



UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL
DEPARTMENT OF ALLIED HEALTH SCIENCES
DIVISION OF OCCUPATIONAL SCIENCE & OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY
www.med.unc.edu/healthsciences/ocsci

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY INFORMATION SESSION HANDOUTS 2025

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DIVISION OF OCCUPATIONAL SCIENCE & OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is first, to produce outstanding occupational therapists and occupational scientists, and second, to develop and expand knowledge about occupation and translate that knowledge to various therapeutic arenas.

We accomplish this mission through enacting our core values:

- the fundamental worth of occupation and its exploration,
- critical engagement with ideas and the world, and
- embracing diversity and community.

These values inform the evolution of creative and committed pedagogy focused on occupation and based in partnerships with students. Our mission requires a faculty who excel in research, theory, and translation to practice. This community of faculty, students, and graduates collaborates with individuals, groups, institutions, and populations to enhance well-being through occupation.

This mission is consistent with the UNC School of Medicine's focus on excellence in education of health care professionals through an innovative and integrated curriculum. Our mission also echoes the School's promise to achieve excellence in research and its translation to applied settings. We align closely with the UNC mission and its fundamental goals to graduate leaders, to extend our expertise to the citizens of North Carolina, and to enhance the quality of life for the state's residents.

PHILOSOPHY

The Division of Occupational Science is rooted in a philosophy that upholds the complex and holistic nature of human experience as a fundamental way to understand occupation, occupational therapy, the science of occupation, and the education of therapists. This focus on complexity and holism means that occupations are viewed first and foremost as the ongoing activities through which relationships of people and their situations are coordinated. Such coordination requires negotiations among individuals and the social, cultural, political and economic dimensions of situations—the complex, whole environment through which people live.

Occupation, therefore, is the embodied enactment of socially constructed habits, formed over time, as well as the creative adjustments to each situation through learning and use of resources. Meanings, values, and emotional experience are part of occupation and come from the ways in which the activity creates new relationships or sustains existing ones. Although health and well-being may be seen as outcomes of such transactions, we view the enactment of occupations as indicators of (positive or negative) well-being and worthy of attention in and of themselves.

This orientation toward occupation and the situations in which it happens means that families, institutions, and communities cannot be ignored in the assessment of, and intervention into, occupation. *Occupational therapy*, therefore, is the process of evaluating the relationships of occupations and complex situations in order to enhance occupations and situations through interventions. *Occupational science* is the study of occupation and situation relationships, as well as interventions based on them, in order to generate knowledge and inform practice.

We view the educational process from the same transactional perspective. Our program continually refines a curriculum that is designed to engender active learning through engagement in collaborative processes of understanding occupations, situations, and their transactional relationships. Learning takes place through doing; therefore, coursework and fieldwork experiences are created so that students are forced to employ critical inquiry into these dynamics both for the development of practical and scholarship skills. While we must prepare occupational therapy students for entry-level practice, we believe we must challenge them to create habits of lifelong inquiry and learning as well as application of new knowledge to practice.

**UNC-CHAPEL HILL MASTER OF SCIENCE IN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY
CURRICULUM THEMES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES**

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 pressures 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 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 *Occupational Therapy Practice Framework: Domain & Process-3rd Edition* (AOTA, 2014; p. S3):

- *persons* (including those involved in care of a client)
- *groups* (collectives of individuals, e.g., families, workers, students, communities)
- *populations* (collectives of groups of individuals living in a similar locale—e.g., city, state, or country—or sharing the same or like characteristics or concerns)

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.

UNC Division of Occupational Science & Occupational Therapy
Master of Science in Occupational Therapy Curriculum: Course Descriptions

YEAR 1	
Fall Semester	
<p>OCCT 725 Human Capacities: Body Structures and Functions 1 takes place in the first half of the semester and explores the structures, functions, and processes of the human body that support participation in occupation. The course will focus on neurological systems, mental processes, sensory processing, digestion, reproduction, endocrine, and immune responses that support human occupation</p>	<p>OCCT 726 Human Capacities: Body Structures and Functions 2 takes place in the second half of the semester to address the structures, functions, and processes of the human body that support participation in occupation. The course will focus on movement and somatosensory capacities and the structures related to those functions.</p>
<p>OCCT 770 Occupational Science introduces the philosophical tenets of Occupational Science and their application to Occupational Therapy. The course highlights the multiplicity of interconnected factors which generate participation in occupational situations.</p>	
<p>OCCT 755 Foundations of Professional Practice introduces core foundations for occupation-centered occupational therapy practice. Students learn fundamentals of professional communication and behavior, therapeutic use of self, clinical reasoning, activity analysis, theory, and evidence-based practice, as well as key clinical skills such as observation and documentation. Includes Level 1 fieldwork experiences.</p>	
<p>OCCT 736 Occupational Therapy Practice Environments introduces fiscal, regulatory, ethical, legal, interdisciplinary, temporal, and cultural factors that transact in practice systems. Explores pragmatic reasoning as applied to varied settings where OT services are delivered.</p>	
Spring Semester	
<p>OCCT 771 Life Course Development I focuses on the changing capacities for engagement with occupations of children and young adults, examining how young people shape and join with families, educational programs, and communities. Development is viewed as involving a transactional relationship of the “person-in environment as a whole” thus the social, physical, cultural, and historical contexts and individual characteristics are considered.</p>	
<p>OCCT 727 Perspectives on Disability & Health I addresses the biological and phenomenological aspects of specific mental and physical health conditions that may be experienced by children, adolescents and young adults. Introduces concepts of disability, public health, and prevention.</p>	
<p>OCCT 756 Therapeutic Processes I focuses on OT practice with children, adolescents and young adults that have disabilities or health conditions that inhibit occupational performance and/or social participation, across a variety of situations. Includes Level 1 fieldwork experiences.</p>	
<p>OCCT 766L Therapeutic Processes Lab provides opportunities for students to practice and begin developing key clinical skills in assessment, intervention planning, intervention strategies, and documentation in practice with children, adolescents, and young adults.</p>	
<p>OCCT 781 Environments & Technologies highlights the environmental dimensions of occupational performance and environmental, assistive and rehabilitation technologies used in occupational therapy practice. Students will learn to assess various environmental characteristics and their impact on occupational performance, modify the environment for therapeutic effect, and utilize technology as a means to access, engage in and control the environment.</p>	
<p>OCCT 704 Research Methods focuses on understanding the scientific process, and the application of different methodologies, including qualitative and quantitative methods.</p>	
Summer	
No course work May- 3 rd week in July	

YEAR 2
Mini-mester (starts late July – 8.5 weeks; includes 1 week Level I fieldwork in psychosocial setting)
OCCT 772 Life Course Development II focuses on human life in the decades between childhood and old age, and considers changing perspectives in this part of the life course, which has recently been characterized as more varied than previously thought. Concepts of establishment, commitment and bridging to both past and future life periods will be highlighted as students consider issues of identity, culture, role fulfillment and individual and group relationships in context.
OCCT 728 Perspectives on Disability & Health II addresses the biological and phenomenological aspects of specific mental and physical health conditions that may be experienced by adults. Addresses prevention, public health and disability.
OCCT 757 Therapeutic Processes II focuses on OT practice with adults who have disabilities or health problems that inhibit occupational performance and/or social participation, across a variety of situations.
OCCT 767L Therapeutic Processes Lab provides opportunities for students to practice and begin developing key clinical skills in assessment, intervention planning, intervention strategies, and documentation in practice with adults and older adults.
OCCT 990 Applied Research continues the work started in the Research Methods course on understanding the process of scientific inquiry and the application of different methodologies, including qualitative and quantitative methods, to address clinical concerns. Each student will refine a research question/area of inquiry and develop a research proposal.
Remainder of Fall Semester (mid-September until mid-December)
OCCT 720A Level 2 Fieldwork (12 weeks, full-time)
Spring Semester
OCCT 773 Life Course Development III explores diversity older adults' engagement in occupation as a result of changing capacities and environments, including public policies related to aging. It will highlighting the impact of major life transitions such as retirement from paid employment, caregiving and care receiving, losses, and changes in community mobility. End of life experiences, although not only occurring in old age, will be addressed here. Lab content provides students with experiential learning activities that supplement course content.
OCCT 729 Perspectives on Disability & Health III addresses the biological and phenomenological aspects of complex mental and physical health conditions, when experienced by older adults. Special emphasis will be on prevention of decline, dementia, 'geriatric syndromes', and the impact of age-associated changes on service delivery
OCCT 836 Community Level Practice focuses on the role of social systems in occupational performance and on the principles for population and system level practice in occupational therapy. Students learn to understand and analyze how systems are created, reproduced, and altered through the coordinated action of people, as well as content related to needs assessment, program development and evaluation processes, policy, and community health.
OCCT 992 Applied Research supports each student to continue the learning and research processes of the two previous research courses by collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data, preparing a poster to disseminate findings, and completing a final research paper of publishable quality.
OCCT 837 Professional Development/Transition to Practice addresses professional development from perspectives that include the history of the profession itself, engaging as a professional in local, state, national and international OT organizations, maintaining professional competence, and the practical aspects of becoming a beginning practitioner.
Summer
OCCT 720B Level 2 Fieldwork (12 weeks, full-time)

***ESTIMATED TUITION AND FEES FOR THE MSOT PROGRAM (8-23-24)**

This document reflects the most current information available. The document is updated when new tuition/fee rates are published by the University Cashier’s Office.

Information in the tables below was retrieved from:

<https://cashier.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/259/2024/06/graduate-and-professional-tuition-and-fees-fall-2024-spring-2025.pdf> (p. 3)

<https://cashier.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/259/2024/03/tuition-fees-summer-2024.pdf> (p. 1)

Tuition and Fees (2024-25 academic year, per semester)

Health Science Campus Based: Doctor of Audiology, Doctor of Physical Therapy, Masters Degrees in Speech-Language Pathology, Occupational Therapy, Clinical Rehabilitation & Mental Health Counseling, Post-Prof Doctor of Physical Therapy	IN STATE		OUT OF STATE		Fees
	Per Credit Hour	Maximum*	Per Credit Hour	Maximum*	
	\$1034.12	\$9307.00	\$2070.62	\$18,635.50	\$987.06

*Maximum: full time enrollment of 9+ credit hours

Summer Tuition and Fees (2024, per credit hour)

Graduate Programs, Campus Based	IN STATE	OUT OF STATE	
	Per Credit Hour	Per Credit Hour	Fees
	\$586.23	\$1602.45	\$75.00

Currently the UNC MSOT program is 4 semesters and two summer sessions (for Level II Fieldwork), so:

TIME PERIOD	IN STATE			OUT OF STATE		
	Tuition	Fees	Total	Tuition	Fees	Total
Semesters (4)	\$37,228.00	\$3948.24	\$41,176.24	\$74,542.00	\$3948.24	\$78,490.24
Summer (6 credit hours)	\$3517.38	\$450.00	\$3967.38	\$9614.70	\$450.00	\$10,064.70
TOTALS	\$40,745.38	\$4398.24	\$45,143.62	\$84,156.70	\$4398.24	\$88,554.94

Based on 2024-25 costs, the *estimated** total for the program for

- an ***in-state student*** who pays in-state tuition and fees for both years would be approximately **\$45,143.62**.
- an ***out-of-state student*** who pays out-of-state student tuition and fees for both years would be approximately **\$88,554.94**.
- an ***out-of-state student*** who pays out-of-state student tuition and fees for one year and applies for/**receives in-state status** for the second year would be approximately **\$63,800.62**.

***Please be aware that tuition and fees can go up each academic year (fall-spring) or summer, and that this page reflects only an estimate based on current costs.**

INFORMATION FOR PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS: EVALUATING PREREQUISITES
Master of Science Program in Occupational Therapy
Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy at UNC-Chapel Hill
Revised December 2013

Please read this entire document for information related to prerequisites for the Master of Science program in Occupational Therapy at UNC-Chapel Hill.

We ask that you compare the courses you are submitting for prerequisites to the descriptions we have provided below and base the selection of courses you submit on these criteria. You do not need to submit a transcript for review prior to making application to the program.

There are **eight** total prerequisite courses. **Four** of these are fixed (core body of knowledge) and are outlined on this page. **Three** are in categories that allow flexibility in the specific coursework that satisfies the prerequisite (outlined on page 2). These 7 courses may be taken at accredited universities, colleges or community colleges. Online courses will be accepted from nationally accredited institutions if the course credit is equivalent to that of a typical on-site course. The **final** prerequisite is an occupation course, which does not have to be taken for credit, but must meet specific criteria (outlined beginning on page 2).

CORE BODY OF KNOWLEDGE: FIXED PREREQUISITES

The curriculum in occupational therapy builds directly on basic understanding in certain academic content areas. As a result, prospective applicants will be expected to complete the following four fixed prerequisite courses:

FIXED PREREQUISITE COURSES	COMMENTS
<p><u>1 AND 2: ANATOMY and PHYSIOLOGY</u></p> <p>A total of two courses in anatomy and physiology are required.</p>	<p>Any of the following course combinations will suffice: OPTION 1: Anatomy course with human anatomy lab component + a physiology course OR OPTION 2: Anatomy & Physiology I + Anatomy & Physiology II. There must be an anatomy lab with human content somewhere in this sequence OR OPTION 3: Anatomy & Physiology I course with human anatomy lab + physiology course</p>
<p><u>3. ABNORMAL PSYCHOLOGY</u></p> <p>This course must cover a broad spectrum of intellectual/developmental disabilities, psychopathology/mental health and behavioral disorders.</p>	<p>The course may also be listed under titles such as Behavioral Disorders or Psychopathology but courses in Biopsychology or Neurobiology are NOT accepted substitutes in this category.</p>
<p><u>4. STATISTICS</u></p> <p>This course must cover both <u>descriptive and inferential</u> statistical methods.</p>	<p>Although often called "Statistics !" or "Introduction to Statistics," courses by other names may also fulfill this requirement, and may be in mathematics, social science, psychology or public health departments.</p>

Timing: The 4 fixed prerequisites on this page and the 3 flexible prerequisites outlined on page 2 **MUST** have been taken within the 5 years prior to application to the program. The only potential exceptions are for those who work in fields focused on a specific area AND who have taken the coursework in the past (for example, mental health professionals may not have to retake abnormal psychology). Applicants requesting a waiver of the 5-year rule should document their justification and send it via email to OSInfo@med.unc.edu prior to the application deadline. The Admissions Committee will review and make decisions about waiver requests as quickly as possible.

FLEXIBLE PREREQUISITES

In addition to the fixed prerequisites, applicants must submit three additional prerequisite courses in the categories outlined below.

FLEXIBLE PREREQUISITE CATEGORY	COURSE EXAMPLES (Please note that this list of examples is not all-inclusive.)
<u>5. HUMAN DEVELOPMENT/BEHAVIOR</u> This course should cover aspects of <u>typical</u> individual human growth and development and/or behavior.	Developmental Psychology Lifespan Human Development Child Development (early childhood / adolescence, etc) Adulthood and Aging Cognitive Psychology Neuropsychology Brain and Behavior Personality
<u>6. SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND SYSTEMS</u> Courses in this category should address the study of social entities and constructs that influence human action. The study of cultural groups, social institutions and socio-cultural practices are all acceptable.	Cultural anthropology Minority Studies (focused on ethnicity, race, gender, etc) Upper level sociology (beyond introductory) Public Health Public Policy Leisure / Recreation Studies Political Science Social Work Education (systems-level, not pedagogy) Women's Studies
<u>7. MODES OF REASONING</u> The intent of this category is to recognize coursework that has challenged the applicant to apply a strategic process of reasoning or problem solving.	Research Methods Specific courses in quantitative or qualitative methods or analysis (ethnography, biostatistics, etc) Philosophy or Ethics (specific topics in ethics accepted) Literature taught in a foreign language Comparative religion (not a course based in a specific faith tradition, but a course that asks the learner to compare ways of thinking across systems of belief) Honors thesis work (must have course credit associated)

OCCUPATION PREREQUISITE

NOTE: The occupation prerequisite must have been taken in the past three (3) years and must be completed prior to application. One of the essays in the application is a reflection on this learning experience, and you must be able to complete that essay and submit it with your application.

The intent of the Occupation prerequisite is to expose you to a situation in which you attempt something that is a novel challenge and that has an outcome, either a product (something you've created) or performance. We ask you to participate in this prerequisite to reflect on the types of learning processes that may be experienced by our clients during occupational therapy. As OTs, we often ask our clients to try new ways of doing things, or things they haven't done before, in order to meet a goal. For example, we may ask someone who was an avid baker to try using some adapted cooking utensils in order to address concerns about arthritis in her hands. We might ask another baker to use his non-dominant hand to stir cake batter because his dominant hand has been affected by a stroke. In both these examples, the ultimate goal, or outcome, is the return to the valued occupation of baking, as

well as the more immediate outcome of a delicious baked good! We feel it's important for students in our program to have some understanding of what's happening when a person learns an occupation that is meaningful or of interest, in an ongoing, structured process that involves learning not only from an "instructor" but also from others.

A wide range of learning options can satisfy this prerequisite, and some specific examples and ways to evaluate the prerequisite follow this paragraph. The Occupation prerequisite does NOT have to be taken for credit. It must, however, reflect a learning experience that is offered in a structured and social format. There must be other learners involved in the process, and the learning experience must occur at least once a week over a minimum of 6 weeks. The emphasis here is on *doing* and the learner must be an active participant in the process. Please note that this prerequisite does NOT include courses taken in order to benefit, teach or communicate with others (such as foreign languages, sign language, coaching, therapeutic recreation methods, etc).

The occupation prerequisite must have the following characteristics:

1. new learning/challenge (not something you already do or know how to do)
2. formal (structured) learning context, but does not have to be a "for credit" course
3. at least once a week for a minimum of 6 weeks
4. social context (other learners present in person, i.e., no online courses)
5. results in a product or performance
6. learners must be active (learning to DO something not just recipients of information)
7. course content is not designed to be used to benefit, teach or communicate with others

EXAMPLES	OUTCOME: PRODUCT OR PERFORMANCE (This list is not all-inclusive)
Creative Writing	Poem, short story, article, etc
Woodworking	Object, furniture or craft constructed of wood
Dance	Dance performance (any genre)
Theater	Theater production, stage play, public performance
Music	Vocal or instrumental performance
Studio Art	Painting, ceramics, sculpture, weaving, etc
Digital Media / Photography	Documentary film, website, photographic images
Sports and Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Scuba Diving with the outcome of a final test dive ✓ Tennis with the outcome of participation in a tournament ✓ Marathon (or similar) training with the outcome of a completed race
<u>Please Note:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common physical education courses are not accepted but courses that represent a novel challenge for the learner and have an outcome other than a written course exam are OK • Exercise classes to maintain personal fitness (while great!) are not applicable 	

IF YOU HAVE READ THROUGH THIS DOCUMENT AND REVIEWED YOUR OWN COURSEWORK AND STILL HAVE QUESTIONS, please send your questions to osinfo@med.unc.edu. If your question is about whether or not a course you have taken (or are taking) would met a specific prerequisite requirement, please include the name of the course, where you took it, and a course description in your email, as that will assist the committee in determining whether or not that course is acceptable.

UNC-CHAPEL HILL MSOT PROGRAM APPLICATION PROCESS

The Occupational Therapist Centralized Application System (**OTCAS**) allows you to apply to multiple programs from one online platform. OTCAS will collect the following information on all applicants to all programs:

OTCAS Personal Information	OTCAS Academic History	OTCAS Supporting Information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biographic Information • Contact Information • Citizenship Information • Other Information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High School attended • Colleges attended • Transcript Entry • OTCAS Course Subjects • Standardized Tests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation (References) • Observation Hours • Experiences • Achievements • Licenses and Certifications

The “Supporting Information” section also includes a general **Personal Statement** essay replying to the prompt:

Explain why you selected occupational therapy as a career and how an Occupational Therapy degree relates to your immediate and long-term professional goals. Describe how your personal, educational, and professional background will help you achieve your goals.

References are included here, though the subsection is called “Evaluation.” Applicants provide contact information for references, and references are contacted to complete a checklist of applicant qualities and upload a letter of recommendation.

PROGRAM MATERIALS

Each OT program in OTCAS then has a section in which they can request additional information and materials. **For the MSOT program at UNC-Chapel Hill, this will include the following:**

Prerequisites

- Identification of courses taken for 7 academic prerequisites. For more information about these prerequisites, please see the “Prerequisites” page of our website (<https://www.med.unc.edu/healthsciences/ocsci/prospectivestudents/programs/prerequisites/>).

Short-Answer Questions

Instructions:

- There is a 1000-character limit (including spaces) on your responses, so conciseness and clarity are important.

Questions:

1. Occupational therapy is a field in which practitioners often work with people who have backgrounds and identities different from themselves. Please reflect on your experiences with people different from yourself in one or more ways. Give a brief overview of these experiences, and then describe at least one important thing you have learned, giving a specific example of how you learned it.
2. Think about your experiences working as a part of a group or team to get something done. Reflect on your strengths and challenges working with that group or team. Include at least one clear example of a strength and a challenge.
3. Think about your work, school, home, and community experiences over the past 5 years. Describe a challenge or problem you encountered and how you solved it. Include people and/or factors that supported you and that created barriers for you. Give at least one clear example of a support and of a barrier.
4. Please talk briefly about why you have chosen to apply to the Master of Science in Occupational Therapy program at UNC-Chapel Hill and why you feel it is a good “match” for you and your career goals.

Documents

- Resume' or CV: Please upload a resume' or CV of no more than two pages. Paid or ongoing volunteer work in an OT setting may be included, but you do not need to include your OT observation/shadowing experiences on this document as they will be uploaded separately.
- Essay: Upload a reflective essay addressing the course taken for the Occupation prerequisite. Include: 1) the challenges of learning a new occupation, 2) how the method of instruction helped or hindered learning, 3) the influence of other learners, and 4) how you felt about the outcome you created, and 5) how this experience expanded your understanding of occupation, humans as occupational beings, and/or occupation as a key to wellness. 200 word minimum, 400 word maximum.
- Other Experience with OT: Please complete the observation hours section of the OTCAS application. If you participated in OT conference sessions, workshops, webinars or similar learning experiences specific to OT and wish to report them, please upload a chart in this section. The chart should include the date of the learning experience, location, title, number of hours, and name of the presenter. This is NOT a required document.

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Prospective students applying to the MSOT program must apply to and be accepted by both the UNC Graduate School and the MSOT program itself.

- Therefore, the UNC Graduate School will contact all applicants AFTER they have submitted their OTCAS Application.
- **Do not** start a separate application to the Graduate School.
- Please be on the lookout for an email from the UNC Graduate School after your OTCAS submission – this email will provide instructions for the Graduate School application.
- Applicants must pay the UNC Graduate School application fee (\$95) as well as the OTCAS fee (\$150 for the first program and \$65 for each additional program).

Questions?

There is detailed information **about OTCAS** in the Applicant Help Center (https://help.liasonedu.com/OTCAS_Applicant_Help_Center), so answers to all questions related to the application system should be sought there.

If you have questions **about the UNC MSOT program** or application requirements specifically, please review the information provided on our website (<https://www.med.unc.edu/ahs/ocsci>) and then contact osinfo@med.unc.edu if you cannot find the answer.



* CORE INFORMATION

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

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 4 years we have averaged approximately 200 applications. The Division admits a cohort of 24 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 ("Profile of Accepted Students" on our website) 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.

Will my application be reviewed if my GPA is below the program average of 3.6?

Yes, the Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy reviews all completed applications. We recognize individual differences and consider a range of factors including grades, work or volunteer and personal experiences, recommendations from supervisors, and knowledge about occupational therapy. Competitive applicants must demonstrate academic potential to be successful at a graduate level as well as to practice as an OT. Successful OT practice requires many types of knowledge and ability, so we examine each application carefully and individually to make our admission decisions.

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

We encourage applications from all qualified individuals. We do not have limits or requirements related to our ratio of in-state to out-of-state students.

How would you define occupation and occupational therapy in your program?

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, things they do because doing the activity is interesting or enjoyable, or activities they find meaningful for other reasons. We also acknowledge that not all occupations, routines, and habits are health-promoting (e.g., substance abuse), but people do engage in these activities, so it is important to understand those occupations and their meanings as well. 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 experiences of well-being and participation in life.

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

Read about both occupational therapy and Occupational Science. The *American Journal of Occupational Therapy* and the *Journal of Occupational Science* are available 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 very important and we welcome conversation with interested applicants at our periodic information sessions. You can also arrange to visit a class (during the academic year); more information on class visits is available on the "Prospective Students" page of our website.

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

UNC's program in occupational therapy is designed to prepare graduates for Occupational Therapy practice as a "generalist." That is, our graduates are prepared to work in a variety of settings such as day care centers, schools, hospitals, rehabilitation clinics, home health agencies, mental health practice, community settings, and nursing homes, to name a few. We expect our graduates will be called on to work with people of different ages and with varied social and cultural backgrounds. It is also important that graduates leave with clinical and analytical reasoning skills that an OT generalist can use to address new conditions and develop original programs for people who can benefit from occupational therapy. Part of this preparation for both current and future practice can include focused study and practice in a particular area. Therefore, opportunities are present for students to develop some additional knowledge and skills in area of interest while in the program, but these are not considered "specializations." Curriculum opportunities to create a special focus include:

- Class projects and papers
- Final research paper
- The second Level II (12 week) Fieldwork
- Training grants when available

* DEGREE LEVELS

What is the difference between your entry-level master's program and an entry level clinical doctorate degree (an OTD)?

All professional programs that offer entry into the practice of occupational therapy are accredited by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE). Our current program is a 2-year entry-level program that prepares students to practice occupational therapy in both traditional and emerging settings. It includes research, clinical, and community experiences in addition to classroom academic preparation. The OTD is also an entry-level degree which, like a doctorate in clinical psychology, dentistry, physical therapy, or pharmacy, should take 3 to 4 years after the bachelor's degree to complete. Entry-level OTD programs are designed to include some additional (beyond 2 years) academic preparation in management and program development, and requires a focused individual capstone project. There currently is no outcome data that indicates that those with an entry-level OTD have greater job or salary opportunities than do those with an entry-level master's degree. For a more in-depth comparison of the master's and OTD degrees, please go to the MS Program page on our website and click on the document linked there. Also see our question and answer regarding the difference between an OTD and a Ph.D. provided in this FAQ document.

Is there a clinical doctorate beyond the entry level?

Yes, the post-professional OTD is designed for individuals who already have an OT degree and have passed the registration exam. These individuals typically are practicing in an area in which they would like to develop additional expertise and leadership skills. Post-professional programs are usually part-time to allow the OT to continue working in that setting and to use that clinical work in their academic experiences in the program.

Will the UNC MSOT program convert to an OTD program?

In September of 2017, ACOTE issued a mandate that all entry-level programs for occupational therapists be offered at the clinical doctorate level (OTD) by the year 2027. That mandate was rescinded in 2019, although some Master's programs who had started to convert to OTD continued that process. Acknowledging the potential effects of converting to an OTD program on student financial resources and the diversity of our program, the faculty at UNC made an intentional and unanimous decision to remain at the Master's level. There currently are no plans to develop an entry-level OTD program.

What will happen to people who get a master's degree now, if the profession decides later to move to the clinical doctorate for entry-level?

Occupational therapists who receive an MSOT or MOT degree and who pass the National Certification exam will be able to practice as an OT even if the profession changes the entry-level degree. There is historical precedent in this, as practitioners with a bachelor's degree in OT who passed the certification exam continued to practice when the profession moved from bachelor's entry level to master's entry level in 2007.

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

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 pharmacist (PharmD) or dentist (DDS), 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 PhD, which is a research doctorate. Research degrees that prepare an individual for academic and research leadership positions take 6 to 7 years to complete after a baccalaureate degree (approximately 5 years post-master's degree).

* FIELDWORK

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

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 with occupational therapists as well as participation 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 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.

How are students assigned to FW experiences?

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.

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

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 others.

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

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.

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

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.

*** FINANCIAL**

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

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.

What is the Professional School Tuition?

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 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.

*** REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATION AND CERTIFICATION**

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

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 courses. In addition to a course on research methods, all students complete a research project under the guidance of a faculty member, in a group-based mentoring context. A master thesis is not required but remains an option for strong students who wish to further their skills in research.

What else is required in order to graduate?

Successful completion of all coursework and fieldwork are required for graduation. Courses must be taken in the sequence in which they are offered in the curriculum, and students must pass all courses in each semester in order to move on to the next semester. Students who are unable to participate in or complete the first Level II fieldwork may be allowed to proceed to the next semester, but will be required to complete all FW requirements successfully before being cleared for graduation. Students also must complete a Master's Comprehensive Self-Assessment (MCSA) after all coursework is finished. The MCSA takes the form of a portfolio of student work during the span of the entire program and includes work that represents student learning in each of the curriculum themes. It also includes an essay in which the student reflects on their learning over the course of the program.

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

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. *Applicants should be aware that a felony conviction may affect a graduate's eligibility to sit for the NBCOT certification examination or to attain state licensure. We suggest that applicants contact the NBCOT with any questions about their background that could impact eligibility for professional credentialing.* 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/>