to add positions in this period of academic budget cutbacks. However, addition of the position in question would enable the SRS program directors to make better use of their time.</p>
<p>Decanal response:</p> <p>2.1 Engage with officials to build a case.</p> <p>The Faculty is delighted to see that the external review committee recognizes the quality of the occupational therapy program’s academic and research activities, despite potential administrative challenges. Before it can comment on the need to add administrative staff to the program and/or the SRS, the Faculty is currently conducting its own comprehensive analysis of the administrative operation of the SRS and the other schools in the Faculty of Health Sciences. This analysis looks at administrative processes, the nature of the needs identified, the administrative and management skills required, the management model, optimum use of technology, and resources/processes outside the schools supporting our programs, including the occupational therapy program. The results of this analysis will inform the Faculty in its decision making and could lead to an application for additional funding in a timely manner for everyone. In the meantime, the Faculty will continue to work closely with the occupational therapy program and the SRS in furtherance of their mandates.</p>
Priority *: 1
<p>Actions to be undertaken:</p> <p>If necessary, take part in the detailed analysis of administrative support tasks performed by the administrative assistant position, graduate studies at the SRS.</p>
<p>Assigned to:</p> <p>Program Director, SRS Director</p>
<p>Timeline:</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
Program changes? No

* Priority level: 1. URGENT – IMMEDIATE ACTION REQUIRED 2. IMPORTANT – ACTION REQUIRED WITHIN 18 MONTHS (MAXIMUM) 3. ADVISED: ACTIONS SHOULD BE DEVELOPED AND DISCUSSED, AND BE IMPLEMENTED BY MID-CYCLE (WITHIN FOUR YEARS).

Recommendation 3: Continue developing engagement tools to support the continuous improvement of the program.
<p>Unit response:</p> <p>3.1 Proceed with efforts to hire a regular professor.</p> <p>The program concurs with this need. The grounds for the request for a ninth OT professor position includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Maintaining an equivalent ratio of one FTE (chief faculty members) to eight OT students, as recommended by CAOT accreditation indicator 5.51, even when program members take up administrative positions outside the program, or during academic leave or other teaching releases. 2) OT professors would be better able to serve on compulsory program committees (e.g., curriculum assessment, program promotion) and take part in faculty/academic committees. 3) Achieving parity with the physiotherapy program, which currently has nine positions and a student body similar in size to that of the occupational therapy program. 4) Ability to ensure a smooth succession when seasoned professors retire.
<p>Decanal response:</p> <p>3.1 Proceed with efforts to hire a regular professor.</p> <p>We agree that hiring a regular professor is a priority. As mentioned in our response to recommendation 1.3, we plan to hire a regular professor in July 2024, given the vacancy following the retirement of a professor in another SRS program. We propose to allocate the position in question to OT in order to build capacity and expertise in the program.</p>
Priority *: 1
<p>Actions to be undertaken:</p> <p>Perform a detailed analysis of the expertise required to complement the knowledge and skills of our chief current members.</p> <p>Continue to advocate for the addition of a regular professor position in the occupational therapy program at the School of Rehabilitation Sciences.</p>
<p>Assigned to: Program Director School Director Dean</p>
<p>Timeline: Ongoing</p>
Program changes? No

* Priority level: 1. URGENT – IMMEDIATE ACTION REQUIRED 2. IMPORTANT – ACTION REQUIRED WITHIN 18 MONTHS (MAXIMUM) 3. ADVISED: ACTIONS SHOULD BE DEVELOPED AND DISCUSSED, AND BE IMPLEMENTED BY MID-CYCLE (WITHIN FOUR YEARS).

Recommendation 4: Have a structured plan for communicating with stakeholders, for example about the upcoming move.

Unit response:

4.1 Coordinate the communication actions proposed in the action plan in the form of a calendar.

The self-study report included a communications plan, which we are in the process of implementing. The steps and timeline are presented below.

Decanal response:

4.1 Coordinate the communication actions proposed in the action plan in the form of a calendar.

The Office of the Dean is always willing to help the program and the School to achieve the objectives in the plan aimed at communicating the important aspects of the occupational therapy program (e.g., mission, values, professional and pedagogical concepts, competencies).

With regard to the future move, the administrative director of the Faculty regularly shares information with teaching and administrative staff in preparation for the transfer of operations from the Alta Vista Campus to Lees Campus in the summer of 2023. We feel it is important to share clear information about each step of the move in order to ensure a smooth transition for staff and students. The communications and marketing group created an intranet site to facilitate internal communication in the faculty.

Priority * : 2

Actions to be undertaken:

- a) Work on a visual to reflect the mission, values and professional/pedagogical concepts embodied by the occupational therapy program at the University of Ottawa.
- b) Include the visual in the program's foundational documents to convey our program-specific identity.
- c) Plan an annual retreat to facilitate communication and professor awareness regarding the competencies.
- d) Post the visual on the program website.
- e) Explore the possibility of making the document titled *Les cadres professionnel et éducationnel du programme* available to stakeholders through the program website.
- f) To support collaboration, hold meetings to notify internship supervisors about changes to the program and about the move to Lees.
- g) Ensure that the move is on the agenda at each monthly program Assembly until the end of the fall 2023 term in order to facilitate ongoing communication between professors, administrative staff and the director.

Assigned to:

- a), b) and c) Program Director, with the assistance of the Teaching and Learning Support Service
- d) and e) Faculty communications team
- f) Clinical Education Coordinator, Program Director
- g) Program Assembly

Timeline:

- a) April 2023
- b) May 2023
- c) June each year
- d) and e) May–June 2023
- f) Fall each year
- g) Monthly until December 2023

Program changes? No

Unit response:

4.2 Develop formal training sessions/meeting mechanisms for part-time teaching staff.

This recommendation seems to be aimed specifically at courses using the “problem-based” pedagogical approach, where students are divided into small groups. Each course already includes weekly harmonization sessions with the course leader and the participating tutors (in charge of the sub-groups). The purpose of the sessions is to facilitate agreement on teaching and assessment methods. It should be noted that the course leaders and tutors can be regular or part-time teaching staff.

Teaching staff have already received training in the problem-based pedagogical approach, and a tutors’ guide has been developed. Turnover of new part-time teaching staff has been higher in recent years, increasing the need for such training.

Decanal response:

4.2 Develop formal training sessions/meeting mechanisms for part-time teaching staff.

We concur with the program’s response. We feel that communication between program staff (professors and administrative staff) and part-time professors is essential for the program to operate smoothly and for students—future occupational therapists and health professionals—to achieve their learning objectives and competency goals.

Priority *: 2
<p>Actions to be undertaken:</p> <p>a) Remind professors in charge of problem-based-approach courses about the importance of harmonizing expectations among tutors correcting assignments.</p> <p>b) Update the tutors' guide following the program alignment process under way.</p>
<p>Assigned to:</p> <p>a) Program Director and professors responsible for problem-based-approach courses.</p> <p>b) Curriculum Committee and professors responsible for problem-based-approach courses.</p>
<p>Timeline:</p> <p>a) April 2023</p> <p>b) January 2024</p>
<p>Program changes? No. No new program changes. However, this recommendation should be aligned with the changes already being discussed to ensure the program meshes with the new Competencies for Occupational Therapists in Canada.</p>

Recommendation 5: Continue efforts to make the program more attractive and to increase admissions.
<p>Unit response:</p> <p><i>5.1 Monitor the impact of the program’s promotional activities on the number of candidates who apply for admission.</i></p> <p>The Admissions and Promotion Committee thinks that this is an excellent idea. The following actions are planned to address the recommendation.</p>
<p>Decanal response:</p> <p><i>5.1 Monitor the impact of the program’s promotional activities on the number of candidates who apply for admission.</i></p> <p>We will use the results of the future survey of newly admitted students to modify our promotional activities if needed. The Office of the Dean recognizes that the OT program members are actively involved in recruitment activities in the community (e.g., through open houses at uOttawa), even though those activities are mainly aimed at secondary school students wishing to undertake undergraduate studies. Recruitment of our future occupational therapy students therefore begins early. Integrated undergraduate programs (in interdisciplinary health and occupational therapy AND in human kinetics and occupational therapy) are an excellent way to promote the professional master’s program in occupational therapy. A preliminary analysis of the applications for admission into these integrated undergraduate programs shows that students have been interested in them since they began taking applications in the fall of 2022.</p>
Priority *: 2
<p>Actions to be undertaken:</p> <p>a) Develop a survey to ask newly admitted students how they heard about the occupational therapy profession and the occupational therapy program at the University of Ottawa.</p> <p>b) Survey newly admitted students annually and submit the findings to the Admissions and Promotion Committee.</p>
<p>Assigned to:</p> <p>a) Chair of the Admissions and Promotion Committee</p> <p>b) Program Director and Assistant, Graduate Studies, SRS</p>
<p>Timeline:</p> <p>a) August 2023</p> <p>b) Every September, at the initial meeting</p>
Program changes? No

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<p>Unit response:</p> <p>5.2 Survey graduates and employers.</p> <p>The self-study report included a program assessment plan, which we are currently carrying out. The steps and timeline are presented opposite.</p>
<p>Decanal response:</p> <p>5.2 Survey graduates and employers.</p> <p>We believe that this recommendation will shed light on how our students are faring after graduation and on how well they are prepared for employment in the OT field.</p>
<p>Priority: 2</p>
<p>Actions to be undertaken:</p> <p>a) Create a formal process to gather feedback from our graduates' internship supervisors and employers.</p> <p>b) Create an alumni survey to meet program assessment needs. This could be done with the Institutional Research and Planning (IRP) Office, as other professional programs at the University have similar needs.</p> <p>c) Implement a process in the program to follow up on data gathered by the IRP, and on all other recruitment and admissions data.</p> <p>d) Review the questions in the student survey to ensure they are aligned with the revised professional and pedagogical frameworks for the program and with the new competencies set out in the Competencies for Occupational Therapists in Canada.</p>
<p>Assigned to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum Committee and Clinical Education Coordinator • School Director and IRP Office • School Director obtains data from IRP. The Admissions and Promotion Committee analyses the data. • d) Curriculum Committee.
<p>Timeline:</p> <p>a) May 2023</p> <p>b) May 2024</p> <p>c) May 2023</p> <p>d) May 2025 (after revised curriculum is implemented)</p>
<p>Program changes? No</p>

Recommendation 6: Review institutional objective concerning professional master’s program (scholarly project).
<p>Unit response:</p> <p>6.1 Take stock of this component with the entire student body.</p> <p>6.2 Closely monitor the work being done by the Vice-Provost, Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.</p> <p>Scholarly projects are currently under review. We will be taking into account the issues reported during the review process, and consulting with the Vice-Provost, Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.</p>
<p>Decanal response:</p> <p>6.1 Take stock of this component with the entire student body.</p> <p>6.2 Closely monitor the work being done by the Vice-Provost, Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.</p> <p>Accreditation standard 9.21 for occupational therapy programs in Ontario stipulates that students must undertake research/scholarly projects, i.e., take part in research or its dissemination (e.g., through posters, systematic reviews, assessment plans). We will be supporting the program in the review of the parameters and the type of research work to be completed by students in order to meet the requirements of standard 9.21, taking into account discussions at uOttawa on institutional learning objectives in the area of training for scientific research.</p>
Priority *: 3
<p>Actions to be undertaken:</p> <p>a) Take stock of methods used in other occupational therapy programs in Canada.</p> <p>b) Discuss scholarly project methods and objectives.</p> <p>c) Implement the new process.</p>
<p>Assigned to:</p> <p>a) Curriculum Committee</p> <p>b) Program Assembly retreat</p> <p>c) Program Director</p>
<p>Timeline:</p> <p>a) December 2023</p> <p>b) December 2023</p> <p>c) September 2024</p>
Program changes? Possible change to description for ERG 6755.

* Priority level: 1. URGENT – IMMEDIATE ACTION REQUIRED 2. IMPORTANT – ACTION REQUIRED WITHIN 18 MONTHS (MAXIMUM) 3. ADVISED: ACTIONS SHOULD BE DEVELOPED AND DISCUSSED, AND BE IMPLEMENTED BY MID-CYCLE (WITHIN FOUR YEARS).