



## **Entry-Level Doctor of Occupational Therapy (OTD) Tampa Program Essential Functions Policy for Admission, Retention, and Graduation**

### **Introduction**

NSU's OTD Tampa program prepares entry-level occupational therapists to serve as a part of an interdisciplinary team of health professionals in a variety of practice settings, such as hospitals, schools, outpatient, private practice, and home health 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], 2012).

### **Policy**

The Entry-Level Doctor of Occupational Therapy (OTD) Program at Nova Southeastern University Tampa selects applicants who have the ability to become competent occupational therapists. The OTD Tampa program’s curriculum adheres to the standards and guidelines of the ACOTE of the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA).

The OTD Tampa program follows these standards and guidelines in the selection and evaluation of its students, the design, implementation and evaluation of its curriculum, and the determination of who receives the OTD degree. The department bases its admission, retention, and graduation decisions not only on satisfactory academic achievement, but also on the student’s ability to perform essential functions, skills, and abilities ensuring that candidates possess the necessary attributes required for graduation, licensure, and entry-level professional practice.

The program has a responsibility to the public to assure that its graduates can become fully competent and caring occupational therapists, capable of providing benefit and doing no harm. It is important that persons admitted and retained in the program possess the intelligence, integrity, compassion, humanitarian concern, physical and emotional capacity, cognitive and communication skills, and professionalism necessary to practice occupational therapy. To this end, the OTD Tampa program may dismiss a student who is unable to perform any of the essential functions, skills, and abilities, with or without a reasonable accommodation. Students are required to notify the program of any changes in their ability to perform the essential functions of occupational therapy students. Academic or clinical faculty will notify students when they are not demonstrating proficiency in the essential functions. Students with disabilities may inquire about reasonable accommodations through the Office of Student Disabilities (<http://www.nova.edu/disabilityservices/>) and in accordance with the provisions of the most current NSU Student Handbook.

As part of the Nova Southeastern University Health Professions Division, the College of Health Care Sciences, and its OTD Tampa Program is pledged to the admission and matriculation of qualified students. The program wishes to acknowledge awareness of laws that prohibit discrimination against anyone on the basis of race, color, religion or creed, sex, pregnancy status, national or ethnic origin, nondisqualifying disability, age, ancestry, marital status, sexual orientation, unfavorable discharge from the military, veteran status, or political beliefs or affiliations.

As mentioned above, the OTD Program is committed to the education of all qualified individuals, including persons with disabilities who, with or without reasonable accommodation, are capable of performing the essential functions specified by the program. It is the program's policy to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). In accordance with federal regulations established by the ADA, Section 504 of the Civil Rights Act of 1973, and state and local requirements regarding students and applicants with disabilities, the following standards are described to assist each candidate/student in evaluating his/her prospect for academic and clinical success.

Doctor of Occupational Therapy students (OTD-S) must be able to perform each of these essential functions in order to fully participate in the program and successfully complete the requirements for the Entry-Level Doctor of Occupational Therapy degree. When a student's ability to perform is compromised, the student must demonstrate alternative means, strategies, and/or abilities to perform the essential functions of the OTD-S described below.

### **Essential Function Requirements: Entry-Level Doctor of Occupational Therapy Students (OTD-S)**

Essential functions, as distinguished from fund of knowledge standards, refer to those abilities required for satisfactory completion of all aspects of a curriculum, including clinical education and the development of professional attributes required of all students at graduation. The essential functions required by the OTD curriculum are:

1. Observational
2. Intellectual
3. Cognitive
4. Communication
5. Cultural Sensitivity
6. Behavioral and Social
7. Physical
8. Professional

### **Observational Functions:**

1. Acquire a defined level of necessary information as presented through educational experiences relating to all courses prior to admission and while participating in the OTD Tampa program;
2. Achieve the required competencies in real and virtual learning environments, perceiving, assimilating, and integrating information from a variety of sources. These sources include

lectures, printed materials, visual and auditory media, laboratory experiences, hands-on demonstrations, as well as collaboration and communication tools used in a virtual learning management system.

3. Adequately demonstrate sensory and perceptual abilities, observe individual and/or group performance, discriminate safe from unsafe environments and between therapeutic and non-therapeutic behaviors and contexts.

### **Intellectual Functions:**

1. Apply critical thinking skills towards creative problem-solving, mastering abstract ideas, and synthesizing information, which may present ethical and other dilemma during didactic, research, clinical and mentorship experiences.
2. Measure, calculate, reason, analyze, process, synthesize, apply and retain facts, concepts, and data related to the art and science of health care and integrate information from all program sources; written materials, demonstration, lectures, class discussions, laboratory practice sessions, internet-based resources, and real and simulated patients
3. Apply information obtained from classroom, laboratory, internet-based sources and written materials to the examination, evaluation, interventions, and referral of real and simulated patients.
4. Apply theoretical knowledge and current research evidence to specific client populations and diagnoses, to develop, support and justify the rationale for appropriate patient examinations, evaluations, and interventions
5. Develop a sense of socio-medical ethics and recognize and apply pertinent legal and ethical standards.
6. Participate in the process of scientific inquiry.

### **Cognitive Functions:**

1. Maintain a high level of alertness and responsiveness during real time and virtual didactic research and fieldwork learning situations.
2. Focus on a task for a prolonged period to allow for successful learning to take place.
3. Recall information and organize information in an efficient and useful manner. This includes the ability to acquire, retain, and prioritize informational data, conceptualize and integrate abstract information, apply theoretical knowledge to specific client populations and justify a rationale for therapeutic interventions, and problem-solve to create innovative and practical solutions.

### **Communication Functions:**

1. Apply when building relationships with faculty, advisors, fellow students, clients, fieldwork supervisors, other professionals, and caregivers, in his/her various roles of learner, peer, student, and college/program representative.
2. Gather, comprehend, utilize and disseminate information effectively, efficiently, and in accordance with professional standards. Students are required to communicate in the English language both verbally and in writing, at a level consistent with competent professional practice.
3. Use correct grammar and vocabulary and elicit/gather information and describe findings verbally and in writing (e.g. evaluation reports, treatment plans, progress notes, and discharge summaries), that are comprehensible by clients, caregivers, professionals and non-professionals.
4. Use computer keyboards and accessories for composing, searching, recording, storing, and retrieving information, while using/learning common or specific applications for learning and database management

#### **Cultural Sensitivity Functions:**

1. Communicate accurately, sensitively and effectively with clients and professionals from different cultural and social backgrounds.
2. Observe, recognize and understand non-verbal behavior.
3. Establish rapport with clients and communicate evaluation and treatment information effectively, while adhering to principles of confidentiality.
4. Engage in respectful, non-judgmental interactions with individuals from various lifestyles, cultures, beliefs, races, socioeconomic status, and abilities.

#### **Behavioral and Social Functions:**

1. Demonstrate emotional stability and be able to develop mature and effective interpersonal relationships with other students, faculty, fieldwork supervisors, and other professionals.
2. Manage physically and emotionally taxing workloads and function effectively under stress.
3. Adapt to changing environments, display flexibility and function in the face of real-world ambiguities.
4. Commit to work collaboratively and professionally with individuals and groups in fast-paced, demanding settings.
5. Demonstrate awareness of and manage personal biases in order to meet the needs of people from diverse cultures, age groups, and socioeconomic levels.

6. Work with individuals who are severely medically involved, injured or disabled; be limited by cognitive, emotional and functional impairments and who may exhibit extreme and aversive behaviors without being judgmental or prejudicial, in order to establish a therapeutic relationship within the profession's code of ethics.
7. Demonstrate empathy, integrity, concern for others, interpersonal skills, interest, and motivation, not only during the admissions process but also throughout occupational therapy education.
8. Demonstrate responsibility for self-assessment and the development of a life-long plan for professional growth and development
9. Practice in a safe, ethical, and legal manner, following guidelines for standard practice as established by federal, state, and local law, the University, clinical facilities, the AOTA, and related professional organizations.
10. Accept responsibility for all actions, reactions, and inactions, integrating feedback in a non-defensive manner.

### **Physical Functions:**

1. Possess sufficient motor abilities, including physical strength and coordination to effectively operate and maintain equipment, safely handle, transfer, and move clients, carry out medical procedures, perform evaluations, provide treatment intervention with a variety of clients, and in multiple, non-isolated settings.
2. Optimal gross and fine motor skills including but not limited to, the ability to walk, balance, bend, climb, stoop, kneel, crouch, rotate, integrative use of two sides of the body, coordinate eyes with hand/foot function, manipulate objects, reach overhead for the purpose of daily activities.
3. Use multiple grasp and pinch patterns, including dexterity for writing and keyboard function, and firm grasp for sustained hand/arm use as in lifting, push/pull, twisting, transferring and carrying for engagement in manual actions necessary for purposeful activities.
4. Regularly lift and/or move objects up to 10 pounds, occasionally lift and/or move objects at 25-50 pounds, and infrequently lift/move objects at greater than 50 pounds.
5. Ability to participate in activities when exposed to the following conditions: wet or humid internal environments; proximity to moving mechanical parts, fumes or airborne particles, hazardous materials, and blood borne pathogens; exposure to outdoor weather conditions, risk of electrical shock, objects of hot/cold temperature, or vibration.

### **Professional Functions:**

1. Meet challenges of didactic, research or fieldwork situation that requires immediate and appropriate responses without interference of personal or medical problems.

2. Travel to and from real time classes and fieldwork rotations on time.
3. Possess the organizational skills and stamina for performing required tasks and assignments within allotted time frames.
4. Perform problem-solving tasks in a timely manner and prioritize and organize multiple workload needs, completing required work within the specified due dates.
5. Take initiative to direct own learning as evidenced by the ability to prepare in advance, utilize resources before asking for help and independently exploring additional information.
6. Take responsibility for own actions and outcomes.
7. Work cooperatively and collaboratively with other students on assigned projects and participate willingly in a supervisory process involving evaluation of other students and their own abilities and reasoning skills via giving and receiving feedback, as well as looking for ways to improve.
8. Adhere to policies of the university, the OTD Tampa program, and fieldwork sites. This includes matters ranging from professional dress and behavior to attending to their program's academic schedule.
9. Demonstrate knowledge of and commitment to the AOTA code of ethics and the core values of NSU.



### Statement of Understanding

I certify that I have received, read, and understand the **Nova Southeastern University OTD Tampa program Essential Functions Policy** and requirements for my admission, retention and graduation as an **Entry-Level Doctor of Occupational Therapy Student (OTD-S)**.

I agree to notify the OTD Tampa program if I am unable to perform any of these essential functions and understand that the inability to perform these essential functions, with or without a reasonable accommodation, can result in withdrawal, delay in progress, or dismissal from the program.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### References:

1. Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education, Retrieved January 22, 2015 from the American Occupational Therapy Association Website: <http://www.aota.org/-/media/Corporate/Files/EducationCareers/Accredit/Standards/2011-Standards-and-Interpretive-Guide-August-2013.pdf>
2. Corso, T. (1998). Thinking and rethinking technical standards. Perspective on Physician Assistant Education, 9(1), 17-19.
3. Essential Functions of Occupational Therapy Students, Retrieved December 15, 2013 from Brenau University Website: <http://www.brenau.edu/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/EssentialFunctionsofOTSRECRUITINGVERSION082008vsg.pdf>
4. Student Disability Services, Retrieved December 15, 2013 from Nova Southeastern University Website: <http://www.nova.edu/disabilityservices/>
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6. U.S. Department of Labor Physical Demand Characteristics of Work, Section 37.02 Retrieved January 22, 2015 from Website [http://www.acc.co.nz/PRD\\_EXT\\_CSMP/groups/external\\_providers/documents/guide/wcmz002335.pdf](http://www.acc.co.nz/PRD_EXT_CSMP/groups/external_providers/documents/guide/wcmz002335.pdf)