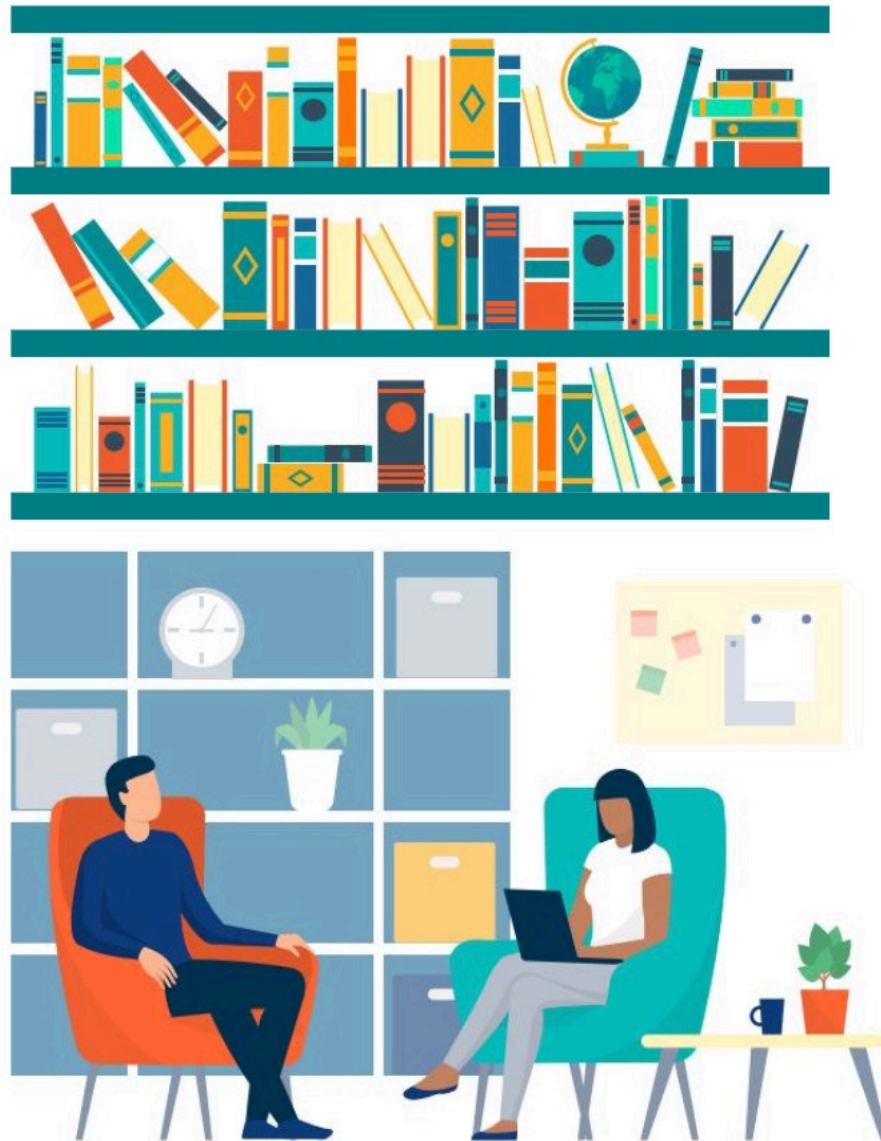


# CONNECTIONS

Supporting people to engage in activities they find meaningful

WINTER 2021 | VOL 18 ISSUE 2



## From Theory to Practice

**Animal-Assisted OT: Providing Safe and Ethical Services**

Putting Co-design into Service Design: The AT Navigation Program

**Shaping New Graduates' Experiences:  
Make Intervention Decisions**





# Employment Considerations for New OT Graduates

Anna Pannuzzo, Director, WorkPlacePLUS

Entering the occupational therapy profession can be an exciting yet challenging time for new graduates. With a smorgasbord of potential workplace settings to consider, from private practice, hospitals, and rehab centres to schools, community organisations, and businesses, it is important to know your role and responsibilities when looking to be employed as an occupational therapist.

## Before you Sign

When looking for an occupational therapy position and considering a potential employer, the first few things to look out for are:

- The position description—does this reflect the role you are looking for?
- Employment arrangement—is it employee or contractor, permanent or casual, full-time or part-time?
- Pay rate—is the correct pay rate being offered?
- Contract of employment—make sure you read and understand it!

The terms and conditions of your contract may differ depending on the workplace setting you choose (e.g. private practice, hospital, not-for-profit organisation, etc). Some employers will offer the minimum rates under the Health

Professionals and Support Services Award, whereas others will have an enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA).

Once you've read, understood, and signed your contract, it's time to pop the champagne! But it's also important to know what to expect in those first few days, weeks and months as you transition into your new workplace.

## Onboarding

In the first few days of employment, there will generally be plenty of paperwork. For example, you will need to fill out your superannuation and tax forms, your bank details so you can get paid, and any professional requirements such as a Working with Children Check or Police Check.

Your employer may have an onboarding or induction program, designed to familiarise you with the workplace culture and the way things operate. This may include an introduction to:

- Organisational values or mission statement
- Policies and procedures
- Key stakeholders
- Access to technology and/or workspaces
- Your key contacts and co-workers within the organisation

During this time, it is advisable to keep a copy of your position description on hand and ask plenty of questions to gain a better understanding of where you fit in and the expectations of your role.

**Tip:** When you start with a new employer, ensure your pay rate is as per your contract and you get paid either in the fortnight or month advised. If you have any queries about your entitlement, don't be afraid to ask!

**As an employee, you need to understand your legal rights and take the time to properly review and understand the policies and expectations of the business.**



## Probation Period and Performance Reviews

A probation period or 'trial period' is the initial period of employment in which the employer can assess your suitability and you can decide if the job is right for you. Your employer decides on the length of the probation period, which can range from a few weeks to a few months. While on probation, you should expect to receive your normal entitlements per your employment contract, including accruing and accessing paid annual leave and sick leave. If you don't pass your probation, or decide that the job isn't right for you, you are still entitled to have your unused accumulated annual leave hours paid out.

Regular performance reviews are an important part of the professional manager/staff relationship. They include discussions around:

- Achievements
- Areas for improvement
- Future objectives

At the beginning of your probation period, your manager or employer should sit down with you to discuss the key result areas they are looking for, and to schedule some follow-up meetings. Use these as an opportunity to receive feedback, track your own progress, and discuss any concerns.

## Employee Obligations

Employees generally have a duty to:

- Take reasonable care for their own health and safety
- Take reasonable care for the health and safety of others who may be affected by their actions or omissions
- Not 'intentionally' or 'recklessly' interfere with or misuse anything provided in the workplace
- Behave and act appropriately in the interests of a positive workplace culture
- Cooperate with anything the employer does to comply with legislative requirements (e.g. Fairwork Act, WHS Laws, Privacy Laws).

As an employee, you need to understand your legal rights and take the time to

properly review and understand the policies and expectations of the business. In particular, make sure you familiarise yourself with the code of conduct, rules around workplace safety, and the processes for performance management, including how to make a complaint.

If you are going to be working outside of your usual workplace—such as visiting a client in a residential facility or in their home—it is important to be aware that these places become an extension of your workplace, and all relevant policies and procedures apply. Make sure you discuss the relevant workplace protocols with your employer, including what to do if a safety incident occurs or something goes wrong.

Before you accept a job offer, do not hesitate to do some research and ask plenty of questions. There is a range of support services available to members of OTA who are new graduates transitioning into practice. For employment-related queries, you can contact OTA's preferred HR provider, WorkPlacePLUS. Learn more at [www.workplaceplus.com.au](http://www.workplaceplus.com.au) or by calling Anna Pannuzzo on (03) 9492 0958.