

ACOTRO

ASSOCIATION OF CANADIAN OCCUPATIONAL
THERAPY REGULATORY ORGANIZATIONS



ACORE

ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES ORGANISMES
DE RÉGLEMENTATION EN ERGOTHÉRAPIE

2016 Annual Report



Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy Regulatory Organizations
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WHO WE ARE

The Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy Regulatory Organizations—or ACOTRO—is the national organization of occupational therapy regulators in Canada. Our goal is to promote consistency and excellence in regulating occupational therapy across Canada.

ACOTRO’s 10 provincial members protect the public by regulating the practice of occupational therapy in their respective provinces. We also provide guidance to occupational therapists seeking information on how to register in Canada.

Through ACOTRO, regulators collaborate to promote the best regulatory practices, enhance public accountability, build consistency across the country, and support each other in our efforts to respond to changes in occupational therapy practice and regulation.

We bring leadership to our profession by

- advancing best practices in occupational therapy regulation,
- developing and promoting a national strategy for consistent regulatory practices,
- promoting interprovincial and international mobility among occupational therapists, and
- strengthening national and international networking and information sharing.

In practical terms, this means that we work together to streamline processes, advocate, and facilitate change in the regulatory environment.

Most recently, ACOTRO has begun to administer the assessment process for internationally educated occupational therapists. This process assesses the extent to which an occupational therapist’s education obtained internationally is substantially equivalent to education and competencies obtained by occupational therapists educated in Canada.

The ACOTRO Board is appointed by the occupational therapy regulatory organization in each province. Therefore, each Canadian province has one representative on the ACOTRO Board.





HISTORY

ACOTRO was established in 1989 and incorporated in 2011.

VISION

ACOTRO is recognized nationally and internationally as an essential leader in the profession of occupational therapy from a regulatory perspective.

MISSION

ACOTRO is the collective of all provincial occupational therapy regulators, who have the responsibility to protect the public. ACOTRO advances quality occupational therapy regulation in Canada.

VALUES

ACOTRO embraces the following values:

- **Mutual respect:** We recognize all members as equal partners, and we welcome and honour diverse opinions, perspectives, and contributions.
 - **Mentoring and support:** We believe that shared ideas and expertise, reciprocal consultation, and new leader orientation facilitate leadership development and capacity building.
 - **Trust:** We respect confidences and confidentiality. Decisions are made by consensus, and members speak with one voice publicly.
 - **Excellence:** We use best practices and evidence-based decision-making to support effective leadership and continuous improvement.
 - **Collaboration:** We access collective wisdom by working in partnership with each other and with stakeholders. We create positive relationships and accepting environments that facilitate communication and goal achievement.
 - **Commitment:** We dedicate time and energy to fulfill ACOTRO's goals and objectives. When members cannot fulfill promises, we communicate this and support each other.
 - **Accountability:** We are responsible to each other, to the boards and members of our organizations, and to the public for setting and achieving realistic goals and activities, and for functioning in a transparent manner.
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GOVERNANCE

All occupational therapy regulatory organizations across Canada belong and contribute to ACOTRO's activities. The organization is governed by a Board of Directors composed of the registrars or ACOTRO representatives from each of our 10 provincial regulators.

ACOTRO MEMBERS 2016

President: Elinor Larney

Registrar, College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario

Vice-President: Heather Cutcliffe

Registrar, Prince Edward Island Occupational Therapists Registration Board

Treasurer: Sharon Eadie

Executive Director, College of Occupational Therapists of Manitoba

Jonathan Belbin: November–present

(Paulette Upshall: May–October 2016; Gayle Salsman: January–May & October–November 2016)

Registrar, College of Occupational Therapists of Nova Scotia

Kathy Corbett

Registrar, College of Occupational Therapists of British Columbia

Kim Doyle

Executive Director, Newfoundland and Labrador Occupational Therapy Board

Maggie Fulford

Registrar, Alberta College of Occupational Therapists

Sherry Just: October–present

(Kara Gorman: January–October 2016)

Executive Director, Saskatchewan Society of Occupational Therapists

Catherine Pente

Registrar, New Brunswick Association of Occupational Therapists

Louise Tremblay

Secrétaire générale, Ordre des ergothérapeutes du Québec

Currently, there is no regulatory organization in Yukon, Nunavut, or the Northwest Territories. Occupational therapists in these regions may be registered by regulatory organizations in other provinces.

STAFF

Susan Domanski, SEAS Manager

Ruheena Sangrar, SEAS Credentialing Officer



ACTIVITIES IN 2016

SEAS: Substantial Equivalency Assessment System

Background

In November 2010, all 10 ACOTRO members came together to launch the ACOTRO Harmonization Project, a five-year initiative funded by Employment and Social Development Canada's Foreign Credential Recognition Program, aimed at harmonizing the way in which occupational therapy regulators assess internationally educated occupational therapists (IEOTs) applying to practise in Canada. The result of this collaborative project was the Substantial Equivalency Assessment System (SEAS), a four-part, national, competency-based system that assesses the extent to which an IEOT's education and competencies are substantially equivalent to those of Canadian-educated occupational therapists.

ACOTRO launched SEAS on May 1, 2015, and it is now the required first step in the registration assessment process for all IEOTs applying to work anywhere in Canada outside of Quebec.¹ Its main components address both qualification recognition and competence verification:

- Academic Credential Assessment (ACA);
- Profession-Specific Credential Assessment (PSCA);
- Competency Assessment;
- Jurisprudence Knowledge Assessment Test (JKAT); and
- Language Assessment.

SEAS is the outcome of almost a decade of research and development on the part of ACOTRO and its members. SEAS represents the collaborative efforts not just of all 10 occupational therapy regulatory organizations in Canada, but also of key ACOTRO partners in the educational, regulatory, and governmental communities, as well as several hundred occupational therapists and occupational therapy students from across the country who volunteered their time to this initiative.

The result is a national assessment system that supports labour mobility and labour market success by introducing a fair, transparent, objective, and consistent approach to assessing IEOTs. SEAS ultimately better protects the health of Canadians by ensuring that IEOTs have demonstrated the minimal level of competencies critical for safe, effective, and ethical occupational therapy practice in Canada.

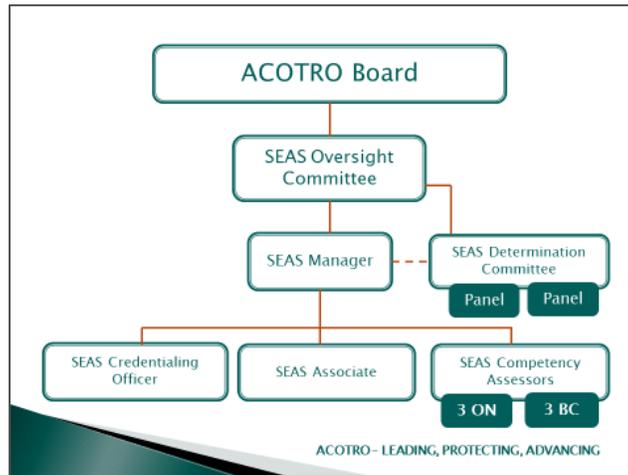
Governance and Operations

SEAS is a program operated by ACOTRO and used by 9 of the 10 occupational therapy regulators to confirm that an applicant in a specific province meets substantial equivalence, and as such is eligible to

¹ As a full member of ACOTRO, Quebec's regulatory organization, Ordre des ergothérapeutes du Québec, has fully endorsed SEAS and participated in its development. However, Quebec employs its own assessment system for the evaluation of IEOTs registering to practise in that province according to the specific regulations and competencies set out by the Ordre des ergothérapeutes du Québec.

apply for registration or licensure in that jurisdiction. See Figure 1 for the SEAS governance and operations structure. It is funded through applicant fees, partially subsidized by ACOTRO until applicant numbers achieve the cost recovery model expected in this program.

Figure 1: SEAS Governance and Operations Structure

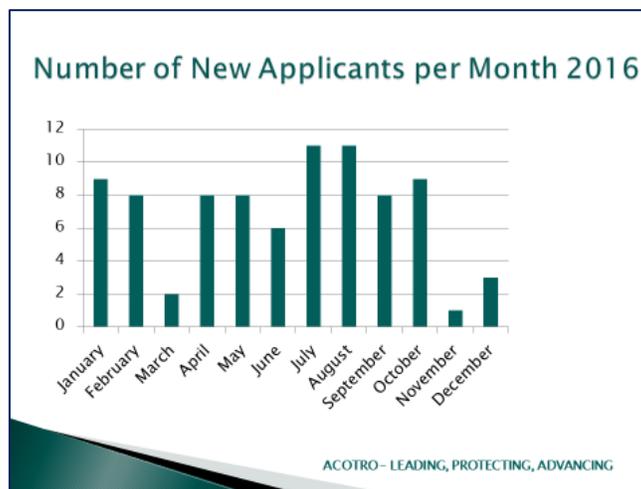


Applicant Statistics for January 1, 2016, to December 31, 2016

SEAS was launched on May 1, 2015, and 300 applicants responded to the one-year notice of the new assessment system and applied prior to the launch date. Fewer applicants were expected later in 2015 and into 2016 as the program ramped up.

In 2016, there were 84 applicants to SEAS, and by December 31, 2016, 36 applicants had completed the process. SEAS is applicant driven, and statistics show that where extensions are requested by applicants, they are completing the program well within the one-year timeline. Many are completing within six months from the date that their application is initiated. Figure 2 shows the applications by month.

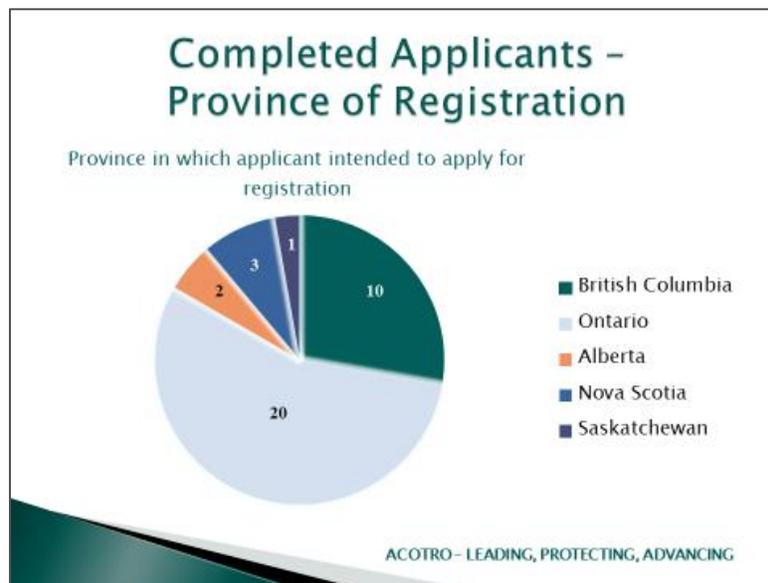
Figure 2: Number of New Applicants per Month, 2016





The SEAS Competency Assessment is the only component that requires an applicant to attend in person. SEAS provides fair access to the assessment, with the SEAS Competency Assessors travelling to the province where the applicant is intending to practise. This is based on the history of where IEOTs tend to practise. Three assessors are based in British Columbia and three in Ontario. Figure 3 proves that this set-up remains reasonable because most IEOTs are intending to practise in either Ontario or British Columbia.

Figure 3: Completed Applicants–Province of Registration (to December 31, 2016)



As 2016 was the first full year of operations, it is expected that over the course of the next year, ACOTRO will be able to confirm forecasts for the program and evaluate the delivery model. Future activities include maintenance and review of our assessment tools, quality improvement, and continuing efforts to build gap-filling options.

Exam and Accreditation Forum

In September 2016, ACOTRO hosted a national meeting called the Forum on Regulatory Issues and Implications of Occupational Therapy Education Accreditation and National Examination for Occupational Therapists, which was attended by ACOTRO members and representatives from the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists and the Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy University Programs. This forum was held to explore issues and requirements of regulators related to entry-to-practice exams for occupational therapists and accreditation of Canadian occupational therapy educational programs. The issues and implications of multiple occupational therapy competency documents emerged as a key priority to address. The result was a commitment to working together to first develop one competency document.



Labour Mobility Support Agreement

The Agreement on Internal Trade was signed by federal, provincial, and territorial governments in the 1990s. Chapter 7, the labour mobility chapter, was of significance to regulators as it set forward the requirements to recognize those qualified in one jurisdiction when applying to work in another jurisdiction. ACOTRO developed a Mutual Recognition Agreement, effective June 1, 2001.

In 2008–2009, the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, through the Forum of Labour Market Ministers, amended the Agreement on Internal Trade. Of significance was the added requirement that regulators create provisions to allow for the transfer of those in restricted practice categories if similar categories of registration exist in the receiving jurisdiction. ACOTRO member organizations signed the revised Labour Mobility Support Agreement in February 2010.

ACOTRO worked to further update this agreement in light of SEAS, with final approval reached in late 2015. The agreement was signed by all Canadian occupational therapy regulators in early 2016. Necessary additional work to update related forms and processes was also carried out. The next major review is due by January 1, 2019.

National Exam Oversight

As part of the role of regulators in oversight of activities used to assess entry-to-practice requirements, one ACOTRO representative attends the Certification Exam Committee business meetings of the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists, and ensures that the exam report is distributed to all ACOTRO members.

Currency

The College of Occupational Therapists of Nova Scotia and the Prince Edward Island Occupational Therapists Registration Board commissioned a report to

- develop a consistent definition of and process for determining “currency” so that it is not an obstacle to the registration of IETOs;
- ensure that public protection is considered when exploring options and implications of currency; and
- educate ACOTRO members on issues about practice currency.

A consultant was hired, an environmental scan carried out,² and key findings summarized in a report titled *Best Practices in Definition of and Process for Defining Currency for Internationally Educated Occupational Therapists*.

Key findings included the following:

² The scan comprised occupational therapists in Canadian jurisdictions, New Zealand, Australia, and the UK; physiotherapists in eight Canadian jurisdictions; pharmacists in five Canadian jurisdictions; lawyers in three Canadian jurisdictions; and engineers Canada.



- Currency is an important element for an occupational therapist to continue to be competent.
- Successful completion of SEAS can be reasonably viewed as a comparable “starting-off point” for IEOs in a manner similar to that of the completion of initial occupational therapy education for Canadian-educated occupational therapists when they initially apply to be registered by a provincial regulatory organization.
- Additional follow-up work is required around definitions and having currency requirements available on the websites of provincial regulatory organizations.

A working group has been established and will assist in determining the next steps for ACOTRO members.

Use of Title in Retirement

The Working Group on Use of Title in Retirement began its work in the fall of 2013 as an Occupational Therapy Canada (OTC) initiative. OTC requested that the working group explore issues and options related to the continued use of title after retiring from the occupational therapy profession and prepare a report with recommendations for OTC.

The working group concluded that providing all occupational therapists with clear and comprehensive information on the issues could contribute to future discourse at the individual and organizational level. To this end, the working group oversaw the development of an English and a French version of three key documents, which can be found on the Resources section of the ACOTRO website:

- *OTC Backgrounder on Use of Title in Retirement;*
- *ACOTRO FAQ on Use of Title in Retirement;* and
- *ACOTRO Title Protection Provisions Province by Province* (an Excel document compiling current, relevant regulations for each province).



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