

COTNS Continuing Competency Portfolio Usefulness Supported by Survey Results

In 2007, the College of Occupational Therapists of Nova Scotia (COTNS) introduced registrants to the first component of the Continuing Competency Program - the Continuing Competency Portfolio and the requirement that all occupational therapists registered to practice in Nova Scotia must develop and maintain a professional portfolio. All components of the portfolio were implemented in 2009.

In December 2011, the Continuing Competency Committee developed and administered the COTNS Continuing Competency Portfolio Evaluation Survey to registrants to determine the effectiveness of the portfolio in fostering competency reflection and professional development. The survey also asked registrants their opinion on the use of electronic portfolio (e-portfolio) and learning modules as part of the Continuing Competency Program.

The survey was distributed to all registered therapists in Nova Scotia. The response rate was 26.14%.

The survey results show about 60% of the respondents see value in maintaining the continuing Competency Portfolio and about 50% reported they had a positive learning experience with the portfolio. Some of the respondents - about 41% felt having the portfolio does not help with lifelong learning and professional development. They further added that as occupational therapists they would engage in ongoing professional development anyway.

Overall, respondents support the development of an electronic portfolio and learning modules. However, they expressed the need for simplicity and relevancy to practice areas.

"I am more diligent in attending CPD events and maintaining my awareness of EBP on an ongoing basis"

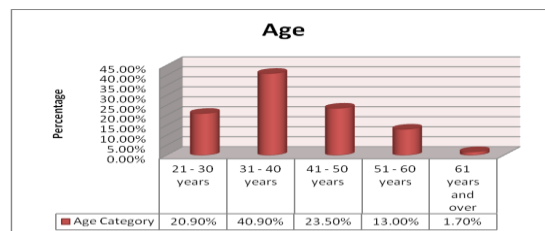
"I have not noticed any changes in my professional practice, but I do see the portfolio as a way to keep everything organized in one place for easy access".

"The portfolio does not influence my professional practice or the professional development. I am doing the same professional development that I would have done anyway".

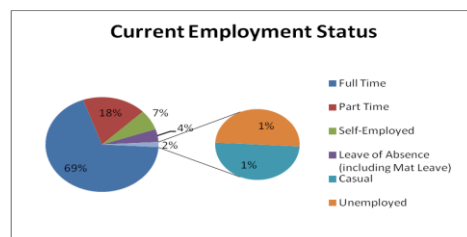
The Participants:

About 440 occupational therapists received an invitation to participate in the online survey. 115 (26.14%) participated. The demographic information as follows:

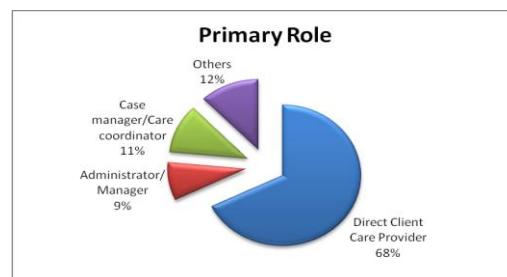
Age: Majority is within 31-40 age group.



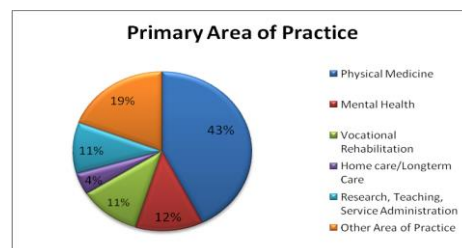
Employment Status: 69% are full time employed



Primary Role: 68% are direct client care providers.



Practice Area: 43% practice in physical medicine.



Survey Questionnaire and Administration

The notification of the survey was emailed to all registrants - inviting them to share their experience using the portfolio over the past years. Participants were given the option of completing the Survey online or use hard copy and fax or mail completed survey to the College.

Participants were asked to rate statements from strongly disagree to strongly agree that addressed portfolio development process, usefulness of the portfolio and future consideration for Continuing Competency Portfolio. The responses were further grouped in three categories: Agreed (strongly agreed and agreed); Not Sure; Disagreed (strongly disagreed and disagreed).

Results:

Value of Portfolio Creation:

About 92.3% of respondents agreed that the portfolio helped with pulling together important document in one place for easy access. About 50% agreed the portfolio helped in identifying strengths and setting goals for professional development and 62% agreed that it helped in creating a learning plan to achieve identified goals. About 45% of respondents disagreed with the statement that "creating a professional portfolio helped with reflective thinking skills" and about half (49.51%) disagreed with the statement "I have made changes in my practice as a result of my learning activities".

Some additional comments on the value of the portfolio include:

"Better awareness of accomplishment and areas requiring improvement, more concrete goals identified and a more tangible professional development plan"

"I am more diligent in attending CPD events and maintaining my awareness of EBP on an on-going basis"

"The continuing competency portfolio acts as a reminder to actively search for more learning opportunities. I feel that it has made me proactive to take on new learning challenges".

"I enjoyed the continuing education log and compiling the material for my portfolio".

"Overall, completing the portfolio was a positive experience. It is very well laid out and COTNS provides great resources to assist in the completion".

"I see the value in the portfolio as a means of the college ensuring that all members are doing this, and reminding us of the importance of these".

"While I support a competency portfolio in general, I believe improvements could be made to ensure efficient use of time for professional development aimed to increase practice skills".

"I have not noticed any changes in my professional practice, but I do see the portfolio as a way to keep everything organized in one place for easy access."

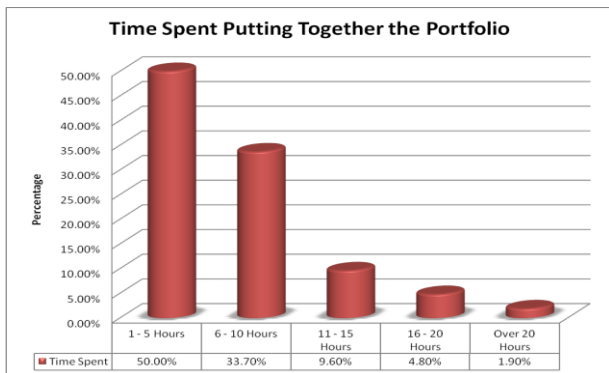
"The portfolio does not influence my professional practice or the professional development. I am doing the same professional development that I would have done anyway".

"Very labour intensive and repetitive. Overall unhappy with the concept of continuing competency portfolio - time consuming and not very beneficial".

"I see the value in the portfolio in helping maintain documents and goals for the year, however, the self-assessment tool is long and tedious. OT's should be able to make 2-3 goals based on each competency rather than go through each part of each competency"

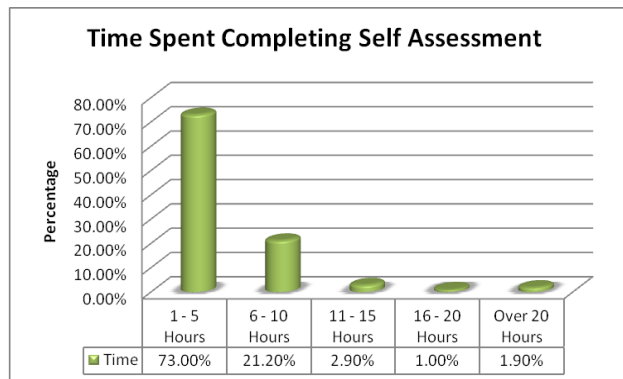
Time Commitment: Putting Together the Portfolio:

50% reported it took 1 - 5 hours; 33.7% reported 6-10 hrs; 9.6% reported 10-15 hrs; about 6.7% reported over 16 hours.



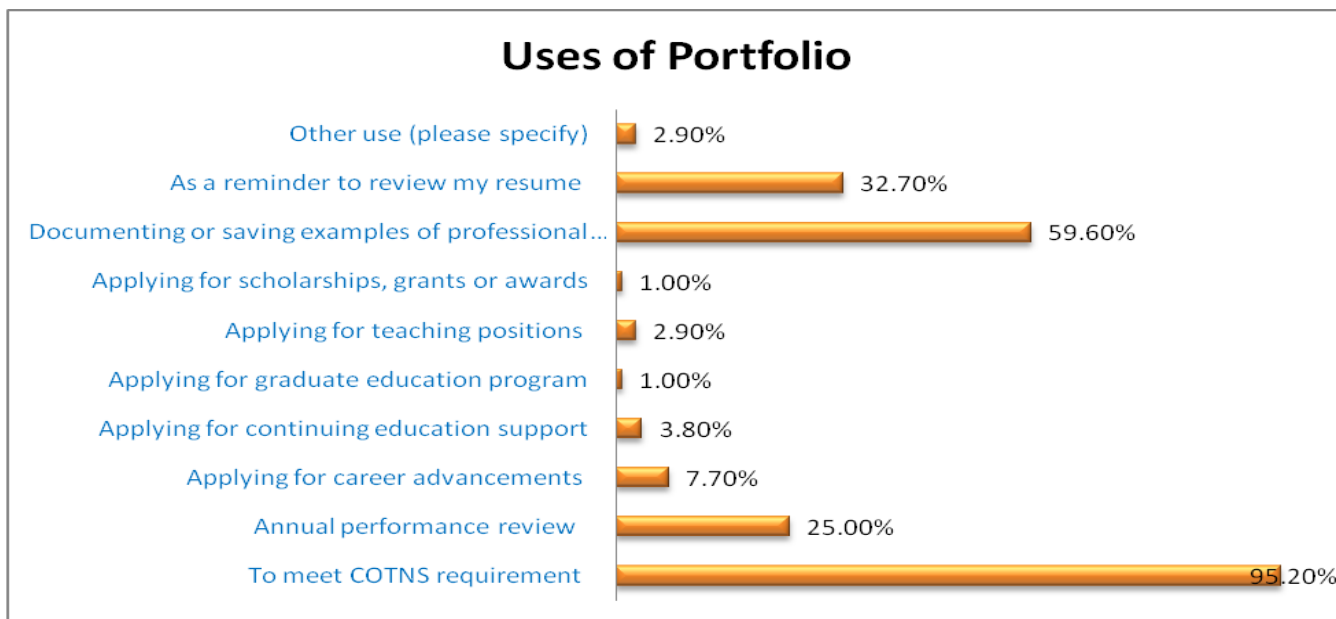
Time Commitment: Completing Self Assessment:

73.0% reported it took 1 - 5 hrs; 21.2% reported 6-10 hrs; 2.9% reported 10-15 hrs; about 2.9% reported over 16 hrs



General Uses of Portfolio:

About 95% of respondents indicated that they use the portfolio to meet COTNS requirements. Documenting or saving examples of professional activities 59.60% and annual performance review 25.0%. Only few respondents (16.4%, n=17) reported using the portfolio for career development.



Use of Portfolio in Changing Jobs:

About 23.5% of respondents reported use of the portfolio in changing jobs. Of those who had changed jobs only about 25% agreed the portfolio helped in better understanding of career goals, searching for jobs, or preparing for job interviews. Overall, over 65% disagreed on the usefulness of the portfolio in changing jobs

Future Consideration for Continuing Competency Portfolio: Electronic Portfolio

Members were asked about possible ways to improve the Continuing Competency Portfolio such as use of Electronic Portfolio (ePortfolio) and online Learning Modules.

Survey findings reflect that 54.9% of respondents support an electronic portfolio as an alternate to paper based; 25.5% are not sure and 19.68 disagree with an e-Portfolio. About 46.6% of respondents supported the use of both electronic and paper based; 28.9% were "Not Sure" and 26.7% not in support of use of both.

Some additional Comments include:

"Great idea. I think it is a great idea to do an ePortfolio. It makes it not only more accessible but easier to access as well." Great idea! My portfolio is overflowing with paper". "I am a fan of most online and electronic"

"There are documents that are collected along the way - paper and online portfolio comb may be the best option". "I still find the easiest access is to have pen/paper. It is more transportable and the way, my brain learned. However I recognize the value of on-line"

" Concerned about access and privacy " "I do not want my professional information online"

"Concerns that an online portfolio would create more work. ie. scanning all documents, course certificates and client feedback into the computer".

"I think it would be great if there were an online system for managing one's portfolio (sending out reminders for goals or upcoming deadlines)".

Future Consideration for Continuing Competency Portfolio: Learning Modules

Over 64% of respondents support the development of an online learning module as an additional component to the Continuing Competency Program. Only about 11% respondents were not in agreement and 24.3% were not sure.

About 64% agreed with the statement that access to online learning modules will help them in meeting professional development requirements. 24.3% were not sure and 11.7% disagree.

Some additional Comments:

"I love the idea of available opportunities for on-line learning. Hopefully we'd be able to print a certificate of completion with it for our "paper"!"

"The learning modules should be for all areas of practice and should be for all skill levels. It will be important to offer modules that will be relevant and challenging for all OTs in Nova Scotia.

"I feel that the resources available for Nova Scotia OT's for continuing education is limited and I would like increase opportunities to extend my continuing education"

"I support this idea, and it would be interesting to have a discussion forum for therapists to post suggested topics for modules".

"I think having learning modules is a great idea, especially for rural Nova Scotians who don't always have access to in-services".

"Please ask Dalhousie to help with this-- we have expertise in development of online learning".

"I...With diverse learning needs amongst the OT community, it would be challenging to develop learning modules that apply across the various practice settings and types".

"I would like to see a choice of modules -to allow you to tailor the modules to best fit your practice". Alternatively a basic review of OT principles that are key to OT in general"

"I would like to know what material would be proposed to be included - would these be like webinar or continuing education activities about OT topics, or modules specifically about portfolios?"

Next Step:

The continuing Competency Committees will use the feedback from members to further develop and improve the Continuing Competency Program

- Revision of the self assessment tool
- Explore an E-Portfolio
- Explore development of learning modules

Acknowledgement:

The Continuing Competency Committee would like to thank the occupational therapists who took the time to complete the survey. Thank You.

"Overall, the investment in time in creating and maintaining portfolio is well worth the value it provides".

New Edition of Essential Competencies Addresses NonClinical Work

Essential Competencies of Practice for Occupational Therapists in Canada was recently revised by the Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy Regulatory Organizations (ACOTRO). This third edition reflects changes to occupational therapy practice over the past few years with more explicit descriptions of the competencies related to interprofessional practice, teamwork, and collaboration. Occupational therapists whose work extends beyond direct client care will also find competencies that address other roles. ACOTRO recognizes that developing competencies that are inclusive of all occupational therapists recognizes that public protection is dependent on a profession that supports and monitors the competence of all its members, regardless of their present roles (Essential competencies 3rd ed., 2011).

The Essential Competencies (3rd ed.) is organized into the following seven units:

1. Assumes Professional Responsibility
2. Thinks Critically
3. Demonstrates Practice Knowledge
4. Utilizes an Occupational Therapy Process to Enable Occupation
5. Communicates and Collaborates Effectively
6. Engages in Professional Development
7. Manages Own Practice and Advocates within Systems

The competencies that describe nonclinical work do not include Units 3 and 4. They concentrate on the knowledge, skills and abilities required for effective development, delivery, oversight and/or improvement of systems and services, as opposed to clinical practice. However occupational therapists with many roles may draw upon both sets of competencies to accurately reflect their daily work. For example, practice leaders who carry a caseload may apply competencies from all units and pull specific competencies that address their management roles such as quality improvement.

Importance of Context

Although *Essential competencies (3rd ed.)* sets the standard for developing entry to practice and continuing competence requirements, it needs to be interpreted within the context and authority of each provincial regulatory organization. Likewise, the individual occupational therapist has the responsibility for applying these competencies within their practice and their various roles. It is expected that the vast majority of the competencies will be applicable in most contexts, but in the event that this is not possible a reasonable explanation should be available.

Process for Revisions

The revisions to *Essential competencies (2nd ed.)* and the development of the competencies for nonclinical work involved a collaborative and systematic process. It began with a comprehensive environmental scan and document analysis, followed by consultations with key informants as the competencies were reviewed and revised. A field consultation using a national survey of occupational therapists was also done to validate the content and construct of this edition. Additionally, focus groups were used as needed.

The project was guided by a diverse group of experts on the Steering Group and Advisory Group that included members from ACOTRO, the Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy University Programs (ACOTUP), and the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT) as well as other experts external to occupational therapy (*Essential competencies 3rd ed., 2011*).

Other Updates

In addition to the development of the competencies for nonclinical work, the following additions and/or revisions were made:

- A definition of competence and a description of the elements of competence.
- A description of the competencies for occupational therapists with nonclinical work.
- An overview of the approach used for the *Essential competencies (3rd ed.)* and that used for the *Profile of Occupational Therapy Practice in Canada, 2007*.
- Fine-tuning of areas that were redundant in the previous edition.
- A more explicit description of the competencies related to interprofessional practice, teamwork, and collaboration in occupational therapy.
- A more explicit inclusion of the competencies related to client safety in occupational therapy practice.
- Adjustments to reflect other changes in practice context, such as health human resources and culture. (*Essential competencies 3rd ed., 2011*).

Essential competencies (3rd ed.) describes the knowledge, skills, and abilities that are required for occupational therapists to provide safe ethical and effective services, and for some occupational therapists, the development, delivery, oversight and/or improvement of systems and services. With this third edition, occupational therapists now have an expanded repertoire of competencies which more accurately reflect the diversity of the profession. ■

Reference

Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy Regulatory Organizations [ACOTRO]. 2011. *Essential competencies of practice for occupational therapists in Canada (3rd ed.)*. Toronto, ON: Author.

