

Slide #	Transcript
1	<p>Hello! My name is Linn Wakeford, and I am the Admissions Coordinator for the Master of Science program in Occupational Therapy at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill! Welcome to this information session!</p> <p>I will review information about the OT program itself as well as about the application and admissions process. I also will identify resources that you may find helpful as you go through this session and afterward.</p>
2	<p>To start with, there is a set of handouts that go along with this session, and you can find those on our website, under the “Prospective Students” tab, and then under “Information Sessions.” You don’t have to have them for this session, but you may find them helpful as I talk through some of the topics and refer to those handouts.</p>
3	<p>For those of you who are just starting to consider a career in occupational therapy, I want to provide a little bit of information about the future growth of the profession and point you to the Bureau of Labor Statistics for more information. Based on data from 2018, the Bureau of Labor Statistics has predicted a growth of about 18% for OT by 2028. This prediction obviously was made prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, and no data are currently available about possible changes in this growth. However, as professionals who address health, wellness, quality of life, and social participation, OTs are well-positioned to be needed at least as much if not more in the months and years that follow the pandemic.</p> <p>The salary data provided on this slide also is from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and is accurate as of 2018. Salaries likely have increased a bit since then, but not a lot. Also, note that these are average and median salaries reported here; salaries depend on the geographical area in which you live as well as the particular type of practice setting, among other things. A variety of work settings are listed here, and OT is continually expanding and exploring settings in which OT may be of benefit.</p> <p>Before we go on, I want to address an issue that has been controversial in the field of OT over the last several years, although it has been resolved at this point. That issue is whether or not the profession should move to a doctoral level for entry-level education. That is, should those who wish to become OTs be required to complete an OTD (occupational therapy doctorate) in order to practice. The OTD is a clinical doctorate, much like the DrPH in Pharmacy and the DPT in Physical Therapy. A clinical doctorate is different from a PhD; a PhD is a research degree and is best for people who want to be able to do research and teach at a college level in their field. A clinical doctorate is designed for individuals who want to engage in their practice area but wish to have some additional education and training beyond the Master’s level in areas such as program development, management, and clinical research. Entry-level OTD programs require 3 years to complete.</p> <p>In 2017, the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (or ACOTE) issued a mandate that the profession move to doctoral-level entry by 2027, and that OT Assistant education move to a Bachelor’s level (it is currently at an Associate’s degree level). This mandate created much controversy and discussion in the field. Skipping forward to April 2019, that mandate was rescinded, and entry-level OT education can be at either the Master’s or clinical doctorate level. Although the UNC OT faculty had begun the process of converting to an OTD, when the mandate was rescinded we unanimously decided to continue the MS program rather than become an OTD program. We made this decision based on our desire to keep costs down for students and to maintain our commitment to diversity.</p>
4	<p>There are more details about our curriculum themes, course descriptions, and fieldwork placements in the handouts, so I will just do a brief overview here.</p> <p>Curriculum themes provide a foundation for the content of our courses, along with the Standards for OT education from ACOTE, our accrediting body. While all programs must meet the ACOTE Standards, curriculum themes are determined individually by each program, and represent the core</p>

	<p>ideas on which that particular program is built. We have identified the 7 curriculum themes that you see listed here as the core ideas that we feel should be woven into coursework throughout the whole curriculum. This doesn't mean that every theme is fully integrated into every course, but rather that each course is grounded in one or more themes most relevant to the course content. For instance, the first theme of Context & Community provides a core foundation in courses such as Practice Environments, Life Course, Therapeutic Processes, Environments and Technology, and Community Level Practice.</p> <p>Under non-pandemic circumstances, all courses are taught on campus, although they may have some online components. In the first year of the program, courses typically are taught between 8:30 and 4:00 on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays, and Wednesdays are used for Level 1 Fieldwork, Inter-Professional Education activities, and other events. There are no classes scheduled on Fridays. In the second year of the program, students have a "mini-mester" that begins at the first of August and runs for 7.5 weeks until the 3rd week in September. Then they participate in their first full-time, Level 2 Fieldwork. The following spring semester is scheduled much like those in the first year. Then that summer, students participate in their 2nd full-time Level 2 Fieldwork. If all goes as planned, students are eligible to graduate in August after completion of that Level 2 fieldwork, as long as they have passed all courses and fieldwork placements and submitted a passing comprehensive learning portfolio. As I said earlier, there are course descriptions and an overview of fieldwork in the handout packet, as well as sample semester course schedules.</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>Now let's talk about the admissions process. The online application system typically opens for OT sometime in August, and has a deadline of 11:59 pm EST on the first Tuesday in December. For 2021, this will be Tuesday, December 7th. If you are applying from another time zone, please be sure you have your application submitted by 11:59 EST, as the software cuts off at midnight and we are NOT permitted to accept late applications, no matter what the reason.</p> <p>Our first round of review is usually finished in early January, and we do review all completed applications. We do not screen anyone out based on grades or any other factor. After reviewing all applications, we select 45-50 applicants to move to the interview round. By mid-January we let all applicants know whether or not they are being invited to interview.</p> <p>Interviews take place the first or second Friday in February and are held in person when possible. We can also do phone or Zoom interviews for interviewees who can't be with us in person on interview day. Each interviewee has two interviews, each about 20 minutes long, with individual faculty members.</p> <p>After the interview process is complete, we make a total of 24 offers of admission, and usually have 5-9 people on the waiting list. Again, we let all interviewees know whether or not they are being offered admission or not by the end of the 3rd week in February. Those who are offered admission have until April 15th to pay their enrollment deposit to the Graduate School and accept the offer of admission.</p>
<p>6</p>	<p>All parts of the application are online, managed by the ApplyNow software. This means that transcripts, letters of recommendation, and all other documents should be submitted online rather than mailed or emailed directly to us. The application itself is essentially an application to the Graduate School, with additional documents and requirements specific to our program.</p> <p>As you can see on the slide, we no longer require that applicants take the GRE in order to apply. Yay! The remaining requirements include unofficial transcripts from all educational programs you have attended since high school. This means all institutions of higher learning even if you did not receive a degree, so this includes wherever you took prerequisite courses if you didn't take them where you got your degree. You also must upload a 2-page resume and identify 3 references. The contact information you provide for your references will be used by the software to send those people an "invitation" to upload a reference for you, along with directions how to do so. For the OT program,</p>

	<p>one of your letters of recommendation must come from an OT practitioner (OT or OT Assistant). The prompt for the Statement of Purpose essay is specific to our program and can be found with other application information on the Graduate School website at https://gradschool.unc.edu/admissions/instructions.html.</p> <p>Other requirements for the OT program are the prerequisite courses, a record of OT observations or experiences, and a short reflective essay about the class you took for the occupation prerequisite.</p>
<p>7</p>	<p>There is a Prerequisites document in the handouts, on page 4, and it provides a brief description and examples of courses required.</p> <p>We have 4 fixed prerequisites, meaning that there is little leeway on how you meet that requirement in terms of the course you take. This is because there is specific content within those topic areas that you must have when you enter the program. The fixed prerequisites are 2 semesters of human anatomy and physiology, one of which must include a lab; an introductory statistics course that includes both descriptive and inferential (or probability) statistics; and a course that covers common mental health diagnoses across age groups. These courses still may be called Abnormal Psychology, but some may have changed names to something that doesn't include the word "abnormal."</p> <p>Flexible prerequisites are essentially categories of content, and there are multiple courses that could meet that requirement. The flexible prerequisite categories include Human Development or Behavior at the level of the individual, Social Institutions and Systems, which is more at the societal, cultural, political, economic, or environmental level but still involving humans, and Modes of Reasoning, which is really about the ability to see things from different perspectives, reason in different ways, and analyze.</p> <p>The final flexible prerequisite is Occupation. The link on the slide will take you to a video on our website (on the Prerequisites page) in which several students talk about what they took to satisfy the occupation requirement, and how it contributed to their understanding of occupation and the therapy experience. There also is a substantial description of this prerequisite on the 3rd page of the Prerequisites document. The occupation prerequisite does not have to be a class taken for credit, so it can be taken at an art or music studio, recreation center, in a sports venue, a yoga or dance studio, a theater, etc. Because of the COVID pandemic and challenges with doing in-person occupation classes, we made changes to some of these requirements for those applying to the program in the fall of 2020. Those changes are posted on our website. We have not made a decision yet about whether those changes will stay in place for 2021, but that information will be posted on the website as well.</p> <p>All prerequisite courses must have been taken within 5 years of when you apply to the program, so if you apply in 2021 to start the program in the Fall of 2022, your prerequisite courses can be no older than spring of 2016. The exception to this is the Occupation prerequisite which must be taken within the past <i>three</i> years; this is because you need to be able to reflect on your experience in that class in some detail.</p>
<p>8</p>	<p>On our website and in the handouts, there is more information about our curriculum, how to apply, costs and financial aid, and FAQs.</p>
<p>9</p>	<p>Because of scheduling and time constraints, we aren't able to schedule individual meetings with potential applicants to the program, but on the Prospective Students page there is information about the semester schedule and how to request a visit to sit in on a class. If you sit in on a class, you will be hosted by a current student and have the opportunity to meet other students and the instructor for that class, so this is a great way to get some first-hand information about what it would be like to be a student in the program. Class visits usually are scheduled starting the 3rd week in a semester and ending 3 weeks before the semester is over. We try to accommodate as many requests as possible, but</p>

	without overwhelming students or instructors. Under current conditions with the COVID pandemic and a lot of online teaching, we aren't able to have as many class visitors as usual but are hosting as many as we can.
10	<p>If you have questions about your prerequisite courses, please refer first to the document linked on the Prerequisites page and included in the Information Session handouts and try to figure out for yourself whether your course satisfies the requirement. If you still have a question, please use the Prerequisite Check form to request a review of that course to see if it is acceptable or meets the requirement.</p> <p>Some applicants have prerequisite courses that were taken more than 5 years ago but they have been using that knowledge and skill regularly since they took the course in their work or other usual activities. For instance, a massage therapist may have taken their anatomy and physiology courses 10 years ago, but since that time they have had to take continuing education, maintain their certification, and use their knowledge actively in their practice every day. Applicants in situations like this may apply for the 5-year rule to be waived so that they don't have to re-take the course in question. The waiver request document also is linked on the Prerequisites page of our website.</p>
11	On the Costs and Aid page of our website there is a link to the official tuition and fees schedule for the whole University, as well as to a document that shows estimated costs for the OT program for both in-state and out-of-state students. Links to resources for financial aid also are provided. This information also is included in the Information Session handouts.
12	A Profile of Accepted Students is included in the Information Session handout packet, and also on our website. This information is designed to help applicants understand the type of individual that we feel is a good match for our program and most likely to be successful in it. This can help you identify ways in which you can strengthen your own application, as well as better understand our program overall.
13	These are just some suggestions and resources to consider. Once you have reviewed the information you have available, please feel free to send us questions that still are not answered for you!
14	Thank you!