

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PROGRAM  
**MINIMUM TECHNICAL STANDARDS FOR  
ADMISSION AND CONTINUATION**

**M.S. in Occupational Therapy**

Read this information sheet carefully and retain it for your records

### Introduction

The Occupational Therapy Program at SUNY Downstate Health Science University upholds diversity and inclusivity as core values. Our commitment extends to providing a supportive environment where every student, including those with disabilities, can thrive. We strive to attract and nurture students who aspire to excel as highly skilled, reflective, creative, and compassionate occupational therapists.

In pursuit of academic success, we emphasize the development of a comprehensive professional knowledge base and skill set that empowers students to make client-centered decisions across various healthcare, social service, and community-based settings.

To ensure transparency and clarity, we outline technical standards that delineate the skills, abilities, and behavioral characteristics necessary for success in our academic program. These standards encompass acquiring fundamental knowledge, fostering effective communication skills, interpreting data and practice information, cultivating sound judgment, and exhibiting professional behaviors and attitudes. These technical standards were developed to prepare students to meet the minimum standards of practice in the delivery of occupational therapy services as defined by the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA)<sup>1</sup>.

Aligned with our commitment to accessibility, both the technical and academic standards are integral to admission, progression, and graduation requirements. We engage in an interactive process with qualified students who request accommodations to determine reasonable modifications, auxiliary aids, or services that support access to the program. Accommodations are determined on an individualized basis and are designed to ensure equal access to the academic program while preserving the essential requirements, academic integrity, and professional expectations. We encourage students to engage with Student Affairs for confidential discussions about their specific learning needs. Timely accommodation requests are welcomed and essential, as we recognize that the experiential nature of our program may require additional time to implement accommodations effectively.

This information is used in conjunction with the policies and procedures as delineated in the *Policy and Procedure Manual for the Master of Science Program in Occupational Therapy*.

1. American Occupational Therapy Association; Standards of Practice for Occupational Therapy. Am J Occup Ther November/December 2021, Vol. 75(Supplement\_3), 7513410030. doi: <https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2021.75S3004>

### Technical Standards

A candidate for M.S. in Occupational Therapy must have the knowledge and demonstrate the skills to function in various clinical, community, and/or educational environments and provide a wide spectrum of occupational therapy interventions. To perform the essential functions required of the profession, the student must be able to learn, evaluate, integrate, and synthesize information quickly, accurately, and consistently. A candidate must have abilities, attributes, and skills in the following areas:

- Sensory
- Motor
- Observation
- Communication
- Cognitive
- Behavioral/Social

<p><b>Sensory</b></p>	<p>Sensory skills play a crucial role in facilitating successful participation in the educational environment and practical experiences for students. Some sensory skills necessary for students to engage effectively in such settings include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Visual Perception:</b> The ability to accurately perceive and interpret visual information presented through various instructional materials such as books, presentations, live demonstrations, and multimedia resources.</li> <li>• <b>Auditory Discrimination:</b> Discriminating between different sounds and tones, as well as effectively processing auditory information such as spoken instructions, lectures, and group discussions.</li> <li>• <b>Tactile Sensitivity:</b> Comfortably engaging with tactile materials and tools used in learning activities, such as writing and treatment tools, manipulatives, models, and other artifacts commonly used in occupational therapy education and practice</li> <li>• <b>Proprioceptive Awareness:</b> Having a good sense of body position and movement in relation to classroom furniture, equipment, and peers, which supports proper posture and spatial organization during learning tasks.</li> <li>• <b>Environmental Adaptability:</b> Being aware of and able to adapt to environmental factors such as lighting, temperature, and seating arrangements that can impact comfort and focus in the learning environment.</li> <li>• <b>Sensory Modulation:</b> Effectively regulating responses to sensory stimuli to maintain an optimal level of arousal and engagement for learning, avoiding under- or over-stimulation that may hinder participation.</li> <li>• <b>Executive Functioning:</b> Utilizing higher-order cognitive processes such as planning, organization, time management, and problem-solving to manage academic tasks and assignments efficiently.</li> <li>• <b>Emotional Regulation:</b> Executing strategies to manage emotions and cope with stressors that may arise during academic challenges, supporting emotional well-being and resilience in the learning process. Additionally, being able to tolerate close physical proximity and physical contact with peers, instructors, and clients, including manipulation of their bodies for instructional and therapeutic purposes is essential.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Motor</b></p>	<p>Motor and mobility skills are essential in facilitating successful participation in the educational and practice environment. Students must demonstrate sufficient motor coordination and mobility to participate in required laboratory and clinical learning activities, with or without reasonable accommodations, in a manner that ensures client and student safety. Some skills necessary for students to engage effectively in such settings include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mobility for safety and emergency situations:</b> Execute motor movements reasonably required to provide occupational therapy services, including performing safety and emergency procedures.</li> <li>• <b>Gross movement in the environment:</b> Perform physical activities requiring significant use of arms and legs, including climbing, lifting, getting up and down from the floor, balancing, walking, bending, stooping, handling materials, lifting and transferring patients; and standing for long periods.</li> <li>• <b>Fine movements in the environment:</b> Plan and execute fine motor coordination to manipulate tools and equipment to design and fabricate orthotics, positioning devices, and adaptive equipment used in various settings and under diverse conditions.</li> <li>• <b>Coordinated movement of sufficient strength and endurance:</b> Demonstrate sufficient mobility, motor coordination, strength, and stamina required to perform assessments and interventions with clients who may have cognitive, emotional, sensory, and/or mobility impairments.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cognitive</b></p>	<p>Cognitive skills are essential in facilitating successful participation in the educational and practice environment. Some skills necessary for students to engage effectively in such settings include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Attention and concentration:</b> Maintaining focus and attention on learning tasks, both in individual and group settings, despite potential distractions in the environment.</li> <li>• <b>Memory storage and retrieval:</b> Encoding and retaining information gathered in diverse forms in the academic, fieldwork, and community settings.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Comprehension:</b> Demonstrating the ability to retain, process, recall, integrate, infer, analyze, evaluate, and apply information from diverse sources in all steps of the occupational therapy process.</li> <li>• <b>Critical thinking:</b> Utilizing reasoning and judgement to identify salient information, recognize patterns, integrate concepts, master abstract ideas, problem-solve creatively, and synthesize data to apply logically in academic, fieldwork, and community settings.</li> <li>• <b>Self-awareness and impulse control:</b> Display the ability to monitor and evaluate one's own knowledge, skills, and behavior for one's safety and that of others.</li> </ul>
<b>Observation</b>	<p>Observation is a key practice ability that is refined in both academic and experiential components of the curriculum. Such observation necessitates the functional use of vision, hearing, and/or other sensory modalities, with or without reasonable accommodations or assistive technologies, to accurately interpret client performance and responses. To successfully participate in such settings, it is important for students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• observe demonstrations in the basic science occupational therapy courses, effectively attending to and limiting focus to relevant information</li> <li>• recognize emergency signals, while maintaining appropriate sensory, cognitive, and emotional functions for safety in emergency situations.</li> <li>• develop skill in recognizing subtle cues in clients' motor, cognitive, and emotional responses to therapeutic interventions, and be able to plan and modify treatment accordingly.</li> </ul>
<b>Communication</b>	<p>Effective communication is an important skill to possess and develop within in the educational and practice environment. Students must be able to access and use required educational technologies, including learning management systems, electronic communication tools, and digital documentation platforms, with or without reasonable accommodations. Some communication skills necessary for students to demonstrate include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• proficiency in written and spoken English to meet curricular, clinical, and scholarly demands. This includes but is not limited to completing assignments, discussions, presentations, and documentation within the academic environment and as expected in practice settings.</li> <li>• the ability to acquire information through classroom instruction, practical experiences, independent learning, and consultation, completing reading assignments, and evaluating the literature required for learning within academic and practice environments.</li> <li>• Demonstrating sufficient emotional intelligence to recognize, interpret, and appropriately respond to nonverbal behavior of clients, instructors, and peers within various academic, community, educational, and practice environments.</li> <li>• Acquire and comprehend information from images, electronic, and written materials to meet academic and practice demands.</li> </ul>
<b>Behavioral/ Social</b>	<p>Students are expected to demonstrate and develop professional attitudes and behaviors appropriate for academic, fieldwork, and community settings. Some behaviors include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizing and managing time effectively to fulfill responsibilities and meet deadlines within in the educational and practice environment</li> <li>• Exhibiting the ability and commitment to work collaboratively and professionally with diverse individuals and groups, meeting the needs of people from various cultures, identity groups, and socioeconomic backgrounds without bias.</li> <li>• Demonstrating sufficient emotional intelligence to self-reflect and understand personal responses, thoughts, and feelings, making necessary corrections and being open to feedback.</li> <li>• Maintaining flexibility and adaptability in changing environments and emergent practice situations, learning to function amidst the uncertainties and ambiguity inherent within in the educational and practice environment</li> <li>• Exercising sound judgment in various situations and responding appropriately to emergency situations.</li> </ul>

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students must be able to participate appropriately in laboratory and clinical learning experiences that may involve physical contact, using professional judgment, ethical conduct, informed consent, and respect for personal and cultural boundaries.</li></ul> |
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Note: Students are expected to adhere to the standards of professional behaviors described in the *AOTA Code of Ethics* and the *Downstate OT Policy and Procedure Manual*.

## Conclusion

The SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University Occupational Therapy Program and its sponsoring institution are dedicated to supporting qualified individuals with disabilities by providing reasonable accommodations. Our commitment also includes maintaining the integrity of the curriculum and preserving essential elements necessary for the education of future occupational therapists. Ensuring the health and safety of consumers of occupational therapy services is our top priority. Applicants and students who meet the minimum academic and technical standards will be well-prepared for the rewarding practice of occupational therapy.

## Signature

I have read, understand, and agree to the technical standards as published above.

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Signature

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Date