



Essential Functions of the Occupational Therapy Assistant

A candidate for the Occupational Therapy Assistant major must have abilities and skills in five categories: sensory, motor, cognitive, communication, and behavioral/social. Students must be able to perform the following essential functions in an independent manner, with or without reasonable accommodation. Considerations for students with documented disability will be given on an individual basis.

Sensory: Candidates must have functional visual acuity and perception to discern occupational therapy media, lectures, and laboratory activities. Auditory reception is required to participate in lectures and laboratory activities and interpersonal exchanges with instructors, fieldwork supervisors, and clients. Tactile sensation must be functional for activities requiring direct manipulation, such as range of motion or transfer training.

Gross Motor and Fine Motor: Candidates must have environmental accessibility to participate in tours and fieldwork experiences at clinical sites. Degrees of gross motor skills for running, jumping, balancing, reaching, lifting, lifting (up to 50 pounds), and bending for games and sensory integration equipment, manual muscle testing, range of motion, and transfers are required for laboratory and fieldwork experiences. Long periods of sitting, standing, or moving are qualities of work components that are expected during participation in full time academic and fieldwork experiences. Manual dexterity and strength adequate to handle a variety of media and evaluative tools common in the profession is required.

NOTE: The above physical requirements are required to participate in the full scope of Occupational Therapy Assistant education and practice. Limitations may require adaptations or modification in school and/or the workplace. Although these modifications/hardships may be made without major hardship or voids in the academic process, there may be more stringent requirements in selected fieldwork sites, or in the job market. These factors will enter into the student advisement process on an individual basis.

The following standards for cognitive, communication, and behavioral/social essential functions cannot be compromised:

Cognitive: Candidates must demonstrate skills for measurement, calculations, reading charts and graphs, and scoring. Clinical reasoning, which is the critical skill required of an OT practitioner, is needed in order to make safe clinical judgments; evaluate relevancy of data and prioritize for clinical decision making; identify need for changes in clinical applications; problem solve creative solutions for specific manifestations of behavior, treatment applications, and environmental modifications; generalize theoretical principles to treatment applications; and integrate and apply theory to practice (i.e., identify needs, establish goals, select appropriate interventions, and evaluate outcomes).

Communication: Candidates must be able to communicate effectively in both academic and fieldwork settings. They must show evidence of effective written and verbal communication skills – such as are needed to interact with instructors, supervisors and superiors, and patients – individually as well as within a group setting.

Behavioral/Social: Candidates must possess the emotional health required for full utilization of their intellectual abilities, the exercise of good judgment, and the prompt completion of all academic and fieldwork responsibilities. The development of mature, sensitive, and effective relationships with patients and other members of the health care team is essential. The role of the Occupational Therapy Assistant requires flexibility, compassion, integrity, motivation, interpersonal skills, concern for others, and the ability to function in the face of uncertainties and stress inherent in clinical practice.