



INTRODUCING THE SUBSTANTIAL EQUIVALENCY ASSESSMENT SYSTEM (SEAS)

A BIG CHANGE IN HOW INTERNATIONALLY-EDUCATED OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS GET REGISTERED IN CANADA

If you are an internationally-educated occupational therapist planning to register for practice anywhere in Canada except Quebec, read this!

We are pleased to announce a new process for assessing Internationally-Educated-Occupational Therapists (IEOTs) across Canada. The Substantial Equivalency Assessment System, also known as SEAS, applies to anyone who received their occupational therapy education outside of Canada, including Canadians who travelled outside Canada to pursue their OT education. With SEAS, every IEOT wanting to work anywhere in Canada (except in Quebec, which has its own assessment process) will start their assessment process with ACOTRO.

ACOTRO will launch SEAS on May 1, 2015. Once applicants have been assessed through SEAS, they can apply to a provincial occupational therapy regulatory body for registration. In other words, SEAS will be the first step in the registration process for anyone educated outside of Canada.

What is SEAS?

The Substantial Equivalency Assessment System is the process ACOTRO will use to evaluate the extent to which an IEOT's educational qualifications and competencies are *substantially equivalent* to those of a Canadian-educated occupational therapist. *Substantially equivalent* means that while an IEOT's education doesn't need to be identical to that of a Canadian-educated occupational therapist, it needs to be equivalent in some essential ways. We look at qualifications and competencies to determine that equivalence.

This new assessment approach has several stages. SEAS looks at the education that IEOTs originally completed, allows them to demonstrate what they know and can do, and ensures they know about Canadian legislation, ethics and standards of practice for occupational therapy practice in Canada.

SEAS has four main components:

- 1. Review of the Academic Credential Assessment (ACA)*
- 2. Profession-Specific Credential Assessment (PSCA)*
- 3. Jurisprudence Knowledge Assessment Test (JKAT)*
- 4. Competency Assessment*

As part of SEAS, all applicants who have completed their education outside of Canada will also be required to prove that they have the language skills needed to work as an occupational therapist in Canada.

The SEAS Process

The substantial equivalency model includes both *qualification recognition* and *competency verification*. Qualification recognition looks at the education an IEOT has completed. This includes a review of an **Academic Credential Assessment (ACA)** performed by an external agency, World Education Services, and a review (called a **Profession-Specific Credential Assessment - PSCA**) of the education curriculum and transcripts provided by IEOTs. Competency verification focuses on demonstrating knowledge about practice and jurisprudence through the **Jurisprudence Knowledge Assessment Test**, and includes an in-person evaluation of competencies, called the **Competency Assessment**, gained through education and previous experience.

SEAS is a multi-step process. Some steps can be completed on-line from anywhere in the world and can begin as soon as an applicant applies to ACOTRO for SEAS. The final steps need to be completed at a testing site in Canada. Applicants have up to one year to complete the process. Once all of the steps are completed, ACOTRO sends a report to the regulator in the province in which the IEOT wants to register. This report will show whether the applicant has met the substantial equivalency requirement. If the applicant has done so, he or she will then follow further steps set out by the provincial regulator to determine whether they can write the national occupational therapy certification exam, and be registered.

An Exercise in Teamwork

All ten provincial regulators collaborated closely to develop the new SEAS process. Prior to SEAS, regulators used different processes and standards to assess IEOT applications. They used different language fluency tests and standards, and had different ways of assessing academic credentials. Regulators also wanted to have a way to better recognize the knowledge and skills that IEOTs have gained through their education and work experience, and wanted to compare their education to the national educational standard for Canadian OT programs. So, the new assessment approach now includes a day-long Competency Assessment session that will allow IEOTs to demonstrate what they know and can do.

The end result?

A more, fair, objective, transparent and consistent way of evaluating all IEOTs wanting to practice in Canada. And a better way to ensure that all registered OTs who are deemed equivalent truly meet the minimum level of competencies for safe and ethical practice in Canada.

Cost

Applicants will have to pay \$3,100 to complete all SEAS assessment components, after the language proficiency and academic credential assessment requirements have been met. Applicants pay at different points as they move successfully through the process, and do not have to pay for the whole assessment if they choose to not to proceed.

The points of payment are:

- Upon initial application and submission of the ACA report
- Upon submitting the Profession-Specific Credential Assessment self-assessment form and documentation; and
- When registering for the Competency Assessment

Applicants will also need to pay for any costs for travel and accommodation to the Competency Assessment testing site.

Please note: If you are internationally-educated, and have applied for registration with a provincial regulatory organization prior to May 1, 2015, you may not be affected by SEAS. If you have applied by May 1, 2015, and your application is being processed by a college, you will have one year from your application date within which to complete your registration process under the current system. Applicants who do not complete their registration within the one-year period must apply to ACOTRO to complete the new assessment process.

For more information about your current application, please contact the provincial regulatory organization to which you applied.

For more information on the SEAS process, please check out our Frequently Asked Questions.

For more information on how to register in Quebec, please visit: www.oeq.org.