



Entry-Level Master of Occupational Therapy (MOT) Ft. Lauderdale Campus Essential Functions Policy for Admission, Retention, and Graduation

Introduction

Occupational therapists provide evaluation and treatment to enhance function and participation in daily living tasks or occupations, including personal care, work, play, and leisure. The occupational therapist must be an expert in the knowledge of occupation, its role in health and adaptation, and its use in therapy. Occupational therapy practice requires the therapist to exercise increasingly complex, autonomous decision-making and problem-solving skills. The therapist must, therefore, be a critical thinker, capable of evaluating and synthesizing information from a variety of sources about a wide range of phenomena; the therapist should be a reflective practitioner able to evaluate his or her own clinical reasoning. Finally, the therapist serves as part of an interprofessional team of health professionals in a variety of practice settings, such as hospitals, schools, outpatient centers, physician offices, private practices, and homes as well as in programs they develop where occupational therapists may not yet be employed.

The preamble of the accreditation standards for occupational therapy education states, “the rapidly changing and dynamic nature of contemporary health and human services delivery systems provides challenging opportunities for the occupational therapist to use knowledge and skills in a practice area as a direct care provider, consultant, educator, manager, leader, researcher, and advocate for the profession and the consumer,” (Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education [ACOTE], 2013, p. 1).

The education of an occupational therapist requires assimilation of knowledge, acquisition of skills/attributes, and development of judgment through academic preparation and client care experiences. The current practice of occupational therapy emphasizes collaboration among occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants (intraprofessional), with other health care and community professionals (interprofessional), the client, the client’s family/caregivers, and other individuals who contribute to the overall management of clients.

The Occupational Therapy Department at Nova Southeastern University presents the following policies, in line with the section in the Health Professions Division Student Handbook titled ‘Core Performance Standards for Admission and Progress’.

Regarding those applicants or students with verifiable disabilities, the university will not discriminate against such individuals who are otherwise qualified, but will expect applicants and students to meet certain minimal technical standards (core performance standards) as set forth herein, with or without reasonable accommodation. In adopting these standards, the university believes it must keep in mind the ultimate safety of the clients whom its graduates will eventually serve as well as the efficacy and safety in the learning environment. The standards reflect what the university believes are reasonable expectations required of health professions students and personnel in performing common functions. Any exceptions to such standards must be approved by the dean of the student’s particular college based upon appropriate circumstances. (College of Health Care Sciences, 2014-2015 Student Handbook, pp. 97-100)

In addition to the Core Performance Standards as outlined in the College of Health Care Sciences Student Handbook, Master of Occupational Therapy students must possess attributes and skills in a reasonably independent manner in the areas of cognition, interpersonal communication; motor, auditory, visual, and tactile skills; and behavioral and social interaction.

Cognition

These abilities include measurement, calculation, reasoning, analysis, and synthesis. Problem solving—a critical skill—requires all of these intellectual abilities.

1. Applicants and students must have critical thinking ability sufficient for good clinical and professional judgment. This is necessary to identify cause-effect relationships in clinical situations and to develop plans of care.
2. Applicants and students should be able to comprehend three-dimensional relationships and to understand the spatial relationships of structures.
3. An individual is expected to be able to perform multiple tasks in a diverse, dynamic, highly competitive, and challenging learning environment. They must be able to think quickly and accurately in an organized manner, despite environmental distractions.
4. Applicants and students should be proficient in technology to develop, send, and retrieve information, including writing papers, sending/receiving documents, managing Blackboard, and searching databases and the internet.

All individuals are expected to meet their program requirements on a satisfactory level as determined by the Occupational Therapy Department.

Interpersonal Communication

These skills are necessary for effective interaction interpersonally, intraprofessionally, and interprofessionally, in educational, clinical, community, and social settings.

1. Applicants and students must be able to interact with and observe clients and colleagues in order to elicit information; conduct assessments; describe changes in mood, activity, and posture; and perceive nonverbal communications.
2. Applicants and students must be able to communicate effectively and sensitively with clients. Communication includes not only speech, but also body language, touch, reading and writing.
3. Applicants and students must also be able to communicate effectively and efficiently in all written forms with all members of the health care team.
4. Applicants and students must have interpersonal abilities sufficient to recognize the impact of and engage respectfully with clients and colleagues from diverse lifestyles, cultures, beliefs, sexual orientation, races, ethnic groups, socioeconomic positions, and abilities.

Motor Skills

These skills are used to navigate through and physically perform in all academic, clinical, and professional settings.

1. Applicants and students must have sufficient motor function to execute movements reasonably required to provide intervention such as to position clients for treatment, as well as teach the functions involving gross and fine movements. Such actions require coordination of both gross and fine muscular movements, equilibrium, and functional use of the senses of touch and vision.
2. Applicants and students must have sufficient strength to perform assessment and intervention tasks such as lift at least 35 pounds in an outpatient setting and 50 pounds in an acute or inpatient setting.
3. Applicants and students must have sufficient gross motor function to perform assessment and intervention tasks requiring the ability to push wheeled equipment through a facility and in the community, walk, bend, squat, stand and reach (all planes) constantly during a work day/shift.
4. Applicants and students must have sufficient fine motor function to perform assessment and intervention tasks that require the ability to produce legible and accurate documentation of reports, charting, scheduling, daily correspondence and presentations, performed either manually through the use of a writing implement, electronically through the use of keyboard/mouse or verbally through the use of dictation equipment.
5. Applicants and students must possess fine motor skills for effective and efficient handling of diagnostic or therapeutic equipment, creation of orthotics, and provision of fine motor interventions. They must have the ability to use both upper extremities for performing the aforementioned psychomotor tasks.
6. Applicants and students must safely, reliably, and efficiently perform appropriate occupational therapy tests/measures to assess the functional skills and occupational performance of patients across the lifespan.
7. Applicants and students must have the ability to walk, bend, squat, stand and reach (all planes) constantly during a work day/shift as well as be able to get up and down from the floor.
8. Applicants and students must have sufficient mobility to attend emergency codes and to perform such maneuvers as cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) when required.
9. Applicants and students must have the physical ability to move sufficiently from room to room and to maneuver in small places.
10. Applicants and students must be able to administer treatment in a variety of settings and positions and to move clients when required.

Auditory Skills

The ability to hear and listen is critical to gather clinical, personal, and environmental information in all academic and practice settings.

1. Applicants and students must have sufficient auditory ability to monitor and assess health needs.
2. Applicants and students must be able to hear information given by the client, respond to inquiries, to hear cries for help, and to be able to monitor equipment.

Visual Skills

The ability to see and visually interpret is critical to gather clinical, personal, and environmental information in all academic and practice settings.

1. Applicants and students must have visual ability sufficient for observation and assessment necessary in patient care. It must be consistent in many cases with being able to assess asymmetry, range of motion, and tissue changes. It is necessary to have adequate visual capabilities for proper evaluation and treatment.

2. Applicants and students must be able to observe the client and the client's responses, including body language and features during the assessment.
3. Vision must be adequate to read the following whether in text, electronic or handwritten: textbooks, assignments, documentation and displays on devices.

Tactile Skills

The ability to feel and tolerate tactile sensation is critical to engage in clinical, and academic interactions in all academic and practice settings.

1. Applicants and students are required to have an enhanced ability to use their sensory skills. These enhanced tactile and proprioceptive sensory skills are essential for appropriate assessment and treatment of clients.
2. Applicants and students must have sufficient tactile ability for physical assessment. They must be able to perform palpation and functions of physical assessment and/or those related to therapeutic intervention.
3. Applicants and students must be able to deliver appropriate treatment using high and low technology equipment.

Behavioral and Social Interaction

Students and practitioners constantly work with others and therefore must be able to consistently engage appropriately and professionally with colleagues, clients, caregivers, peers, faculty, clinical educators, and others. In order to effectively interact with others, students must possess self-control, insight, the ability to reflect on one's own behavior, and receive and integrate feedback from others.

1. Applicants and students must possess the emotional health required for full use of their cognitive abilities; the exercise of good judgment; the prompt completion of all responsibilities attendant to the assessment and care of clients; and the development of mature, sensitive, and effective relationships with the clients and colleagues
2. Applicants and students must exhibit professional behaviors such as timeliness, responsibility in group collaboration, and accept responsibilities for their own actions.
3. Applicants and students must be able to physically and psychologically tolerate taxing workloads, to adapt to changing environments, to display flexibility, and to learn to function in the face of uncertainties inherent in education and practice.
4. Applicants and students must effectively and consistently manage personal stress and the stress of others.
5. Applicants and student must also be able to recognize adverse reactions and emergency or urgent client related situations, and respond appropriately and calmly. Compassion, integrity, concern for others, interpersonal skills, interest, and motivation are all personal qualities that will be assessed during the admissions and education process.

American Occupational Therapy Association (2013). 2011 Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE ®) standards and interpretive guide: December 2013 interpretive guide version.

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