

UCA Department of Occupational Therapy Essential Functions

UCA prepares students to evaluate and provide intervention for individuals who present with occupational challenges. In order for a student to be successful in the program they must be able to perform certain essential functions. Students must also have the prerequisite skills to be able to conduct clinically based research.

The following essential functions define the minimal physical, sensory, cognitive, professional, and behavioral abilities required for successful program completion. Additionally, students must be prepared to conduct components of clinical practice in a timely manner.

The Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) accredits professional occupational therapy programs and requires that graduates of these programs are able to deliver entry-level clinical services. Graduates of entry-level programs are required to possess a broad base of knowledge and skills requisite for the practice of occupational therapy. Occupational therapists must possess the intellectual, communication, behavioral – social, observational, and motor abilities to meet the standard of practice.

All applicants are questioned regarding their ability to complete these essential functions, with or without reasonable accommodation. Reasonable accommodation refers to ways in which the university can assist students with disabilities to accomplish tasks. For example, provide support services to significantly decrease or eliminate physical and educational barriers caused by disability. Reasonable accommodation does not mean that students with disabilities will be exempt from certain tasks or time restrictions.

Prospective OT students who can complete these tasks with or without reasonable accommodation are not required to disclose their disability prior to an admission decision. Prospective OT students who cannot complete these tasks with or without reasonable accommodation are ineligible for consideration for admission. If admitted, a student with a disability, who requires reasonable accommodation must register with UCA Disability Support Services Center. An offer of admission may be withdrawn or a student may be dismissed from the program if it becomes apparent that the student cannot complete essential tasks, or that fulfilling functions would create a significant risk of harm to the health or safety of others.

The following is a list of the essential functions required of the prospective OT student in order to participate in academic and clinical components of the curriculum:

1. Intellectual Abilities

Intellectual skills include the ability to recall and comprehend large amounts of information and to apply this information to the client's complex problems as well as participate in classroom discussions.

The OT student has the ability to:

- a) Recognize and define problems, develop and implement solutions, and evaluate outcomes
- b) Demonstrate critical thinking skills and appropriate clinical decision making with ability to differentiate relevant vs. irrelevant information
- c) Memorize, analyze, synthesize and apply large volumes of information
- d) Demonstrate an ability to be flexible in both intervention strategies and behavior when needed
- e) Implement the use of both computer and technology including: word processor, learning platforms (Blackboard, Skype), databases, spreadsheets, PowerPoint, and other Internet search tools
- f) Demonstrate additional skills including spelling proficiency, active listening, reading comprehension, instructing, time management, active learning, deductive reasoning, inductive reasoning, decision making, adaptability, flexibility, cooperation, self-control, frustration tolerance, and attention to detail

2. Communication Abilities

Effective communication skills enable the occupational therapist to appropriately exchange information with clients and to effectively explain intervention procedures to clients, caregivers, and other professionals.

The OT student has the ability to:

- a) Effectively process and comprehend written and verbal communications, in the English language, in any form of media at a level consistent with full participation in academic and fieldwork environments
- b) Utilize appropriate, effective, and respectful verbal, written and non-verbal communication
- c) In all situations, respond professionally and appropriately verbally and in writing, in the English language, when communicating with any personnel
- d) Respond to situations that indicate an individual's need for assistance
- e) Participate in group and individual discussions, present oral and written reports and provide constructive feedback in the English language
- f) Be able to recognize and interpret nonverbal behaviors and their effect on communication
- g) Communicate effectively and professionally in written communication, utilizing correct spelling and grammar

3. Observational Abilities

Observation is vital to an occupational therapist in that it allows the gathering of data regarding the client and his/her condition.

The OT student has the ability to:

- a) Observe and recognize abnormalities or changes in a client's affect, behavior, position, posture, movements, skin condition and appearance
- b) Recognize potential safety hazards
- c) Read equipment dials, graphs, medical records, professional literature, and notes from clients, physicians and other health professionals

4. Behavioral – Social Abilities

The OT must demonstrate the ability to practice in a professional and ethical manner and possess the emotional stability to practice in a stressful work environment.

The OT student has the ability to:

- a) Appropriately handle the physical, emotional and mental challenges of a rigorous curriculum and varied practice environments
- b) Engage in a professional manner in intimate situations involving clients and classmates care such as dressing, bathing, and toileting
- c) Demonstrate flexibility and willingness to adapt to changing environments
- d) Demonstrate empathy, compassion, integrity, honesty, and concern for others of all cultures
- e) Demonstrate the ability to respond appropriately to unpredictable or stressful situations
- f) Demonstrate behaviors and attitudes that protect the safety and well-being of others especially clients and classmates
- g) Demonstrate professional, ethical and legal behavior in academic and clinical environments
- h) Receive and deliver constructive feedback in a calm and respectful manner
- i) Accept responsibility for one's own behaviors
- j) Demonstrate the ability to work productively in teams and groups

5. Motor and Sensory Skills

The practice of occupational therapy requires that the practitioner possess the ability to perform basic evaluation and intervention procedures that require specific physical skills and stamina. A therapist must also use vision and somatic sensation in the evaluation and intervention of clients.

The OT student has the ability to:

- a) Attend classes 30 or more hours per week during each academic semester. Classes consist of a combination of lecture, discussion, laboratory, and clinical activities
- b) Participate in fieldwork experiences 40 or more hours per week on a schedule that corresponds to the operating hours of the fieldwork site
- c) On a daily basis, sit for two hours, stand for two hours, walk or travel for two to four hours, before taking a break

- d) Lift objects or people to and from various surfaces ranging from the floor, plinth, bed, or overhead. A minimum weight of 10 pounds for overhead lifts. Be able to safely move up to a 150 pound dependent person from one surface to another with or without physical or mechanical assistance
- e) Carry in your arms (as opposed to in a box, backpack, on your head or shoulders) up to 25 pounds while walking up to a minimum of 50 feet
- f) Exert 75 pounds of push/pull forces up to 50 feet and sometimes exert 150 pounds of push/pull forces from a standing or seated position
- g) Twist, bend, stoop, squat, crawl, climb onto equipment, reach above shoulder level, and kneel for a sustained amount of time and be able to effectively return to a standing position
- h) Move from place to place and position to position at a speed that permits safe handling of classmates and clients
- i) Stand and walk while providing support to a classmate simulating a disability or while supporting a client with a disability
- j) Climb stairs and negotiate uneven terrain with good balance (ex: without stumbling or falling and without holding on to rails or other objects)
- k) Administer CPR – upon successful completion of CPR training
- l) Use hand(s) to manipulate very small equipment, palpate body structures, handle injured body parts without causing or exacerbating injury to the client, and safely guide a client's movement
- m) Perform physical tasks while maintaining awareness of external factors; including client response, monitor displays, equipment function and/or surroundings
- n) Demonstrate sufficient postural and neuromuscular control, sensory functions, and coordination to complete assessments and interventions
- o) Tolerate noxious fumes for an extended period of time with or without assistive equipment

6. Professional Skills

The OT student has the ability to:

- a) Follow the standards set forth by the ethical code of AOTA, University of Central Arkansas, and HIPPA maintaining confidentiality and complying with all laws and standards
- b) Demonstrate dependability by notifying faculty of circumstances that prevent attendance or completion of assignments
- c) Attend all academic and field activities on time
- d) Demonstrate the ability to be a cooperative and contributing member of class, clinical, and professional activities
- e) Demonstrate the ability to set boundaries for themselves to eliminate distractions in the classroom and in the field
- f) Display appropriate dress and personal hygiene
- g) Demonstrate respect and develop relationships with faculty, fieldwork educators, peers, coworkers, clients, and caregivers
- h) Demonstrate and exhibit honesty and integrity in all coursework, documentation, communication, and about errors or uncertainties
- i) Exhibit a positive attitude in the classroom and in the field
- j) Produce class and field assignments in a manner consistent with the rules, regulations, and laws of practice settings, for example, timely manner, confidentiality, and professional product