

**UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL**  
**DIVISION OF OCCUPATIONAL SCIENCE & OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY**  
**M.S. PROGRAM IN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY**  
**CURRICULUM THEMES AND BROAD LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

**CONTEXT & COMMUNITY**

This theme addresses core concepts of time, place, social relationships, political governance, and culture in their dynamic relationship with human action, participation in occupation, and the practice of occupational therapy. These concepts apply to situations in which individuals, groups, and populations live, work, and make use of occupational therapy services, as well as to situations in which occupational therapists and their colleagues learn and work. The concept of community includes local, state, regional, national, global and virtual groups through which both diversity and commonality among participants exists.

Learning outcomes:

- Critically evaluate the interplay of social, political, economic, cultural, physical, and temporal contexts on occupational engagement for individuals and groups.
- Analyze the concept of community as it influences and is influenced by participation in occupation for individuals and groups.

**HUMAN CAPACITY FOR ACTION**

Human beings function as actors through physical, social, and cultural worlds by integrating embodied capacities for action with interpretation of occupational situations. The extent to which a person lacks the capacity to act in accordance with the presses of a given situation is regarded as disability and the occupational situation becomes a focal point for occupational therapy. Although educational practices may foreground different aspects of human capacities (e.g. physiology, perceptual, structural), they are understood with an appreciation of interdependence in the functional system of action that includes the interpretation of the situation.

Learning outcomes:

- Understand how transaction of mental, physical, emotional and social structures and processes shape the capacity for human action.
- Analyze and interpret factors that enable or limit occupational performance from multiple perspectives including biological, observational and phenomenological
- Understand changes in body functions and structures over the lifespan, and as impacted by injury, illness, or disability, and their potential influence on human capacity for occupation

**OCCUPATION**

Occupations represent patterns of time use across the life course enacted by individuals, groups and communities situated through relevant life contexts. Occupations include the coordination of everyday routines as well as exceptional life events. People experience occupations from the framework of past experiences and in anticipation of the future. In addition, occupations are comprised of shared activities that are recognized in the immediate social and cultural contexts.

Learning outcomes:

- Understand occupations as complex transactions among individual, contextual, cultural and societal factors.
- Understand how occupational performance, habits and occupational development emerge from dynamic transactions joining people and the environment through the stream of time and across the life span.
- Analyze occupation and habits as they relate to health, development, and well-being, and how contemporary models of ablement and disablement [ICF] discriminate factors that facilitate, enhance, or impede participation for individuals and groups.

## **ETHICS, JUSTICE AND CARE**

This curriculum theme is comprised of three interwoven terms which together form the foundation as to how practice is enacted: Ethics, Justice and Care. Ethics refers to the values, motivation, and principles that shape behavior within the practices of individuals, professions, and across organizations. Justice refers to ensuring the protection of human rights, and equal access to occupational participation regardless of their socioeconomic circumstances, demographic characteristics or other situational factors. Care refers to embodied motivation, values, practices, and relational capabilities informing response to the needs of others to promote human flourishing.

### Learning outcomes:

- Evaluate the protection of human rights and dignity, equitable distribution of resources and equal access to occupation.
- Apply ethical principles in practice through advocacy and client-centered approaches to promote justice in occupational opportunities and access to care.
- Apply the AOTA professional Code of Ethics to guide conduct.
- Evaluate ethical issues that arise in practice and research, integrating information from multiple sources, and collaborating with others to formulate and evaluate possible courses of action.
- Understand human diversity and demonstrate respect and interest in all its forms.

## **LEADERSHIP AND COLLABORATION**

This theme addresses the importance of collaboration, vision, communication and lifelong professional development in carrying out effective professional relationships and enacting leadership roles. Leadership, in this view, focuses on habits of character, service, innovation, and wisdom, applied to informal, emergent and traditional leadership roles. Supervision and management of personnel and programs, stewardship of resources, professional development and innovation in practice are areas of emphasis within this theme.

### Learning outcomes:

- Apply principles of professional conduct, communication and collaboration to optimally meet societal, community and individual needs.
- Apply principles of professional behavior, standards and roles in occupational therapy to represent the values of the profession to external audiences.
- Create, evaluate, and implement potential applications of occupational therapy to areas of human need through system consultation, policy development, program development, supervision, and/or education.
- Apply entry-level skills in personnel management, facilitation of others' professional development and organizational leadership.
- Understand professional responsibility in acquisition and stewardship of resources—including fiscal/capital assets, people, and the natural environment—to meet the occupational needs of present and future clients.

## **INQUIRY, SCHOLARSHIP AND INNOVATION**

This theme integrates concerns of occupational therapy and occupational science through the process of inquiry. Inquiry is fostered through the understanding of various research methodologies, the applications of those methodologies to practice and active engagement in scholarly endeavors. Inquiry is seen as an iterative process that is fostered first through purposeful exploration, assessment, and application, and then through critical self-evaluation of each of those process components. The skills of inquiry are applicable to issues of scholarship about occupation, evidence based practices and the ongoing systematic appraisal of the relevance of those practices to individual clients (broadly defined) as well as the communities and contexts in which they participate. A long-term goal is to develop habits of intellectual curiosity, scholarly rigor, life-long learning, innovation and dissemination of knowledge.

### Learning outcomes:

- Evaluate, analyze, and apply scientific research and clinical evidence to enact best practice and advance the science of occupation and its translation to therapeutic practice Apply critical thinking skills relevant for the consideration of arguments, evidence, research methods, inferences, and other matters for evidence-based practice.
- Understand the importance of developing scholarly habits of life-long learning and intellectual curiosity for evidence based practice and scholarship about occupation.
- Understand the value of and need for occupational therapy practitioners to create, apply and disseminate professional knowledge.

### **THERAPEUTIC PROCESSES**

This theme addresses the methods of thought, action and interaction employed by occupational therapists while engaged with clients\* in the process of assessment, intervention planning and implementation, and evaluation of therapeutic outcomes. It includes the use of theories and conceptual models, tools and materials, intervention techniques, collaborative relationships, therapeutic use of self, procedural knowledge, and creative reasoning to engage clients in successful and satisfying return to meaningful occupation and/or improved quality of life. Content addressed by this theme is built upon a core understanding of areas of occupation, human capacity for action, context and communities, and ethics, justice and care. It is supported by an attitude of inquiry and scholarship and a willingness to engage in roles of leadership and professional collaboration.

\*Clients as defined in the OT Practice Framework (AOTA, 2008) p. 625.

- Persons including families, caregivers, teachers, employers and relevant others.
- Organizations, such as businesses, industries or agencies; and
- Populations within community, such as refugees, veterans who are homeless and people with chronic health disabling conditions (Moyers & Dale, 2007)

### Learning outcomes

- Apply and evaluate theoretical frameworks to inform clinical and professional reasoning throughout the OT process.
- Create therapeutic relationships to optimize client satisfaction, agency and outcomes.
- Evaluate clients' occupational profile, analysis of occupational performance and occupational environments, using best available evidence.
- Create, implement, monitor, evaluate and modify therapeutic interventions that are occupation-centered, evidence-based and formulated in collaboration with clients.
- Apply and critique occupational therapy services, including screening, therapeutic use of self, consultation, education, and advocacy.
- Collaborate effectively with team members, colleagues, and others in service to the interests and needs of clients.
- Apply standards of safety, accountability, documentation, and professional judgment.
- Create and modify services to meet client needs and interests, using a systematic program development process.