

Reference Points for Degree Programmes in Occupational Therapy

Tuning Educational Structures in Europe



Council of Occupational Therapists for the European Countries

COTEC was established in 1986 with the purpose of co-ordinating the views of the National Associations of Occupational Therapy. The aim of COTEC is to enable National Associations of Occupational Therapists in Europe to work together to develop, harmonise and improve standards of professional practice and education, as well as advance the theory and research of occupational therapy throughout Europe. COTEC supports the development of new occupational therapy associations, education and services in European countries and the free movement of professionals and mutual recognition. COTEC gathers and disseminates information/statistics from all its members regarding the numbers and employment of graduates, levels of education and emerging areas of practice. COTEC now represents 27 European Countries and more than 120,000 occupational therapists.

www.cotec-europe.org/

European Network of Occupational Therapy in Higher Education

ENOTHE is a thematic network, which has been funded by the European Commission, SOCRATES programme from 1997 till 2008. At the moment it is funded only by the members themselves. The main aim of a thematic network is to enhance quality and define and develop a European dimension within a given academic discipline, or other issues of common interest, through co-operation between university faculties or departments, academic and/or professional associations, employers and client organisations.

Such co-operation should have a lasting and widespread impact across a wide range of institutions within or between specific discipline areas. ENOTHE represents about 200 organisations from 44 countries.

www.enothe.eu

Tuning

TUNING Educational Structures in Europe is a large scale European project, which accompanies the Bologna process and implements its principles at curriculum level of different disciplines or multidisciplinary studies.

Tuning process

In the framework of the Tuning project a methodology has been designed to understand curricula and to make them comparable. Five lines of approach have been distinguished to organize the discussions in the subject areas:

1. generic (general academic) competences,
2. subject-specific competences,
3. the role of ECTS as an accumulation system
4. approaches to learning, teaching, and assessment and
5. the role of quality enhancement in the educational process (emphasizing systems based on internal institutional quality culture).

Tuning model

Furthermore Tuning developed a model for designing, implementing and delivering curricula offered within one institution, or, jointly, by two or more institutions. The following main steps in the process for designing a study programme either a local programme or an (international) integrated programme / joint degree were identified:

1. Meeting the basic conditions.
For all study programmes:
 - Has the social need for the programme on a regional/national/European level been identified? Has this been done on the basis of a consultation of stakeholders: employers, clients, professionals and professional bodies?
 - Is the programme of sufficient interest from the academic point of view? Have common reference points been identified?
 - Are the necessary resources for the programme available inside or, if required, outside the (partner) institution(s) concerned?
2. Definition of a degree profile.
3. Description of the objectives of the programme as well as the learning outcomes (in terms of knowledge, understanding, skills and abilities) that have to be met.
4. Identification of the generic and subject-related competences which should be obtained in the programme.
5. Translation into the curriculum: content (topics to be covered) and structure (modules and credits).
6. Translation into educational units and activities to achieve the defined learning outcomes.
7. Deciding the approaches to teaching and learning (types of methods, techniques and formats), as well as the methods of assessment (when required, the development of teaching material).
8. Development of an evaluation system intended to enhance its quality constantly.

(In)frequently asked questions

What is the Bologna process?

Starting with a declaration signed in Bologna in 1999, the Ministers of Education of the signatory countries (now 45) meet every two years to take stock of what has been accomplished and what still needs to be done in order to make higher education system in all their countries comparable, compatible and transparent. Between the meetings of Ministers, activities take place (seminars and events organised by the “Bologna Follow-up Group”, the Bologna Promoters, Rectors’ conferences, Universities) in order to examine specific issues and prepare the next ministerial meeting.

Why apply ‘Bologna’?

Bologna is output oriented. It is centred on the student and the student’s needs and experience of the learning process, rather than on the teacher, and his/her expectations of the continuity of the traditional ‘input-based’ structure. It provides general guidelines, so that Universities in all 45 Bologna countries can communicate in an agreed language and share basic structures (cycles, credits, quality procedures). This makes it possible for students’ work to be recognised in other countries and in their own as well. In fact, Bologna means Quality, Transparency, Recognition and Employability — not just mobility!

Who implements ‘Bologna’?

Ministers are responsible for being sure that the normative framework in their country allows and encourages Universities to apply the Bologna reforms. The actual design and implementation of the new programmes, however, is the responsibility of Universities: that is Higher Education administrative and academic staff with the students. The Tuning Educational Structures in Europe project is based on the idea that in final analysis it is the professors, students and administrative staff of Universities that can actually “implement Bologna” in a concrete meaningful way.

What does ‘student-centred’ mean in practice?

It means using the great capacities of European Universities and Higher Education Institutions to organise the learning process with an eye to the competences (knowledge, understanding, skills and abilities) that the student will need for a satisfying personal and professional life. It means using ECTS credits — which are based on student workload measured in time — in order to use the students’ time in the most effective way possible.

What is the EQF for Higher Education?

The European Qualifications Framework for HE provides very general statements of what a student must know, understand and be able to communicate at the end of each cycle. They are based on the so-called “Dublin Descriptors”; countries are now asked to create their national version (NQF) and ‘Sectoral’ versions, that is, applied to sectoral areas such as Health and Social Sciences.

What are the “Dublin descriptors”?

They are very general descriptions of what a student must know, understand and be able to communicate at the end of each cycle.

How do the Occupational Therapy cycle level descriptors relate to them?

The Occupational therapy descriptors are compatible with the Dublin Descriptors, but they are specific for Occupational Therapy

Will all Occupational Therapy programmes in Europe be alike?

No, absolutely not. Diversity is the most important single characteristic of European Occupational Therapy Programmes. But, by applying the agreed guidelines and reference points, programmes will become transparent — that is understandable to others — and their quality and relevance to the students will increase.

Are other countries and continents involved?

Yes, countries of Tuning Latin America have carried out similar work in establishing guidelines and reference points for Occupational Therapy, as well as Georgia and Armenia.

www.unideusto.org/tuning

Tuning Educational Structures in Europe

“COMPETENCES” are what students know, understand and are able to do. Forming them is the objective of the learning /teaching process.

GENERIC COMPETENCES FOR ALL ACADEMIC DISCIPLINES

To prepare for employment and citizenship, students must possess competences not always considered in the academic world. These include ‘**instrumental competences**’ such as ‘capacity for analysis and synthesis’, ‘information management skills’ and ‘problem solving; ‘**interpersonal competences**’ such as ‘teamwork’, ‘interpersonal skills’ and ‘appreciation of diversity and multiculturality’; and ‘**systemic competences**’, such as ‘research skills’, ‘creativity’ and ‘capacity to learn’.

GENERIC COMPETENCES

1. Ability for abstract thinking, analysis and synthesis
2. Ability to apply knowledge in practical situations
3. Ability to plan and manage time
4. Knowledge and understanding of the subject area and understanding of the profession
5. Ability to communicate both orally and through the written word in native language
6. Ability to communicate in a second language
7. Skills in the use of information and communications technologies
8. Ability to undertake research at an appropriate level
9. Capacity to learn and stay up-to-date with learning
10. Ability to search for, process and analyse information from a variety of sources
11. Ability to be critical and self-critical
12. Ability to adapt to and act in new situations
13. Capacity to generate new ideas (creativity)
14. Ability to identify, pose and resolve problems
15. Ability to make reasoned decisions
16. Ability to work in a team
17. Interpersonal and interaction skills
18. Ability to motivate people and move toward common goals
19. Ability to communicate with non-experts of one's field
20. Appreciation of and respect for diversity and multiculturality
21. Ability to work in an international context
22. Ability to work autonomously
23. Ability to design and manage projects
24. Commitment to safety
25. Spirit of enterprise, ability to take initiative
26. Ability to act on the basis of ethical reasoning
27. Ability to evaluate and maintain the quality of work produced
28. Determination and perseverance in the tasks given and responsibilities taken
29. Commitment to the conservation of the environment
30. Ability to act with social responsibility and civic awareness
31. Ability to show awareness of equal opportunities and gender issues

SUBJECT SPECIFIC COMPETENCES FOR OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY STUDENTS

Knowledge of Occupational Therapy

The occupational therapist is able to:

1. Explain the theoretical concepts underpinning occupational therapy, specifically the occupational nature of human beings and their performance of occupations
2. Explain the relationship between occupational performance, health and well-being
3. Synthesise and apply relevant knowledge from biological, medical, human, psychological, social, technological and occupational sciences, together with theories of occupation and participation
4. Analyse the complexities of applying theories and research evidence related to occupation in the context of a changing society
5. Engage in rational and reasoned debate in relation to occupation and occupational therapy

Occupational Therapy Process and Professional Reasoning

The occupational therapist is able to:

6. Work in partnership with individuals and groups, using occupation in prevention, re/habilitation, and treatment in order to promote participation, health and well-being
7. Select, modify and apply appropriate theories, models of practice and methods to meet the occupational and health needs of individuals/populations
8. Use professional and ethical reasoning effectively throughout the occupational therapy process.
9. Utilise the therapeutic potential of occupation through the use of activity and occupational analysis and synthesis
10. Adapt and apply the occupational therapy process in close collaboration with individuals/ populations
11. Work to facilitate accessible and adaptable environments and to promote occupational justice
12. Collaborate with communities to promote and develop the health and well-being of their members through their participation in occupation
13. Actively seek, critically evaluate and apply a range of information and evidence to ensure that occupational therapy practice is up-to-date and relevant to the client
14. Critically appraise occupational therapy practice to ensure that the focus is on occupation and occupational performance

Professional Relationships and Partnerships

The occupational therapist is able to:

15. Work according to the principles of client centred practice
16. Build a therapeutic relationship/partnership as the foundation of the occupational therapy process
17. Establish and maintain collaborative partnerships, consult and advise with clients, carers, team members and other stakeholders on enabling occupation and participation in a wide range of contexts
18. Collaborate with clients to advocate for the right to have their occupational needs met
19. Appreciate and respect diversity, individual differences, cultural beliefs, customs and their influence on occupation and participation

Professional Autonomy and Accountability

The occupational therapist is able to:

20. Prepare, maintain and review documentation of the occupational therapy process
21. Comply with local/regional/national/European policies and procedures, professional standards and employers' regulations
22. Demonstrate continuing lifelong learning to enhance occupational therapy
23. Practice in an ethical manner, respecting clients and taking account of professional codes of conduct for occupational therapists
24. Demonstrate confidence in self-management, self-awareness and knowledge of own limitations as an occupational therapist

Research and Development in Occupational Therapy/Science

The occupational therapist is able to:

25. Identify the need for research on issues related to occupation, occupational therapy and/or occupational science and formulate relevant research questions
26. Search independently, critically examine and synthesise scientific literature and other information relevant to occupational therapy
27. Understand, select and defend designs and methods appropriate to research in occupation and occupational therapy, considering ethical aspects
28. Interpret, analyse, synthesise and critique research findings relevant to occupational therapy
29. Develop new knowledge of occupation and occupational therapy practice, particularly in relation to local and/ or emerging health and social challenges
30. Disseminate research findings to relevant stakeholders

Management and Promotion of Occupational Therapy

The occupational therapist is able to:

31. Determine and prioritise occupational therapy services
32. Understand and apply principles of management to occupational therapy services, including cost-effectiveness, administration of resources and equipment, and establishing occupational therapy protocols
33. Engage in a continuous process of evaluation and improvement of the quality of occupational therapy services, involve clients where appropriate and communicate the results to relevant stakeholders
34. Take a pro-active role in the development, improvement and promotion of occupational therapy
35. Consider developments and influence policies in health and social care, society and legislation at international, national and local levels that affect occupational therapy services

ECTS credits measure the time a normal student needs to do all the work associated with a particular course unit: — whether at home, in the library, in the classroom or elsewhere. 1 ECTS credit equals 25-30 hours of student time. Usually: First cycle = 180-240 credits; Second cycle = 90-120 credits.

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OCCUPATIONAL
THERAPISTS for the
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Lifelong Learning Programme