

Title: A new tool for evaluating occupational therapy fieldwork is being rolled out across Canada<sup>1</sup>

Authors:

Anne-Marie Brassard, OTH, Associate Academic Coordinator of Clinical Education, McGill University;  
Cynthia Fauteux, OTH, Clinical Education Coordinator, Laval University;  
Marie-Ève Lacombe, OTH, Fieldwork Coordinator, Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières;  
Dobrochna Litwin, OTH, Head of Clinical Training Management and Development, Université de Montréal;  
Ève-Lyne Robitaille Baumier, O.T., Clinical Training Coordinator, Université de Sherbrooke.

Note: this article has been translated from French to English by DeepL, S. Murphy and C. Storr (June 2026)

You may already have heard about this from the fieldwork coordinators at one of the universities in Quebec: a new tool for assessing student fieldwork performance is about to be launched in Quebec. The development of a new fieldwork assessment tool common to all Canadian university programmes stems from a recommendation issued by two organisations deeply involved in the world of occupational therapy in Canada: the Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy University Programs (ACOTUP) and the Committee on University Fieldwork Education (CUFE). The pan-Canadian adoption of the new competency framework for occupational therapists in Canada (ACOTRO, ACOTUP, & CAOT, 2021) was the initial milestone that enabled this major project to be launched. CUFE members unanimously recognised that a new, standardized tool for assessing fieldwork across the country would be beneficial for all.

### **Context of the development and scientific approach**

To date, a wide variety of assessment tools exist, particularly in Quebec. The use of a single tool across Canada will facilitate fieldwork placements between university programmes, as well as create opportunities to integrate research and enhance evidence-based clinical training.

Firstly, a working group was formed to ensure proper representation of the various programmes across the country, encompassing both French-speaking and English-speaking communities. The authors of the new tool bring a range of expertise and experience in both quantitative and qualitative research in fieldwork education.

The working group was established in 2022 and began by analysing all the fieldwork assessment tools used in Canada. These were compared with one another and the differences were highlighted. The working group's next step was to reach a national consensus on the structure of the future tool, including: the scoring scale, the levels of learners within the academic programmes, and the expected fieldwork learning experiences for each placement.

---

<sup>1</sup> Brassard, A-M., Fauteux, C., Lacombe, M-E., Litwin, D., & Robitaille Baumier, È-L. (2026). Un nouvel outil d'évaluation de la formation clinique fait son entrée à travers le Canada. *La Revue de L'Ordre des Ergothérapeutes du Québec*, 17(1), Printemps 2026, 41-43.

Several consultations were held with the various stakeholders involved, namely: students, occupational therapists, preceptors, university faculty, ACOTUP and ACOTRO members, and the CAOT's Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) Committee. Once conceptual consensus was reached, the findings were presented at the CAOT conference in 2023. The working group subsequently developed fieldwork indicators for each learner level in both French and English, simultaneously.

A Delphi study was conducted with clinical experts identified by the fourteen university programmes to agree on the content and terminology used for the tool. Adjustments were made following the first round, and consensus was reached by the second round. This led to the creation of the new Occupational Therapy Fieldwork Assessment in Canada, the OTFAC.

### **Presentation of the tool**

The assessment tool has been developed according to four levels of learners. Each university programme has identified the level at which each of its clinical courses is situated. Thus, many of the Level 1 placements take place during the first year of training, whilst the final student placement of the programme is at Level 4. The requirements for each placement level are established according to the fieldwork indicator guidelines expected of students, based on their level of training. The tool is to be used as a guide to monitor trainees' progress throughout the placement, as well as during formal feedback sessions at the mid-placement and end-of-placement.

The tool consists of two sections: the **record of fieldwork experience** and the **assessment of practice competence** across the six domains of the Canadian Occupational Therapy Competencies.

The **record of fieldwork experience** describes the context of the practice setting and what the student is exposed to during their placement. Preceptors indicate the number of exposures for each clinical situation. For example, to quantify their student's exposure to the intervention process, they tick the box corresponding to the number of exposures completed: more than 4 intervention exposures, 2 to 3, one, or none. This allows both students to track their progress in fieldwork learning exposure and university programmes to ensure varied and complementary exposure. These fieldwork experiences are not part of the scored assessment; they are provided to document what students were able to experience.

**The assessment of students' competence** across the six domains forms the core of the tool. An overall rating for each of the six domains must be provided by the occupational therapist supervising the placement: occupational therapy expertise; communication and collaboration; culture, equity, and justice; excellence in practice; professional responsibility; and engagement with the profession (ACOTRO, ACOTUP, & CAOT, 2021).

The rating scale is divided into four potential scores (see Figure 1). For each domain, a list of fieldwork indicators provides potential observable behaviours to help determine whether trainees have met expectations. To pass the placement at final, each domain rating must be at least level 3.

Figure 1 – Scoring Scale

1. Problematic	2. Partially Meets Expectations	3. Meets Expectations	4. Exceeds Expectations
Overall, does not meet the competency indicators expected for the level, requiring constant supervision, guidance and/or cueing.	Partially meets the competency indicators expected for that level, needing occasional coaching, and/or consistent with the competency level expected mid-stage.	Overall, meets the competency indicators for the level.	Exceeds the competency indicators for the level.

©2025 Occupational Therapy Fieldwork Assessment in Canada by Susanne Murphy, Caroline Storr, Dr Annie Rochette, Dr Mary Roduta Roberts and Manon Boucher.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International Licence.

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/deed.fr>

## Implementation

The new 'Occupational Therapy Fieldwork Assessment in Canada' tool is currently being piloted in several programmes across Canada. Implementation will be managed by the university programme in your region. Please contact them to find out when you will be able to integrate it into your setting. Research analysis continues with the working group identifying final edits based on the utility pilot.

## Conclusion

In an era where borders are blurred and differences bring us together, the co-creation of a standardised national tool was a critical, next step. We hope that this new fieldwork evaluation will facilitate national and provincial mobility, promote better inter- and intra-provincial communication, whilst ensuring excellence in fieldwork education across the country.

If you would like further details regarding the development process and research supporting this tool, please contact one of the tool's co-authors.

## References

ACOTRO, ACOTUP, & CAOT. (2021). Competencies for Occupational Therapists in Canada/Référentiel de compétences pour les ergothérapeutes au Canada. Accessed (June 5, 2026) at [https://acotro-acore.org/sites/default/files/uploads/ot\\_competency\\_document\\_en\\_web.pdf](https://acotro-acore.org/sites/default/files/uploads/ot_competency_document_en_web.pdf)

Murphy, S., Storr, C., Rochette, A., Roduta Roberts, M. and Boucher, M. (2025). Evaluation of Occupational Therapy Placements in Canada.

Brassard, A-M., Fauteux, C., Lacombe, M-E., Litwin, D., & Robitaille Baumier, È-L. (2026). Un nouvel outil d'évaluation de la formation clinique fait son entrée à travers le Canada. La Revue de L'Ordre des Ergothérapeutes du Québec, 17(1), Printemps 2026, 41-43.