



Explanatory introduction for the Occupational therapy qualification reference frameworks

Introduction

In 2008 the guidelines “*Reference points for Design and Delivery of Degree Programmes in Occupational therapy*” were published (Berding et al., 2008). Framed by TUNING Educational Structure in Europe, this publication was adopted by many European universities as a guideline to describe occupational therapy education programmes and the specific competencies, which outline the education of practitioners and researchers. Since then, the rapid advancements of the profession, changed population needs, and changes in standards nationally demanded incorporation and update of these competencies. As a result, the Tuning Academy project group, headed by the University of Groningen, continued its work to solve diverse inconsistencies between European Qualifications Frameworks and the Tuning Sectoral Qualifications Frameworks (SQFs). In addition to the inconsistencies, the importance of having dynamic frameworks that would permit the incorporation of innovation as well as allow improvement of contextual and cultural sensitivity of curricula design was recognised (Wagenaar, 2021).

The European Network of Occupational Therapy in Higher Education (ENOTHE) initiated contact with the Tuning Academy to work alongside other subject areas in the extension of the project *Measuring and Comparing Achievements of Learning Outcomes in Higher Education in Europe* (CALOHEX). The work involves the update of the Qualifications Reference Frameworks (Bachelor, Master, and Doctoral cycles) in Occupational Therapy and development of more detailed Assessment Reference Frameworks. Both frameworks are being designed to contribute to the enhancement and fairness of external and internal quality assurance mechanisms in occupational therapy education.

The Qualifications Reference Frameworks will offer clear indicators for the design and implementation of degree programmes and show the intended learning relevant to the preparation for finding employment and for a role in society.



ENOTHE

Holzmeistergasse 7-9 2/1
1210 Vienna
Austria

Info@enothe.eu
www.enothe.eu



The ENOTHE TUNING Taskforce 2022/23

The ENOTHE TUNING Taskforce, leading the development of the Qualifications Reference Frameworks (Bachelor, Master, and Doctoral cycles) is composed of occupational therapy educators who were recruited through an open call to all ENOTHE members and were nominated by their institutions. ENOTHE board members and a student representative of Student Platform of Occupational Therapy (SPOT) Europe are included in the taskforce.

Process

The first draft of the 2023 occupational therapy competencies were developed by the ENOTHE TUNING taskforce based on the Reference Points for the Design and Delivery of Degree Programmes in Occupational Therapy (Berding, et al., 2008) and the Starting Tuning of OT Master competences: Comparing masters' programmes to facilitate collaboration in OT education (ENOTHE Masters Project Group, 2017).

Critical discussions among members of the ENOTHE Tuning Taskforce, Tuning workshops at the 26th ENOTHE annual meeting in Tbilisi, Georgia 2022, a survey of programme coordinators, and topical group discussions further contributed to the development of the draft. The ENOTHE TUNING Taskforce was divided into small groups which focused on the Qualifications Reference Frameworks for each of the cycles (Bachelor, Master, and Doctoral). The groups merged again to check for coherence and progression in the cycles. Afterwards, the taskforce was redivided to focus on overarching topics, to ensure each topic was embedded within the cycles. Topics embedded are:

1. Societies and Cultures: Interculturalism
2. Processes of information and communication
3. Processes of governance and decision making
4. Ethics, norms, values, and professional standards
5. Sustainable development

Finally, members of the taskforce focused on the language and terminology in the three cycles. Later, these elaborated frameworks were modified according to the two-phase Delphi process with the participation and agreement of 16 European experts.



This consultation process, which you are now a part of, will add to the refinements of the Final Qualifications Reference Frameworks (Bachelor, Master, Doctoral).

Occupational therapy competences

The Occupational Therapy Qualification Reference Frameworks is based on a merge of two meta-frameworks - the European Qualifications Framework Lifelong Learning (EQF for LLL) and Qualifications Frameworks of the European Higher Education Area (QF of the EHEA). While the EQF for LLL is focused on the application of knowledge and skills in society, the focus of the QF of the EHEA relates to the learning process itself. The descriptors in the Reference Frameworks are organized on the basis of 'dimensions'. A dimension indicates a constructive key element, which defines a subject area. These dimensions are linked to the five strands of the QF of the EHEA. By applying the categories of the EQF for LLL each dimension involves three descriptors - knowledge, skills and autonomy and responsibility ('wider competences'), which reflect a progressive level of achievement.

The columns in the Occupational Therapy Qualification Reference Frameworks correspond to the three descriptors - Knowledge, Skills, and Responsibility and Autonomy. The rows correspond to the updated dimensions, revised from the 2008 TUNING competences:

- I. Knowledge of occupational therapy and occupational science
- II. Occupational therapy professional reasoning and process
- III. Critical thinking and scientific approach in occupational therapy and occupational science
- IV. Leadership, management, entrepreneurship, and innovation
- V. Communication, professional relationships, and partnerships
- VI. Life-long professional development
- VII. Contribution to original research (additional dimension in Level 8)



The Occupational Therapy competences in the Qualifications Reference Frameworks are described through a limited number of broad descriptors for each dimension. For each descriptor there will be more detailed sub-descriptors in the Assessment Reference Frameworks, which will be developed alongside the Qualifications Reference Frameworks to secure all gathered data (e.g., in Knowledge of occupational therapy and science on the bachelor level one of the broad descriptors is to "*Ensure respect to diversity in contexts, acknowledging their holistic influence on participation, occupational and social justice*". A sub descriptor clarifies this means: "*Consideration of values and norms, and according to application of ethical principles*"). They will offer a breakdown of the descriptors into sub-descriptors with measurable learning outcomes statements, examples of good practice of learning, teaching and assessment methods and approaches to achieve the learning outcomes defined.