

2026

Certification and Education Standards:

A Crosswalk Analysis and Summary

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NBCOT[®] National Board
for Certification in
Occupational Therapy

Introduction

The mission of the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy NBCOT® (NBCOT) is to protect the public through the validation of essential competencies for effective and safe occupational therapy (OT) practice. NBCOT's initial certification exams provide independent verification that an individual has demonstrated entry-level competence for OT practice.

The Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE®) is the agency responsible for establishing, approving, and administering educational standards to evaluate OT and occupational therapy assistant (OTA) educational programs (Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education, n.d.).

NBCOT and ACOTE are separate, unrelated entities that serve their own distinct purposes. Each entity has publicly available resources. The NBCOT Exam Content Outlines are based on studies of entry-level practice that identify the tasks performed by entry-level OT professionals and the knowledge required to perform those tasks. These outlines ground the certification exams in evidence of actual entry-level practice, supporting the validity of the exams as an independent measure of the knowledge required for competent entry-level practice.

The ACOTE Standards and Interpretive Guide provides the required elements for educational programs to prepare students to become entry-level occupational therapists and therapy assistants. The Standards have four sections: Section A covers general program requirements and defines how programs operate; Sections B, C, and D are written as expected student outcomes and focus on content requirements, fieldwork education, and baccalaureate project requirements, respectively.

NBCOT completed a Crosswalk review to identify areas of alignment between the 2023 ACOTE Standards, Section B—essentially the didactic component of the curriculum—and the 2022 NBCOT COTA Examination Content Outline. At their sole discretion, educators may consider using this crosswalk summary when completing curriculum planning and ongoing program review.

Using this resource alone or with other resources does not guarantee a graduate's passing score on the certification exam.

Method

A crosswalk analysis was conducted to examine alignment between the competencies defined at the task level of the [2022 NBCOT COTA Examination Content Outline](#) (National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy, 2023) and Section B content requirements of the [2023 ACOTE Standards and Interpretive Guide](#) (Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education, 2023) for OTA baccalaureate- and associate-degree-level educational programs. This process involved a mapping exercise to identify areas of congruence and highlight gaps between the two documents. Acknowledging that the terminology, order, and sequencing of statements differ across the two documents, some interpretation was necessary to align the content.

Summary of Results

All task statements in the NBCOT COTA Exam Content Outline are reflected in the ACOTE Section B Standards. However, given the distinct missions that drive both entities, it is logical to expect some minor differences between the respective standards documents. Table A lists the areas of alignment and Table B lists the few ACOTE Standards that do not appear in the NBCOT anchor document.

Table A: Areas of Alignment Between the 2022 NBCOT COTA Exam Content Outline Task Statements and the 2023 ACOTE Section B Standards for the Occupational Therapy Assistant

NBCOT COTA Exam Content Outline	ACOTE Section B Standard(s) for the Occupational Therapy Assistant
<p>Domain 1: Collaborate and Gather Information Under the supervision of the OTR, acquire information on an ongoing basis regarding factors that influence occupational performance.</p>	
<p>Task 1 Recognize the influence of development and lived experience; body functions and body structures; values, beliefs, and spirituality; and identity on occupational performance.</p>	B.1.1., B.1.2., B.1.3., B.2.3., B.2.6.
<p>Task 2 Acquire information about a client’s functional skills, roles, prioritized needs and wants, and performance context to inform the development of and updates to an occupational profile.</p>	B.2.3., B.3.2., B.3.3.
<p>Task 3 Perform an activity analysis to determine the influence of task demands, current conditions, performance skills, and context on occupation.</p>	B.2.3., B.2.7.
<p>Task 4 Collaborate with the client, the client’s relevant others, occupational therapy colleagues, and other professionals using a client-centered approach and therapeutic use of self to provide quality occupational therapy services.</p>	B.3.1., B.3.5., B.3.10., B.3.17., B.3.19., B.3.21., B.3.22., B.4.2., B.4.6.
<p>Task 5 Monitor the intervention plan, approach, context, and goals on an ongoing basis, in collaboration with the OTR, using clinical reasoning.</p>	B.2.8., B.3.2., B.3.5., B.3.7.

<p>Domain 2: Select and Implement Interventions</p> <p>Implement interventions, under the supervision of the OTR, in accordance with the intervention plan and level of service competence to support client participation in areas of occupation throughout the occupational therapy process.</p>	
<p>Task 1</p> <p>Incorporate preparatory techniques, activities, and modalities as an adjunct to interventions to promote healing and enhance engagement in occupation-based activities</p>	<p>B.2.1., B.2.8., B.3.6., B.3.8., B.3.14.</p>
<p>Task 2</p> <p>Implement occupation-based strategies to support participation in activities of daily living (ADL), instrumental activities of daily living (IADL), health management, rest and sleep, education, work, play, leisure, and social participation across the life span.</p>	<p>B.3.6., B.3.8., B.3.9., B.3.12., B.3.13.</p>
<p>Task 3</p> <p>Implement interventions for improving sensory, motor, neurological, and physiological status, considering client condition and current stage of recovery, to support occupational performance.</p>	<p>B.3.6., B.3.8.</p>
<p>Task 4</p> <p>Select, fabricate, and modify orthotic devices, and provide training in the use of orthotic and prosthetic devices in order to support functional outcomes.</p>	<p>B.3.16.</p>
<p>Task 5</p> <p>Integrate assistive technology options, adaptive devices, mobility aids, and other durable medical equipment into the intervention to enable participation in occupation.</p>	<p>B.3.11., B.3.12., B.3.15.</p>
<p>Task 6</p> <p>Implement environmental modifications, while considering accessibility guidelines, standards, and legislation, to support participation in occupation consistent with client needs and status, task demands, and context.</p>	<p>B.3.8.</p>

<p>Domain 3: Uphold Professional Standards and Responsibilities</p> <p>Uphold professional standards and responsibilities by achieving service competence and applying evidence-based interventions to promote quality in practice.</p>	
<p>Task 1</p> <p>Employ evidence-based strategies and approaches to provide safe, effective, and efficient services relevant to individuals, groups, and populations.</p>	<p>B.2.1., B.2.5., B.3.20., B.4.7., B.4.8., B.5.1., B.5.3.</p>
<p>Task 2</p> <p>Incorporate risk management techniques at the individual and practice-setting levels to protect clients, self, staff, and others from injury or harm.</p>	<p>B.2.8., B.2.9.</p>
<p>Task 3</p> <p>Provide occupational therapy services in accordance with laws, regulations, state occupational therapy practice acts, and accreditation guidelines to protect consumers and meet applicable reimbursement requirements related to the service delivery setting.</p>	<p>B.3.18., B.4.3., B.4.4., B.4.5.</p>
<p>Task 4</p> <p>Engage in professional development and competency assessment activities relevant to the job role, practice setting, scope of practice, and professional certification standards.</p>	<p>B.2.9., B.2.10., B.2.11., B.4.9.</p>

Table B: ACOTE Section B Standards Not Reflected in the NBCOT COTA Exam Content Outline Task Statements

Standard	Descriptor
B.2.2.	Apply knowledge of occupational therapy history, philosophical base, theory, and sociopolitical climate and their importance in meeting society’s current and future occupational needs as well as how these factors influence and are influenced by practice.
B.2.4.	Explain to the community of interest (e.g., consumers, potential employers, colleagues, third-party payers, regulatory boards, policymakers, and the public) the distinct nature of occupation and the evidence that occupation supports performance, participation, health, wellness, and well-being.
B.2.12.	Demonstrate the application of principles of instructional design and teaching and learning in content related to occupational therapy which includes at minimum: development of learning objectives; design of material; development of learning assessment; delivery of professional presentation; self-reflection of process.
B.4.1.	Identify and analyze the influence of contextual factors and current federal, state, and local policy issues and structures on the delivery of occupational therapy services for persons, groups, or populations to promote and advocate for policy development and social systems as they relate to the practice of occupational therapy

References

Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education. (n.d.).

About ACOTE. <https://acoteonline.org/about/>

Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education. (2023). 2023 Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE®) standards and interpretive guide.

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National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy. (2023, May 4). 2022 COTA examination content outline.

https://www.nbcot.org/-/media/PDFs/2022_COTA_Content_Outline.pdf

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National Board for Certification
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One Bank Street Suite
300 Gaithersburg, MD 20878
nbcot.org