

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY (MOT/OTD)

ACADEMIC AND CAREER INFORMATION

NATURE OF THE WORK, EARNINGS, AND OCCUPATIONAL OUTLOOK

Occupational Therapy (OT) is a health profession concerned with promoting health and well-being. The primary goal of occupational therapy is to enable people to participate in the activities of everyday life. OTs achieve this outcome by working with people and communities to enhance their ability to engage in the occupations they want to, need to, or are expected to do, or by modifying the occupation or the environment to better support their occupational engagement. Common occupational therapy interventions include helping children with disabilities to participate fully in school and social situations, helping people recovering from injury to regain skills, and providing supports for older adults experiencing physical and cognitive changes. The types of services that OTs provide include customized treatment programs to improve people's ability to perform daily activities; evaluation and treatment to develop or restore sensorimotor, cognitive, and psychosocial performance skills; comprehensive home and job site evaluation with adaptation recommendations to make them safe, conserve energy, enhance comfort, independence and productivity; adaptive equipment recommendations and usage training; and guidance to family members and caregivers.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects a 29 percent increase in occupational therapy jobs between 2012 and 2022, which is much higher than other professions. Moreover, U.S. News & World Report ranked OTs number nine in its list of the best health care jobs in 2015, so the future looks bright. The median annual wage for occupational therapists was \$81,910 in 2016.

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY SCHOOL

Successful completion of a Master's degree in Occupational Therapy (MOT) is required to practice as an occupational therapist in the United States. Optional degrees include a Doctorate in Occupational Therapy (OTD) or Ph.D. degree. In addition to coursework, students complete at minimum six months of supervised clinical internships in a variety of health care and community settings. Upon graduation, an array of opportunities and practice settings are available to licensed OTs that include working in private clinics, hospitals, corporations, homes, schools, community centers, psychiatric hospitals, health centers, and wellness resorts. For licensing, students must graduate from an accredited program, as well as pass a certification examination.

ACADEMIC PREPARATION

The most competitive applicant has seriously investigated the field, taken the proper prerequisite courses, and given much thought to the reasons for selecting occupational therapy as a career. Criteria used in the selection of applicants for occupational therapy programs include GPA, work experience and/or exposure to the field, letters of recommendation, personal statement, applicable test scores (such as the Graduate Record Exam, or GRE), extracurricular activities, and interview scores. GPA ranges fluctuate with each applicant pool and each school. For more information on occupational therapy as a career, visit the [American Occupational Therapy Association](http://www.aota.org).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

CSULB courses which fulfill admission requirements for some U.S. Occupational Therapy programs:

Students maintain responsibility for verifying course selection with individual programs.

Coursework	CSULB Courses	Units
Human Anatomy and Physiology with Lab	Biology 208: Human Anatomy Biology 207: Human Physiology	4, 4
General Biology with Lab	Biology 211 & 212	4, 4
One year of General Physics with Lab	Physics 100A & 100B OR 151 & 152	4, 4
One course in Statistics	Biology 260 OR Kinesiology 483	3
General Psychology	Psychology 100	3, 3
One year of English	English 100 AND another course from the English department such as: 102, 180, 300	3, 3

IMPORTANT FACTORS CONSIDERED FOR SUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS

CLINICAL EXPOSURE: Many programs require applicants to have volunteer or paid experiences working with patients under the supervision of a licensed occupational therapist. The program may specify the settings and types of experiences required. These experiences are an important factor in the admissions process. Students should respectfully contact occupational therapy clinics, hospitals, long-term care facilities (e.g., nursing homes), and other healthcare settings in the area to find opportunities.

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION: Many programs require 1-4 letters of recommendation as part of the admissions process. Programs may require references from a particular individual, such as an occupational therapist, science professor, or academic advisor. If references are required, select individuals who meet the program's requirements, know the student well, and can speak to maturity, dependability, dedication, compassion, communication skills, leadership, and any hands on experience in the field.

STANDARDIZED TEST: Some programs require the [Graduate Record Examination \(GRE\)](#) for admission.

ADMISSIONS CYCLE: All prerequisite courses must be completed by time of matriculation. Most OT programs use rolling admissions and deadlines vary between fall and spring. Check individual OT schools and consult with your OT advisor on admission deadlines. Competitive applicants will be invited for an interview. All applicants must submit consent for a criminal background check.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [American Occupational Therapy Association \(AOTA\)](#)
- [Occupational Therapy Centralized Application Service \(OTCAS\)](#)
 - [OTCAS: participating educational programs](#)

For more information on Occupational Therapy, visit www.aota.org and see your HPAO advisor for further information on the application process, application assistance, and a list of upcoming workshops and events.