

# Technical Standards for Occupational Therapy Students

## Essential and Critical Demands of Performance

### Introduction

The faculty of the University of Findlay Occupational Therapy Program are responsible for the welfare of individuals treated or otherwise affected by students enrolled in our program as well as for the educational welfare of its students. In order to fulfill this responsibility, the occupational therapy program provides this document to inform you of the performance expectations of the program. The purpose of this document is to clarify the occupational therapy student's personal, physical, emotional, sensory, and cognitive essential functions that are necessary for successful completion of the didactic and clinical components of the University of Findlay's Occupational Therapy Program. These technical standards apply to the entire occupational therapy curriculum and may include activities held in the classroom, lab sessions, and/or during clinical fieldwork experiences. All occupational therapy students are required to meet these essential functions with or without reasonable accommodations.

- Criteria for successful completion of each segment of the educational program and for graduation must be given in advance to each student.
- Students must be informed of and have access to the student support services that are provided to other students in the institution.

### References:

American Occupational Therapy Association. (2020). *Occupational therapy practice framework: Domain and process* (4th ed). AOTA Press.

Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (2018). Standards and interpretive guidelines. <https://acoteonline.org/accreditation-explained/standards/>

### Procedure

1. Following admission to the Occupational Therapy Program at the University of Findlay, but prior to beginning academic coursework, all students must sign a form acknowledging that they have read, understand, and meet the technical standards.
2. Students who may have concerns about meeting these expectations are advised to meet with both their program director and their academic advisor.
3. If a student feels that they require reasonable accommodation for the didactic portion, competencies, and/or fieldwork components of the program, the student must contact the Office of Accommodation and Inclusion and follow the procedures outlined in the university catalog and student handbook before any accommodations can be made. Approved accommodations in a classroom setting are not guaranteed and may not translate to the practice setting.
4. Due to the time it takes to properly evaluate a student's needs and to implement reasonable accommodations, it is recommended that students request accommodations as early as possible, preferably at least two weeks before the start of a course. Refer to the fieldwork manual for accommodation policies.

### Technical Standards

Occupational therapists employ rehabilitation and environmental strategies that contribute to self-sufficiency, social integration, improved health status, and employment of persons with chronic disease and disability. To perform these functions the students must gain the knowledge,

attitudes, and skills for practice that may be provided directly to individuals or education or consultative roles to clients in healthcare, schools, industry, and community settings. Occupational therapy students must be capable of social, cognitive, sensory, and motor skills that will be needed in the classroom as well as the clinical fieldwork setting.

Specifically, the student must possess the following, physical, cognitive, and social skills central to making decisions and interacting with individual clients, families, and other professionals in the practice of occupational therapy. All occupational therapy applicants must review the technical standards described below and perform a self-evaluation to determine if they are able to maintain compliance. The following is not meant to be an exhaustive list.

#### Observation/ Sensory

Students must have sufficient visual abilities to be able to observe, analyze, and interpret patients/clients accurately. They should also possess functional tactile and proprioceptive skills and abilities necessary to perceive and synthesize inputs during patient/client interaction, evaluation, and treatment.

#### Communication

Students must demonstrate effective verbal, non-verbal, and written communication with patients, family members/caregivers, faculty/staff, fieldwork preceptors, payers, elected officials, members of the healthcare team, and others. They must demonstrate appropriate communication with people of different ages and genders, with diverse physical, cognitive and emotional abilities, and from different cultural, ethnic, racial, socioeconomic, and religious backgrounds and lifestyles. Students must demonstrate the ability to use therapeutic communication and a client-centered approach. They must display adequate English language skills in written and oral communication.

#### Motor

Students must display adequate motor skills to provide safe, efficient, and effective occupational therapy services. Examples of motor skills include sitting and standing tolerance, splint or assisted technology fabrication, computer usage, performing transfers and assisting with ADL/ IADL, providing range of motion, and strengthening activities. These motor skills require adequate gross and fine motor function, vestibular function, strength, and functional usage of the sensory system.

#### Intellectual / Conceptual

Students must demonstrate problem-solving throughout the didactic and experiential components of the program. This includes the ability to interpret information from multiple sources (written, verbal, environmental, interpersonal, etc.), carry out instructions in a timely manner, and understand and follow policies and procedures. Therefore, the student must be able to read complex material, and write in a way that is accurate, descriptive, free from errors, and consistent with guidelines or standards. Further, students must be able to apply critical thinking processes in order to gather information, identify problems and alternative plans of action, and make decisions spontaneously, in "on the spot" situations, frequently under pressure from multiple workloads, time, and variable environmental demands.

#### Behavioral / Social Skills / Professionalism

Students must possess sufficient emotional health to fully utilize their intellectual abilities, exercise good judgment, adhere to ethical standards, complete patient care responsibilities promptly, and relate to others with courtesy, compassion, maturity, and respect for their dignity.

Because occupational therapy education and practice takes place in a large variety of settings, students must have the ability to participate collaboratively as a (professional) team member, must be able to modify behavior in response to feedback, and display emotional health when faced with changing environments, clinical uncertainties, and stressful workloads that include multiple concurrent demands and short deadlines. This requires the ability of students to be aware of and appropriately react to their own emotional responses. In addition, students must at all times maintain personal appearance and hygiene that is appropriate for professional and classroom settings.

All students admitted to the occupational therapy program should be able to demonstrate these abilities at the time of admission and at all times during classroom, lab and fieldwork. Inability to comply with these technical standards may result in course failure. All occupational therapy applicants must review the technical standards described in this document and perform a self-evaluation to determine if they are able to maintain compliance with them. A signed copy of this form should be returned to the OT Program office signifying the standards have been read and certifying compliance. Accommodations will not be considered reasonable if they affect the substance of the occupational therapy educational program, compromise the University's educational standards, and/or negatively affect the safety of students and/or other people, including patients, with whom they may come into contact in the course of their studies. If accommodations are provided, this information will be kept in strict confidence.

### **Classroom Expectations**

The following is not intended to be an exhaustive list but is representative of the typical requirements expected.

#### **The student is required throughout the academic program to:**

Lift 10-50 pounds

Rotate & Twist

Bend/Stoop

Squat

Balance

Reach above shoulder level

Kneel

Push/Pull

Carry

Use hands repetitively

Use simple grasping

Use firm grasp

Use manual dexterity

Use finger dexterity

Provide instruction

Use auditory/tactile/visual

Use senses to evaluate client status

Transition from different heights (chair - floor - plinth)

Attend class approximately 35+ hours per week which includes the following:

- Lecture
- Laboratory
- Task group meetings
- Integrated clinical experience
- Reading, studying, and absorbing classroom materials

- Meets class standards for course completion
- Actively participates in classroom discussions
- Performs and/or instructs others in a timely manner in the following:
  - ✓ Activities of daily living (dependent through independent status) - performs and instructs
  - ✓ Splinting - performs
  - ✓ Evaluative and therapeutic activities/procedures
  - ✓ Task and verbal group activities
- Carries out assessment procedures using sound judgment and safety precautions
- Applies critical thinking process to requirements of the academic learning experience in
  - ✓ Lecture
  - ✓ Laboratory
  - ✓ Integrated clinical/fieldwork experience
- Addresses problems or questions to the appropriate person at the appropriate time
- Maintains personal appearance and hygiene conducive to professional student setting
- Travels or relocates to various locations required for internships and practicums
- Maintains work area, equipment, and supplies in a manner conducive to efficiency and safety
- Models socially appropriate behaviors
- Manages time effectively
- Communicates with peers, faculty, and staff effectively and professionally
- Treats peers, faculty, staff, patient/clients with respect
- Conducts themselves in an honest manner in dealing with faculty, staff, guest speakers, and peers
- Assumes responsibility for professional conduct and growth
- Is responsible for abiding by the rules and regulations of the Occupational Therapy Program, fieldwork facility, and profession (AOTA)

**In an average academic day, a student must:**

- Sit: 2-6 hours
- Stand: 2-4 hours
- Walk/travel