



## Specialist standards for occupational therapists



SWEDISH ASSOCIATION OF  
**OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS**

Specialist standards for occupational therapists, 2015

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# Introduction

Occupational therapy activities are constantly changing. In order to meet requirements at both an individual's level and those of society greater demands are placed on specialized competence and professional expertise. Increased complexity places demands both on the professional depth and breadth of therapists' expertise. The following specialist standards are a means of ensuring and strengthening increased competence in the occupational therapy profession and its practice.

A specialist role in occupational therapy may involve:

- Integrating, synthesizing and applying knowledge in occupational therapy in relation to evidence within a field of specialization.
- Being able to reflect on ethical matters starting from one's field of specialization.
- Applying a professional approach in the professional role as a specialist in accordance with the ethical code of the profession.
- Identifying needs for, and managing development of, competence within one's field of specialization.
- Utilizing in-depth knowledge of how external factors affect ongoing professionalization of the profession and the development of fields of specialization.

## History

In Sweden, the first specialist training course for occupational therapists was approved by the Board of the Swedish Association of Occupational Therapists in 1998 and a Standards Advisory Council was set up. Since then the specialist standards have been revised continuously, most recently by the Board in 2015.

The Swedish Association of Occupational Therapists conducted the first mandatory professional in-service training course, *The Professional Role as a Specialist* in Autumn 2002. In 2003 the first occupational therapists were awarded specialist qualifications. Participation in this specialist training course is a benefit open to members of the Association.

# The Swedish Association of Occupational Therapists' Standards Advisory Council

## **POWERS**

The Standards Advisory Council is the Association's body for:

- Coaching applicants in respect of designing their individual educational programs.
- Deciding matters concerning equivalence.
- Approving both applications for specialist training and individual specialist educational programs.
- Being responsible for planning and implementation of the mandatory professional course which is included in specialist education.
- Deciding on and awarding specialist qualifications.

Appeals against decisions of the Standards Advisory Council can be made to the Board of the Swedish Association of Occupational Therapists.

## **MEMBERS OF THE SPECIALIST ADVISORY COUNCIL**

The Advisory Council consists of a Chairman and six additional members. These are appointed by the Board of the Association.

The members of the Council should represent each and every single specialist field. Members should have a PhD or specialist training and should be active within their field of expertise.

# Specialist standards

A specialist standard is a means of distinguishing within which fields of activities and functions specialization can take place. For occupational therapists the designation “specialist” consists of one specialist field together with two specialist functions.

## **SPECIALIST FIELDS**

Five fields in which occupational therapists are active have been defined: Working life and education, Public health, Habilitation and care of those with functional impairments, Healthcare and nursing and Healthcare for, and care of, the elderly. Activities in each field are considered independent of the principal organizers thereof.

### **Working life and education**

Covers occupational therapy activities coupled with interventions concerning ability to work or study as well as participation in work or education.

### **Public health**

Covers occupational therapy activities at individual, group and community levels coupled with preventative measures and health.

### **Habilitation and functional impairment**

Covers occupational therapy activities that are linked with interventions for persons with permanent functional impairments.

### **Healthcare and nursing**

Covers occupational therapy activities within both somatic and psychiatric care which are linked with healthcare and nursing.

### **Healthcare for, and care of, the elderly**

Covers occupational therapy activities that are linked with healthcare for, and care of, elderly persons (aged 65 +).

### **SPECIALIST FUNCTIONS**

Specialist functions describe what occupational therapists do, thus forming a basis for specialization. Four specialist functions have been defined: *Investigation*, *Intervention*, *Evaluation* and *Consultation and/ or Supervision*. Two of these functions must be included in specialist education.

#### **Investigation**

Covers occupational therapy investigation of an individual's needs for activity and resources and limitations at functional, activity/participation levels as well personal factors and those in the surroundings.

#### **Intervention**

Covers various types of intervention (preventative, providing improvement and compensatory) starting from an individual's needs for activity at functional, activity/ participation level as well as personal factors and those in the surroundings.

#### **Evaluation**

Covers intervention at individual, group and community levels; methods of working or collaboration. Evaluation also includes development of quality.

#### **Consultation and/or supervision**

Covers interventions directed towards individuals, relatives etc; consultation with or supervision of colleagues or other professionals and students as well as other players.

## Proof of legitimacy and description of specialization

The Advisory Council issues a Certificate of Specialist Competence following the completion and approval of all parts of the specialist course of training undertaken.

The Certificate of Specialist Competence is valid for one field of specialization together with two specialist functions e.g. *Specialist in occupational therapy in working life and education especially with respect to intervention and consultation and/or supervision.*

## Specialist education

A specialist training course may be undertaken after completion of a Master's Degree or acquiring at least 60 ECTS credits at an advanced level.

Specialist training is comprised of a total of 40 (forty) weeks (equivalent to 60 ECTS credits) and, in addition to the mandatory professional course, includes elective courses within the field of specialization as well as the specialist functions which the applicant wishes to have included in his/her Certificate of Specialist Competence.

The education is based on the contents of an applicant's application for a course leading to specialist competence. These contents also form the basis for the individual training program.

Thus, specialist education includes elective courses, which an applicant has undergone earlier, together with the mandatory, six-week course which is carried out under the auspices of the Swedish Association of Occupational Therapists.

## **ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS**

### **Registration**

An eligible applicant must be a State-registered occupational therapist.

### **Theoretical background**

Applicants must have a minimum of a master's degree or at least 60 (sixty) completed credits at master's level. Of these at least 30 credits must be specialization in Occupational Therapy. The university credits in Occupational Therapy must include at least six on "The concept Activity, theories and models" as well as at least 15 (fifteen) credits of independent work in Occupational Therapy at an advanced level.

### **Practical basis**

Applicants must have at least five years of practical experience working in occupational therapy during the ten most recent years, of which at least two years in the field of specialization concerned. Such work must have been at least half time.

## **INDIVIDUAL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM**

A completed application for specialist training constitutes an individual educational program.

## **PROFESSIONAL COURSE**

The professional course, held under the auspices of the Association, completes specialist education. The course is mandatory and comprises of six weeks of full time study. In order to join this course all of the other courses in the individual educational program must have been completed previously.

Using in-depth analysis and synthesization, the professional course aims at ensuring that participants gain increased expertise within both the specialist field and the specialist functions chosen.

## **COURSES IN THE SPECIALIST FIELD**

For the specialist field a course has to be the equivalent of 30 (thirty) ECTS credits, spread over 20 (twenty) weeks. The course must provide knowledge within the field for which an applicant seeks expertise (specific subject matter that can be utilized in occupational therapy in the field of specialization).

Such courses need not be at pre-determined levels, nor credited in a system of higher education, but must be carried out after initial training as an occupational therapist.

## **COURSES IN SPECIAL FUNCTIONS**

Given the two specialist functions chosen, the courses that are to be completed must be the equivalent of 15 (fifteen) ECTS credits, spread over 10 (ten) weeks. Such courses must have a clear relationship with each respective function and may either be divided equally between the two specialist functions, or be a minimum of 4 (four) weeks/ 9 (nine) credits on one function and a maximum of 6 (six) weeks/ 9 (nine) credits on the other.

Such courses need not be at pre-determined levels, nor credited in a system of higher education, but must be carried out after initial training as an occupational therapist.

## **EXAMINATION**

Specialist education is examined through each and every part of the specialist training course having been completed and approved, as well as through holding a specialist lecture which is examined by the Advisory Council.





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