

Since the first ACOTE accreditation in 1985, the occupational therapy department has been preparing occupational therapy practitioners to utilize theory-based, occupation-focused assessment and intervention strategies to assist the individual in improving functional performance. Recently, the curriculum has been updated to reflect its focus on occupations, evidenced based practice, community leadership and dynamic reasoning to promote professionals in meaningful and effective OT practice. Successful completion of the program results in a Bachelors of Science degree in Occupational Science and a Doctorate in Occupational Therapy (OTD) degree. Upon passing the National Board for Certification of Occupational Therapists examination, graduates can expect to practice successfully in a variety of traditional and non-traditional health care delivery models with clients across the lifespan.

The entry level OTD program is six years in length that combines the foundation of a liberal arts education with professional occupational therapy coursework to produce a holistic practitioner who has a strong background in the use of occupation and critical inquiry skills to advance the profession. Students achieve a baccalaureate degree in occupational science, followed by the doctorate degree in occupational therapy. Opportunities also exist to complete a minor or a specialization. These options enhance student educational preparation.

The entry-level occupational therapy doctoral degree program has applied for accreditation and has been granted Candidacy Status by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) of the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), located at 4720 Montgomery Lane, Suite 200, Bethesda, MD 20814-3449. ACOTE's telephone number c/o AOTA is (301) 652-AOTA and its Web address is www.acoteonline.org. The program must have a pre accreditation review, complete an on-site evaluation, and be granted Accreditation Status before its graduates will be eligible to sit for the national certification examination for the occupational therapist administered by the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT). After successful completion of this exam, the individual will be an Occupational Therapist, Registered (OTR). In addition, all states require licensure in order to practice; however, state licenses are usually based on the results of the NBCOT Certification Examination. Note that a felony conviction may affect a graduate's ability to sit for the NBCOT certification examination or attain state licensure. Students must complete Level II fieldwork and experiential requirements within 24 months following completion of the didactic portion of the program.

Graduates of the program are eligible to sit for the occupational therapy examination given by the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy. Successful candidates are able to apply for occupational therapy licensure in the state chosen for employment.

CURRICULUM DESIGN

The Design

The manner in which the Occupational Therapy curriculum is delivered is complex. The Occupational Therapy curriculum is designed in such a way as to reflect the values and intent of the profession. The program integrates the profession's philosophy, the University and Program mission, and the educational outcome goals of the curriculum, including didactic, fieldwork and experiential components.

Within the Occupational Therapy curriculum, students learn to analyze situations critically, think logically, employ scientific methodology, and appreciate the arts to use them in their work. Graduates will express themselves clearly and persuasively, considering the numerous dimensions of the person, context, and occupations.

Our curriculum promotes the application of ethical standards and the active participation in professional organizations, advocacy for consumers and commitment to lifelong learning.

This curriculum is designed on beliefs that the Occupational Therapy faculty hold in regard to professional education. We hold that these beliefs are in accordance with our philosophy and reflect the program mission and curricular goals are well incorporated into program goals. These include the following concepts:

- The development of transformation knowledge occurs in a sequential process beginning with basic concepts/techniques and progressing to increasingly more complex constructs and application of these concepts and constructs in practice
- Individuals construct knowledge based on their unique interpretation of meaningful experiences with an emphasis on occupation
- Skills of inquiry, critical reasoning, and problem solving are essential professional behaviors for practicing occupational therapists
- Continuous examination and definition of one's own values and attitudes are critical steps in the growth and development of professional behaviors and ethical practice.
- Development of interpersonal skills and an appreciation of the value of collaboration must be integral to all learning experiences.

ELOTD Program Curricular Goals

1. Apply the foundational knowledge from anatomy and physiology, occupational science, sociology, human development, neurology, and psychology.
2. Analyze the complexity of humans as occupational beings whose lives are sustained and enhanced by engagement in meaningful goal-directed occupations.
3. Apply clinical reasoning throughout the occupational therapy process using the OT Practice Framework as a guide to establish individual, group, population focused intervention programs which are client-centered and occupation-based, as entry level generalists with an advanced area of focus..
4. Integrate culturally relevant content into the interpersonal, interprofessional, and occupational therapy process when working with diverse communities and their members.
5. Evaluate, design, and implement theoretically sound and evidence-based occupational therapy services in traditional, nontraditional and emerging areas.
6. Implement the research process to substantiate clinical outcomes, advance the profession of occupational therapy, and support evidenced based practice.
7. Utilize leadership, policy, educational, and advocacy skills that will provide a framework for the 21st century generalized practitioner and leader that upholds ethical and current professional standards.

CURRICULUM THEMES

Four themes provide the overarching structure to the curriculum design. These themes were developed in consideration of ACOTE Standards, graduate education and rapidly changing educational and clinical environments. These themes serve to provide structure to the sequence of coursework, emphasize the values of the profession, the institution and the faculty, and to provide students with a consistent reminder to view each client in a holistic manner. These themes are:

Occupation Focused Practice

Features of occupation focused practice include the ability to collaboratively determine the meaning and purpose of an individual's occupational profile, identify needs and priorities, and construct a plan of motivating therapeutic activities. This process, infused with occupations, reflects best practice and results in a more meaningful lifestyle. Our curriculum is developed to foster an understanding and appreciation of:

1. the role of occupation throughout the lifespan
2. how occupation is used as a means and an end in occupational therapy practice
3. the value of occupation based assessment and intervention
4. how the focus on occupational performance improves therapeutic outcomes

Evidence Based Practice

Evidence based practice is a collaborative process between therapist and client in which the best available research evidence, in combination with the therapist's clinical experience, is reviewed

to determine the most appropriate therapeutic options that support the client's occupational goals. Essential to this is the therapist's ability to develop and apply data collection and analysis processes throughout the intervention sequence that support the attainment of documented outcomes.

Community Leadership

Community initiatives help to increase access to occupational therapy services for all individuals, groups and populations, especially those underserved. We prepare students to work in emerging practice areas, primary care and community settings as well as traditional settings. We desire to instill in our students leadership characteristics for advocacy in the community, including an entrepreneurial spirit, skilled interprofessional collaboration and the ability to identify and attain funding resources to support effective programming.

Dynamic Clinical Reasoning

In addition to the three content related themes described above, we have chosen to incorporate an organizing theme, Dynamic Clinical Reasoning. This theme emphasizes the necessity to apply a systematic clinical reasoning process when considering the interactions of the individual, the context and the environment in the context of the therapeutic relationship.

These themes serve to provide structure to the sequence of coursework, reinforce the terminology and the stated purview of the profession, and provide students with a consistent reminder to look take a holistic view at each of our clients.

Curriculum Sequence

In order to meet our curricular goals, the sequence of coursework is delivered using a progressive approach. This sequence covers six areas: Liberal Arts & Foundational Knowledge, Individual Development and Occupation, Professional & Community Initiatives, Clinical Performance, Reasoning & Application, Research & EBP: Strengthening our Knowledge Base and Advanced Skill Development. The six interwoven sequences of education are described in more detail below.

Sequence I Liberal Arts and Foundational Knowledge

Students establish the foundation of knowledge through the completion of all liberal arts core courses such as prerequisite courses **Physics, Anatomy and Physiology I & II** and **Basic Statistics** followed by **Applied Functional Anatomy** and **Applied Neuroscience**. The science foundation provides a basis for clinical expertise regarding knowledge of body structures and functions. The liberal arts provide a broad foundation upon which to build the student's professional education. Required courses in **Psychology, Psychopathology, and Sociology** provide a further basis from which the student can begin to understand the interaction between the individual, their environment, and occupation.

Sequence II Individual Development and Occupation

Introduction to Occupational Science and Conceptual Foundations introduces the students to the many models and frames of reference that may be used to guide the development of a comprehensive and holistic approach to the client. Students are introduced to the concepts of human growth and development in **Occupational Development Through the Lifespan** where the students review the theories and analysis of occupations from the perspective of self and others. In order to enhance the student's' study of occupations, the **Advanced Occupational Science and Theoretical Application** encourages students to further their knowledge of evidenced based research supporting the use of occupations in therapeutic intervention.

Sequence III Professional and Community Initiatives

Students learn the importance of developing professional behaviors and the application of these behaviors to develop individual therapeutic relationships and leadership skills in the community in the **Seminar Series (I Professional Behaviors, II Occupations, III Professional Writing, IV Pre fieldwork and Cultural Competence)**. Professional Behaviors are introduced in **Introduction to Occupational Science and Conceptual Foundations**, where broad issues about the profession, such as it's standards, ethics and vision for the future are discussed. The **Community Based Practice** and **Contemporary and Emerging Intervention** courses provides less structured opportunities for students to create occupational opportunities and to take an active role in the development of their learning. **Management and Supervision** assists the student in acquiring the management and supervisor skills necessary in many of today's practice environments, as well as the leadership capacities for entrepreneurial work. **Occupational Therapy Issues and Trends**, as a culminating course, requires students to investigate the professional concepts and ideals in the profession that will challenge and motivate them as they enter into practice as entry level therapists. Through didactic and problem based learning, students explore program assessment tools, complete needs assessment and gain knowledge regarding business plans through the course called **Program Development and Grant Writing**.

Exam Prep allows students to prepare for the NBCOT professional examination through sample testing scenarios and generation of skill and topic specific studying plans.

Sequence IV Clinical Performance, Reasoning and Application

The development of clinical skills begins in **Clinical Reasoning and Conditions** and **Occupational Performance Analysis** where students acquire general competencies in conducting an occupation centered evaluation and assessment process and attain the entry-level clinical skills that are required to progress through the intervention series in upcoming semesters. Within the **Environment and Context** course, students learn how to assess the client's environment and to change the context to enhance the occupational performance of the individual. The **Intervention Series (Interpersonal Process and Group Dynamics across the Lifespan, Adult Intervention, Geriatric Intervention, Pediatric Intervention)** provide the students with opportunities to integrate prior levels of learning to construct intervention for a variety of clients with an occupation and evidence based approach derived from theoretical principles. The final application of this sequence occurs during the student's **Level I/II FW** and **Doctoral Capstone Experiences**.

Sequence V Research and EBP – Strengthening our Knowledge Base

While basic bibliographic, search and information literacy are introduced early throughout the curriculum, the essence of the research series begins in **Research Design** and **Clinical Outcomes** where students learn about qualitative and quantitative research designs, grants, and the research process. **Evidence Based Practice** addresses the evidence based practice component, where students complete an individual EBP review throughout the semester. **Intro to Doctoral Professionalism and Scholarship Seminar, Capstone I: Project Proposal, Capstone 2: Preparation, Capstone 3: Implementation, and Doctoral Capstone Experiential Component** requires students to develop a research proposal from start to finish, design a study, collect data, and analyze and present results.

Sequence VI Advanced Skill Development

The courses in this sequence are meant to provide the student with a means to develop into a professional beyond that of the generalist entry level therapist. This coursework will assist the student to assume the roles of researcher, educator, and leader. Students are exposed to evidenced based clinical measurements in the and **Clinical Outcomes** coursework as these are key components of today's quality health care environment. In the **Capstone I, II, III** courses, students advance previously developed skills in clinical reasoning, critical analysis, and competences within specialized areas of practice. The **Doctoral Capstone Experiential Component** allows the student to refine skills beyond the generalist level and engage in an in depth activity in a specific area (clinical practice skills, research skills, administration, leadership, program/policy development, advocacy, education, or theory development). Students will evaluate current state and federal public policy issues as to the extent of influence these regulations have on service delivery, while incorporating advanced advocacy and leadership skills in the **Public Policy and Advocacy** coursework. **IPE and Leadership** course envelops the importance of interprofessional practice and encourages students to be leaders in the profession. The importance and dissemination of scholarly work is presented in the **Presentation, Publication & Knowledge Translation** course. **Curriculum Development and Instructional**

Strategies course will also allow students to construct curricular objectives and explore various teaching practices to be incorporated within the professional academic environment.

***An **ELECTIVE** course allows the student to target their interests for individual enhancement of knowledge in a specific area of practice.

Admissions - Traditional Entry Level program

Admission Criteria to the Pre-Professional Phase of the entry level program

Students with backgrounds which include good academic performance, diverse extracurricular activity involvement, a history of leadership, and an appreciation for the profession of occupational therapy, who meet the criteria stated below, will be considered for admission to the occupational therapy program.

Successful freshman applicants to Misericordia University's Entry Level Occupational Therapy program will need to have:

- a minimum high school grade point average of 3.2 and
- have a class rank in the top one-third of the graduating class.
- A combined SAT score of 1110 (math and critical reading) with a critical reading score of at least 540 if taken after March 5, 2016.
- A minimum ACT composite score of 22 may be presented instead of the required SAT scores. If the ACT composite is used, a minimum of 22 in the English subset and a minimum of 22 in the reading subset are required.
- High school background in biology, mathematics and physics.

Applicants for the weekday program must also submit the following:

1. Two letters of reference.
2. A 500 word typed statement of personal and professional goals.
3. By the beginning of the fall of their freshman year, documentation of a full day (6-8 hours) of documented service in a health care setting with a licensed occupational therapist. Applications may be reviewed for admission if this documentation is pending.
4. A formal interview is not required, but is highly recommended.
5. All applicants who are Certified Occupational Therapy Assistants must submit evidence of current NBCOT certification.

Fieldwork

Fieldwork education is designed to provide occupational therapy students with opportunities to integrate academically acquired education with practice. It is during the students' experiences in fieldwork that they can learn, practice and refine skills of observation, evaluation, treatment planning and implementation, documentation and communication. In the fieldwork setting, the students begin to define their future role as practicing occupational therapists and can develop the necessary personal and professional skills essential in meeting the demands of this challenging profession.

Fieldwork is an essential part of an occupational therapy program's curriculum as established by the American Occupational Therapy Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education. At Misericordia University, fieldwork education begins in the fourth year of the curriculum for a weekday student and ends in the spring semester of the fifth year. For weekend college students, fieldwork education begins in the fall semester of the second year of the program and ends in the summer semester of the third year.

Level I Fieldwork is an integral component of the occupational therapy curriculum and includes experiences to enrich didactic coursework through directed observation and participation in multiple aspects occupational therapy process. Level I fieldwork will enhance student learning with a variety of potential experiences including but not limited to: simulated environments, standardized patient role plays, case-based clinical reasoning assignments, traditional fieldwork experiences, as well as faculty led experiences; all of which will have integrated assignments that draw upon prior learning in the OT curriculum. The experiential nature of the learning is a hallmark of Level I Fieldwork and carries the expectation of engagement with people in occupation across the life span continuum in a variety of settings. Students are supervised by licensed occupational therapists, certified occupational therapy assistants, and a variety of other qualified health care professionals.

Level II Fieldwork begins in the summer of the fourth year for weekday students and the spring of the third year for weekend students. It is the cumulative educational experience in which students have the opportunity to apply academically acquired knowledge in assessing, planning and implementing occupational therapy intervention programs for consumers in a wide variety of traditional and non-traditional service settings. Students must complete a total of twenty-four weeks of Level II Fieldwork experience and be supervised by a licensed occupational therapist with at least one year of practice experience. Upon successful completion of all coursework and Level I and Level II Fieldwork experiences, the student will qualify to take the NBCOT (National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy) examination. Students are responsible for all costs incurred that are associated with fieldwork (both Level I and Level II experiences) including but not limited to living arrangements, transportation, meals, and dress

requirements. Fieldwork Education is managed by the Occupational Therapy Program's Academic Fieldwork Coordinator.

Related Expenses

Additional expenses for occupational therapy students typically include lab fees, which cover lab/splinting supplies, AOTA membership, HIPPA training, medical record hosting site, etc. As a fieldwork requirement, students must complete all measures for clearances to participate in fieldwork experiences, which are dependent on the site. Costs to complete these health clearances are the responsibility of the student. All students in the final year have the opportunity to complete an additional certification examination preparation course for which there is a fee. As part of professional development, students are encouraged to become members of the Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy Association (POTA has reduced student rates; details are available in the occupational therapy office). Attendance at professional conferences is encouraged as students may have the opportunity to disseminate scholarly projects and continue their lifelong commitment to learning. Students should plan on regular use of a computer for course communications and assignments. There are several state-of-the-art computer laboratories on campus.

Retention

Retention requirements for the occupational therapy program can be found in the MUOT student handbook. Retention criteria for overall GPA and individual course grade minimums vary at different levels of the program. Refer to the MUOT student handbook for details.

Re-admission

There is no re-admission to the Occupational Therapy Entry Level Program. Students who are dismissed from the program may not re-enter the occupational therapy curriculum or be readmitted into a different format of the program.

Graduation Requirement

Students in the MUOT entry level program must complete all requirements of their degree track and all requirements established by the University. All weekday and weekend program occupational therapy students are required to successfully complete the university-offered certification examination preparation course (OT 544).

ELOTD Degree and Options

Upon successful completion of all undergraduate requirements of the Bachelor of Science in Occupational Science (BS in OS), students in the traditional weekday program are issued a BS in

OS; the OTD in occupational therapy is issued at the conclusion of the final year of the program when all academic and fieldwork requirements are met. A pediatric or adult specialization track is available for students to pursue in the doctoral phase of the program to enhance their interest in a specific area of practice.