



COUNCIL OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS REGISTRATION BOARDS
(AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND) INC

INFORMATION LEAFLET

Introduction

This leaflet has been prepared by the Council of Occupational Therapists Registration Boards (Australia and New Zealand) Inc (COTRB) in cooperation with OT AUSTRALIA, the Australian Association of Occupational Therapists. It provides information and guidance for overseas-educated occupational therapists who wish to obtain recognition of their qualifications in Australia. The information given is believed to be accurate at the time of printing, however, requirements for recognition may vary from time to time.

Australia has a federal system of government and is divided into six States and two Territories. As in most countries, the practice of a profession in Australia requires evidence of an appropriate level of education and practical skills. Each Australian State and Territory has separate legislation covering the recognition of occupational therapy qualifications. The steps that you will need to take to obtain recognition as an occupational therapist in Australia are explained below in Entry of Overseas Qualified Occupational Therapists into the Profession in Australia.

If you live overseas and are an occupational therapist and you **intend to migrate** and work in this profession in Australia, you should **first contact** the nearest Australian Embassy, High Commission or Consulate. Information relating to the general skilled migration program, including requirements for assessment of skills and qualifications, is available in the *General Skilled Migration* booklet. This can be purchased from the nearest Australian Embassy, High Commission or Consulate.

If you are already in Australia but need a skills assessment to support an application to **change your immigration status**, you should seek the advice of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) in your State or Territory.

If you live in Australia and hold occupational therapy qualifications gained overseas you may, if you wish, apply to the Council of Occupational Therapists Registration Boards (Australia and New Zealand) Inc (COTRB) for recognition of your qualifications in Australia.

Occupational Therapy in Australia

Occupational therapists in Australia work with people who are affected by developmental delay, ageing, injury, and physical, psychological or social disability. Occupational therapists' responsibilities include primary health care, health promotion and education, counselling, services for people with special needs, therapeutic device prescription and fitting, maintaining client records and liaising with other members of an inter-disciplinary team. Their work can assist diagnosis, restore physical, psychological and mental functions, help convalescence and work capacity, promote social adjustment and integration, test recovery and prevent disability.

Professional practice occurs in a wide variety of settings, including hospitals, nursing homes, community centres and corrective institutions. Private practice opportunities are expanding rapidly, and there is an increased demand for therapists to work in positions outside of government.

To become an occupational therapist in Australia, a person must first meet the entry requirements of one of the Australian institutions offering occupational therapy courses, and then complete the course requirements. All occupational therapy schools have to meet the standards of the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT).

The Australian institutions that offer entry-level occupational therapy courses are:

- Charles Sturt University (New South Wales)
- University of Sydney (New South Wales)
- University of Newcastle (New South Wales)
- University of Western Sydney, Macarthur (New South Wales)
- La Trobe University (Victoria)
- University of Queensland (Queensland)
- James Cook University (Queensland)
- Curtin University of Technology (Western Australia)
- University of South Australia (South Australia)

The qualifications from these institutions satisfy the formal requirement for registration, where it exists, or for practice, where there is no registration. These qualifications also satisfy the eligibility requirements for membership of OT AUSTRALIA.

Entry of Overseas Educated Occupational Therapists into the Profession in Australia

At present, occupational therapists must be registered to practise in Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory. Registration is through the local registration board. If you hold overseas qualifications, you will need to apply for recognition of your qualifications by the Council of Occupational Therapists Registration Boards (Australia and New Zealand) Inc. (COTRB) to enable you to become eligible for limited/conditional registration.

Registration is not required in Tasmania, New South Wales, Victoria or the Australian Capital Territory. However, if you want to work as an occupational therapist in a government-funded agency, for example, a public hospital or a community health centre, you are usually expected to have qualifications acceptable to OT AUSTRALIA. OT AUSTRALIA is the professional association for occupational therapists in Australia. Initial membership of OT AUSTRALIA requires recognition of your qualifications by COTRB.

How to Apply

If you **intend to migrate** to Australia, you should first contact your nearest Australian Embassy, Consulate or High Commission (overseas post) for information about migration processes and requirements for assessment of your qualifications. If you intend to migrate in a skilled migration category, information relevant to you is available in the *General Skilled Migration* booklet which can be purchased from the nearest Embassy, Consulate, or High Commission or, in Australia, from the nearest office of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC). It is essential that you read this booklet carefully before proceeding with your skills and qualifications assessment.

To migrate to Australia under the General Skilled Migration categories, you must satisfy certain basic requirements before you apply to migrate.

One of the basic requirements is to nominate an occupation from the "Skilled Occupations List" which fits your skills and qualification, and have your skills and qualifications assessed by the relevant assessing authority. You can find the "Skilled Occupations List" in the *General Skilled Migration* booklet.

If your nominated occupation is "occupational therapist", you will be required to pursue recognition of your qualifications with COTRB. Note that under current migration procedures for applicants in the skilled migration category, you are required to have your qualifications assessed by COTRB even if you obtained those qualifications from an Australian institution.

If you are already in Australia but need a skills assessment to support an application to **change your immigration status**, you should seek the advice of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) in your State or Territory.

If you **live or have permission to work in Australia** and hold qualifications in occupational therapy gained overseas, you may apply to the Council of Occupational Therapists Registration Boards (COTRB) for recognition of your qualifications in Australia.

Application forms for the recognition of occupational therapy qualifications in Australia are available from COTRB at:

Council of Occupational Therapists Registration Boards (Aust & NZ) Inc

Postal: PO Box 229
Torrensville Plaza SA 5031
AUSTRALIA

Telephone: 61 8 8443 9375

Facsimile: 61 8 8443 9550

Email: cotrb@sboards.com.au

Website: <http://www.cotrb.sboards.com.au>

Please note that COTRB does not provide information on how to migrate or on the allocation of points under the skilled migration program: for this information you need to contact the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) or your nearest Australian Embassy, High Commission or Consulate.

Procedures for Assessment and Recognition of Overseas Qualifications in Occupational Therapy

The Council of Occupational Therapists Registration Boards (Australia and New Zealand) Inc (COTRB) is the body responsible for assessing occupational therapy qualifications for recognition in Australia.

The Overseas Qualifications Assessment Committee (OQAC) of COTRB is responsible for the administration of the assessment procedures and will liaise with Registration Boards, OT AUSTRALIA and others as required.

The OQAC of COTRB assesses your eligibility by checking that you are recognised as an occupational therapist in your country of origin or education, and that your professional education is of a standard that would adequately prepare you for practice in Australia.

The COTRB assessment is valid for a period of five (5) years from the date of issue of the Assessment Letter.

Assessment Criteria

Stage I – Desk Top

You must satisfy the following minimum criteria to be eligible for recognition by COTRB:

(a) Qualifications

Have completed a World Federation of Occupational Therapy (WFOT) *currently approved* (at time of graduation) tertiary level education program leading to an award in occupational therapy, that is comparable to an Australian Bachelor degree (as per the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (AEI-NOOSR) Country Education Profiles).

“*Currently approved*” is taken to mean those courses listed on the WFOT website under “Programs & Schools” which at the time of graduation:

Prior to 2002:

Fall within 5 years after the year last reviewed by the National Association

From 2002:

Fall within 5 years (for 3 year courses) of the year last reviewed by the National Association

Fall within 7 years (for 4 year courses) of the year last reviewed by the National Association

The WFOT approval referred to above must be in place at the time of graduation and cannot be considered retrospectively. Therefore, if your institution and program receive WFOT approval after the time of your graduation, this will not be considered sufficient to meet the criteria for assessment.

(b) English

(i) *English Language Proficiency Test*

All occupational therapists who are applying for skilled migration or practice in Australia must prove English Language Proficiency by completing either the IELTS or the OET and achieving the results outlined below.

These results must have been obtained within two (2) years prior to applying for assessment.

- International English Language Testing System (IELTS) examination (Academic Module) and achieve a minimum score of seven (7) in each of the four components (Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking)
- Occupational English Test (OET) and achieve an overall pass with grades A or B only in each of the four components.

(ii) *Waiver of English Language Proficiency Test*

The English Language Proficiency Test is waived where applicants have met the following educational requirements for English language.

1. Completed occupational therapy education program in the United States of America, the United Kingdom, New Zealand or Ireland, leading to registration/licensure in those countries (recognition by the Minister for Health & Children in Ireland).

OR

2. Completed occupational therapy program in Canada and gained registration/licensure in Canada through an examination that was in English.

OR

3. Completed occupational therapy program in South Africa and gained registration/licensure in South Africa through education that was conducted in English.

OR

4. Completed a degree in Australia (on-shore) for at least 4 semesters, 2 years full time study, within the last two years prior to application.

Please note that evidence of English is required for points 2 and 3. This evidence is usually included on the transcript or in a letter from the training institution.

If you do not meet the above criteria, you will need to complete an English Language Proficiency Test (either IELTS or OET only).

Please Note: The Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) may require occupational therapists to undertake an English Language Proficiency Test even where COTRB has waived this requirement. Please contact DIAC for further information.

Desk Top Assessment application forms and guidelines are available on request or from the website under “Assessment Process – Stage I Desk Top Audit – How to Apply”.

Some persons may be eligible to apply for a Modified Desk Top Assessment (refer Modified Desk Top Assessment Criteria).

Stage II – Practice Audit

After successfully completing the Stage I Desk Top Assessment and arriving in Australia you will also be required to undertake a practice audit once you have secured paid employment or self-employment as an occupational therapist in Australia. The Overseas Qualifications Assessment Committee (OQAC) of COTRB will administer both the assessment of qualifications and the practice audit procedures.

On successful completion of the practice audit you will be issued with a Certificate of Practical Completion by COTRB. This must be presented to the relevant registration board before full registration is granted or to OT Australia for continuing membership.

Practice Audit application forms and guidelines are available on request or from the website under “Assessment Process – Stage II Practice Audit – How to Apply”.

Some persons may be exempt from undertaking the practice audit (refer Modified Desk Top Assessment Criteria).

Educational Assessment

Your educational qualifications will be assessed in terms of occupational education as well as the general comparability of your educational qualifications to Australian educational standards. The minimum requirement for occupational education is completion of a tertiary level education program in occupational therapy approved by WFOT. The general comparability of your educational qualifications to Australian educational standards will be based on the guidelines published in the AEI-NOOSR Country Education Profiles for the country concerned. To be consistent with the educational standard of occupational therapy education in Australia, the minimum requirement for general educational qualifications is that they are comparable to an Australian Bachelor degree.

AEI-NOOSR Country Education Profiles have been published for over 100 countries. If your qualifications and the awarding institution are not listed or there is no Profile for the relevant country, an individual assessment by AEI-NOOSR will be required. In this event, you will be notified. You may also be asked to provide further information and to pay an additional fee.

Importance of English

Competence in verbal, written and scientific use of the English language is essential to the practice of occupational therapy in Australia. Please refer to information on pages 5 and 6 of this document which explain how you can demonstrate your English language proficiency.

The Occupational English Test (OET) assesses reading, writing, speaking and listening skills and is profession specific. The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) also assesses reading, writing, speaking and listening skills, but is not profession specific.

If you want further information about either of these English language tests please contact:

The OET Centre

GPO Box 372

MELBOURNE VIC 3001

Tel: 61 3 9825 3800

Fax: 61 3 9825 3899

E-mail: public enquiry form available under "Contact Us" on the website below

Website: <http://www.occupationalenglishtest.org>

IELTS Australia

GPO Box 2006

CANBERRA ACT 2601

Tel: 61 2 6285 8222

Fax: 61 2 6285 3233

E-mail: ielts@idp.edu.au

Website: <http://www.ielts.org>

To obtain information about English language learning programs in Australia you should contact:

- Centrelink;
- Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) providers;
- Local offices of Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA);
- Technical and Further Education (TAFE) colleges; or
- Migrant Resource Centres.

The local Australian telephone directory will provide details of addresses and telephone numbers for these agencies.

In addition, there is a national Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) which provides telephone-interpreting assistance for people who have difficulty in communicating in English. This service can be reached by telephoning 131 450 (within Australia).

Fees

The fee for assessment of overseas occupational therapy qualifications for recognition in Australia and the assessment of Australian trained overseas applicants who seek to migrate to Australia appear in the Fee Schedule.

The fee for assessment of qualifications must be sent with your application form and made payable to COTRB in Australian dollars by one of the following methods:

- A bank cheque drawn by a bank outside Australia that has bank clearance arrangements with an Australian bank;
- A foreign draft on an Australian bank;
- A money order issued by Australia Post;
- A bank cheque drawn by an Australian bank; or
- A personal cheque drawn on an Australian bank account.

Payment of fees for the educational assessment if required, and English language assessment, if applicable, must be discussed with the appropriate body.

A fee will also apply for the practice audit during your first year of practice as an OT in Australia.

Certification

If your qualifications are assessed as suitable for recognition in Australia, you will receive an official letter from COTRB that entitles you to apply to migrate to Australia under the General Skilled Migration category of occupational therapist.

The official letter also entitles you to apply for registration in relevant Australian States and Territories and/or to apply for membership of OT AUSTRALIA. On receipt of your application, the registration boards will grant conditional registration and will require a period of audited practice during your first year of practice in Australia. On successful completion of the practice audit you will be issued with a Certificate of Practical Completion by COTRB. This must be presented to the relevant registration board before full registration is granted and/or to OT AUSTRALIA for renewal of membership.

Membership of OT AUSTRALIA is conditional upon eligibility to practice in all states and territories as would occur when the requirements for registration are met in any one of the relevant states or territories.

OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION

Professional Organisations

- OT AUSTRALIA – The Australian Association of Occupational Therapists Inc. is the national professional body for occupational therapists. Its national office is in Victoria but affiliated associations can be found in each State and Territory. (Contact details are available from the national office).

OT AUSTRALIA provides:

- A Code of Ethics and deals with ethical and standards issues
- Professional representation on behalf of the profession
- Professional education events and other activities to maintain or extend competencies
- A professional indemnity insurance scheme for members
- A scientific journal and members' newsletter
- Recognition of those OTs who maintain the currency of their skills and knowledge.

OT AUSTRALIA - Australian Association of Occupational Therapists Inc.

National Office
6/340 Gore Street
FITZROY VIC 3065

Tel: 61 3 9415 2900
Fax: 61 3 9416 1421
E-mail: info@ausot.com.au
Website: www.ausot.com.au

Australian and New Zealand Registration Boards

Occupational therapists must be registered to practise in Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory. Under Trans Tasman Mutual Recognition you will also be eligible for registration in New Zealand. Registration is through the local registration board.

Occupational Therapists Board of Queensland

GPO Box 2438
Brisbane QLD 4001
Australia

Tel: 61 7 3225 2532
Fax: 61 7 3225 2527
E-mail: occupationaltherapy@healthregboards.qld.gov.au
Website: www.occuptherapyboard.qld.gov.au

Occupational Therapy Board of South Australia

PO Box 229
Torrensville Plaza SA 5031
Australia

Tel: 61 8 8443 9669
Fax: 61 8 8443 9550
E-mail: otrb@sboards.com.au
Website: www.otrb.sboards.com.au

Occupational Therapists Registration Board of Western Australia

PO Box 959
South Perth WA 6951
Australia

Tel: 61 8 9368 2655
Fax: 61 8 9368 2677
Email: enquiries@otbwa.com.au
Website: www.otbwa.com.au

Northern Territory Occupational Therapists Registration Board

GPO Box 4221
Darwin NT 0801
Australia

Tel: 61 8 8999 4157
Fax: 61 8 8999 4196
E-mail: healthprofessions.ths@nt.gov.au

Occupational Therapy Board of New Zealand

PO Box 10202
Wellington
New Zealand

Tel: 64 4 918 4740
Fax: 64 4 918 4746
E-mail: enquiries@otboard.org.nz
Website: www.otboard.org.nz

National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (AEI-NOOSR)

AEI-NOOSR is part of the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). AEI-NOOSR works together with the Australian States and Territories and professional bodies to improve recognition procedures in Australia for the overseas educated.

Contacting AEI-NOOSR

AEI-NOOSR offers a general information and referral service on overseas skills recognition which can be accessed by telephoning **1300 363 079** (within Australia) between the hours of 9am – 12pm and 1.30 – 4.30pm (Eastern Standard Time), Monday to Friday.

The postal address for inquiries is:

National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (AEI-NOOSR)

GPO Box 1407
Canberra ACT 2601
Australia

AEI-NOOSR's e-mail address is: Educational.Noosr@deewr.gov.au

Information about the recognition of overseas skills and qualifications in Australia is also available on the AEI-NOOSR website at <http://aei.dest.gov.au/AEI/QualificationsRecognition/default.htm>

Please note that AEI-NOOSR does not provide information on how to migrate or on the allocation of points under the skilled migration program: for this information you need to contact the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) or your nearest Australian Embassy, High Commission or Consulate.

FEE-HELP - Loans for Bridging Courses

Eligible overseas-trained professionals who are citizens or permanent residents of Australia may apply for a FEE-HELP loan to pay their tuition fees for a bridging course for overseas-trained professionals that enables them to meet formal recognition requirements of their profession in Australia. This assistance replaces the Bridging for Overseas-Trained Professionals Loan Scheme (BOTPLS) from 1 January 2005.

To be eligible for a FEE-HELP loan the proposed study must:

- be less than twelve months of full-time study in duration;
- meet the requirements of the relevant professional body for recognition of the applicant's professional qualifications in Australia; and
- **not** lead to a higher education award.

FEE-HELP is available for bridging courses beginning on or after 1 January 2005 to assist eligible students to pay their tuition fees. Students repay the loan through the taxation system when their income reaches the minimum threshold for compulsory repayment.

To be eligible for a FEE-HELP loan a person must:

- be a permanent resident or citizen of Australia;
- hold an overseas qualification in a profession that is regulated or self-regulated in Australia; and
- have had their qualifications assessed by the relevant assessing authority which has provided an assessment statement indicating that the bridging training is **required** before they can practise their profession in Australia.

For more information about the administration of FEE-HELP please visit the website:

<http://www.goingtouni.gov.au/>

For information about FEE-HELP which is specific to overseas-trained professionals please visit the website:

<http://aei.dest.gov.au/AEI/QualificationsRecognition/RecognisingProfessionalQualifications/SupportForProfessionalRecognition/default.htm>

If you have read the available information but still have questions and would like to speak to a FEE-HELP contact officer, please call the FEE-HELP hotline on **1800 020 108**.

Financial Assistance for Overseas-Trained Occupational Therapists

The Department of Education, Science and Training seeks to help overseas-trained professionals who are Australian citizens or permanent residents living in Australia to obtain recognition of their qualifications in Australia.

The AEI-NOOSR **Assessment Subsidy for Overseas Trained professionals (ASDOT)** program covers fees for assessments of occupational therapists leading to full and unconditional registration or membership of the professional association.

For further information please read the AEI-NOOSR ASDOT Information Sheet available from the following website:

http://aei.dest.gov.au/AEI/QualificationsRecognition/RecognisingProfessionalQualifications/SupportForProfessionalRecognition/ASDOT_pdf.pdf