

Technical Standards and Essential Functions of a UNMC Occupational Therapy Student

Receiving an entry-level doctoral degree in occupational therapy from the Division of Occupational Therapy Education indicates the graduate is eligible to take the national certification examination and is prepared to enter the profession. This document outlines technical standards and essential functions required for students to complete their education and training in the Occupational Therapy (OT) program. Technical standards and essential functions apply to academic and clinical settings, as well as civil public behavior. Technical standards and essential functions are stated to ensure that all students are aware of the expectations of the program.

Definitions

- *Technical standards* are the knowledge, skills, and attitudes a student applicant possesses at admission, indicating their preparation for entry into the program. Technical standards are crucial for students to participate in the program.
- *Essential functions* are the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that all students must be able to execute, with or without a reasonable accommodation, in order to graduate from the program. Essential functions are crucial for occupational therapists in practice.
- *Reasonable accommodations* will be provided for qualified students with disabilities so they can meet essential functions. Reasonable accommodations will be established on an individual basis in consultation with the UNMC Coordinator, Services for Students with Disabilities, Counseling and Student Development Center.

Students must meet essential functions in five categories across academic and clinical settings in order to progress in and complete the occupational therapy program. The categories include

1. behavioral and professional standards and ethics;
2. intellectual, conceptual, and integrative skills;
3. sensory-motor coordination and function;
4. communication; and
5. observation.

1. Behavioral and professional standards and ethics

<i>Technical standards</i>	<i>Essential requirements</i>
<p>The entering student must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate honesty, integrity, responsibility, compassion, ethics, and respect for others • Respect for others' rights and property • Maintain privacy and confidentiality of peers, faculty, staff, and clients • Adhere to safety precautions • Recognize potentially dangerous situations and equipment and proceed safely in order to minimize risk of injury to self or others • Accept and give constructive feedback • Maintain work areas, equipment, and supplies 	<p>The graduating student will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adhere to the Occupational Therapy Code of Ethics (2020) • Demonstrate honesty, integrity within and outside of didactic, clinical environments • Complete client interventions, assessments, and documentation within required timelines • Create client-centered context • Apply universal precautions, infection control • Collaborate with peers, faculty, colleagues, team • Take responsibility for professional competence, conduct, and growth through self-assessment

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain personal appearance and hygiene in a professional manner • Complete required assignments and tests within required timelines • Attend class approximately 35+ hours per week including large groups, small groups, and integrated clinical experiences • Participate in additional activities outside of class time that enhance learning experiences • Demonstrate culturally competent interactions • Effectively manage multiple demands • Apply judgement for professional boundaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate consistent, professional work behaviors in classroom, clinic, and fieldwork • Actively engage in a supervisory process • Consent to health tests and immunizations required by the program or fieldwork settings, or provide documentation of exempt status (immunization status may delay graduation) • Complete and pass state and federal criminal background checks • Maintain current CPR certification • Adhere to HIPAA regulations
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2. Intellectual, conceptual, and integrative skills

<p><i>Technical standards</i></p> <p>The entering student must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive, process, and comprehend text, oral presentation, numbers, and graphs displayed in print, lecture, and audio-visual formats and store information for self-reference • Use intellectual skills: attention, comprehension, measurement, mathematical calculation, reasoning, integration, analysis, critical thinking, comparison/contrast, problem-solving, planning • Critically evaluate own performance and the performance of others • Effectively use technologies including computer, tablet, and ability to interface with supporting software programs (e.g., learning management system, electronic health records, Exxat) • Articulate rationales for decision making • Produce legible, concise, and grammatically correct written communication (handwritten and electronic) 	<p><i>Essential requirements</i></p> <p>The graduating student will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze and synthesize copious information in a short period of time from a variety of sources • Apply critical thinking and reasoning in didactic and fieldwork activities • Integrate occupation-based theories and models with other information during OT process • Identify and interpret affect, nonverbal cues, and response to intervention for individuals, groups, and populations • Select relevant screening/evaluation methods • Assess clients and modify activity or contexts as needed • Accurately interpret evaluation results • Use statistics, tests, measurements, research • Develop and implement intervention plans • Update, modify, and terminate interventions • Plan scope, frequency and duration of service • Supervise, select, and delegate tasks • Collaborate with faculty, supervisors, peers, teams, and colleagues • Refer clients to professional services prn • Follow all policies and procedures of program and fieldwork sites
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3. Sensory-motor coordination and function

<p><i>Technical standards</i></p> <p>The entering student must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in fine motor tasks • Participate in gross motor tasks • Apply senses for assessment, intervention • Participate in exploratory learning involving handling objects of various size and weight • Travel in a timely fashion to classrooms, labs, clinics • Manage self in classrooms, labs, clinics, for extended periods of time 	<p><i>Essential requirements</i></p> <p>The graduating student will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in active experiential learning performing and/or demonstrating ability to instruct others in manual and skilled tasks in classroom, lab, and clinical (e.g., orthotic fabrication, client transfers, art/craft activities, patient handling, equipment management) • Perform assessments and interventions that require palpation, manipulation of clinical tools, positioning of client and self, and demonstration of assistive devices and techniques
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process sensory information from people and the environment • Produce concise, explicit, understandable, and legible communication • Effectively use computer, Internet, and other electronic devices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiate emergency responses and/or assist others to provide prompt care • Tolerate and safely handle body fluids • Interpret and utilize sensory information from people and the environment • Effectively administer emergency procedures
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4. Communication

<p><i>Technical standards</i></p> <p>The entering student must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address problems or questions in timely fashion • Communicate meaning to others • Demonstrate awareness of own non-verbal communication and interpretation by others • Communicate quickly, effectively, and efficiently in a recorded format • Read, write, understand oral and written English • Participate effectively in small groups, class discussions, and presentations • Receive and process technical and professional materials • Follow instructions and processes • Report to others concerns in adhering to instructions/processes 	<p><i>Essential requirements</i></p> <p>The graduating student will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read and record efficiently, accurately, and legibly in client record (graphics, tests) • Communicate concisely assessments, progress notes, changes in client behavior and function, discharge summaries, and recommendations • Build rapport and elicit information • Interpret verbal and nonverbal communication • Produce professional quality educational materials, adjusting for intended audience • Communicate with supervisors and healthcare professionals involved in educational activities and client care • Communicate respectfully with others from diverse backgrounds and varied abilities
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5. Observation

<p><i>Technical standards</i></p> <p>The entering student must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observe lab demonstrations and specimens, including those in which biologicals (e.g., donor bodies, living human limbs) are manipulated 	<p><i>Essential requirements</i></p> <p>The graduating student will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess context for accessibility and safety • Monitor equipment, emergency alarms • Evaluate clients' level of function and safety (physiologic, emotional, cognitive, contextual) • Observe demonstrated clinical techniques • Differentiate changes in client factors, habits, roles, routines • Observe clients' interaction with environment • Observe emotional affect, nonverbal cues, and response to intervention of both individual clients and groups of clients • Synthesize observed data for plan of care
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Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE®)

The 2018 ACOTE® Standards and Interpretive Guide state the following expectations of program graduates.

The dynamic nature of contemporary health and human services delivery systems provides opportunities for the occupational therapist to possess the necessary knowledge and skills as a direct care provider, consultant, educator, manager, leader, researcher, and advocate for the profession and the consumer.

A graduate from an ACOTE-accredited doctoral-degree-level occupational therapy program must

- Have acquired, as a foundation for professional study, a breadth and depth of knowledge in the liberal arts and sciences and an understanding of issues related to diversity.

- Be educated as a generalist with a broad exposure to the delivery models and systems used in settings where occupational therapy is currently practiced and where it is emerging as a service.
- Have achieved entry-level competence through a combination of didactic, fieldwork, and capstone education.
- Be prepared to evaluate and choose appropriate theory to inform practice.
- Be prepared to articulate and apply occupational therapy theory through evidence-based evaluations and
- Be prepared to articulate and apply therapeutic use of occupations with persons, groups, and populations for the purpose of facilitating performance and participation in activities, occupations, and roles and situations in home, school, workplace, community, and other settings, as informed by the Occupational Therapy Practice Framework.
- Be able to plan and apply evidence-based occupational therapy interventions to address the physical, cognitive, functional cognitive, psychosocial, sensory, and other aspects of performance in a variety of contexts and environments to support engagement in everyday life activities that affect health, well-being, and quality of life, as informed by the Occupational Therapy Practice Framework.
- Be prepared to be a lifelong learner to keep current with evidence-based professional practice.
- Uphold the ethical standards, values, and attitudes of the occupational therapy profession.
- Understand the distinct roles and responsibilities of the occupational therapist and the occupational therapy assistant in the supervisory process for service delivery.
- Be prepared to effectively collaborate with and supervise occupational therapy assistants in service delivery.
- Be prepared to effectively communicate and work interprofessionally with all who provide services and programs for persons, groups, and populations.
- Be prepared to advocate as a professional for access to occupational therapy services offered and for the recipients of those services.
- Be prepared to be an effective consumer of the latest research and knowledge bases that support occupational therapy practice and contribute to the growth and dissemination of research and knowledge.
- Demonstrate in-depth knowledge of delivery models, policies, and systems related to practice in settings where occupational therapy is currently practiced and settings where it is emerging.
- Demonstrate active involvement in professional development, leadership, and advocacy.
- Demonstrate the ability to synthesize in-depth knowledge in a practice area through the development and completion of a doctoral capstone in one or more of the following areas: clinical practice skills, research skills, administration, leadership, program and policy development, advocacy, education, and theory development.

Resources

Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education. (2018). 2018 ACOTE standards and interpretive guide (effective July 31, 2020).

American Occupational Therapy Association. (2020). AOTA 2020 Occupational therapy code of ethics. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 74, 7413410005