

Technical Standards and Essential Functions for Hofstra University Occupational Therapy Students

A student is required to have multiple skills in order to effectively participate in the educational program (didactic and clinical/practice settings). The skills include abilities related to observation, critical thinking, conceptual, behavioral/social appropriateness and physical/motor capacities. It is the expectation that the student can perform independently. The occupational therapy program complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act- federal regulations established by the ADA, Section 504 of the Civil Rights Act of 1973 as well state and local requirements regarding applicants and students with disabilities.

Since graduates work in diverse practice areas, e.g. hospital-based, school systems, mental health facilities, community agencies, the education program prepares students to effectively and safely work in different settings and jobs with clients across the lifespan. Reasonable accommodations can be provided for individuals with disabilities. However, if a student or applicant's ability to perform effectively is compromised, it will be necessary to demonstrate alternate means to accomplish the essential functions of the tasks.

Essential Functions* related to Performance Skills as Outlined in the *Occupational Therapy Practice Framework: Domain and Process, 3rd edition.*

Motor Skills and Process Skills

Physical/Motor Skills and Environmental Requirements

- Students must possess sufficient motor abilities, including physical strength and coordination to effectively operate and maintain equipment, safely handle, transfer, and move clients, carry out medical procedures, perform evaluations, provide treatment intervention with a variety of clients, and in multiple, non-isolated settings.
- Students must demonstrate good gross and fine motor skills including but not limited to, the ability to walk, balance, bend, climb, stoop, kneel, crouch, rotate, coordinate arms, and reach overhead.
- Students are required to use multiple grasp, and pinch patterns, including dexterity for writing and keyboard function, and firm grasp for sustained hand/arm use as in lifting, push/pull, twisting, transferring and carrying. Students must regularly lift and/or move objects up to 10 pounds, occasionally lift and/or move objects at 25-50 pounds, and infrequently lift/move objects at greater than 50 pounds.

- Students may be exposed to the following conditions: wet or humid internal environments; proximity to moving mechanical parts, fumes or airborne particles, hazardous materials, and blood borne pathogens; exposure to outdoor weather conditions, risk of electrical shock, objects of hot/cold temperature, or vibration.

Motor, Process and Social Interaction Skills

Professional Responsibility

- Students must exhibit the ability to unpredictable challenges of health/medical situations that require a high level of alertness and readiness for immediate and appropriate response without interference of personal or medical problems. This includes training for emergencies (e.g. CPR and infection control).
- Students must adhere to policies of the college, the Program, and fieldwork/clinical sites. This may include, but is not limited to, professional dress and demeanor, conforming to the academic calendar, and meeting start dates for fieldwork/clinical assignments.
- Students are responsible for travel to and from classes and fieldwork/clinical sites; attendance at classes and fieldwork/clinical assignments; and maintaining organizational skills and stamina for meeting performance criteria within assigned time frames.
- Students must take the initiative to self-assess their own academic progress and direct their own learning.
- They must work cooperatively and collaboratively with other students on assigned projects, and participate willingly in a supervisory process involving external evaluation of their abilities and reasoning skills.
- The faculty of the Hofstra University Occupational Therapy Program is committed to comply with the letter and spirit of the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- The faculty acknowledges its responsibility to our students and for the welfare of the clients treated or otherwise affected by students. Hofstra University is committed to promoting the educational welfare of its students relative to the educational programs of the university.

Process Skills

Observation Skills

- Students must be able to acquire a defined level of necessary information as presented through educational experiences relating to both basic arts and sciences, as well as in pre-professional, professional, and graduate courses.
- To achieve the required competencies in the classroom setting, students must perceive, assimilate, and integrate information from a variety of sources. These sources include lectures, printed materials, visual and auditory media, laboratory experiences, and hands-on demonstrations.

- Consequently, students must demonstrate adequate functional use of visual, tactile, auditory and other sensory and perceptual abilities, to enable such observations and information acquisition necessary for academic and clinical performance.

Cognitive Demands

- The successful occupational therapy student maintains a high level of alertness and responsiveness during classroom and fieldwork situations.
- The student must possess the ability to focus on a task for a prolonged period of time to allow for successful learning to take place.
- In addition, the student must be able to recall information and organize information in an efficient and useful manner. This includes the ability to acquire, retain, and prioritize informational data, conceptualize and integrate abstract information, apply theoretical knowledge to specific client populations and justify a rationale for therapeutic interventions, and problem-solve to create innovative and practical solutions.

Process Skills and Social Interaction Skills

Intellectual/Conceptual Abilities

- Students must demonstrate critical thinking skills so that they can problem-solve creatively, master abstract ideas, and synthesize information present in academic, laboratory and fieldwork/clinical settings that may present gray areas and ethical dilemmas.
- Students must be able to measure, calculate, reason, analyze, process, integrate, synthesize, apply and retain facts, concepts, and data related to the art and science of health care.
- In addition, students must be able to comprehend three-dimensional relationships and understand the spatial relationships of anatomic structures.
- Students must be able to apply theoretical knowledge and current research evidence to specific client populations and diagnoses, and justify the rationale for medical and therapeutic interventions.
- Students must also develop a sense of socio-medical ethics, and recognize and apply pertinent legal and ethical standards.

Social Interaction Skills

Cultural Competency

- Students must be able to communicate accurately, sensitively and effectively with clients and professionals from different cultural and social backgrounds.
- They should be able to observe, recognize and understand non-verbal behavior.
- They must be able to establish rapport with clients and communicate evaluation and treatment information effectively, while adhering to principles of confidentiality.

Behavioral and Social Skills

- Students must demonstrate emotional stability and be capable of developing mature and effective interpersonal relationships with other students, faculty, clinical supervisors, and other professionals.
- Students must be able to tolerate physically and emotionally taxing workloads and to function effectively under stress.
- They must be able to adapt to changing environments, display flexibility and function in the face of real- world ambiguities.
- Students must exhibit the ability and commitment to work with individuals in fast-paced, demanding settings. Students must acknowledge and manage personal biases in order to meet the needs of people from diverse cultures, age groups, and socioeconomic levels.
- Students must be prepared to work with individuals who are severely medically involved, injured or disabled; be limited by cognitive, emotional and functional impairments; and exhibit extreme behavior that may elicit an aversive reaction. The ability to successfully interact with such individuals without being judgmental or prejudicial, is critical to establishing a therapeutic relationship and maintaining one's professionalism as indicated in a profession's code of ethics.
- Students must demonstrate attributes of empathy, integrity, concern for others, interpersonal skills, interest, and motivation, as such qualities are assessed not only during the admissions process but throughout occupational therapy education.
- Students must possess the emotional well being required for use of their intellectual abilities, the exercise of care of patients, and the development of mature, sensitive, and effective relationships with patients.
- Candidates must be able to adapt to ever-changing environments, display flexibility, and learn to function in the face of uncertainties and stresses which are inherent in the educational process, as well as the clinical problems of many patients.

*Adapted from Essential Function Statements from Brenau University School of Health Science, Department of Occupational Therapy. <http://www.brenau.edu/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/EssentialFunctionsofOTSRECRUITINGVERSION082008vsg.pdf>, retrieved May 28, 2015.