

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions About: *Representing Title and Credentials*

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Background

This Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document features answers to questions fielded from occupational therapists (OTs) in Alberta about how to use and represent their protected title and credentials. It has been prepared to supplement the **Use of Protected Title** practice guideline.

The list of questions in this Practice FAQs is not exhaustive and will be updated as unique questions are asked. If you have any concerns or questions about the content of the answers, please contact [ACOT](#).

Questions and Answers

- A. [Protected Title – What, Why and When](#) (what is protected title; can title be used on a LOA, after retirement or by a student; difference between title and credentials; difference between title and position description/employment role; where did the (C) go)
- B. [Examples of How to Communicate/Represent Title](#) (verbally, in written documentation, in email signature, when providing services virtually in other provinces)
- C. [Supplemental Information in Signature Blocks](#) (i.e., credentials, position description/employment role, land acknowledgements, gender pronouns)

Questions and Answers

A. Protected Title – What, Why and When

1. What is our protected title?

The protected titles which can be used by registered OTs in Alberta are outlined in Schedule 15 of the [Health Professions Act](#) (HPA) and the [Occupational Therapists Profession Regulation](#) (OTPR).

The protected titles registered OTs in Alberta are permitted to use include:

- registered occupational therapist;
- occupational therapist;
- O.T.
- provisional occupational therapist¹

¹ OTs on the Provisional Register are either new graduates, internationally educated OTs waiting to write and pass the national exam, or OTs who are undertaking supervised practice to re-enter the profession.

2. Why is our title called “protected”?

The HPA Part 7, Section 128 describes title protection as a means of ensuring no person or group of persons may imply or represent themselves as a regulated/registered health professional without being registered with a regulatory body. This applies to the 29 (soon to be 30) professions regulated under the HPA.

As qualifying credentials vary across the country and internationally, this could potentially lead to confusion for clients. Using your protected title offers confirmation to your clients that you have met the requirements to be registered/licensed to practice occupational therapy in Alberta. Anyone who contravenes this legislation is guilty of an offence and is subject to fines as per HPA Section 129. Unauthorized use of the protected title should be immediately reported to ACOT.

3. Is protected title the same as credentials?

No, protected title and credentials are not the same. In Alberta, title is protected and written into legislation (the HPA and the OTPR). Protected title is proof that you meet the requirements to be registered to practice OT in Alberta.

Your academic credentials (e.g., BScOT, MScOT or other variations depending on the institution you graduated from) are part of what qualifies you to register with ACOT; see OTPR Section 3(1) and (2) for the registration requirements. Academic credentials illustrate a system of standards that provide “*information about: depth/breadth of knowledge, conceptual awareness and/or knowledge of research, communication skills, application of knowledge, professional capacity/autonomy, and awareness of limits of knowledge*” for each credential you obtain ([Alberta Credential Framework \(ACF\)](#), Alberta Government, 2018).

Although inclusion of your academic credentials is not required, we have prepared examples in Section B for you to follow if you wish to include your academic credentials within your signature.

4. Which should come first – my title or my credentials?

The order doesn’t matter. You are not legislated to include academic credentials. If you choose to use your credentials, ensure that your protected title is prominent and clear to your clients, your colleagues and/or the general public. See Section B for examples.

5. The HPA and OTPR use lower case letters in the protected title and periods in the occupational therapist acronym (i.e., O.T.), can I use capital letters (i.e., Occupational Therapist) or just OT?

The HPA and OTPR use lower case letters in the protected titles and punctuation in the abbreviated form. It is acknowledged that capitalization of the protected title may sometimes be required/appropriate and is thus permitted. Section 128.1 of the HPA permits a regulatory body to authorize alternate punctuation in abbreviations or initials.

6. I am taking a student - how should they sign their name in chart notes or correspondence?

ACOT is only responsible for registered occupational therapists, not students. However, the use of the word “student” is addressed in the HPA - Section 128(5)(b); 128(5.1).

- *a student who is enrolled in a program that in the opinion of the registrar is a program to train persons to provide professional services shall use the word “student”*
- *the word “student” shall not be used in combination with the title “regulated” or “registered”*

Your student can sign their name:

First/Last Name, Occupational Therapy Student

First/Last Name, Student OT (or OT Student)



Students may also wish/be required to include the name of their institution after their title

Refer also to your employer's policies and procedures regarding students as well as the Fieldwork Coordinator of the university the student attends for additional guidance.

7. I'm supervising a provisional OT– how should they sign documentation.

Provisional OTs (new graduates/internationally educated OTs waiting to write and pass the national exam, or OTs who are undertaking supervised practice to re-enter the profession) must be registered with ACOT on the Provisional Register. Once approved for registration as a provisional OT, they would sign as follows:

First/Last Name, Provisional Occupational Therapist (or) Provisional OT

8. Can I use OT title if I'm not registered with ACOT?

No. Only those registrants who have successfully met the registration requirements and paid their annual fees are able to use the protected title. If you are not registered with ACOT you cannot use the protected title.

As indicated above, academic credentials are different than protected title. If you are *not registered* with ACOT, you may include your credentials within your name or signature, but you are *not permitted* to reference yourself as an "occupational therapist" nor an "OT".

If you are aware of anyone who is using the protected title and is *not* registered with ACOT, you are obligated to inform ACOT. Individuals found to be in contravention of the HPA section 128 are subject to fines as per HPA Section 129.

9. Can I use OT title when I am retired?

If you are retired/no longer practicing AND you hold registration with ACOT (which can be done if you have enough practice hours) – Yes.

If you are retired AND have cancelled your registration with ACOT – No.

You can still use/refer to your occupational therapy credentials. However, if/when you are asked to provide knowledge gained from your experience as an OT, make it clear that you are no longer registered to practice occupational therapy or use the title of occupational therapist.

10. Can I use OT title when I am on a Leave of Absence?

If you are on a leave of absence (sick, maternity, educational) AND you hold registration with ACOT - Yes.

If you decide to cancel your registration while on leave of absence – No.

11. I'm on ACOT's Courtesy Register, can I use title in Alberta?

Application to ACOT's Courtesy Register requires an applicant to be registered in good standing in another province. You can use the protected title legislated in your primary province of registration (along with indication of the province of registration if it is not already part of your protected title). You can include Courtesy Register (AB) after your title. For example:

First/Last Name, O.T. Reg. (Sask), Courtesy Register (AB)

12. I graduated years ago, and we used to include a (C) after our credential - i.e., BScOT(C) – why is this no longer required?

Historically, occupational therapists registered in Alberta and across Canada included the symbol (C) after their academic credentials. Our understanding is that this practice started when the National Occupational Therapy Certification Examination (NOTCE) was introduced in the late 1980s and before the HPA/OTPR came into effect in 2000 and 2006 respectively.

Inclusion of the (C) after one's credentials, was a way for an OT to indicate they had passed the NOTCE (and differentiate themselves from those who hadn't). Those who graduated before the NOTCE was implemented, could choose to write the exam or opt out as they were granted an exemption; regardless, they could register with ACOT's predecessor organization the Alberta Association of Registered Occupational Therapists (AAROT).

Some OTs continue to use the (C) after their credentials. Going forward, it is understood that by being a registered member of ACOT, you have either successfully completed the NOTCE or have been granted an exemption from writing the exam (if you are still practicing and graduated before 1988 or so). As a result, including this symbol is no longer required and should not be used... the days of fixing the (C) when it autocorrects to © are behind you!

B. Examples of How to Communicate/Represent Title

13. How should I convey my title verbally?

"Hi, I'm _____, I am the: 'registered occupational therapist', 'occupational therapist (or OT)', 'provisional occupational therapist (or OT)', 'occupational therapy (OT) student' who will be conducting your home visit tomorrow."

You can also mention that you are registered to practice in Alberta – this is particularly important if you are providing virtual services to clients outside of Alberta (and don't have to be licensed to practice in the province/state/country your client is located). See the **Practice FAQs: Practice Across Jurisdictions** and the **Virtual Care** practice guideline for more details on registration requirements for OTs practicing virtually beyond Alberta borders – both can be accessed from the [Practice Resources](#) page of the ACOT website.

14. What does ACOT require me to include in written documentation?

You at least need to include your OT title after your signature (replacing Registered with Provisional or Student if that is your case). For example, for a chart note:

Signature, OT or *Signature*, Reg. OT or *Signature*, Reg. OT (AB)

Or a legal document such as an OT Report:

Signature
First/Last Name, Registered Occupational Therapist (or Registered OT or Registered OT (AB))

Your employer or your student's post-secondary institution may have additional direction for how to sign chart notes either manually or digitally via an electronic record keeping system.

15. I am hired as a Mental Health Therapist; do I still need to tell my client I am an OT or include my OT title in my signature block?

Yes. This is because your job title or position description is different than your protected title.

In the case of a Mental Health Therapist position, the job description likely requires you to hold a permit/license with a regulatory body whose professional regulation includes performance of psychosocial interventions (a *restricted activity* listed within the [Occupational Therapists Profession Regulation](#)). You are required to tell your client you are a registered occupational therapist, so that in the event of a complaint, your client is clear on which college to bring a concern about your practice to.

The same applies to other positions/roles which are open to applicants from other regulated professions such as Client Service Managers or other non-traditional or non-clinical roles which OTs are often recruited to fill.

C. Supplemental Information in Signature Blocks

16. Does ACOT have any recommendations for what to include in my Email signature block?

ACOT only requires that you indicate your protected title. Below is an example of what you might include in addition to your title.

First/Last Name, credentials (optional)
Registered Occupational Therapist (AB) (or Reg. OT or Reg. OT (AB))
Position/Role Title (e.g., Home Care Case Manager, Mental Health Therapist, OT I, OT II etc.)
Employer Name
Contact Information

The same convention noted above would apply to Provisional or student OTs as well.

Your employer may have additional requirements (e.g., including a confidentiality statement, land acknowledgement, pronouns, important website links, etc.) over and above ACOT's minimum expectation.

17. How could I represent my credentials in client documentation or in my email block?

As long as your protected title figures prominently, the order you represent your credentials is based on personal preference. Order of credentials can be:

- qualifying OT degree, then higher-level degrees. For example:
First/Last Name, **Reg. OT (AB)** BScOT, MBA
First/Last Name, BA, MScOT **Provisional OT (AB)**
First/Last Name, BSc, OT Student
or
- in hierarchy of highest level of degree obtained followed by any certificates obtained (as recommended by the [Alberta Credential Framework \(ACF\)](#) or [CJOT](#)). For example:
First/Last Name, MScOT, BA **Reg. OT (AB)**
First/Last Name, MBA, BScOT **Provisional OT** (this is an example of an OT in supervised practice for re-entry)

18. Should I include a Land Acknowledgement in my email signature?

The [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action](#) was created to “redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation” (Truth and Reconciliation

Commission of Canada, 2015). Although not legislated, the act of acknowledging treaty land in email signatures, on business cards, or on webpages is one of many ways to show your commitment to reconciliation. For guidance refer to – [Territorial Acknowledgements: Going Beyond the Script](#).

19. Should I include my gender pronouns?

Alberta Human Rights Act and the *Canadian Human Rights Act* protects people from discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. Including your gender pronouns in your email signature is a practice that minimizes misgendering. See [What are Personal Pronouns and Why do They Matter](#).