

Level I Fieldwork Q & A:

Q: What is Level I fieldwork?

A: According to the 2011 accreditation standards for MOT and OTA programs (AOTA, 2011), the goal of Level I fieldwork is to “introduce students to the fieldwork experience, to apply knowledge to practice and to develop understanding of the needs of clients” (p. 34). A Level I student can be supervised by professions other than OTs. A Level I experience varies from university to university and college to college, depending on the design of the program’s curriculum. For some this means a week of a full-time experience; for others it is once a week for an entire semester. Level I students are just beginning their journey into the practice arena.

Q: Is Level I fieldwork just observation?

A: The accreditation standards indicated that Level I fieldwork is “directed observation and participation in selected aspects of the occupational therapy process” (AOTA, 2011, p. 84). So indeed, it is much more than passive observation. Students should be encouraged and supported to perform components of the OT process used in your facility. They can do chart reviews, practice note writing, interview a client, begin to identify occupational performance needs of the client, develop a group based on specific goals identified during a supervisory meeting, co-lead a group, or assist with aspects of a treatment session. In addition, the student should have time to process their observations with you to help link this to classroom learning.

Q: How is this different from Level II fieldwork?

A: The goal of Level II fieldwork is entry-level practice. With this in mind, a Level I student is just beginning to understand the OT process, along with various diagnoses, assessments and interventions for certain populations. They are also learning about therapeutic use of self and various models of practice. They have not covered all content yet and are just beginning to apply the concepts learned in class to the practice setting. An ideal Level I experience is one in which a student can observe and participate in appropriate pieces of the OT/OTA responsibilities within a given facility. A Level II student, on the other hand, is finalizing and solidifying their learning. They should be on a track to be entry-level generalists by the end of their experience.

Questions about how to make this work in your setting? Contact your friendly neighborhood Academic Fieldwork Coordinator!

(brought to you by MOTEC – the Michigan Occupational Therapy Education Consortium)

Reference:

American Occupational Therapy Association (2011). Accreditation Standards for a Master’s-Degree-Level Educational Program for the Occupational Therapist, Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) of the American Occupational Therapy Association, Inc. *retrieved from* <http://www.aota.org/~media/Corporate/Files/EducationCareers/Accredit/Draft-Standards/2011%20Standards%20and%20Interpretive%20Guide%20-%20December%202012%20Version.ashx> on September 24, 2013