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# **Occupational Therapist Assistant and Physiotherapist Assistant Program Standard**

*The approved program standard for  
Occupational Therapist Assistant and  
Physiotherapist Assistant program of  
instruction leading to an Ontario College  
Diploma delivered by Ontario Colleges of  
Applied Arts and Technology (MTCU funding  
code 51502)*

**Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities  
June 2008**

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# Table of Contents

<b>I.</b>	<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
	Development of System-Wide Program Standards .....	1
	Program Standards .....	1
	The Expression of Program Standards as Vocational Learning Outcomes .....	2
	The Presentation of the Vocational Learning Outcomes .....	2
	The Development of a Program Standard.....	2
	Updating the Program Standard.....	3
<b>II.</b>	<b>Vocational Standard</b> .....	4
	Preamble .....	4 - 5
	Synopsis of the Vocational Learning Outcomes.....	6
	The Vocational Learning Outcomes .....	7 - 17
	Glossary .....	18 - 19
<b>III.</b>	<b>Essential Employability Skills</b> .....	20
	Context.....	20
	Skill Categories.....	20
	Application and Implementation .....	21 - 22
<b>IV.</b>	<b>General Education Requirement</b> .....	23
	Requirement.....	23
	Purpose.....	23
	Themes .....	24 - 26

# I. Introduction

*This document is the Program Standard for the Occupational Therapist Assistant and Physiotherapist Assistant program of instruction leading to an Ontario College Diploma delivered by Ontario colleges of applied arts and technology (MTCU funding code 51502).*

## Development of System-Wide Program Standards

In 1993, the Government of Ontario initiated program standards development with the objectives of bringing a greater degree of consistency to college programming offered across the province, broadening the focus of college programs to ensure graduates have the skills to be flexible and to continue to learn and adapt, and providing public accountability for the quality and relevance of college programs.

The Program Standards and Evaluation Unit of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities has responsibility for the development, review, and approval of system-wide standards for programs of instruction at Ontario colleges of applied arts and technology.

## Program Standards

Program standards apply to all similar programs of instruction offered by colleges across the province. Each program standard for a postsecondary program includes the following elements:

- **Vocational standard** (the vocationally specific learning outcomes which apply to the program of instruction in question),
- **Essential employability skills** (the essential employability skills learning outcomes which apply to all programs of instruction); and
- **General education requirement** (the requirement for general education in postsecondary programs of instruction).

Collectively, these elements outline the essential skills and knowledge that a student must reliably demonstrate in order to graduate from the program.

Individual colleges of applied arts and technology offering the program of instruction determine the specific program structure, delivery methods, and other curriculum matters to be used in assisting students to achieve the outcomes articulated in the standard. Individual colleges also determine whether additional local learning outcomes will be required to reflect specific local needs and/or interests.

## The Expression of Program Standards as Vocational Learning Outcomes

Vocational learning outcomes represent culminating demonstrations of learning and achievement. They are not simply a listing of discrete skills, nor broad statements of knowledge and comprehension. In addition, vocational learning outcomes are interrelated and cannot be viewed in isolation of one another. As such, they should be viewed as a comprehensive whole. They describe performances that demonstrate that significant integrated learning by graduates of the program has been achieved and verified.

Expressing standards as vocational learning outcomes ensures consistency in the outcomes for program graduates, while leaving to the discretion of individual colleges curriculum matters such as the specific program structure and delivery methods.

## The Presentation of the Vocational Learning Outcomes

The **vocational learning outcome** statements set out the culminating demonstration of learning and achievement that the student must reliably demonstrate before graduation.

The **elements of the performance** for each outcome define and clarify the level and quality of performance necessary to meet the requirements of the vocational learning outcome. However, it is the performance of the vocational learning outcome itself on which students are evaluated. The elements of performance are indicators of the means by which the student may proceed to satisfactory performance of the vocational learning outcome. The elements of performance do not stand alone but rather in reference to the vocational learning outcome of which they form a part.

## The Development of a Program Standard

In establishing the standards development initiative, the Government determined that all postsecondary programs of instruction should include vocational skills coupled with a broader set of essential skills. This combination is considered critical to ensuring that college graduates have the skills required to be successful both upon graduation from the college program and throughout their working and personal lives.

A program standard is developed through a broad consultation process involving a range of stakeholders with a direct interest in the program area, including employers, professional associations, universities, secondary schools, and program graduates working in the field, in addition to students, faculty, and administrators at the colleges themselves. It represents a consensus of participating stakeholders on the essential learning that all program graduates should have achieved.

## Updating the Program Standard

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities will undertake regular reviews of the vocational learning outcomes for this program to ensure that the Occupational Therapist Assistant and Physiotherapist Assistant Program Standard remains appropriate and relevant to the needs of students and employers across the Province of Ontario. To confirm that this document is the most up-to-date release, contact the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities at the address or telephone number noted on the inside cover page.

## II. Vocational Standard

*All graduates of the Occupational Therapist Assistant and Physiotherapist Assistant program of instruction must have achieved the 11 vocational learning outcomes listed in the following pages, in addition to achieving the essential employability skills learning outcomes and meeting the general education requirement.*

### Preamble

The standard for the Occupational Therapist Assistant (OTA) and Physiotherapist Assistant (PTA) program that is offered at the colleges of applied arts and technology includes a foundation of vocational learning outcomes, essential employability skills, and general education requirements. Graduates, as entry-level workers, have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are necessary to perform their duties as an OTA, and as a PTA. This document relates to both OTA and PTA vocational learning outcomes. Graduates have a strong foundation in relevant principles and theory and in supervised practical experience in OTA and PTA roles. Upon successful completion of the program, graduates will receive an Ontario College Diploma.

Occupational therapist assistants (OTAs) and physiotherapist assistants (PTAs) are health care workers who work under the supervision of and in collaboration with occupational therapists and physiotherapists, respectively. Graduates assist these therapists to teach and enable clients to effectively cope with their limitations in movement, daily functioning, and activities whether temporary or permanent, during and following recovery. As health care team members, OTAs and PTAs work with individuals, families, and groups of varying abilities, and provide support and enable participation in meaningful activities across the lifespan. OTAs and PTAs assist in the implementation of intervention/treatment plans and programs that have been developed by the occupational therapist or physiotherapist. Occupational therapy promotes clients' optimal independent function, with the purpose of enabling individuals to perform self-care, be productive, and to contribute to their environment. Physiotherapy improves and maintains clients' functional independence and physical performance, and promotes fitness, health, and wellness. Both OTAs and PTAs are responsible for the implementation of those activities/exercises that have been assigned to them. Under current legislation, occupational therapists and physiotherapists are legally accountable for the safe, effective, and efficient planning, delivery, and evaluation of the activities/exercises assigned to the OTA and PTA.

Graduates demonstrate interpersonal and communication skills that respect the uniqueness of individuals. They work together with clients, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, and other health care and social service providers to enable clients to meet their own expected goals. Their behaviour is consistent with relevant legislation and the policies and procedures established by the practice setting\*. OTAs and PTAs use judgment in making decisions; behave in an ethical manner; contribute to the development, implementation, and modification of occupational therapy and physiotherapy programs and services; and contribute occupational therapy and physiotherapy concepts and perspectives at health care team meetings. Becoming an OTA and PTA enables an individual to enter a dynamic and challenging career that offers opportunities in a variety of health and community settings. Graduates may find employment within health care facilities, community agencies, and private practices.

\* See Glossary

## **Synopsis of the Vocational Learning Outcomes Occupational Therapist Assistant and Physiotherapist Assistant Program**

*The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to*

- 1. communicate appropriately and effectively, through verbal, nonverbal, written and electronic means, with clients, their families, and significant others\*, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, other health care providers, and others within the role of the therapist assistant\*.**
- 2. participate in the effective functioning of interprofessional health care teams within the role of the therapist assistant\*.**
- 3. establish, develop, maintain, and bring closure to client-centred, therapeutic relationships within the role of the therapist assistant\*.**
- 4. ensure personal safety and contribute to the safety of others within the role of the therapist assistant\*.**
- 5. practice competently in a legal, ethical, and professional manner within the role of the therapist assistant\*.**
- 6. document and complete client records in a thorough, objective, accurate, and nonjudgmental manner within the role of the therapist assistant\*.**
- 7. develop and implement strategies to maintain, improve, and promote professional competence within the role of the therapist assistant\*.**
- 8. perform effectively within the roles and responsibilities of the therapist assistant\* through the application of relevant knowledge of health sciences, psychosociological sciences, and health conditions.**
- 9. perform functions common to both physiotherapy and occupational therapy practices that contribute to the development, implementation and modification of intervention/treatment plans, under the supervision of and in collaboration with the occupational therapist and/or physiotherapist.**
- 10. enable the client's occupational performance\* by contributing to the development, implementation, and modification of intervention/treatment plans, under the supervision of and in collaboration with the occupational therapist.**
- 11. enable the client's optimal physical function by contributing to the development, implementation, and modification of intervention/treatment plans, under the supervision of and in collaboration with the physiotherapist.**

*\* See Glossary*

*Note: The vocational learning outcomes have been numbered as a point of reference; numbering does not imply prioritization, sequencing, nor weighting of significance.*

## The Vocational Learning Outcomes

1. *The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to*

**communicate appropriately and effectively, through verbal, nonverbal, written and electronic means, with clients, their families and significant others\*, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, other health care providers, and others within the role of the therapist assistant\*.**

### Elements of the Performance

- protect confidentiality of all communications including written, verbal, and electronic forms by adhering to government privacy standards, and practice setting\* policies and procedures;
- communicate in a professional and collaborative manner that is accurate, credible, and respectful, and recognizes cultural sensitivities;
- employ and adapt a variety of communication strategies and interpersonal techniques to meet the special needs of the client and groups, as directed by the occupational therapist or physiotherapist;
- respond appropriately and encourage client questions by providing feedback within the scope of the therapist assistant's\* roles and responsibilities;
- refer client's questions to the occupational therapist, physiotherapist, and/or health care team members, as appropriate;
- employ assistive technologies\* (e.g., hearing aids) and make appropriate adaptations to the environment that facilitate effective communications with clients;
- use appropriate technologies including computers, teleconferencing, and video conferencing, to communicate with clients and colleagues, as required within the practice setting\* and in collaboration with the occupational therapist or the physiotherapist;
- speak and write clearly using appropriate terminology and related abbreviations as defined in the practice setting\*;
- provide verbal and written information about client treatment/ intervention sessions to the occupational therapist, physiotherapist, or other health care providers in accordance with relevant laws\*, regulations\*, and policies and procedures of the practice setting\*;
- communicate promptly all significant changes in the clients' health status to the occupational therapist, physiotherapist, or other health care team members;
- ensure that the client, family members, and significant others\* understand those explanations provided by the occupational therapist or physiotherapist that relate to the therapist assistant's\* assigned tasks;
- give clear and understandable instructions and explanations to other health care providers to facilitate the client's optimal physical function and participation in meaningful activities.

\* See Glossary

2. *The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to*

**participate in the effective functioning of interprofessional health care teams within the role of the therapist assistant\*.**

### **Elements of the Performance**

- act interdependently and collaboratively as a health care team member while working within the therapist assistant's\* roles and responsibilities;
- recognize and respect the roles and responsibilities that clients and other health care providers bring to a team that enable clients and their families and significant others\* to work towards expected outcomes;
- contribute to occupational therapy and physiotherapy interventions by providing observations and other relevant information to discussions during health care team meetings;
- apply effective problem-solving and decision-making skills within the therapist assistant's\* roles when participating as a health care team member;
- recognize and respond to situations that require further information and/or further consultation with occupational therapists or physiotherapists and appropriate team members;
- apply knowledge of group dynamics, effective participation, and interpersonal communication to the development and functioning of teams;
- communicate in an ongoing manner with the client, occupational therapist, physiotherapist, and other health care team members;
- contribute to the evaluation of services and programs provided by the health care team to promote the client's optimal health, well-being, life quality, and potential to engage in meaningful activity;
- assist the health care team with continuous quality improvement processes;
- participate effectively with members of a diverse health care team within programs and on committees;
- contribute, as required, to the effective and efficient operation of the practice setting\* by managing resources, purchasing equipment and supplies, and utilizing appropriate software programs.

\* See Glossary

3. *The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to*

**establish, develop, maintain, and bring closure to client-centred, therapeutic relationships within the role of the therapist assistant\*.**

### **Elements of the Performance**

- recognize the influence that attitudes, values, beliefs, and culture of the client and therapist assistant\* have on therapeutic relationships;
- employ a client-centred approach that appreciates the uniqueness of the individual and includes realistic goals that enable participation in meaningful activities;
- establish rapport and build trust with clients by demonstrating a nonjudgmental, empathetic, affirming, respectful, and genuine approach;
- motivate clients and groups by using appropriate techniques;
- recognize and maintain professional boundaries in client-centred relationships;
- apply basic theory and principles of therapeutic relationships and group dynamics when working with clients and groups;
- promote client collaboration and understanding of the treatment/intervention plan by applying principles of teaching-learning and client-centred practice;
- participate in client-centred relationships by using appropriate techniques and processes;
- contribute to the empowerment of clients by encouraging their involvement in the development and description of intervention/treatment goals;
- use appropriate stress reduction and conflict resolution strategies to promote the well-being of the client, under the supervision of and in collaboration with the occupational therapist or physiotherapist.

\* See Glossary

4. *The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to*

**ensure personal safety and contribute to the safety of others within the role of the therapist assistant\*.**

**Elements of the Performance**

- comply with laws\*, regulations\*, and established policies and procedures of the practice setting\* that are relevant to emergency measures such as fire safety, occupational health and safety, the handling and disposal of hazardous wastes, and the prevention of disease transmission;
- report potential safety risks to the appropriate personnel;
- recognize signs of physical and/or emotional stress in clients, self, and others, and modify the contributing factors, where possible, to ensure safety;
- use all assistive technologies\* correctly and safely including those related to client lifting and transferring;
- apply best practices of body mechanics when moving, positioning, seating, ambulating, and transferring clients;
- employ effective teaching strategies for clients and others to ensure client safety when moving, positioning, seating, ambulating, and transferring;
- use safe and appropriate facilitation techniques and proper environment management when implementing physical and occupational-based approaches;
- anticipate and effectively deal with potential safety risks for clients, self, and others by demonstrating sound judgment, problem-solving, and decision-making skills and by communicating, as necessary, with the occupational therapist, physiotherapist, or other team members;
- advocate for staff rights for a safe and nonthreatening working environment;
- contribute to the safe operation and maintenance of equipment, machines, and supplies in accordance with manufacturers' guidelines and the practice setting's\* policies and procedures;
- maintain a safe, clean, orderly, and accessible work environment in keeping with infection control standards;
- monitor the client's condition and adapt the client's plan to ensure safety under the occupational therapist's or physiotherapist's supervision and assignment;
- recognize and manage safety risks related to distress behaviour; e.g., anger or agitation, which a client may exhibit during the course of a therapeutic intervention, under the supervision of and in collaboration with the occupational therapist or physiotherapist.

\* See Glossary

5. *The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to*

**practice competently in a legal, ethical, and professional manner within the role of the therapist assistant\*.**

### **Elements of the Performance**

- know and work within the roles and responsibilities of the therapist assistant\* in a variety of practice settings\*;
- support client advocacy in the practice setting\* and the community as appropriate within the role of the therapist assistant\*;
- be accountable for one's own actions and behave in an ethical manner;
- act responsibly in a self-directed, flexible, and adaptable manner within the therapist assistant\* role;
- identify and communicate to the supervisor when a client's needs exceed the limits of one's knowledge, skill, or judgment;
- seek out the occupational therapist or physiotherapist for guidance and appropriate supervision;
- comply with applicable laws\*, regulations\*, and established policies and procedures of the practice setting\*;
- respect the client's dignity, privacy, and autonomy to make decisions regarding health, well-being, life quality, and occupations\*;
- comply with applicable laws\* and regulations\* relating to the obtainment of a client's informed consent to treatment;
- apply knowledge of the legal frameworks for the regulated professions of physiotherapists and occupational therapists\* to the roles and responsibilities of the therapist assistant\*;
- adapt roles and responsibilities according to new standards in occupational therapy and physiotherapy service delivery;
- display appropriate professional attitudes, behaviours, and credentials.

\* See Glossary

6. *The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to*

**document and complete client records in a thorough, objective, accurate, and nonjudgmental manner within the role of the therapist assistant\*.**

### **Elements of the Performance**

- ensure privacy and confidentiality of all client information including and not limited to reports, files, and records;
- use correct terminology, abbreviations, and symbols as defined by the practice setting\*, when completing documentation;
- maintain accurate, legible, and credible electronic and paper-based records, reports, files, and statistics;
- comply with relevant documentation legislation and adhere to the practice setting's\* established policies and procedures related to documentation;
- contribute to documentation of records as requested by the occupational therapist or physiotherapist;
- document accurately the observations and application parameters determined by the occupational therapist and physiotherapist during the intervention/treatment session;
- use electronic and paper-based methods to document client information for records, reports, and files, in accordance with documentation legislation and the established policies and procedures relevant to the practice setting\*.

\* See Glossary

7. *The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to*

**develop and implement strategies to maintain, improve, and promote professional competence within the role of the therapist assistant\*.**

#### **Elements of the Performance**

- develop a plan for continuing professional education with the support of the occupational therapist, physiotherapist, and other health care personnel;
- apply self-directed learning strategies to seek out resources and opportunities for maintaining and improving one's own competence;
- seek out, select, and act upon constructive feedback from colleagues and from performance evaluations to improve job performance;
- implement practices to promote one's own health and well-being that is based on self-knowledge, self-concept, and self-esteem;
- develop appropriate skills to anticipate and respond effectively to changes in one's environment;
- seek out information on changes in legislation and emerging best practices that affect the role of the therapist assistant.

\* See Glossary

8. *The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to*

**perform effectively within the roles and responsibilities of the therapist assistant\* through the application of relevant knowledge of health sciences, psychosociological sciences, and health conditions.**

### **Elements of the Performance**

- apply knowledge of health sciences and of health conditions across the lifespan when participating in the treatment of client's movement, function, and activity;
- apply knowledge of health and wellness to the recognition of significant changes in the client's health status and report these changes to the occupational therapist, physiotherapist, or other health care team member;
- apply knowledge of physical, psychological-emotional, cognitive-neurological, socio-cultural, and environment dimensions to promote the optimal independent function of clients;
- apply the principles of developmental theory when providing therapeutic services;
- apply the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF)\* model or other relevant models to clinical practice;
- apply the principles of normal and abnormal movement to functional activities such as self-care, postural alignment, seating, transfers, gait, mobility, wheelchair mechanics, and wheelchair propulsion;
- apply knowledge of age, stage of growth and development, and health status when identifying, reporting, and responding to client's alterations in movement and optimal independent function;
- apply knowledge of mental health conditions and recognize their impact on resultant behaviour;
- apply knowledge of ergonomics, energy conservation, and work simplification when contributing to plans for promoting the client's optimal independent function, and carrying out treatment.

\* See Glossary

9. *The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to*

**perform functions common to both physiotherapy and occupational therapy practice that contribute to the development, implementation and modification of intervention/treatment plans, under the supervision of and in collaboration with the occupational therapist and/or physiotherapist.**

**Elements of the Performance**

- use software programs to produce client instructions and other related materials; e.g., exercise programs, energy conservation, assistive devices to assist in the implementation of the intervention/treatment plan, as determined by the occupational therapist or physiotherapist;
- observe, monitor, and report to the occupational therapist or physiotherapist, the client's progress toward expected outcomes as identified in the intervention/treatment plan;
- collect client information in order to contribute to client assessment and/or reassessment;
- recognize and work with factors which may act as barriers or contraindications to optimal independent movement, function, or occupational performance\* and assist the occupational therapist or physiotherapist in the development and implementation of a plan to overcome these barriers;
- manage assigned caseload effectively by employing appropriate communication, organizational, prioritization, and time-management strategies;
- implement the intervention/treatment plan by following established guidelines, policies, and procedures;
- assist in the education and training of clients, caregivers, support groups, and members of the health care team to understand the client's requirements to achieve optimal independent movement, function, and occupational performance\* as outlined in the intervention/treatment plan;
- recognize and apply appropriate strategies and techniques to perform different tasks and activities of daily living\* as identified in the intervention/treatment plan;
- employ effective teaching strategies for clients and others to ensure safety when transferring, lifting, moving, and positioning clients;
- ensure cooperation among those involved when transferring, seating, moving, and positioning clients as identified in the intervention/treatment plan;
- apply a limited number of modalities\*(e.g., superficial thermal and cryotherapy and hydrotherapy), safely and appropriately within the established intervention/treatment plan;
- recognize compensatory mechanisms exhibited by the client and correct these mechanisms, as appropriate, or teach appropriate techniques in consultation with the occupational therapist, or physiotherapist, and the client;
- apply the concepts of problem list, established goals, and intervention/treatment plan within the practice setting\*.

\* See Glossary

**10.** *The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to*

**enable the client's occupational performance\* by contributing to the development, implementation, and modification of intervention/treatment plans, under the supervision of and in collaboration with the occupational therapist.**

**Elements of the Performance**

- assist in the fabrication and modification of orthotics, aids, and other assistive technologies\*;
- contribute to the implementation of various assistive technologies\* including mobility aids and positioning devices as indicated in the intervention/treatment plan;
- employ a variety of therapeutic approaches and activities associated with the promotion of the client's integration into the community, which could include the development of employment skills, social skills, and community mobility skills, in keeping with the intervention/treatment plan;
- contribute to the adaptation of and/or modification of the client's social, cultural, institutional, and physical environments in order to promote occupational performance\*, as outlined in the intervention/treatment plan;
- work with clients and/or caregivers individually and in groups, to implement occupational therapy programs that have been identified in the intervention/treatment plan;
- assist the occupational therapist in the data gathering and planning of adaptations to the client's home, work, and community environments as outlined in the intervention/treatment plan;
- employ principles of ergonomics, energy conservation, and work simplification into the daily routines of the client as identified in the intervention/treatment plan;
- contribute to an occupational analysis to determine the component qualities of the occupation\*, including cognitive, physical, affective, and spiritual dimensions, and assist in its selection and/or adaptation as appropriate;
- enable clients to foster and promote abilities for meaningful occupations\* in the areas of self-care (e.g., basic and instrumental ADLs\*), productivity, and leisure as outlined in the intervention/treatment plan.

\* See Glossary

11. *The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to*

**enable the client's optimal physical function by contributing to the development, implementation, and modification of intervention/treatment plans, under the supervision of and in collaboration with the physiotherapist.**

### **Elements of the Performance**

- assist the physiotherapist with the correct fitting and proper use of orthotics, ambulatory aids, and other assistive technologies\* as identified in the intervention/treatment plan;
- assist the physiotherapist to plan adaptations to client's home, work, and community environments as outlined in the intervention/treatment plan;
- apply knowledge of normal and abnormal movement and gait when transferring, lifting, moving, and positioning clients;
- contribute to the development, implementation, and modification of therapeutic exercise and mobility programs as identified in the intervention/treatment plan;
- apply knowledge of the various types and use of exercise programs for different conditions and disorders as identified in the intervention/treatment plan;
- work with clients and/or caregivers individually and in groups, to implement therapeutic exercise and mobility programs that have been identified in the intervention/treatment plan;
- recognize signs of stress and apply knowledge of contraindications to stop an exercise program, and report this situation to the physiotherapist;
- use knowledge of surface anatomy, physiology, and body landmarks when applying elements of the intervention/treatment plan;
- apply a broad range of modalities\* safely and appropriately within the established intervention/treatment plan.

\* See Glossary

## Glossary

**Assistive technology** – is any device or product that is useful for a person’s enhanced functioning and participation (Scherer, 2001). Assistive devices and products range from low technology devices that are relatively simple to construct and use, such as communication boards and dressing aids, to more complex high technology devices such as powered wheelchairs and myoelectric prostheses. (Miller Polgar, 2002) Assistive technology includes the promotion of environmental access for all persons, including those with disabilities. (CAOT Position Statement Assistive Technology and Occupational Therapy, 2006)<sup>1</sup>.

**Activities of Daily Living (ADLs)** – basic self-care activities that need to be completed on a daily basis; e.g., self-feeding, grooming, bathing, dressing, and toileting.

**Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADLs)** – activities related to independent living and include preparing meals, managing money, shopping, doing housework, and using a telephone.

**International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF)** – a classification of the health components of functioning and disability. The ICF is structured around the following broad components:

- body functions and structure;
- activities (related to tasks and actions by an individual) and participation (involvement in a life situation);
- additional information on severity and environmental factors;
- functioning and disability are viewed as a complex interaction between the health condition of the individual and the contextual factors of the environment as well as personal factors.

**Laws** – relevant laws enacted by the provincial and federal government. Current examples of such law include the Regulated Health Professions Act, Personal Health Information Protection Act, Health Care Consent Act, Occupational Therapy Act, Physiotherapy Act, Public Hospitals Act, and Occupational Health and Safety Act.

**Modality** – a therapeutic intervention employed to promote movement and functioning. The therapist assistant applies a modality under/with the supervision of the occupational therapist or physiotherapist and according to the application parameters and intervention/treatment plan established by the occupational therapist or physiotherapist, and relevant principles, policies, and procedures. Modalities include superficial thermal and cryotherapy, hydrotherapy, (predominantly occupational therapy related and physiotherapy related) ultrasound, muscle stimulation, short-wave diathermy, mechanical traction, continuous passive movement, transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation, ultraviolet light, laser, and interferential current (predominantly physiotherapy related).

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<sup>1</sup> The description of this term was found on the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists website and works cited therein: <<http://www.caot.ca/default.asp?pageid=598>> (Viewed May 8, 2008)

**Occupations** – groups of activities and tasks of everyday life, named, organized, and given value and meaning by individuals and a culture; occupation is everything people do to occupy themselves, including looking after themselves (self-care), enjoying life (leisure), and contributing to the social and economic fabric of their communities (productivity); the domain of concern and the therapeutic medium of occupational therapy (CAOT, 1997a, 2002); a set of activities that is performed with some consistency and regularity; that brings structure and is given value and meaning by individuals and a culture (adapted from Polatajko et al., 2004; and Zimmerman et al., 2006).

**Occupational Performance** – the result of a dynamic, interwoven relationship between persons, environment, and occupation over a person’s lifespan; the ability to choose, organize and satisfactorily perform meaningful occupations that are culturally defined and age appropriate for looking after oneself, enjoying life, and contributing to the social and economic fabric of a community (CAOT, 1997a; 2002, p. 181).

**Regulations** – components of legislation issued by executive order or by regulatory bodies of the government that have the force of the law; regulations help define and clarify the intent and practices of the law.

**Regulated Professions of Physiotherapists and Occupational Therapists** – the regulatory bodies for occupational therapists and physiotherapists are the College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario and the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario, respectively.

**Note:** Although therapist assistants are not regulated health professionals, they should have knowledge of these two colleges and the conditions associated with the assignment of tasks by occupational therapists and physiotherapists.

**Practice Setting** – the environment in which a therapist assistant is employed, including public and private community agencies; schools; and acute, long-term, and rehabilitative facilities.

**Significant Others** – people identified by the client to be privy to client information and consultation sessions and may include the person granted the client’s power of attorney or legal guardian.

**Therapist Assistant** – for the purposes of this document therapist assistants are health care workers who have graduated from an occupational therapist assistant and physiotherapist assistant program that is offered at an Ontario College of Applied Arts and Technology at the diploma level. They are commonly referred to as occupational therapist assistants and physiotherapist assistants, and work under the supervision of and in collaboration with occupational therapists and physiotherapists.

### III. Essential Employability Skills

*All graduates of the Occupational Therapist Assistant and Physiotherapist Assistant program of instruction must have reliably demonstrated the essential employability skills learning outcomes listed on the following pages, in addition to achieving the vocational learning outcomes and meeting the general education requirement.*

#### Context

Essential Employability Skills (EES) are skills that, regardless of a student's program or discipline, are critical for success in the workplace, in day-to-day living, and for lifelong learning.

The teaching and attainment of these EES for students in, and graduates from, Ontario's colleges of applied arts and technology are anchored in a set of three fundamental assumptions:

- these skills are important for every adult to function successfully in society today;
- our colleges are well equipped and well positioned to prepare graduates with these skills;
- these skills are equally valuable for all graduates, regardless of the level of their credential, whether they pursue a career path, or they pursue further education.

#### Skill Categories

To capture these skills, the following six categories define the essential areas where graduates must demonstrate skills and knowledge.

- Communication
- Numeracy
- Critical Thinking & Problem Solving
- Information Management
- Interpersonal
- Personal

## Application and Implementation

In each of the six skill categories, there are a number of defining skills, or sub skills, identified to further articulate the requisite skills identified in the main skill categories. The following chart illustrates the relationship between the skill categories, the defining skills within the categories, and learning outcomes to be achieved by graduates from all postsecondary programs of instruction that lead to an Ontario College credential.

EES may be embedded in General Education or vocational courses, or developed through discrete courses. However these skills are developed, all graduates with Ontario College credentials must be able to reliably demonstrate the essential skills required in each of the six categories.

<b>SKILL CATEGORY</b>	<b>DEFINING SKILLS: Skill areas to be demonstrated by graduates:</b>	<b>LEARNING OUTCOMES: The levels of achievement required by graduates. The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to:</b>
COMMUNICATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading</li> <li>• Writing</li> <li>• Speaking</li> <li>• Listening</li> <li>• Presenting</li> <li>• Visual literacy</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>communicate clearly, concisely and correctly in the written, spoken, and visual form that fulfills the purpose and meets the needs of the audience.</i></li> <li>2. <i>respond to written, spoken, or visual messages in a manner that ensures effective communication.</i></li> </ol>
NUMERACY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding and applying mathematical concepts and reasoning</li> <li>• Analyzing and using numerical data</li> <li>• Conceptualizing</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. <i>execute mathematical operations accurately.</i></li> </ol>
CRITICAL THINKING & PROBLEM SOLVING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analysing</li> <li>• Synthesising</li> <li>• Evaluating</li> <li>• Decision making</li> <li>• Creative and innovative thinking</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. <i>apply a systematic approach to solve problems.</i></li> <li>5. <i>use a variety of thinking skills to anticipate and solve problems.</i></li> </ol>

<b>SKILL CATEGORY</b>	<b>DEFINING SKILLS: Skill areas to be demonstrated by graduates:</b>	<b>LEARNING OUTCOMES: The levels of achievement required by graduates. The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to:</b>
INFORMATION MANAGEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gathering and managing information</li> <li>• Selecting and using appropriate tools and technology for a task or a project</li> <li>• Computer literacy</li> <li>• Internet skills</li> </ul>	<p>6. <i>locate, select, organize, and document information using appropriate technology and information systems.</i></p> <p>7. <i>analyze, evaluate, and apply relevant information from a variety of sources.</i></p>
INTERPERSONAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team work</li> <li>• Relationship management</li> <li>• Conflict resolution</li> <li>• Leadership</li> <li>• Networking</li> </ul>	<p>8. <i>show respect for the diverse opinions, values, belief systems, and contributions of others.</i></p> <p>9. <i>interact with others in groups or teams in ways that contribute to effective working relationships and the achievement of goals.</i></p>
PERSONAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Managing self</li> <li>• Managing change and being flexible and adaptable</li> <li>• Engaging in reflective practices</li> <li>• Demonstrating personal responsibility</li> </ul>	<p>10. <i>manage the use of time and other resources to complete projects.</i></p> <p>11. <i>take responsibility for one's own actions, decisions, and consequences.</i></p>

## IV. General Education Requirement

*All graduates of the Occupational Therapist Assistant and Physiotherapist Assistant program must have met the general education requirement described on the following pages, in addition to achieving the vocational and essential employability skills learning outcomes.*

### Requirement

The General Education Requirement for programs of instruction is stipulated in the Credentials Framework (Appendix A in the Minister's Binding Policy Directive *Framework for Programs of Instruction*).

In programs of instruction leading to either an Ontario College Diploma or an Ontario College Advanced Diploma, it is required that graduates have been engaged in learning that exposes them to at least one discipline outside their main field of study, and increases their awareness of the society and culture in which they live and work. This will typically be accomplished by students taking 3 to 5 courses (or the equivalent) designed discretely and separately from vocational learning opportunities.

This general education learning would normally be delivered using a combination of required and elective processes.

### Purpose

The purpose of General Education in the Ontario college system is to contribute to the development of citizens who are conscious of the diversity, complexity, and richness of the human experience; who are able to establish meaning through this consciousness; and, who, as a result, are able to contribute thoughtfully, creatively, and positively to the society in which they live and work.

General Education strengthens student's essential employability skills, such as critical analysis, problem solving, and communication, in the context of an exploration of topics with broad-based personal and/or societal importance.

## Themes

The themes listed below will be used to provide direction to colleges in the development and identification of courses that are designed to fulfil the General Education Requirement for programs of instructions.

Each theme provides a statement of Rationale and offers suggestions related to more specific topic areas that could be explored within each area. These suggestions are neither prescriptive nor exhaustive. They are included to provide guidance regarding the nature and scope of content that would be judged as meeting the intent and overall goals of General Education.

### **1. Arts in Society:**

#### *Rationale:*

The capacity of a person to recognize and evaluate artistic and creative achievements is useful in many aspects of his/her life. Since artistic expression is a fundamentally human activity, which both reflects and anticipates developments in the larger culture, its study will enhance the student's cultural and self-awareness.

#### *Content:*

Courses in this area should provide students with an understanding of the importance of visual and creative arts in human affairs, of the artist's and writer's perceptions of the world and the means by which those perceptions are translated into the language of literature and artistic expression. They will also provide an appreciation of the aesthetic values used in examining works of art and possibly, a direct experience in expressing perceptions in an artistic medium.

### **2. Civic Life:**

#### *Rationale:*

In order for individuals to live responsibly and to reach their potential as individuals and as citizens of society, they need to understand the patterns of human relationships that underlie the orderly interactions of a society's various structural units. Informed people will have knowledge of the meaning of civic life in relation to diverse communities at the local, national, and global level, and an awareness of international issues and the effects of these on Canada, and Canada's place in the international community.

#### *Content:*

Courses in this area should provide students with an understanding of the meaning of freedoms, rights, and participation in community and public life, in addition to a working knowledge of the structure and function of various levels of government (municipal, provincial, national) in Canada and/or in an international context. They may also provide an historical understanding of major political issues affecting relations between the various levels of government in Canada and their constituents.

### **3. Social and Cultural Understanding:**

#### *Rationale:*

Knowledge of the patterns and precedents of the past provide the means for a person to gain an awareness of his or her place in contemporary culture and society. In addition to this awareness, students will acquire a sense of the main currents of their culture and that of other cultures over an extended period of time in order to link personal history to the broader study of culture.

#### *Content:*

Courses in this area are those that deal broadly with major social and cultural themes. These courses may also stress the nature and validity of historical evidence and the variety of historical interpretation of events. Courses will provide the students with a view and understanding of the impact of cultural, social, ethnic, or linguistic characteristics.

### **4. Personal Understanding:**

#### *Rationale:*

Educated people are equipped for life-long understanding and development of themselves as integrated physiological and psychological entities. They are aware of the ideal need to be fully functioning persons: mentally, physically, emotionally, socially, spiritually, and vocationally.

#### *Content:*

Courses in this area will focus on understanding the individual: his or her evolution; situation; relationship with others; place in the environment and universe; achievements and problems; and his or her meaning and purpose. They will also allow students the opportunity to study institutionalized human social behaviour in a systematic way. Courses fulfilling this requirement may be oriented to the study of the individual within a variety of contexts.

### **5. Science and Technology:**

#### *Rationale:*

Matter and energy are universal concepts in science, forming a basis for understanding the interactions that occur in living and non-living systems in our universe. Study in this area provides an understanding of the behaviour of matter that provides a foundation for further scientific study and the creation of broader understanding about natural phenomena.

Similarly, the various applications and developments in the area of technology have an increasing impact on all aspects of human endeavour and have numerous social, economic, and philosophical implications. For example, the operation of computers to process data at high speed has invoked an interaction between machines and the human mind that is unique in human history. This development and other technological developments have a powerful impact on how we deal with many of the complex questions in our society.

*Content:*

Courses in this area should stress scientific inquiry and deal with basic or fundamental questions of science rather than applied ones. They may be formulated from traditional basic courses in such areas of study as biology, chemistry, physics, astronomy, geology, or agriculture. As well, courses related to understanding the role and functions of computers (e.g., data management and information processing), and assorted computer-related technologies, should be offered in a non-applied manner to provide students with an opportunity to explore the impact of these concepts and practices on their lives.