



QUESTION: How many people apply to your program and how many do you accept?

ANSWER: The Division is committed to ensuring a high quality professional education with small classes, group work, and close faculty supervision for special projects. The resources for teaching and classroom space provided by the University determine the size of our program. Each year we process many more applications than we are able to accept; over the last 5 years we have averaged approximately 140 applications. Typically the Division admits a cohort of 20 students in each class, and unfortunately we are not able to admit all qualified applicants due to lack of space. You should review the description of the accepted UNC student to better understand the characteristics of the successful applicant. Applying to more than one entry-level program is recommended to improve your chances of reaching your career goals.

QUESTION: Will my application be reviewed if my combined GRE verbal and quantitative scores are below the recommended minimum 50th percentile, or if my GPA is below the program average of 3.6?

ANSWER: Yes, the Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy reviews all completed applications. We recognize individual differences and consider a range of factors including GRE scores, grades, work or volunteer and personal experiences, recommendations from supervisors, and knowledge about occupational therapy. Competitive applicants must demonstrate academic potential to integrate the curriculum information at a graduate level as well as the potential to successfully practice as an OT.

QUESTION: If I am not a North Carolina resident should I even submit an application?

ANSWER: We encourage applications from all qualified individuals. Review the characteristics of students who were admitted last year and reflect on your experience and academic history. Strong out-of-state students, especially those who can contribute to class diversity, will be considered equally for admission.

QUESTION: So, how would you define occupation and occupational therapy in your program?

ANSWER: Occupation has been defined in a number of different ways. At UNC we discuss and study the activities of everyday life that are valued by and given meaning by sociocultural groups of people. These activities can include what people do to look after themselves and others, pursue because doing the activity is interesting or enjoyable, or find meaningful as the activity contributes to their families and communities. Our students learn to focus on the "occupation within occupational therapy," that is, the *therapeutic use* of everyday activities, habits, and routines for the purpose of enhancing people's functional capacities, health, development, and felt experiences of well being and participation in life.

QUESTION: How can I learn more about the curriculum and the philosophy of UNC's program?

ANSWER: One thing to do is read about both occupational therapy and Occupational Science. The *American Journal of Occupational Therapy* and the *Journal of Occupational Science* should be available to you through direct access or inter-library loan at most academic libraries. We also recommend reading articles written by our faculty (see Faculty pages for names) We think that finding a graduate program that suits your needs is a very important decision and welcome visits from interested applicants at our periodic information sessions. You can also arrange to visit a class (during the academic year).

QUESTION: Can I choose a specialization area while I am a student at UNC?

ANSWER: UNC's program in occupational therapy is designed to prepare graduates for Occupational Therapy practice in a variety of settings such as day care centers, schools, hospitals, rehabilitation clinics, home health agencies and nursing homes. We expect our graduates will be called on to work with people of different ages and with varied social and cultural backgrounds. Because we anticipate innovations in practice it is important that graduates leave with clinical and analytical reasoning skills a generalist can use to address new conditions and develop original programs for people who can benefit from occupational therapy. Part of this preparation for future, innovative practice can include an appreciation for the depth of knowledge one can acquire through study, scholarly inquiry and clinical practice. Therefore, a specialization area is an option for students during the second year. Students work with their academic advisor and other faculty to determine the extent and nature of a specialization area that is right for them. Curriculum opportunities to create a special focus include:

- Elective 3 credit courses outside the Division
- Selecting the topic of your community planning project consistent with a specialization area
- Pursuing independent studies or guided reading with a faculty member
- Research paper
- Fieldwork II (second summer)

A combination of the above options could result in up to 15 credit hours that would provide interested students with a specialization area. Interested applicants are encouraged to consider the expertise of the UNC faculty to gain a better understanding of a student's options for specialization.

QUESTION: What are your requirements for a research/special project as a part of my graduate studies at UNC?

ANSWER: We believe that graduates who possess the attitudes and abilities for inquiry will adopt clinical methods that are based on evidence (i.e., engage in evidence-based practices) and be positioned to develop innovations in practice. Activities that support learning to read and synthesize the occupational therapy literature are embedded in all of the courses. In addition to courses on research (OCCT 304 & OCCT 330) during the second year as a part of other classes (OCCT 338 & OCCT 344) all students complete a special project. A master thesis is not required but remains an option for strong students who wish to further their skills in research. In the community planning project, students define and select a client population whom they believe could benefit from OT. The students then spend two semesters designing an occupation-centered program for that group. Work progresses from studying the literature, to developing and carrying out an assessment of people's needs by working with a sample group from the population that might be served by the proposed program. Then students create and propose an OT program that could be implemented in the community environment.

QUESTION: What types of fieldwork experiences will I have and when will they occur?

ANSWER: Fieldwork (FW) experiences are developmentally sequenced and integrated throughout the program. There are 2 levels of experience. FW I is for direct observation and participation in occupational therapy services as well as in community service projects without Occupational Therapists on site. These range from half day to weeklong experiences. FW II offers an in-depth experience over 8-12 consecutive weeks. FW II experiences are designed to promote competence and independence in clinical reasoning, therapeutic practices and professionalism at the level of a therapist entering the profession. Students complete all FW I and FW II requirements within the timeframe established by the program. For more information, see "MS Curriculum" under the "MS Program" links on the Division website.

QUESTION: How are students assigned to FW experiences?

ANSWER: The FW coordinator screens and selects fieldwork sites to ensure students have opportunities for experiences that develop clinical skills consistent with the philosophy of the program. Currently, the Occupational Therapy program has affiliations with over 150 sites across the country. The FW coordinator is responsible for securing reservations at these sites and for assigning students to the sites. When possible, the FW coordinator considers the student's input on assignments, but the primary consideration is given to the quality of the educational experience during FW. The FW coordinator has the final authority to assign a student to a FW placement.

QUESTION: Can I stay in the Triangle area during my fieldwork experiences?

ANSWER: There is no guarantee that any student will be assigned to a local site for FW. Students may have to relocate for some FW I and FW II experiences. Priority for local sites is given to students who are primary caregivers for people.

QUESTION: Are there opportunities to do fieldwork outside of the U.S.?

ANSWER: There are opportunities to do all or a part of Level II Fieldwork in international settings, but these are limited, and change somewhat from year to year, depending on a variety of factors. Once in the OT program, students can explore the possibility of international fieldwork with the Fieldwork Coordinator, but students should not assume such opportunities will be available every year.

QUESTION: Is there financial assistance for FW experiences if I have to relocate?

ANSWER: Students should budget for the extra cost of travel and living arrangements for fieldwork. Historically, Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) have provided some housing and transportation financial assistance for FW students at North Carolina clinical sites. The support includes partial reimbursement for mileage and a housing stipend for students who relocate within the state for their FW experiences.

QUESTION: What is the difference between your professional masters program and an entry level clinical doctorate degree (an OTD)?

ANSWER: All professional programs that offer entry into the practice of occupational therapy are accredited by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE)* using the same content guidelines. Our program emphasizes a 2 year preparation to practice innovative occupational therapy in both traditional and emerging settings. A professional doctorate is a relatively new degree in occupational therapy and like a doctorate in clinical psychology, dentistry, or medicine should take 3 to 4 years after the bachelor's degree to complete. The programs are designed to give additional in-depth academic preparation for practice. To achieve the focused preparation for practice, the programs offer additional education and usually an extended clinical internship. Many of the OTD programs are new and it is difficult to draw conclusions about how the practitioner with the extra academic training will be used in the job market. Students at UNC can work with their academic advisors to create a specialty track, if they so desire (See our question and answer regarding specialization areas). In addition, strong students who express interest in an academic career have the option of completing a master's thesis under the guidance of the nationally recognized UNC research faculty. (Also see our question and answer regarding the difference between an OTD and a Ph.D.

<http://www.aota.org/nonmembers/area13/links/link56.asp>

*The UNC-CH Occupational Therapy Program is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) of the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), located at 4720 Montgomery Lane, PO Box 31220, Bethesda, MD 20824-1220. Telephone: (301) 652-AOTA.

QUESTION: What is the difference between a professional masters program and a post-professional master's degree?

ANSWER: A professional masters program like the one at UNC is an entry-level degree program. A post- professional masters program is designed to enable an OT to acquire an advanced degree in the field - often in a specialty or sub-specialty area.

QUESTION: What is the difference between a clinical doctorate in OT (an OTD) and a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree?

ANSWER: As the title suggests, an OTD offers preparation for clinical practice with additional emphasis on becoming a consumer of research evidence and program development. Like becoming a medical doctor or dentist an OTD is a clinical degree. A person who wishes to have an academic or research career in occupational therapy or occupational science should pursue a Ph.D. Research degrees that prepare an individual for academic and research leadership positions take 5 to 6 years to complete after a baccalaureate degree (approximately 4 years post master degree).

QUESTION: Is it possible to work while I am in graduate school?

ANSWER: We anticipate that students are making a full-time commitment to their graduate work. At the same time, many of our students have been able to find the right job and balance their studies with part-time employment. During the academic year, you will take up to 15 credits a semester and will meet at various times during the day, five days a week. Some of the courses will require extra hours for lab work, group meetings, and community activities. In addition, some courses have full day clinical and community assignments (See our question and answer about fieldwork experiences). Thus if you have to work a few hours a week, you will want to look for a job with flexible hours. During the summer, when you are doing FW II, you will be "on the job" 40 hours a week. In addition, because everything is so new, many people find that they have to prepare the night before for the next day of FW II, or work some on weekends to keep their progress notes and clinical reports up to date. As a result, you should not plan on working during the summer.

QUESTION: What is the Professional School Tuition?

ANSWER: The Professional School Tuition is a supplemental tuition that has been instituted for the graduate professional degree programs in the Department of Allied Health Sciences, including the MS program in Occupational Therapy. The supplemental tuition of \$1750 per semester is in addition to the UNC tuition and fees. Over the past several years, our costs for delivering the occupational therapy program have increased significantly, as a factor of both general cost-of-living increases and specific costs associated with new requirements for graduate level professional education. 25% of these tuition revenues will be used to fund Division administered financial aid for North Carolina residents and students from under-represented minority groups, who are qualified for admission, but who are unable to afford the costs of the program. In addition, the revenues will allow us to enhance instructional resources including state of the art equipment in our teaching labs and funding teaching assistants. The supplemental tuition will be included as part of the coat of attendance for calculating financial aid packages by the UNC Office of Student Aid.

QUESTION: Are there any restrictions on who will qualify to take the certification exam?

ANSWER: The student is eligible to apply to take the National Certification Examination once all program requirements have been met. Students will have to prove eligibility for graduation (all curriculum requirements including FW are completed) before sitting for the certification exam. When you apply to take the certification examination with the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT), you will be asked to answer questions related to the topic of felony convictions. For a fee the Qualification Review Committee can be asked to review the background of a potential program applicant or student prior to their eligibility to apply for the certification examination. For further information on potential limitations, or early determination, you can contact the NBCOT at:

National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy

800 S. Frederick Avenue, Suite 200

Gaithersburg, Maryland 20877-4150

Telephone: (301) 990-7979

<http://www.nbcot.org/>