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## Master's Degree in Occupational Therapy in the Czech Republic

### Abstract:

Occupational Therapy forms an integral part of comprehensive rehabilitation, having as its main goal the achievement of maximum possible self-sufficiency and independence in people with different types of disability, at any age. Internationally, the training of occupational therapists is not unified<sup>1</sup>. The degrees of education that can be achieved by therapists in the different countries of Europe and globally range from secondary education through higher vocational schools to higher education and Bachelor's, Master's or Doctoral degrees<sup>2</sup>. Worldwide, the title of Professor of Occupational Therapy Sciences is not exceptional. Since 1992, occupational therapists in the Czech Republic have been able to receive a three-year Bachelor's university education. Studies in the first ever two-year Master's degree in Occupational Therapy were opened in the Czech Republic in 2014 at the 1st Medical Faculty of Charles University in Prague. This programme provides therapists with a deeper theoretical and practical clinical knowledge, and is oriented towards science, research and management of health care. Emphasis is also placed on health and social legislation, professional terminology and interprofessional cooperation, as well as information and modern technology. The key teachers of this programme are primarily experts in the field of Occupational Therapy, with further input from doctors, physiotherapists and other medical specialists, biomedical engineers, lawyers, statisticians and managers. Gaynor Sadlo, an Emeritus Professor of Occupational Therapy at the University of Brighton, and a visiting professor of Occupational Therapy Sciences, plays an important role in teaching a specific focus on science and research regarding Occupational Therapy and equality in the workplace. In her

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<sup>1</sup> ENOTHE Masters Project Group, *Starting Tuning of OT Master competences: Comparing masters' programmes to facilitate collaboration in OT education*, Project phase II, Report of the ENOTHE Masters Tuning Project Group, March 2017, [http://enothe.eu/Wordpress%20Documents/Projects/Report%20for%20ENOTHE%20board\\_31032017\\_Master%20project%20group.pdf](http://enothe.eu/Wordpress%20Documents/Projects/Report%20for%20ENOTHE%20board_31032017_Master%20project%20group.pdf), [access date: 29.10.2017]

<sup>2</sup> AOTA, *Academic Programs Annual Data Report, Academic Year 2014–2015*, prepared by: Division of Academic and Scientific Affairs, American Occupational Therapy Association © 2015, <https://www.aota.org/~media/Corporate/Files/EducationCareers/Educators/2014-2015-Annual-Data-Report.pdf>, [access date: 29.10.2017]

teaching, she uses „Problem Based Learning (PBL)”. Collaboration with foreign universities and health facilities worldwide enables students of the programme to travel abroad during their Master’s studies through the Erasmus+ program to Finland (Kuopio), Italy (Ancona), Belgium (Ghent), Austria (Vienna) or Sweden (Stockholm). In 2017, two students of Occupational Therapy participated in a three month professional residency in Israel (Tel Aviv University, Sackler Faculty of Medicine, Sheba Hospital) for the first time in the history of Charles University.

**Keywords:** occupational therapist, education, Master of Occupational Therapy, interprofessional collaboration, comprehensive rehabilitation

## Introduction

According to the recommendations of the UN, the WHO, the European Commission and the Council of Europe, Occupational Therapy is a necessary and recognized profession which forms part of rehabilitation. Rehabilitation provides the tools and aids needed to achieve independence and self-determination. The WHO also notes that the lack of appropriate services for people with disabilities is a significant barrier to health care<sup>3</sup>.

*„Occupational therapy was ranked as the 7th best job in 2012. For all member states of the Council of Occupational Therapists for European Countries (COTEC) the growth from 2007 and 2010 is 11%. Yet Finland saw an increase of 32%, Switzerland of 22%, Greece of 39% and Ireland even 244% of occupational therapists”<sup>4</sup>.*

With the growth and development of Occupational Therapy, this discipline has come to be applied not only in the health care sector, but also in the social sphere, in employment, in the education process and in work with ethnic minority groups. It involves work with people with various types of disability (including those with physical, psychological, mental, sensory or social disadvantages) at any age<sup>5</sup>. The term „occupation” encapsulates the main focus of Occupational Therapy and relates to the normal activities of daily life in which people engage. Occupation is meant here as any meaningful activity for a person, but one which must be specifically targeted to each individual and which defines a wide range of categories: ADLs (Activities of Daily Living), IADLs (Instrumental Activities of Daily Living), rest and sleep, education, work,

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<sup>3</sup> WHO, *Rehabilitation*, <http://www.who.int/topics/rehabilitation/en/>, [access date: 28.10.2017]

<sup>4</sup> Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, *European Master Of Science In Occupational Therapy*, <http://www.ot-euromaster.eu/about/about-ot-euromaster.html>, [access date: 29.10.2017]

<sup>5</sup> Jelínková J., Krivošíková M., *The concept of occupational therapy*, Czech Association of Occupational Therapists, 2007, <http://ergoterapie.cz/Page.aspx?PageHierarchyID=8&PageIndex=5&PageID=45&node=7&ParentPageID=51>, [access date: 30.9.2017]

leisure, play and social participation<sup>6</sup>. Working with targeted and meaningful occupation, the occupational therapist assists in facilitating the full or partial participation of people with disabilities in society. This focus on occupation, i.e. coming from the perspective of meaningful activities, is essential in developing human quality of life.

In order to achieve the maximum independence and functional level of an individual, it is necessary to ensure coordinated interprofessional cooperation amongst members of the rehabilitation team, all acting in accordance with the doctor's recommendations. Occupational therapists generally work as part of an interprofessional rehabilitation team including a rehabilitation doctor, physiotherapist, psychologist, speech therapist, special needs educator, social worker, nutritional therapist and prostheticist, as well as other medical and non-health professionals<sup>7</sup>.

Occupational Therapy is still considered a new field in the Czech Republic and the societal demand for this profession is constantly rising. There are currently 4 universities in the Czech Republic which offer a healthcare specialisation in Occupational Therapy at Bachelor's degree level, namely in Prague, Pilsen, Ostrava and Ústí nad Labem. These are all full-time study programmes, with the exception of Ústí nad Labem, where distance learning is also possible. Graduates of these study programmes are prepared for the professional and theoretical, as well as practical aspects of their profession. Until 2014, there was no corresponding Master's degree in this field in the Czech Republic.

## **Characteristics of Master's degree level education in Occupational Therapy in the Czech Republic**

A Master's degree level education in Occupational Therapy is essential for professionals who are preparing to be or have already become team leaders or even scientific workers. It is essential for professionals in healthcare areas where it is not common to employ occupational therapists (in oncology, psychiatry, work with patients/clients with mental disabilities etc.). It is also necessary for the managers of occupational therapeutic teams in workplaces and for higher education teachers in the field of Occupational Therapy. Correspondence with the Bachelor's study programme is necessary for the deepening of expert theoretical knowledge, as well as expert practical skills, for work in scientific-research teams, for the possibility of publication of expert texts and consequently for the possibility of continuing on to post-graduate studies at the Doctoral programme

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<sup>6</sup> American Occupational Therapy Association, *Occupational therapy practice framework: Domain and process* (3rd ed.), American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 2014, 68 (Suppl. 1), S1–S48, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2014.682006>, [access date: 25.10.2017]

<sup>7</sup> Švestková O., *Základní principy současné neurorehabilitace [Basic principles of contemporary neurorehabilitation]*, „Neurologie pro praxi”, 2013, 14(3), p. 136–139. ISSN 1803-5280.

level. At the 1st Medical Faculty of the Charles University in Prague, a study programme *Specialization in Health Care – Occupational Therapy* is offered as a three-year Bachelor's degree and a corresponding two-year Master's degree programme. This was the first Master's degree in Occupational Therapy to be opened in the Czech Republic, dating from the academic year 2014/2015. Likewise, the first Bachelor's degree study programme in Occupational Therapy, the first of its kind in the Czech Republic, was opened at this faculty in 1994, with the help of the EU TEMPUS/PHARE project.

A prerequisite for Master's degree study in Occupational Therapy is to have completed a Bachelor's degree in Occupational Therapy which has been accredited by the Ministry of Health of the Czech Republic and by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Physical Education of the Czech Republic. The main condition of admission to study is to pass the entrance examination. The admissions procedure consists of a written test which examines thematic areas of the Bachelor's degree level Occupational Therapy programme at the 1st Medical Faculty of Charles University. This written test is taken by all applicants without exception and consists of 50 questions<sup>8</sup>.

Academic staffing: The key teachers of this programme are experts in the field of Occupational Therapy. As part of their Master's degree level studies in Occupational Therapy, our students have the opportunity to work with Visiting Professor Gaynor Sadlo, PhD PGDipTCDHE DipOccThy FCOT. She is one of the world's leading specialists in Occupational Therapy and occupies the post of Emeritus Head of the School of Health Professions at the University of Brighton. Professor Sadlo is a world-renowned expert in science and research regarding Occupational Therapy (Occupational science) and occupational balance<sup>9</sup>. In her teaching, she uses „Problem Based Learning (PBL)”<sup>10</sup>.

In addition, further courses are taught by two Czech therapists who have studied in Europe as part of the European Masters of Science in Occupational Therapy programme, which consists of 4 participating foreign universities:

1. Hogeschool van Amsterdam, Amsterdam University of Applied Science,
2. University College Sjælland, Naestved, School of Occupational Therapy,
3. Karolinska Institutet, Department of Neurobiology, Health Care Sciences and Society, Division of Occupational Therapy,

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<sup>8</sup> *The admissions procedure for the academic year 2018/2019* [Přijímací řízení pro akademický rok 20182019/], 1st Medical Faculty, Charles University, [https://is.cuni.cz/studium/prijimacky/index.php?do=detail\\_obor&id\\_obor=18529](https://is.cuni.cz/studium/prijimacky/index.php?do=detail_obor&id_obor=18529), [access date: 28.10.2017]

<sup>9</sup> University of Brighton, School of Health professions, *Academic staff*, <https://about.brighton.ac.uk/staff/details.php?uid=gs124>, [access date: 29.10.2017]

<sup>10</sup> G. Sadlo, J. T. E. Richardson, *Approaches to studying and perceptions of the academic environment in students following problem-based and subject-based curricula*, "Higher Education Research and Development" 2003, 22 (3). p. 253-274, ISSN 0729-4360

4. University of Brighton, School of Health Professions, Division of Occupational Therapy.

Other specialists include occupational therapists educated to Master´s degree level in a related health or health-social field, doctors, physiotherapists, biomedical engineers and managers. There are also a significant number of lecturing professors and assistant professors who work in the medical field, including medical law, ethics and statistics. Most lecturers work in the science and research fields (e.g. walking lab, modern technology, laboratory of upper limb robotics etc.), while other members of staff are also students in doctoral study programmes focusing on rehabilitation.

The teaching of this discipline is governed by the Study and Examination Rules of the Charles University in Prague and the Rules for Organization of Studies of the First Medical Faculty of Charles University. The study programme is based on a university-wide credit system which complies with the rules of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). Compulsory elective courses are organized into one or more groups in the study plan. Each student chooses compulsory elective courses based on the minimum number of credits in each group. The number of credits for compulsory courses, together with the minimum number of credits for compulsory elective courses, must not exceed 95% of the total number of credits.

Other courses taught at Charles University are considered optional courses for the given field of study. Students may be recommended to choose certain ones (recommended elective courses). Courses are completed by successfully gaining the course credit, whether this takes the form of a classified credit or an exam. The evaluation of the course of study is governed by the Study and Examination Regulations of Charles University in Prague. According to the study plan, courses are organized as seminars, combinations of lectures and practical exercises or as a work experience placement. During the course of study the student must obtain a total of 120 credits, namely 114 credits for compulsory and compulsory elective courses and a minimum of 6 credits for optional courses<sup>11</sup>.

Traditionally, at the 1st Faculty of Medicine, both the theoretical background to the courses and the practical application of Occupational Therapy in clinical disciplines are considered very important. The faculty supports the current trend of teaching Occupational Therapy subjects through the form of “problem-based learning” and also seeks to further involve students in self-study. Problem-based learning teaches the student to be autonomous, and develops their ability to work with information and think logically. It also presents great opportunities to develop the lifelong learning strategies that are crucial for pro-

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<sup>11</sup> 1st Faculty of Medicine of Charles University in Prague, *Study and Examination Regulations of Charles University in Prague [Pravidla pro organizaci studia na 1. lékařské fakultě Univerzity Karlovy]*, 23 June 2017, Prague, Charles University, <https://www.lf1.cuni.cz/pravidla-pro-organizaci-studia-na-1lf>, [access date: 25.10.2017]

fessional students after completing their studies and which are also absolutely necessary to ensure the ongoing quality of professional practice. During their course of study, students are encouraged to reflect on their own knowledge and skills and to draw on their experience from practical lessons to assist their own learning process. In this approach, the teacher acts mainly as a facilitator of the learning process.

As part of the EU project, the employees of the Clinic of Rehabilitation Medicine created an outline manual for Occupational Therapy studies. In the corresponding Master's study programme of Occupational therapy, the latest findings in the field were introduced. The conclusion of the Norwegian funds especially highlighted the work of interprofessional rehabilitation teams working with psychiatric patients as an example of innovation in the field of Occupational Therapy in the Czech Republic. Cooperation with the Bohnice Psychiatric Hospital was therefore established, where students can complete practical residencies and have the opportunity to participate in workshops. The specific focus of the field of Occupational Therapy at the 1st Medical Faculty of Charles University is on patients from practically all clinical branches and patients/clients with disabilities, especially those with an acquired brain injury. The focus is on pre-work and work-based rehabilitation, and employment of people with disabilities. New standardized methodologies are also applied to the field.

## **Professional Work Experience in Occupational Therapy**

The Master's two-year study programme, corresponding with an accredited Bachelor's degree in Occupational Therapy, includes more than 600 hours of practical training. These studies consist of 1505 hours of teaching, of which theoretical instruction (lectures) make up 240 hours, and theoretical-practical lessons (seminars) total 420 hours.

Courses which are considered as theoretical-practical (seminars) are: Propedeutics of Scientific Work (semester 1), Research Methodology (semester 1, 2), Bases of Statistics, Clinical Propedeutics for Occupational Therapists (semester 1, 2), Management and Law in Health Care, Evidence Based Practice (semester 1, 2), Dissertation Seminar (semester 2), Preparation of Professional Publications and Lectures, Expert Terminology in Occupational Therapy, Risk Factors in Occupational Therapy, Science and Research in Occupational Therapy, Management in Occupational Therapy, and Project and Grant Management. Over the course of their studies each student completes 845 hours of practical learning, which includes practicals, exercises, clinical residencies and professional work experience at selected workplaces.

Work experience placements are provided and supervised by occupational therapists in the selected workplaces. During these work experience placements and residencies, students become acquainted with medical documentation

whilst under the supervision of a work placement trainer. They must be able to take a case history, set out short and long-term goals and create a therapy plan, as well as develop protocols from practice. A further component of these work experience placements are detailed patient case reports, which will already have been introduced in specialised courses, such as Casuistry Seminar (semesters 1-4). Due to the assumption that graduates may work in both health care and social facilities, it is necessary that they are able to handle any such necessary documentation.

## **Organisation of Work Experience Placements**

Each student completes 285 hours of occupational therapy clinical practice in a selected clinical facility (hospital) during semester time, over two years of study. In addition, they also complete 120 hours of a three week occupational therapeutic summer work experience placement in a selected clinic during the 1st year and 80 hours of a related two week occupational therapeutic summer work experience placement in a selected clinical facility during the 2nd year, a total of 200 hours. In total, they complete 485 hours of practical learning in clinical workplaces.

Further practical learning which forms part of the teaching of individual courses makes up a total of 240 hours for the first year, within the subjects of Communication Skills, Casuistry Seminar (semester 1), Casuistry Seminar (semester 2), Biomechanical Diagnostic-Therapeutic Methods in Occupational Therapy, Neurodevelopmental Diagnostic-Therapeutic Methods in Occupational Therapy, Applied Kinesiology, Counselling in Occupational Therapy, and Use of Modern Technologies in Rehabilitation. The second year includes a total of 120 hours of practical training as part of the courses in Interprofessional Rehabilitation Team and Case Management, Community Work in Occupational Therapy, Diagnostic-Therapeutic Methods in the Biopsychosocial Area, Diagnostic-Therapeutic Methods in the Cognitive Area, Casuistry Seminar (semester 3), and Casuistry Seminar (semester 4). It is possible to select a work experience placement outside of the compulsory or optional courses and this depends on the student's own initiative. There are also plans to extend the scope of work experience placements to include work with people with psychiatric problems and mental disabilities and also to put a wider focus on occupational therapeutic diagnostics.

## **Final State Exam**

The Master's level study programme in the field of Occupational Therapy is completed by a final state examination, consisting of three main parts:

1. Defence of diploma thesis.

2. Theoretical oral exam based on the subject of Legislation and Management in the Health Care and Social Spheres – the exam consists of three thematic areas:
- A) Legislation in the health care and social spheres in relation to the disabled – prescribing compensatory aids, providing special benefits and care allowances.
  - B) General Legislation – Civil Code, Constitution of the Czech Republic, Labour Laws.
  - C) Management – personnel management, time organization of work, administration, case management, financial management, system management and other topics.
3. Examination based on the course of Occupational Therapy in the Clinical Field, which has both a practical and theoretical part.
- A) Practical exam – the student demonstrates practical knowledge of the functional diagnostics and therapy of a selected patient, sets the goals of occupational therapy, creates a short-term and long-term therapeutic plan, and processes the case report of the patient. Differential diagnosis of balance is part of the patient’s case report. Due to the specific focus of the Rehabilitation Medicine Clinic, students work with severely and very severely disabled patients who are confined to their beds and are in the early stages of rehabilitation ward at the stroke centre of this hospital.
  - B) A further part of the examination consists of three theoretical themes:
    1. Theory and medical examinations in Occupational Therapy (medical examination procedures in Occupational Therapy, diagnostic test methods, kinesiology, diagnostic tools in rehabilitation, virtual reality in rehabilitation, Evidence Based Practice, the International Classification of Functional Abilities, Disability and Health etc.).
    2. Specific methods in Occupational Therapy (the Bobath concept, Affolter method, Kabat method, Proprioceptive Neuromuscular Facilitation, the Bazal stimulation concept, neurodynamics etc.).
    3. Interventions in Occupational Therapy (overview of the occupational therapy approach and specifics of Occupational Therapy in various diagnoses – internal, neurological, surgical, psychiatric, paediatric, geriatric etc.). From each area the student draws one question which they are required to answer.

Each student on the Master’s programme must pass the final state examination at the end of their studies, after fulfilling all the obligations of their study course. According to the Study and Examination Regulations of the 1st Faculty of Medicine, students have the right to one initial sitting and two retake sittings of the final state examination. Students are required to pass the final state examination no later than two years from the first day of the calendar month



following the day on which they fulfilled all the prerequisites for the final state examination<sup>12</sup>.

## Diploma Thesis

The topics for students' diploma theses are provided by educators at the Clinic of Rehabilitation Medicine of the First Faculty of Medicine of Charles University and the General University Hospital in Prague. The course director provides these topics at the beginning of the winter semester of the first year and they are offered to the students. Each student chooses a topic from those offered and consults with their supervisor. In exceptional cases, a student may choose a topic or a supervisor outside the clinic or their own topic, but these must be approved by the guarantor of the field.

The diploma thesis is a scientific piece of work which may take various forms:

1. Pre-research – this is an evaluation of a new or less commonly used methodology using a smaller set of patients, it may be uncontrolled and non-randomized (minimum 10 patients).
2. Pre-research standardisation – this is a piece of work aimed at forming basic standards, identifying differences between populations (min. 100 people in a healthy population, min. 80 patients in clinical pre-research).
3. Pilot studies – these are controlled, randomized/non-randomized (quasi-experiments), verifying the accuracy of an approach and using the results to design a larger study (minimally 10 patients in the intervention and 10 in the control group).
4. Theoretical work – this is a piece of literary research, a necessary condition is an innovative topic, the output can also be the creation of a manual.
5. Case study – this is a detailed case description which goes deeper than the usual case report and contains both qualitative and quantitative data analyses (min. 6 patients).
6. Descriptive study (min. 30 patients).

The defence of the diploma thesis is connected to the relevant state examination. The defence is carried out in oral form with a compulsory presentation and is open to the public.

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<sup>12</sup> 1st Faculty of Medicine of Charles University in Prague, *Study and Examination Regulations of Charles University in Prague [Pravidla pro organizaci studia na 1. lékařské fakultě Univerzity Karlovy]*, 23 June 2017, Prague, Charles University, <https://www.lf1.cuni.cz/pravidla-pro-organizaci-studia-na-1lf>, [access date: 25.10.2017]

## **Description of knowledge and skills after graduation – graduate profile**

Graduates acquire the necessary knowledge from the theoretical, practical, clinical, biomedical and social fields. Their studies prepare them for independent work in leading positions in health care, education, social services or in scientific research teams. After graduation, their work is based on „evidence based practice” in Occupational Therapy. They are able to coordinate and manage grant proposals and project activities. They are able to present results obtained from scientific research projects in professional publications and periodicals, and at professional seminars and conferences at national and international level. Graduates have a deeper knowledge of all available occupational therapeutic functional diagnostic and therapeutic methods, and can gradually acquire specialization through lifelong learning in their clinical practice.

The study programme has been prepared in accordance with the relevant legislation, in particular with the Act on Non-Medical Health Care Professions (No. 96/2004 Coll.), with the amended Decree on the Activities of Health Care Workers and Other Specialists (No. 55/2011 Coll.) and Decree No. 39/2005 Coll., which lays down minimum requirements for study programmes which lead to the acquiring of professional competence for the performance of a non-medical health care profession.

The Master’s studies programme builds on and fully integrates the basis formed in Bachelor’s studies relating to various clinical disciplines and practical learning, science and research, publishing, legislation and management.

Graduates are fully qualified to independently perform the profession of occupational therapist in all types of health care, social and pedagogical facilities and even in employment offices or as part of work in an interprofessional team. Graduates will join the Lifelong Learning System to maintain and develop their knowledge of the field and increase their qualifications. They are able to further develop their knowledge and skills.

During their Bachelor’s studies in Occupational Therapy, graduates will have gained theoretical and practical knowledge of the structure, functions and dysfunctions of the human body in individual fields of medicine (Anatomy, Physiology, Pathology, Pathological Physiology, Neurology, Oncology, Orthopedics, Hygiene and Epidemiology, Surgery, Internal Medicine, Paediatrics and Geriatrics). Within the Master’s degree programme this knowledge is deepened through the following subjects: Human biomechanics and kinesiology in Occupational Therapy, Clinical Propedeutics for Occupational Therapists (semesters 1-2), Course in the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health.

Knowledge of diagnostic, therapeutic and prevention methods and interventions is acquired by occupational therapists within the subjects of Applied

Kinesiology, Methods Based on Neurophysiological Principles, Counselling in Occupational Therapy, Diagnostic and Therapeutic Methods in the Biopsychosocial Field, Diagnostic and Therapeutic Methods in the Field of Cognitive Functions, Diagnostic and Therapeutic Methods in Pre-work and Work-based Rehabilitation, Occupational Therapeutic Clinical Practice (semesters 1-4), Summer Occupational Therapy Work Experience Placement (semesters 1-2), Case study seminar (semesters 1-4), Community Work in Occupational Therapy, Occupational Therapy Terminology, Risk Factors in Occupational therapy.

The course *Use of Modern Technologies in Rehabilitation* provides knowledge of the principles of diagnostic, therapeutic and laboratory medical techniques. Students acquire knowledge of ethical principles and the values and problems associated with the performance of health care practice. First year students sign an Ethical Code of Conduct for Occupational Therapy Students, modelled on the Ethical Code of the Occupational Therapist. Students accept the duty of respecting the professional values necessary to work in the profession of occupational therapy. Through the course in *Bioethics*, students become acquainted with key documents dealing with ethics in health care at national and international level, as well as within the historical context. They learn to recognise ethical aspects that may be relevant to their therapeutic practice, and to identify and solve potential ethical dilemmas. In the course *Communication skills* students acquire the communication techniques they will need in their occupational therapeutic practice.

Students acquire knowledge of organization and management of health care practice through the courses in Management and Law in Health Care (semesters 1-2), Interprofessional Rehabilitation Team and Case Management, and Project and Grant Management.

They deal with legal statutes in the courses of Management and Law in Health Care (semesters 1-2) and Legislation in Rehabilitation. Within the latter course, students are acquainted with legislation in the area of rehabilitation in health care in the world, in the EU and in the Czech Republic, relating to social rehabilitation, pedagogical-educational, pre-working and work-based legislation. They attain key information about rehabilitation from the documents of the UN, WHO, Council of Europe and European Commission. They become acquainted with the legislation in the Czech Republic which applies to people with disabilities, relating to their activities and participation in society (including the possibilities of using and financing health care techniques).

The study programme prepares the graduate to be able to:

- participate in scientific research projects, grants, present research results;
- write expert, scientific articles, actively participate in scientific seminars and conferences;
- write scientific research grant applications and projects;

- work in a leading position;
- participate in and even co-create systems, organizations and regular conferences of interprofessional rehabilitation teams, co-create an individualized short-term and long-term rehabilitation plan;
- gain a grounding in health and social issues, in issues of employment and education;
- communicate with members of interprofessional rehabilitation teams and become an integral, important part;
- communicate with patients and with their families;
- work as a higher education teacher in the field of Occupational Therapy;
- practically apply their theoretical expertise and abilities.

## **The Erasmus+ Project and inter-university cooperation**

The 1st Medical Faculty of Charles University cooperates with foreign universities as part of the Erasmus+ project. Student mobility through Erasmus+ was made possible as part of the Master's study programme in Occupational Therapy for the first time in the academic year 2016/2017. Two students went to Israel for three months (Tel Aviv University, Sackler Medical Faculty, Sheba Medical Center, Israel) and one student to Sweden (Stockholm: Karolinska Institutet). Professional residencies are provided by experienced occupational therapists in very high quality and well-known occupational therapeutical workplaces. Whilst participating in these residencies, students have the opportunity to work on their dissertations and to thus further enrich the Czech Occupational Therapy scene with foreign experience and knowledge.

In order to develop a study programme, it is also necessary to cooperate with foreign universities through mutual teacher mobility, which brings about an enrichment of studies via new knowledge and allows for the comparison of approaches and development of teaching methods both in the home country and abroad. Educators travel abroad primarily through the Erasmus+ program, most often for 1 or 4 weeks. The average stay for doctoral students is 4 weeks. Key educators first complete a one week residency at the Merheim Neurorehabilitation Hospital, RehaNova, which is part of the University of Cologne, Germany.

For students and teachers, it is currently possible to select an institution from this list of Erasmus+ participants in international cooperation:

1. Ghent: Artevelde University College, Belgium
2. Kuopio: Savonia University of Applied Sciences. School of Health Care, Finland
3. Amsterdam: Hogeschoole van Amsterdam, Holland
4. Stockholm: Karolinska Institutet, Sweden

5. Vienna: FH Campus Wien, University of Applied Sciences, Department of Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy, Austria
  6. Madrid: Universidad CEU San Pablo, Spain
  7. Tel Aviv University, Sackler Medical Faculty Sheby Hospital, Israel
  8. Ancona: Azienda Ospedaliero Universitaria Ospedali Riuniti, Clinica di Neuroriabilitazione, Italy
  9. Cologne: Universität um Köln um Rhein, Klinika RehaNova, Germany
- Worldwide inter-university Cooperation  
NOVA Southeastern University, College of Osteopathic Medicine, Florida, USA

## **Possibilities for Master´s Degree Studies in Occupational Therapy in Europe**

Master´s level study in the field of Occupational Therapy has existed in Europe since 1999. This programme is known as The European Master Of Science In Occupational Therapy. It is provided by the following five foreign educational institutions: Hogeschool van Amsterdam, Amsterdam University of Applied Science (The Netherlands); University College Sjælland, Naestved (School of Occupational Therapy, Denmark); Karolinska Institutet, Department of Neurobiology, Health Care Sciences and Society, Division of Occupational Therapy (Sweden); University of Brighton, School of Health Professions, Division of Occupational Therapy (UK) and Zürich University of applied sciences, Winterthur (Switzerland). Later created master´s degree programmes are e.g. in Austria, Belgium, Germany. In the Czech Republic it is provided by the Charles University in Prague, First Faculty of Medicine. Graduating from the above-mentioned field of study opens up opportunities for European occupational therapists to study in specific postgraduate programmes in the field of Occupational Therapy<sup>13</sup>. The key document for the formulation of training of occupational therapists is „Minimum Standards for the Education of Occupational Therapists (Revised 2016)“<sup>14</sup>, but only for bachelor degree. Therefore, in March 2017, the ENO-THE Masters Project Group created special report called “Starting Tuning of OT Master competences: Comparing masters’ programmes to facilitate

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<sup>13</sup> Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, *European Master Of Science In Occupational Therapy*, <http://www.ot-euromaster.eu/about/about-ot-euromaster.html>, [access date: 29.10.2017]

<sup>14</sup> WFOT, *Minimum Standards for the Education of Occupational Therapists. Revised 2016*. WFOT, 2016, <http://www.wfot.org/Store/tabid/61/CategoryID/1/ProductID/55/Default.aspx>, [access date: 30.10.2017]

collaboration in OT education”. The document should help for the internationalization of Master curricula<sup>15</sup>.

## Conclusion

The profession of occupational therapist is a desirable one in the labour market, and it forms a necessary part of the process of deinstitutionalization of health care and of the social services. Occupational Therapy plays an irreplaceable role in rehabilitation. Quality education is essential for the performance of the profession and for its further development. In Europe and in the whole world, the base of graduates with a Master’s degree in this field is expanding. Since 2014, the Master’s Degree in Occupational Therapy has been conceptualised in the Czech Republic in correspondence with the Bachelor’s level degree in Occupational Therapy. Graduates of the Master’s Degree in Occupational Therapy from the 1st Faculty of Medicine of Charles University award a Master’s degree as the highest pre-graduate professional qualification to practice as an occupational therapist. Their studies prepare them to take on the role of occupational therapist in leading positions, in scientific research teams, and in performing the role of a pedagogue at universities. The objective of Occupational Therapy is to achieve the maximum possible quality of life for the patient/client who is dealing with their disabilities.

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