

Pre-Occupational Therapy Guide 2022-2023

Occupational therapists are healthcare professionals who help individuals with illness, disabilities or injuries develop or regain skills that allow them to participate in everyday activities and reach independence. An occupational therapist's (OT) work can be diverse: an OT may help an elementary-aged student improve handwriting or help an elderly patient with self-care following a stroke. OTs work in numerous settings including hospitals, schools, clinics, prisons, rehabilitation centers, assisted living centers, mental health clinics and senior centers. OTs work with individuals from across the lifespan in diverse settings, and work with a variety of healthcare providers.

Occupational therapy programs vary in length depending on the type of program and degree earned. Most students attend occupational therapy school after a baccalaureate program. Post-baccalaureate programs include MOT (Master of Occupational Therapy), DOT (Doctor of Occupational Therapy), combined Masters and Doctorate OT degrees and OTA (Occupational Therapy Assistant) to OT degree programs. All OT post-baccalaureate programs will transition to DOT-granting degrees only by 2027. The University of Iowa does not offer an OT program. There are five programs in Iowa, and several other programs in the Midwest.

Sample Pre-Occupational Therapy Four-Year Academic Plan**

Year 1:

RHET:1030 Rhetoric
SOC:1010 Intro. to Sociology *or*
social science course.

ENGL:1200 Interpretation of Literature
PSY:1001 Elementary Psychology

Year 2:

PSY:2401 Intro. Develop. Science *or*
HHP:2130 Human Dev. Through Lifespan
CHEM:1070 General Chemistry if needed

STAT:1020 Statistics (QFR GE) *or* STAT:3510 Biostats (no QFR)
BIOL:1140 Human Biology (prep for anatomy)

Year 3:

HHP:1100 Human Anatomy
HHP:1110 Human Anatomy lab (if needed)
PSY:2930 Abnormal Psych. for Health Prof.

HHP:1300 Fundamentals Human Physiology
CLSA:3750 Medical Technical Terminology
CSED:4195 Ethics in Human Relations/Counseling

Year 4:

HHP:1310 Human Physiology lab (if needed)
Apply to programs in early fall

Courses needed to complete major

**While this sample plan covers prerequisites for most OT schools, it is important to check prerequisites required for each program that you are considering. Your advisor can help you find the right UI course for any OT prerequisites not listed here.

Prerequisite Coursework

Occupational therapy programs vary considerably in their required prerequisite coursework. Most require two semesters of anatomy and physiology, social science coursework, a statistics class and two to three psychology courses including abnormal psychology and developmental/lifespan psychology. Some programs require one to two courses in chemistry, biology, physics, and computer science with lab components. Students should begin researching OT programs early on to satisfy all prerequisite requirements for the programs they are considering. Students can view prerequisites for OT programs by finding individual programs on the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) under the Education and Careers drop-down menu.

Types and list of OT programs: <https://www.aota.org/Education-Careers/Find-School.aspx>

Academic Guidelines

A minimum 2.60 is required for a few programs; many require a 2.75 to 3.00 minimum GPA and no grade lower than a C in any pre-requisite coursework. **Typically, OT programs admit students in the 3.30-4.00 cumulative and prerequisite GPA range.** Some schools will consider students under the academic guideline if the prerequisite GPA is higher or if a student has shown significant improvement in the last 60 hours of coursework. Admissions profiles which include average GPAs of admitted students and class size can be found on each individual OT school's website.

Non-Academic Guidelines

Exposure to the work that OTs do in a variety of settings is important. Many OT programs will require documentation of observation hours with a registered OT. A minimum of 50 hours in at least two different OT settings is strongly recommended with more hours and settings encouraged. Some OT programs require Red Cross CPR/First Aid certification within three years of application. Many schools require information about applicants' extra-curricular activities, internships, volunteering, accomplishments, and awards. Your pre-OT advisor can help you with finding extracurricular activities. An emphasis on social and human services work is encouraged.

The Application Process

Students can apply to multiple occupational therapy programs by using the Occupational Therapy Centralized Application Service (OTCAS) (www.otcas.org). For the 2022-2023 admissions cycle, OTCAS opened July 21, 2022, and will close in June 2023. Not all OT programs participate in OTCAS. To check if a school participates, go the school's website for application information. Application deadlines vary, with some schools enforcing firm deadlines while others have soft deadlines. Since some schools have rolling deadlines, it is ideal to get applications in as early as possible. Typically, students start working on their applications in late summer/early fall of their senior year. Applicants should check with schools for more deadline information. Most schools require supplemental application material and fees.

This form is to be used as a planning tool. Your degree audit is the official record of degree requirements.
Academic Advising Center, updated 8/2022

Letters of Evaluation

OTCAS allows applicants to submit up to three letters of recommendation. Applicants should seek letters of recommendation from a faculty member and from a volunteer coordinator, occupational therapist, or pre-occupational therapy advisor. OTCAS will not accept committee or composite letters. Some programs require a letter of recommendation from an occupational therapist and many programs highly recommend a letter from an occupational therapist that a student knows from work or shadowing.

Interviews

Not all OT programs require interviews. OT programs will contact applicants who have been selected for an interview. Interviews are an important part of the admissions process. Students can arrange for a practice interview through the UI Career Center at C310 Pomerantz Center, but this must be done in advance. Schedule online through Handshake:

<https://careers.uiowa.edu/mocks>

Criminal Background Checks

On the OTCAS application, applicants will be required to disclose and explain any felony convictions and instances of academic fraud or dishonesty. Criminal activity can have negative impacts on admissions and licensure for professional practice but is not necessarily an insurmountable barrier. Honest disclosure and lessons learned are important to include in an application.

Diversity in Occupational Therapy

AOTA actively seeks to increase participation and matriculation of minority applicants in OT programs. In 2020 the American Occupational Therapy Association launched its AOTA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategic Plan to increase the diversity of the OT workforce:

<https://www.aota.org/about/diversity-equity-and-inclusion>

Entrance Examination Requirements

Some OT programs require Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores. Arrange to take the test at least two to three months before applying to ensure receipt of scores. Students should allow three to four months to prepare for the GRE. A few schools have minimum GRE score requirements.

Citizenship/International Students

Most OT programs will accept international students. Many require the TOEFL test for admission. Some programs require international students to demonstrate financial ability to pay tuition before matriculation. Programs vary in what they will accept as prerequisite coursework outside the United States.

Helpful Websites

American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) www.aota.org

National Board for Certification on Occupational Therapy (NBCOT) www.nbcot.org

Occupational Therapy Centralized Application Service (OTCAS) www.otcas.org

American Occupational Therapy Foundation (AOTF) www.aotf.org

Iowa Occupational Therapy Association (IOTA) www.iowaot.org

Pre-Occupational Therapy Coursework Checklist

RHET:1030 Rhetoric

ENGL:1200 Interpretation of Literature

PSY:1001 Elementary Psychology

PSY:2401 Intro. to Develop. Science **or**
HHP:2130 Human Development/Lifespan

PSY:2930 Abnormal Psych. for Health Prof.

HHP:1100 Human Anatomy

HHP:1110 Human Anatomy lab if needed

HHP:1300 Fundamentals of Human
Physiology **or** HHP:3500 Human Physiology

HHP:1310 Human Physiology lab (if needed)

CSED:4195 Ethics Human Relations &
Counseling

SOC:1010 Introduction to Sociology or other
social science

STAT:1020 or STAT:3510 Statistics

CLSA:3750 Medical and Technical Terminology

Required for some programs:

CS:1020 Principles of Computing

PHYS:1400 Basic Physics (lab if needed)

CHEM:1070 General Chemistry

BIOL:1140 Human Biology Non-Professions

CHEM:1110 Principles of Chemistry I

College-level Algebra or higher math

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