

RE | Support for Bachelor's education and regulation of occupational therapists

6th April 2023

Ministry of Health

Israel

Dear Minister,

The World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT) is the official international representative for the occupational therapy profession. Federated since 1952, today the Federation represents 107 member organisations and in excess of 633,000 occupational therapists worldwide. WFOT has been in official collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) since 1959 and recognised by the United Nations since 1963 – one of only eight international nongovernmental organisations to hold this status for in excess of 60 years. The Israeli Union of Occupational Therapists was one of the 10 founding member organisations of the Federation and still is a Full Member Organisation of WFOT.

The mission of WFOT as a global organisation is the development, use and practice of occupational therapy worldwide. Occupational therapy is a client-centred health profession concerned with promoting health and wellbeing through occupation. The primary goal of occupational therapy is to enable people to participate in activities of everyday life, thereby fostering functional ability across the life course. Using evidence-informed processes, occupational therapy addresses factors relating to individual ability, occupation or the environment to better support participation in everyday activities of choice or need relating to self-care, productivity and leisure.

WFOT strongly supports the regulation and recognition of the role of occupational therapists educated at the Bachelors level. Only qualified occupational therapists can make decisions about occupational therapy services, based on an analysis of the individual needs of people and the use of the occupational therapy process. Given the person-centred approach of occupational therapy, services are not prescriptive and require clinical reasoning to determine the most appropriate programme approach, validated by evidence and research. WFOT therefore strongly endorses that the minimum entry level credential for occupational therapists be a Bachelor's degree. Educating occupational therapists within higher education at a degree level ensures that occupational therapy services are grounded in the occupational domain of the profession, are theory-driven and built on the existing evidence.

Occupational therapists are essential health professionals and are equal to their collaborating partners such as nurses, physicians and physiotherapists and as such, the World Federation of Occupational Therapists strongly maintains that occupational therapy is an autonomous profession that should be legally protected and regulated accordingly. Its status should be the same as that awarded to other health professions.

WFOT encourages that all occupational therapists regulated in Israel receive occupational therapy entry level education that complies with the WFOT Minimum Standards for the Education of Occupational Therapists.¹ The WFOT Minimum Standards recognise that the competencies required for practice as an occupational therapist necessitate that occupational therapy programmes be situated in institutes of higher education, with graduates awarded a minimum of a bachelor's degree. The viability and portability of the profession is founded on a strong educational foundation based on standards that provide for international consistency and recognition of occupational therapy qualifications internationally. The Federation since its inception has provided Minimum Standards for the Education of Occupational Therapists that outline an international benchmark against which education programmes around the world are assessed. Its accompanying approval process is a rigorous mechanism for determining if an education programme meets the Minimum Standards. Renowned and internationally-experienced educators and clinicians around the world review the curricula of education programmes and recommend approval or non-approval. Education programmes that are approved are listed on the WFOT website (<https://www.wfot.org/programmes/education/wfot-approved-education-programmes>).

In closing, WFOT recognizes that further development of occupational therapy within Israel is dependent upon strategic collaboration between the profession and government organisations. WFOT is committed to working with the Israeli Union of Occupational Therapists and the Ministry of Health of Israel to establish occupational therapy as a regulated autonomous profession.

Kind regards,



Samantha Shann

President

World Federation of Occupational Therapists

¹ WFOT Minimum Standards for the Education of Occupational Therapists (2016)