

CURRENCY (Hours of Practice)

Why do I need to report hours of practice?

Recent practice is one of the factors that allows an occupational therapist to maintain current practice skills. The requirement can be found in the *OT Regulation 5(2)*.

How many hours of practice are needed for registration?

You must have worked 600 hours in the 3 years immediately prior to the date that apply for professional eligibility (Phase 2 of the registration process), unless you have

- graduated from an OT education program within the past 12 months or
- completed a re-entry program within the past 12 months.

When do I need to provide hours of practice?

You will be asked to report your hours of practice when you apply for registration and each year after that when you apply for renewal of registration. You must also report hours of practice if you apply to convert your registration from the Non-Practising Register to the Practising Register.

Hours of practice are considered to be worked hours. Worked hours include: paid coffee break time, paid overtime hours, paid call back hours, paid or unpaid education leave, and worked statutory holiday hours.

Worked hours exclude: paid leave such as vacation leave and unworked statutory holidays, lunch break time, stand by or on-call hours, unpaid leave of absence, and extended sick leave.

How do I provide proof of hours of practice?

When you first apply for registration, you must ask each of your employers in the past three years to send documentation to COTM that states that you were employed as an occupational therapist and specifies the number of hours that you worked. For annual renewal of registration, you will be asked to report the number of hours you have worked in the past year.

Can I count hours of volunteer work towards the currency requirement?

Not for initial registration, but you may be able to use volunteer hours to meet the currency requirement for annual renewal of registration. To be eligible, volunteer hours must

- be pre-approved by COTM;
- clearly be the practice of occupational therapy; and
- be recognized as such by both the employer (supervisor) and the clients.

A formal log of volunteer hours, signed by the employer/supervisor, must be submitted to COTM. See "Using Volunteer Hours Towards the Currency Requirement Fact Sheet" for more information.

If I am doing post-graduate studies, can I remain current without working?

If your course of study is directly related to occupational therapy, you will be able to request that COTM recognize the hours of study as currency hours. To be eligible to count the hours, you must be on the COTM Register of Practising Members while you are completing your education. Contact COTM to determine if your course of study can be counted and for details on how to calculate hours. See "Using Education Hours Towards the Currency Requirement Fact Sheet" for more information.

What happens if I have not worked 600 hours in the past 3 years?

You must complete a re-entry program that will allow you to demonstrate that you have the essential competencies of practice. This will involve a period of supervised practice, and may also involve refresher education and/or completion of the National Occupational Therapy Certification Examination (NOTCE). The duration of the supervised practice period is based on the length of time you have been away from practice:

- 150 hrs (4 weeks) if there have been some practice hours in the past 3 years
- 300 hrs (8 weeks) if there have been no practice hours in the past 3 years.
- 450 hrs (12 weeks) if there have been no practice hours in the past 7 years.
- 600 hrs (16 weeks) + exam if there have been no practice hours in the past 10 years.

Supervised practice can be completed on a full time or part time basis (however not less than half-time), and must be completed in the time frame established by COTM.

I am a recent graduate (or recently joined COTM). How will you evaluate my currency?

All members of COTM are required to report their hours of practice at the time of renewal. Recent graduates or members who have recently completed re-entry have until June 1st following their first full year of COTM registration* to meet the COTM currency requirement.

*Recent graduates will be considered to have a full year of registration with COTM if they register between June 1 and November 30. Those who register after November 30 will not be required to meet the currency requirement at their first renewal, but will need to meet the requirement when they renew the following year.

I recently completed the ACOTRO SEAS process. How will you evaluate my currency?

If you have recently established educational equivalency through successfully completing the Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy Regulatory Organizations (ACOTRO) SEAS process, COTM will take into consideration the impact of the time devoted to the SEAS process when evaluating your previous practice hours. You still require evidence of 600 hours of occupational therapy practice in the three years prior to your application for COTM registration. If necessary, COTM may add up to one year to the three year period in order to take into account that you were engaged in the SEAS process.

Is there a consequence for not commencing practice soon after graduating from my OT program?

Yes, it is important that academic learning be integrated by using this knowledge in practice. Applicants who do not begin practice within 12 months of graduation (convocation) are at risk of having more difficulty integrating their knowledge. An additional 4 weeks of supervised practice is required of all applicants who are unable to demonstrate currency and who have not had any practice hours within 12 months of convocation.

I am only a few hours short of the 600 hour requirement. Is there any alternative to doing re-entry?

Not for initial registration, but for renewal of registration, there may be. If it seems likely that you will be able to work enough hours to make up for the shortage in the first three months of the new registration year, you can apply to COTM for special consideration. It may be possible for you to use some or all of the hours worked in the first three months of the new registration year towards the shortfall. These hours cannot be counted twice and therefore cannot be reported on the following year's renewal application.

I am enrolled in the Occupational Therapy Examination and Practice Preparation project (OTepp) at McMaster University. Can I use the supervised practicum hours that are part of this program towards my currency requirement?

Maybe. If you are required to complete 12 or 16 weeks of supervised practice for re-entry, and you have successfully completed the OTepp program including the supervised practicum module, credit will be given for the supervised practice on 2:1 ratio. For example, two OTepp practicum hours will be counted as 1 hour towards the COTM re-entry requirement.

Has the currency requirement changed?

The currency requirement changed in the spring of 2015 from 700 hours to 600 hours.

For more information, please contact COTM at (204) 957-1214 or by email at registration@cotm.ca

This publication is provided for general information. For more specific information see
The Essential Competencies for Occupational Therapists in Canada,
The COTM Code of Ethics for Occupational Therapists and
The Occupational Therapists Act and Regulation.
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