

THE OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PROFESSION

Occupational therapy is a healthcare profession using purposeful activity (or occupation) as a means of preventing, reducing, or overcoming physical, social, and emotional challenges in people of all ages. The occupational therapist utilizes practical activities to encourage the recovering patient's involvement in meaningful daily living. An occupational therapist works with individuals whose participation in life has been impaired by physical injury or illness, developmental or learning disabilities, psychological or emotional problems, or the aging process. The occupational therapist carefully evaluates each person to determine physical and/or mental strengths and weaknesses. In conjunction with other health professionals, the occupational therapist develops a goal-oriented program using purposeful activities and adaptive equipment to correct identified problems, decrease limitations, build strengths, and ensure that life will be meaningful and productive.

UNDERGRADUATE PREPARATION

Most, but not all, occupational therapy schools require the completion of a baccalaureate degree prior to admission to their program. Typically, any major is acceptable. The most common undergraduate majors among occupational therapy graduate students include exercise science, biology, and psychology. In selecting a college major, consider how you will satisfactorily complete the pre-requisite courses for your desired occupational therapy graduate program, in addition to graduation requirements of Nebraska Wesleyan University.

REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDED COURSES

Although there is no required undergraduate major for entering the field of occupational therapy, each institution will have a list of required pre-requisite coursework that must be completed. Some programs accept AP/CLEP/other transfer credits, while other programs do not. To the right is a list of general courses and credits needed for occupational therapy school based on Creighton University requirements. Students should contact their desired graduate school directly for specific pre-requisite requirements, transfer equivalencies, or other questions.

Course	Credits
Philosophy/Religion/Ethics	3
History/World Literature/Women's Studies	3
Human Anatomy	3
Psychology	6
English Composition	3
Statistics	3
Medical Terminology	1

BEYOND ACADEMICS

Pre-occupational therapy students are encouraged to participate in experiences, such as leadership activities, volunteer opportunities, research, and shadowing of professionals, which will help prepare them for occupational therapy school and the occupational therapy profession. Activities beyond the classroom play a significant role in a student's application to a professional school program. Such experiences demonstrate a commitment to and knowledge of the profession. In particular, shadowing occupational therapists will help students learn more about the daily activities of the profession. Additionally, some occupational therapy schools require a minimum number of observation hours for admission. Typically, documentation of the observation experiences is required.

At Nebraska Wesleyan University, students interested in a career in occupational therapy should consider joining Pre-Health Club, Health and Human Performance Club, and Student-Athlete Advisory Committee. As well, consider Beta Beta Beta (Biology Honorary) and Phi Epsilon Kappa (Health and Human Performance Honorary).

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY EDUCATION

There are around 255 accredited occupational therapy schools in the United States that offer programs at both the master's and doctorate level. In Nebraska, doctorate programs in Occupational Therapy (OTD) are offered at Creighton University and College of St. Mary. The University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) is currently in Pre-accreditation status for its doctorate program and is up for review in 2023-2024. Nebraska Methodist College offers a master's degree (MOT) program. Students pursuing graduate education in occupational therapy can decide whether they want to pursue a master's or a doctorate degree, keeping in mind their academic, professional, and personal goals, as well as trends in the profession. The total number of credit hours required for degree completion may vary from school to school. Some institutions offer joint degrees, post-doctoral residencies, and fellowships. Practical experience is important, so all occupational therapy programs have dedicated time spent on clinical education and other training opportunities, rather than just focusing on classroom and lab study.

APPLICATION & ADMISSION

1. For admission to most occupational therapy programs, you must apply through the centralized application process – OTCAS. Information on OTCAS can be found at <https://portal.otcas.org/>.
2. Some occupational therapy programs require the GRE. For information on the content and registration for the GRE, see www.ets.org/gre.
3. Students applying to occupational therapy school will also be required to submit additional application materials, including letters of recommendation.

Regional Schools	Credit Requirement	Other Requirements	Avg. GPA	Length of Program	Degree Offered
College of Saint Mary	Bachelor's Degree	C or better in all general admission requirement courses	3.0 min.	3 years	OTD
Creighton University	Bachelor's Degree	Observation hours	"C" average or better	3 years	OTD
Nebraska Methodist College	Bachelor's Degree	Observation hours highly recommended	3.0 min, with 3.25 preferred for math/science	2 years	MOT
UNMC	Bachelor's Degree	C or better in all general admission requirement courses	3.0 min.	3 years	OTD

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

<http://explorehealthcareers.org> (Explore Health Careers)
<http://aota.org> (American Occupational Therapy Association)
https://help.liaisonedu.com/OTCAS_Applicant_Help_Center
 (The Centralized Application Service for Occupational Therapy)
<http://www.ets.org> (Educational Testing Service - GRE)
<http://www.caahep.org>
 (Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs)

How do I connect with NWU alumni in the occupational therapy profession?

Visit career.nebrwesleyan.edu and scroll down to "Career Assistance Network". Use this database to find alumni in this profession and see their current position titles and employers. Feel free to reach out!