

**COMPETENCY STANDARDS  
FOR OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS IN HONG KONG**

**Occupational Therapists Board of Hong Kong**

**May 2021**

## **INTRODUCTION/PREAMBLE**

This competency document outlines an overarching framework in describing the threshold skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviour that an occupational therapist needs to be competent when practicing in Hong Kong and applying for registration with the Hong Kong Occupational Therapists Board. The competency statements will meet, if not exceeding, the Minimum Standards for Education of Occupational Therapists set by the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT, 2016).

This document also closely links with document on accreditation criteria. Both sets of documents are complementary to each other in conducting accreditation and re-accreditation of occupational therapy education programmes.

This document consists of sets of competency statements that :

- a. outline not only a generic spectrum but also a solid foundation of abilities and actions that guide an occupational therapist's day-to-day practice.
- b. serve as a benchmark for the setting of standards for occupational therapy education; also as a framework to fine tune curricula and assessment scheme to meet the Board's requirement when conducting accreditation and/or re-accreditation.
- c. serve as a developmental milestone for further postgraduate training and attributes to practicing occupational therapists for life-long learning and professional development.

Competency in the context of this paper is defined as the successful use of knowledge, skills, attitude and behaviors that are guided by evidence based practices and expectation of the occupational therapy profession. It is sub-divided into four core and two supporting competency standards respectively in this document.

## Core Competencies

1. Professionalism
2. Knowledge and Learning
3. Occupational therapy process and practice
4. Communication

## Supporting Competencies

5. Partnership and Collaboration
6. Technology

Core competencies refer to basic level of professional knowledge, skills, attitude and behaviors that enable an occupational therapist to respond successfully to a full range of clinical service needs and contemporary professional practice.

Supporting competencies contribute to the achievement of core competencies and are demanded according to social, cultural, economic, disability/disease types and patterns changes, service users' changing needs and patterns, as well as science and technological advances. They may develop into additional core competencies as new emergent standards of occupational therapy professional practices in the long run.

## **CORE COMPETENCIES**

### **1. PROFESSIONALISM**

An occupational therapist should be able to demonstrate an appropriate professional attitude and uphold important tenets of professionalism. An occupational therapist must be able to :

- 1.1 comply to the standards, guidelines and code of practice laid by the Occupational Therapists Board of Hong Kong.
- 1.2 adhere to the Hong Kong legislations that are relevant to practice.
- 1.3 display knowledge and assume the moral and ethical responsibilities involved in the provision of occupational therapy practices.
- 1.4 demonstrate competence in self-management, self-awareness and knowledge of own limitations as an occupational therapist.
- 1.5 adhere to all occupational health and safety as well as quality requirements for practice.
- 1.6 maintain professional competencies and adapts to change in practice context.
- 1.7 contribute to the education and development of the professional practices in occupational therapy.
- 1.8 recognize and manage conflicts of interest and inherent power imbalance in all service recipients and professional relationship.

## **2. KNOWLEDGE AND LEARNING**

An occupational therapist's knowledge, skills and conduct in practice are informed by professional and relevant theories, knowledge and evidence, and are maintained and flourished by continuous professional development and learning. To achieve these goals, an occupational therapist must be able to :

- 2.1 appraise and apply current evidence-informed knowledge of occupational therapy and other relevant theory in practice.
- 2.2 understand and apply theory and frameworks of occupation to professional practice and decision-making.
- 2.3 research and apply best available evidence in professional practice and decision-making.
- 2.4 understand and respond to local health philosophies, leadership, sociopolitical trends and jurisdictions relevant to practices.
- 2.5 maintain current knowledge for cultural responsiveness to all parties in the practice context.
- 2.6 maintain and improve currency of knowledge, skills and contemporary evidence for practice by complying with the requirements for continuing professional development.
- 2.7 reflect on practice to inform clinical reasoning and decision-making and integrate with theories and evidence into practice.
- 2.8 commit to life-long learning and development for supporting practice.
- 2.9 maintain knowledge of relevant resources, technologies and digital literacy appropriate for practice.

### **3. OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PROCESS AND PRACTICE**

An occupational therapist conducts problem-identification through appropriate information gathering and assessment in setting goals according to clients' performance and functional strengths; devising a goal-directed treatment plan and selection of intervention strategies to cater for clients' needs. In doing so, an occupational therapist must be able to:

- 3.1 commit to client-centered approach and provide a holistic care to each individual client.
- 3.2 gather appropriate information and perform proper assessment(s) when identifying a client's status and functioning, strengths, occupational performance and goals.
- 3.3 collaborate with the client, relevant carer(s), and other relevant parties to determine and prioritize the functional and occupational therapy goals.
- 3.4 develop the treatment plan with the client, relevant carer(s) and other relevant parties to meet the functional and occupational therapy goals.
- 3.5 implement proper treatment program(s) in a safe, effective and caring manner.
- 3.6 re-evaluate with the client, relevant others or parties on the client's progress and document/modify the treatment program(s) regularly to achieve outcome.
- 3.7 reflect on practice to inform and communicate (verbally and written) professional reasoning and decision-making.
- 3.8 comply with practice guidelines and protocol according to service setting and environment.

- 3.9 implement and be accountable for delegation, referral and handover.
- 3.10 promote and commit to an inter-disciplinary approach for decision making and planning.
- 3.11 commit to learn and apply effective and updated treatment techniques/devices to improve service outcomes for individual client.
- 3.12 commit to quality service provision and development.

## 4. COMMUNICATION

An occupational therapist uses effective communication in an open, responsive and appropriate manner for safe, ethical and effective practice in clinical work; and for delivery, supervision, development and improvement of systems and services in non-clinical context. An occupational therapist must be able to:

- 4.1 practice open, respectful and appropriate communication with clients, their family members, relatives and carer(s), to identify and articulates the rationale for practice, maximize their engagement and hence the treatment effectiveness.
  - 4.1.1 use client-centered approach that addresses physical, social, cultural or other barriers to facilitate communication.
  - 4.1.2 seek and respond to feedback in an interactive and reflective manner.
  - 4.1.3 adapt verbal, non-verbal and written communication appropriate to the clients and practice context.
  - 4.1.4 adopt timely communication at appropriate moment and/or occasion.
- 4.2 practice open and respectful communication to healthcare professionals, team members, and other stakeholders to uphold professional relationships and to enhance service efficacy.
- 4.3 comply with legal and procedural requirements for responsible and accurate documentation.
- 4.4 maintain up-to-date and complete records of practice. The format of records includes, but not limit to written, audio, visual and electronic.
- 4.5 maintain confidentiality and security in the sharing, transmission, storage and management of client information.



## **Supporting Competencies**

### **5. PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION**

An occupational therapist should collaborate and partner with other individuals, groups, organizations and communities in order to maximize the clients' benefits for best treatment outcomes. An occupational therapist is preferably able to :

- 5.1 explain role in client services to team members and clients.
- 5.2 engage services users and carer(s) in planning, treatment, and intervention to meet service users' needs and goals.
- 5.3 build and sustain professional relationships as an independent practitioner and as a collaborative member of a team.
- 5.4 demonstrate willingness to set team goals and priorities, measure progress, and learn from experience collaboratively as a team.
- 5.5 contribute to supporting, guiding and developing team members.
- 5.6 collaborate well with other agencies/departments who provides services in and across different sectors.
- 5.7 ask for support from the team members when appropriate.

## 6. TECHNOLOGY

Technology has a pervasive effect on our society and becomes clients' important and often an integral part of their daily lives nowadays. There are needs for occupational therapists to enhance their effective practice by digital literacy and the competent use of appropriate technologies. An occupational therapist is expected to be able to:

- 6.1 keep abreast of changes in practice setting by appraising and updating knowledge and skills in technology and its advancement for professional practice.
- 6.2 identify resources for further technology training and enhancing technology expertise as needed to meet the clients' intervention needs (e.g. daily living, cognitive retraining, assistive technology, environmental modification, ergonomic designs).
- 6.3 demonstrate competence in basic use of information technologies (such as personal computer, mobile device and apps, social media and audio/videoconferencing applications) and other relevant applications.
- 6.4 demonstrate competence in basic evaluation of assistive technology products for meeting clients' needs and to facilitate their proper and safe usage (such as mobile technology and robotics).
- 6.5 develop competence in technology-related services as relevant to service settings (e.g. information seeking, utilization, administration, outcome research, programme evaluation).

## **CONCLUSION**

To sum up, this competency standards framework is used to outline an occupational therapist's four core (Professionalism, Knowledge and Learning, Occupational Therapy Process and Practice, Communication) and two supporting competencies (Partnership and Collaboration, Technology).

It sets the foundation for skills, knowledge, attitude and behaviors for practicing occupational therapy professional service. Specifically, this competency standards framework, together with document on accreditation criteria, serves as the standards for occupational therapy educational program accreditation/re-accreditation and can guide curricula design and assessment schemes in occupational therapy education.

## References:

1. Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency: *Australian Occupational Therapy Competency Standards* (February 2018)
2. College of Occupational Therapists of British Columbia: *Essential Competencies of Practice for Occupational Therapists in Canada* (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, May 2011)
3. College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario Essential: *Competencies of Practice for Occupational Therapists in Canada* (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, May 2011)
4. The Dental Council of Hong Kong: *Competences for the Hong Kong Dentists* (September 2009)
5. The Medical Council of Hong Kong: *Hong Kong Doctors* (October 2017)
6. World Federation of Occupational Therapists: *Minimum Standards for Education of Occupational Therapists* (2016). Available from <https://www.wfot.org/assets/resources/COPYRIGHTED-World-Federation-of-Occupational-Therapists-Minimum-Standards-for-the-Education-of-Occupational-Therapists-2016a.pdf>