NBCOT®

National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy

Visa Credential Verification Certificate (VCVC) Handbook

For First-time VCVC Applicants

NBCOT® Certification Programs are accredited by:

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CERTIFICATION PROGRAM
NCCA BY ICE

VCVC

This publication is intended solely for the use of Visa Credential Verification Certificate (VCVC) applicants.
Please refer to the NBCOT website at www.nbcot.org to view the current VCVC handbook.

All general correspondence, including requests for information concerning the Visa Credential Verification Certificate (VCVC) Process, should be directed to:

National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT®), Inc.
International Affairs

Attn: VCVC
One Bank Street, Suite 300
Gaithersburg, MD 20878

Telephone: 301-990-7979
E-mail: international@nbcot.org
Website: www.nbcot.org

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Introduction

The National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy, Inc. (NBCOT®) is the national certification body for occupational therapy professionals in the United States.

NBCOT protects the public through the validation of essential competencies for effective and safe occupational therapy practice. We envision everyone will benefit from high-quality services provided by certified occupational therapy professionals.

Currently 50 states, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia require NBCOT initial certification for occupational therapy state regulation (e.g., licensing).

NBCOT certification programs are accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) under their *Standards for the Accreditation of Certification Programs*.

This handbook has been developed to provide you with the information you will need to complete and submit your VCVC application.

US Homeland Security Visa Requirements

In September 2003, the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA) became effective. This rule requires that all immigrants and non-immigrants coming to the United States for the primary purpose of performing labor as healthcare workers submit a healthcare worker certification. This rule includes those seeking a temporary (H1B) or permanent occupational visa or Trade NAFTA (TN) status.

What is the VCVC process?

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) granted NBCOT approval to issue healthcare worker certificates to individuals coming to the United States to practice in the field of occupational therapy. For this purpose, NBCOT administers a Visa Credential Verification Certificate (VCVC) process.

Applicants who successfully complete the VCVC process receive a VCVC certificate which meets the USCIS requirements. A summary of the requirements for issuing a VCVC are highlighted on the following page.

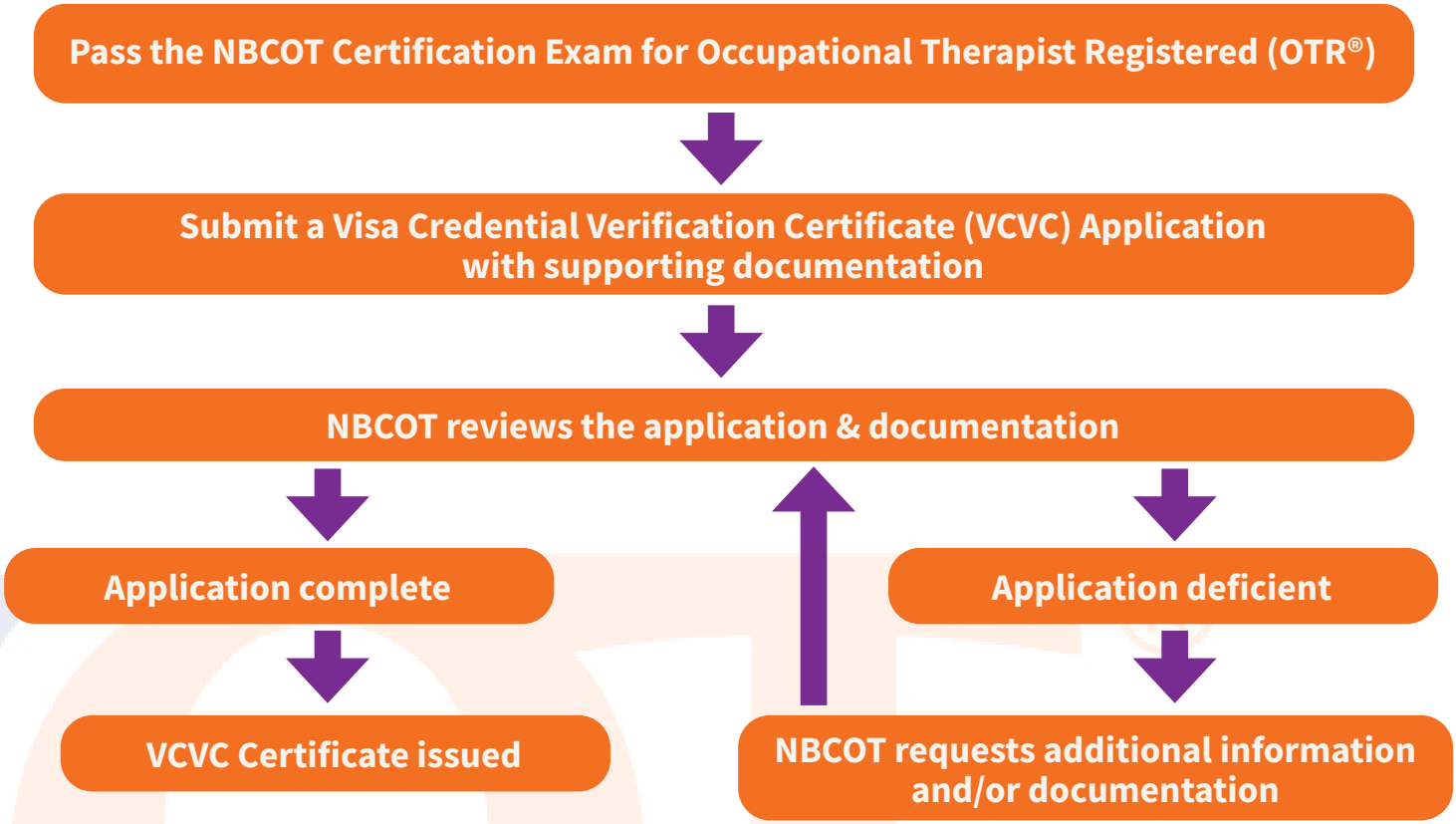
Overview of the NBCOT® Visa Credential Verification Certificate (VCVC) Process

VCVC Criteria

NBCOT looks at specific criteria for issuing a Visa Credential Verification Certificate:

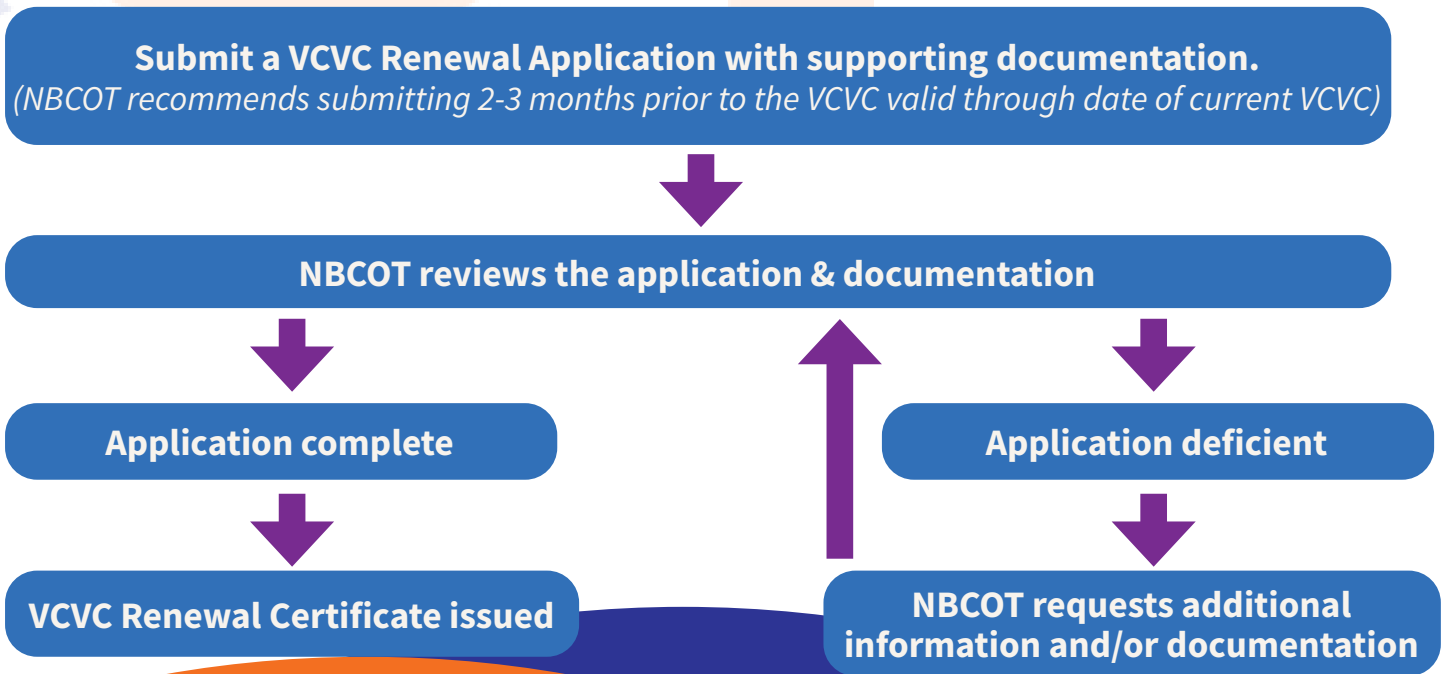
- **Education:** The occupational therapist's education must have been found comparable with current U.S. standards at the time they were certified. The OTED process will determine if your completed education including fieldwork attained through the entry-level degree granting institution, at minimum at a bachelor's degree level, meets the eligibility requirements to apply for the NBCOT OTR Certification Examination.
- **Training:** The occupational therapist's fieldwork must be comparable with that required of a current U.S. entry-level educated occupational therapist.
- **English-language Proficiency:** The occupational therapist MUST attain a passing score on an accepted English-language proficiency examination. Please see requirements and exemptions on *page 7*.
- **License:** All current and previously held licenses, registrations, and certifications must be verified and unencumbered. All work as an occupational therapist must be verified as meeting the requirements of the jurisdiction.
- **Examination:** The occupational therapist MUST attain a passing score on the NBCOT OTR® Certification Examination. For information regarding the certification examination, please refer to the NBCOT Certification Examination Handbook, found online at *https://www.nbcot.org/-/media/PDFs/Cert_Exam_Handbook.pdf*.

NBCOT® VCVC Application Process



NBCOT® VCVC Renewal Application Process

(Certificant holders who have not obtained permanent status or US Citizenship are required to renew their VCVC every five (5) years)



NBCOT VCVC Application Process

1. Take and pass the NBCOT OTR® Certification Examination

2. Submit a Visa Credential Verification Certificate (VCVC) application and appropriate fee
   - Take and pass an accepted English-language proficiency examination
   - Submit all supporting documentation

3. NBCOT reviews all submitted materials
   - Applicant is notified if there are any deficiencies
   - Completed VCVC application is approved

4. VCVC certificate is issued (Valid for five (5) years from issuance date)

NBCOT VCVC Renewal Application Process

(Certificant holders who wish to continue working in the U.S. but have not obtained permanent status or U.S. citizenship are required to renew their VCVC prior to its expiration deadline.)

5. Submit a Visa Credential Verification Certificate (VCVC) Renewal application, payment, and supporting documentation (NBCOT recommends that renewal applications be submitted 2-3 months prior to expiration of current VCVC)

6. NBCOT reviews all submitted materials
   - Applicant is notified if there are any deficiencies
   - Completed VCVC Renewal application is approved

7. VCVC Renewal Certificate is issued (valid for five (5) years from the previous VCVC expiration date)

English-Language Proficiency Exam Requirements

VCVC applicants must attain a passing score on one of the following English-language proficiency examinations.

1. **Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL iBT)**

   This test is administered via the Internet by Education Testing Services (ETS).

   Applicants must have ETS submit the test score directly to NBCOT. **It is important that the applicant provide the following NBCOT code on the test/application: 9953.** This is the only way ETS will know where to send the score report.

   For detailed information about the TOEFL iBT or to schedule a testing appointment, please visit the ETS website at *www.ets.org/toefl/test-takers/ibt/schedule.html*.

2. **Cambridge Assessment English (B2 First, C1 Advanced, or C2 qualifications exams)**

   This test is administered at exam centers around the world. Higher Education institutions will determine admissions requirements.

   Applicants must provide their unique ID and secret number directly to NBCOT to view and verify test results.

   For detailed information about the Cambridge Assessment, please visit the Cambridge website at *www.cambridgeenglish.org/*.

Required Passing Scores:

Test	Minimum Passing Scores
TOEFL Internet-Based Test (iBT)	4.5 Overall Score • 3.5 on Reading, Listening, and Writing • 4.5 on Speaking
Cambridge Assessment English (B2 First, C1 Advanced, C2 qualifications exams)	Cambridge English Scale • 169 Overall • 194 on Speaking

English-language proficiency exam scores are valid for two (2) years from the date the test is taken. Current score reports are required for VCVC purposes.

Exemptions

Graduates of occupational therapy programs in Australia, Canada (except Quebec), Ireland, New Zealand, United Kingdom, and United States are exempt from English-language proficiency exam requirements.

Required Documentation

To apply for a VCVC, applicants must submit a valid application with all required documentation to NBCOT. This includes the VCVC application and payment; an official transcript; VCVC Program Director Form; Verification of OT License, Registration, Certification or Other Form of Official Government Recognition Request form; and International Verification of Academic Credential Form.

English-language proficiency test scores must also be submitted to NBCOT. If taking the TOEFL iBT, scores must be sent through ETS. If taking the Cambridge Assessment English, applicants must provide their unique ID and secret number to NBCOT to verify test results. Please refer to *page 7* of this handbook for more information.

All documentation must be submitted to NBCOT directly from the primary source. For example, an official transcript must be sent directly from the registrar's office; verification of an occupational therapy license from another country must be sent directly from the country's regulatory agency. **Documents that are not sent from the primary source will not be accepted and may delay processing of the VCVC application.** The VCVC application is not considered complete until NBCOT receives all required documentation and payment is processed.

VCVC Application

To apply through the VCVC process, applicants must submit a completed VCVC application with payment through their MyNBCOT account. The VCVC application is located under Services and Resources in the applicant's MyNBCOT account. An official passport-size, front view photo of the applicant with the ***applicant's signature on the lower front section of the photo*** must also be uploaded into the application.

If the applicant has had a name change since taking the certification examination, copies of two forms of official documentation reflecting the name change can be submitted by requesting a name change in their MyNBCOT account.

Official Transcript

After submitting the VCVC application, applicants must arrange to have an official transcript submitted to NBCOT from their college/university. The official transcript must be sent directly from the registrar's office and must be in a sealed envelope with the school's official seal or stamp, and signature of authorized signatory (i.e., registrar, vice chancellor). If the original transcript is not in English, an official English translation must also be submitted.

Internationally educated applicants who applied for Occupational Therapist Eligibility Determination (OTED®) through the online application system do not need to submit new transcripts. Applicants who applied for OTED through the paper application MAY BE REQUIRED* to submit another official final transcript.

*If NBCOT does not have the transcript(s) on file.

VCVC Program Director Form

The Program Director Form verifies that the applicant has completed the required fieldwork experience. Internationally educated applicants who applied for OTED through the online application system do not need to submit a new Program Director Form. Applicants who applied for OTED through the paper application MAY BE REQUIRED* to submit another Program Director Form. The applicant must complete the Applicant section of the form; the college/university's occupational therapy Program Director should complete the rest. The completed form must be sent directly to NBCOT by the Program Director. Please refer to the *International Eligibility webpage* for a copy of the Program Director Form.

*If NBCOT does not have the Program Director Form on file.

Verification of OT License, Registration, Certification, or Other Form of Official Government Recognition Request

All licenses, registrations, and certifications for occupational therapy must be verified by the government regulatory authority that issued them. A Verification of OT License, Registration, Certification, or Other Form of Official Government Recognition Request form must be submitted for each license/registration/certification that the VCVC applicant **currently holds or previously held**. Any temporary permits or licenses held for occupational therapy must also be verified by a regulatory authority. It is not required to provide verification of membership to professional associations.

The applicant must complete the Applicant section of the form; the regulatory authority should complete the rest. The completed form, and any applicable supporting documentation, must be submitted to NBCOT by the regulatory authority. Please refer to the *International Eligibility webpage* for a copy of the Verification form.

An official government website may be used as verification of a license/registration/certification if the website contains the applicant's licensure history and all pertinent licensing information (e.g., issuance and expiration dates, license status, and date(s) of lapse in licensure). The applicant may print the information from the website and submit a copy to NBCOT in place of the Verification form.

International Verification of Academic Credential Form

This form is intended to supplement the applicant's official transcript. It only needs to be submitted if the official transcript does not contain all the pertinent information (e.g., degree title, graduation date, academic credential and academic curriculum).

The applicant must complete the Applicant section of the form; the college/university's registrar should complete the rest. The completed form must be sent to NBCOT directly from the registrar's office. Please refer to the *International Eligibility webpage* for a copy of this form.

After The VCVC Application: What To Expect

Review Process

Once the VCVC application, payment, and all associated documentation have been received, NBCOT will review all materials to ensure that:

1. The required items have been submitted.
2. All documents are original, authentic and have been sent directly from the primary source. Any documents that appear to be falsified will be rejected and will result in the closure of the applicant's VCVC file. *(See page 12 for details.)*
3. The VCVC applicant meets the criteria established for occupational therapists in the U.S.

The review time of a VCVC application will vary depending on the completeness of the application. If it is determined that additional information is needed or the application is incomplete, NBCOT will notify the applicant by e-mail. It is the applicant's responsibility to follow up with any educational institution or regulatory authority to ensure proper submission of documents. NBCOT **will not** directly contact any agency to request materials.

The review process will be delayed until NBCOT receives all required information. Applicants should keep in mind that factors beyond the control of NBCOT, such as overseas mail processing times, may also influence the amount of time it will take to review an application.

Notification of the Decision

When it has been determined that all requirements and criteria have been met, the VCVC application will be approved. Within ten (10) business days after the application's approval, NBCOT will mail the VCVC certificate to the applicant using the preferred mailing address provided. The certificate is valid for five (5) years from the issuance date.

If the VCVC application is denied, NBCOT will notify the applicant in writing. The notification letter will list the deficiencies that led to NBCOT's decision to deny the application and will also include suggestions for correcting the deficiencies.

Appealing the Decision

If NBCOT denies the VCVC application, the applicant has the right to appeal the decision in writing. The appeal letter must state the grounds for the appeal and the reason(s) why the application should be accepted by NBCOT. The letter should be sent via traceable mail with signature confirmation (e.g., certified mail) and must be postmarked no later than sixty (60) days after the applicant receives the denial letter from NBCOT. Appeal letters should be sent to:

NBCOT, Inc.
Attn: President/Chief Executive Officer
One Bank Street, Suite 300
Gaithersburg, MD 20878

Working as an Occupational Therapist in the United States

Immigration Regulations and Visas

Information regarding immigration regulations and visas may be obtained from each country's U.S. embassy and consulate.

State Regulatory Laws

All U.S. states and jurisdictions have licensure requirements that must be met before an occupational therapist can practice in that state/jurisdiction. Before an occupational therapist begins to practice in a state/jurisdiction, it is essential that all state licensure requirements are met. **To practice without a license or permit is against the law.** Information on occupational therapy state boards can be found at *www.nbcot.org/Regulators/Home*.

NBCOT officially provides states and jurisdictions with the names of individuals who have been approved for VCVC. This list is posted on the NBCOT website in the State Regulatory Board Administrator Portal.

VCVC Reactivation, Closure, Revocation, Replacement, and Renewal

Reactivation

VCVC applications are active for one year from the date of receipt by NBCOT. Applications not completed within one year will become inactive. Applicants who wish to reactivate their VCVC application should submit a VCVC Application Reactivation Request and the appropriate fee. The Reactivate button will be displayed on the VCVC Application Summary. Once NBCOT receives the Reactivation request and fee, the VCVC application will be reactivated for another one-year period. For additional information about reactivation, contact NBCOT at *international@nbcot.org*.

Please note: Any VCVC application that is inactive for more than two (2) years will be closed.

Closure

An applicant's VCVC file will be permanently closed if it is discovered that the applicant, or a third party on behalf of the applicant, submitted falsified or altered documents. Due to the serious nature of falsifying official documents, NBCOT has the obligation to notify the appropriate local, state, and federal agencies if falsified documents are received.

Revocation of VCVC

A VCVC will be revoked if:

1. It is determined at any point that the individual was not eligible to receive a VCVC.
2. It is determined at any point that the individual violated the *NBCOT Candidate/Certificant Code of Conduct* and their NBCOT certification has been revoked.
3. The individual's state license is sanctioned. NBCOT will investigate the issue and may determine that the VCVC should be revoked.

If the VCVC is revoked, the individual must return the certificate to NBCOT. The individual's visa certificate number will be voided. NBCOT will notify the appropriate authorities of the VCVC revocation.

Replacement VCVC

In the event that a VCVC certificate is missing or a replacement certificate is needed because of a name change, NBCOT will issue a duplicate certificate. Those who wish to order a duplicate certificate should submit a VCVC Duplicate Certificate Request Form and the appropriate fee. The form can be found online at *https://www.nbcot.org/-/media/PDFs/VCVC_Duplicate_Certificate_Request.pdf*.

VCVC Renewal

The VCVC certificate is valid for five (5) years from the issuance date. Unless the VCVC certificant has obtained a permanent visa or has become a U.S. citizen, the VCVC certificate must be renewed every five (5) years in order for the certificant to continue practicing in the U.S. Certificate holders with a valid employment authorization document issued by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services must check with their state licensing boards on whether or not to renew their certificate. Certificants will need to provide updated employment information as well as licensure status in order to complete the VCVC renewal process. NBCOT recommends that certificants submit their renewal applications two to three (2-3) months prior to the certificate VCVC Valid Through date. For more information regarding the VCVC renewal process, please refer to the VCVC Renewal Handbook, available online at *https://www.nbcot.org/-/media/PDFs/VCVC_Renewal_Handbook.pdf*.

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Visa Credential Verification Certificate (VCVC) Application Instructions

General Instructions

- Please complete the application thoroughly and accurately. Any incomplete sections will result in a delay in processing the application.
- The VCVC application will not be reviewed until NBCOT receives all required documentation, and payment is processed.

Instructions

The following provides detailed instructions for completing the VCVC application.

The VCVC application is located under Services in your MyNBCOT account.

Name: Provide your full legal name as it should appear on the VCVC certificate. If your name has changed since you took the NBCOT Certification Examination, you must submit a name change request through your MyNBCOT account. One form must be a currently valid government-issued photo ID (driver's license, state-issued ID, or passport); the other form must reflect your legal name change (marriage certificate, divorce decree or court order). An affdavit is not acceptable. These documents must be submitted in English. Official documents that are not in English must be sent with an offcial English translation. Translations from applicants are not accepted.

Address: All correspondence from NBCOT, including the VCVC Certificate, will be sent to this address unless a separate mailing address is specified.

Phone/E-mail: Include country, city and area codes on phone numbers.

Preferred Mailing Address: Complete this section only if you wish to have all correspondence, including the VCVC certificate, sent to an address that is dfferent from the one provided.

Birth Information: Provide birth information as it appears on your birth certificate.

General Information: Include your U.S. Social Security number, if one has been issued to you.

English-language Proficiency Examination: Indicate whether you are a graduate of an occupational therapy program in Australia, Canada (except Quebec), Ireland, New Zealand, United Kingdom, or United States. If yes, you are exempt from taking an English-language Proficiency test. If no, you are required to take and pass the TOEFL iBT® or Cambridge Assessment English. Please refer to *page 7* of the VCVC Handbook for more information.

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Visa Credential Verification Certificate (VCVC) Application Instructions *(continued)*

Professional Regulation History: You must complete this section if you have ever held a license, registration, or certification to practice occupational therapy in the U.S. and/or other countries. Include information regarding all temporary permits and licenses held for occupational therapy, and whether these licenses are current, expired, restricted, or inactive. The applicant can click "Add Practice History" as many times as necessary. **Please Note**: Restricted = revoked, suspended, limited, or placed on probation.

Professional Practice History: You must complete this section if you have ever practiced as an occupational therapist in the U.S. and/or other countries. You must provide your complete occupationaltherapy practice history. The information provided in this section is used to ensure that you were properly authorized to work in each jurisdiction. **Please Note:** If you worked at multiple work sites and/or had multiple work assignments under one employer, please list each work site/assignment separately and indicate each of their locations. If there were any gaps of more than 30 days in your occupational therapy practice, please provide the reason(s) for the gaps.

NBCOT Certification: Please provide your initial certification date and certification number. If you have not yet taken the NBCOT certification examination, please refer to the Certification Examination Handbook, found online at www.nbcot.org. **A VCVC cannot be issued until you are certified.**

Application Payment: The appropriate fee must be submitted with your application. Acceptable payment methods are Visa, MasterCard, American Express, and Discover. The application fee is nonrefundable (e.g., in the event you withdraw your application, do not complete your application, etc., the fee will NOT be refunded).

Applicant Statements: It is important that you read and understand the declaration statements before signing.

Identification Photograph: For identification purposes, please attach to your application an official passport-size, front view photo **with your signature on the lower front section of the photo.**

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