

Technical Standards and Essential Requirements

Technical standards and essential requirements describe functions necessary for students to complete their education and training in the Department of Occupational Therapy, and to assume the role of an occupational therapy professional. They are stated to ensure that all students, regardless of disability status, are aware of the expectations of the program. Academic requirements are not waived due to a student's disability. Students must be able to meet the academic requirements with the approved accommodations.

Technical standards are the skills, knowledge and experience the student must bring to the Occupational Therapy Program (often as part of the admissions process), and are considered essential to participate in the Occupational Therapy Program. Essential requirements are those skills and abilities that all students must be able to do, with or without accommodation, in order to graduate from the occupational therapy entry-level master's program (Occupational Therapy Program).

The Department of Occupational Therapy views technical standards and essential requirements as lying within the overlapping domains of academic performance, clinical performance, and the broader context of social behavior. Students must demonstrate competence in five functional areas across each of these domains in order to progress in and complete the Occupational Therapy Program. These functional areas are: (1) observation, (2) sensory and motor coordination and function, (3) intellectual, conceptual, integrative, and application skills (4) communication, and (5) behavioral, social, personal, and professional attributes. The specific functions described below are considered critically important to the performance of the role of an entry-level occupational therapy professional.

Observation

Technical standards for observation:

The occupational therapy student must be able and willing to:

- Observe lab demonstrations and specimens, including those in which biologicals (e.g., donor bodies, living human limbs) are manipulated

Essential requirements in this functional area include the ability to:

- Observe clients' environment for accessibility and potential safety hazards
- Observe clients to evaluate their level of function and safety
- Observe demonstrated clinical techniques

- Observe and differentiate changes in anatomical structures and body movements
- Observe clients' interaction with environment
- Observe emotional affect, nonverbal cues, and response to intervention of both individual clients and groups of clients

Sensory and motor coordination and function

Technical standards for sensory and motor coordination and function:

The occupational therapy student must be able and willing to:

- Participate successfully in a structured manipulative or craft activity
- Participate in exploratory learning involving handling objects of various size, weight, and height
- Move in a timely way to various classrooms and locations required for class/clinical experiences
- Maintain self in a classroom situation for extended periods of time
- Process sensory information from people and the environment
- Produce legible and clear written communication (handwritten and electronic).

Essential requirements in this functional area include the ability to:

- Participate in active experiential learning situations that include performing and/or demonstrating ability to instruct others in manual and skilled tasks both in the classroom and clinical experiences; (e.g., occupation-based activities, orthotic fabrication, client transfers, art/craft activities, handling techniques)
- Perform assessments and interventions that require such functions as palpation, manipulation of clinical tools, positioning of client and self, and demonstration of adaptive equipment and techniques
- Initiate emergency responses and/or assist others to provide prompt care
- Tolerate and safely handle body fluids (e.g., urine, fecal material, blood)
- Interpret and utilize sensory information from people and the environment

Intellectual, conceptual, integrative, and application skills

Technical standards for intellectual, conceptual, integrative, and application skills:

The occupational therapy student must be able and willing to:

- Receive, process, and comprehend text, oral presentation, numbers, and graphs displayed in print, lecture, and audio-visual formats and store information for self- reference
- Possess the following intellectual skills: attention, comprehension, measurement, mathematical calculation, reasoning, integration, analysis, comparison/contrast, critical-thinking, problem-solving, planning
- Critically evaluate his/her own performance and the performance of others
- Effectively use of technologies including computer, tablet, and ability to interface with supporting software programs (e.g. learning management system, electronic health records, Exxat)
- Articulate rationales for decision making
- Produce legible, concise, and grammatically correct written communication (handwritten and electronic)

Essential requirements in this functional area include the ability to:

- Analyze and synthesize information
- Apply critical thinking and clinical reasoning to didactic and fieldwork activities
- Utilize theoretical perspectives and occupation-based models with other information during the observation, screening, and assessment process
- Identify and interpret emotional affect, nonverbal cues, and response to intervention of both individual clients and groups of clients
- Select relevant methods for screening and evaluation
- Assess clients and contexts
- Modify screening and evaluation procedures as needed
- Accurately interpret evaluation results
- Use statistics, tests, measurements, and research
- Develop and implement intervention plans
- Update, modify, and terminate interventions

- Determine scope, frequency and duration of service
- Supervise, select and delegate tasks, and collaborate with faculty, supervisors, peers, and colleagues
- Refer clients to other professional services and collaborate with other professionals involved in client care and educational activities
- Follow all policies and procedures of program and fieldwork sites

Communication

Technical standards for communication: The occupational therapy student must be able and willing to:

- Seek out and address problems or questions to the appropriate people at the appropriate times
- Interact with and communicate meaning to others
- Demonstrate awareness of own non-verbal communication and how it may be interpreted by others
- Communicate quickly, effectively and efficiently in a recorded format
- Communicate quickly, effectively and efficiently in oral and written English
- Participate effectively in small groups, class discussions, and presentations
- Receive and process technical and professional materials
- Follow instructions and processes and report to appropriate individuals any variations in adhering to instructions/processes

Essential requirements in this functional area include the ability to:

- Read and record observations and plans efficiently, accurately, and legibly in the client record
- Prepare and communicate concise but complete assessments, progress notes, changes in client behavior and function, discharge summaries, and recommendations
- Communicate with clients to build rapport and elicit information
- Interpret verbal and nonverbal communication
- Effectively adjust communication for intended audience
- Communicate with supervisors and healthcare professionals involved in educational activities and client care

- Communicate respectfully with others from diverse backgrounds and varied abilities

Behavioral, social, personal, and professional attributes

Technical standards for behavioral, social, personal, and professional attributes

The occupational therapy student must be able and willing to:

- Demonstrate honesty, integrity, ethics, responsibility, compassion, and respect for others
- Respect others' rights and property
- Maintain privacy and confidentiality of peers, faculty, staff, and clients
- Adhere to safety precautions
- Recognize potentially dangerous situations and equipment and proceed safely in order to minimize risk of injury to self or others
- Accept and give constructive feedback and criticism
- Maintain classroom work area, equipment, supplies, personal appearance, and hygiene in a professional manner
- Complete required assignments and tests within required timelines
- Attend class approximately 35+ hours per week including large groups, small groups, and integrated clinical experiences
- Participate in additional activities outside of class time that enhance learning experiences

Essential requirements in this functional area include the ability to:

- Adhere to the Occupational Therapy Code of Ethics
- Complete client interventions, assessments, and documentation within required timelines
- Create an environment that maximizes client responses
- Appropriately apply concepts of universal precautions and infection control
- Collaborate with peers, faculty, staff, colleagues, and care team
- Take responsibility for professional competence, conduct, and growth
- Demonstrate consistent, professional work behaviors in classroom, clinic, and fieldwork

- Engage appropriately in a supervisory process
- Consent to an annual Mantoux test and other immunizations required by the program or fieldwork settings or provide documentation of exempt status
- Complete and pass state and federal criminal background checks
- Maintain current CPR certification
- Adhere to HIPAA regulations

Resources

- Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education. (2018). 2018 ACOTE standards and interpretive guide (effective July 31, 2020).
- American Occupational Therapy Association. (2014). Guidelines for supervision, roles, and responsibilities during the delivery of occupational therapy services. (AOTA membership required).
- American Occupational Therapy Association. (2018). Guidelines for documentation of occupational therapy.
- American Occupational Therapy Association. (2015). Occupational therapy code of ethics.
- American Occupational Therapy Association. (2015). Standards of practice for occupational therapy.
- College of St. Scholastica Center for Equal Access Gupta, J., Gelpi, T., & Sain, S. (2005). Reasonable accommodations and essential job functions in academic and practice settings. *OT Practice*, 10(15). CE-1-CE-8. (AOTA membership required)
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Your rights under section 504 of the rehabilitation act. U.S. Department of Justice. (2010). Americans with disabilities act of 1990, as amended.