

## **OTD Program Essential Skills and Function**

Occupational therapists are health care professionals with the expertise to work with clients to evaluate and provide skilled interventions that support meaningful participation in “occupations.” The Briar Cliff University (BCU) Doctor of Occupational Therapy (OTD) program is dedicated to preparing entry-level occupational therapists as generalists for practice across all age groups in common practice settings and emerging or non-traditional areas of practice. The physical, cognitive, emotional, psychosocial, professional, and technological demands of occupational therapy practice are reflected in the essential skills and functions of the BCU OTD program. Students must have the capacity to assess and analyze clients’ occupational performance, provide occupational-based interventions, and effectively communicate with clients, families, members of the healthcare team, and other stakeholders in practice settings.

Guided by ACOTE Standard A.3.4., the OTD Program’s Essential Skills and Functions inform students of the performance expectations of the program. These requirements apply to the entire OTD curriculum and may include activities held in the classroom, lab, Pro Bono and community engagement experiences, clinical fieldwork experiences, and/or doctoral capstone experiences.

The essential skills and functions assist in determining if students may need accommodations. Reasonable accommodations for qualified students with documented disabilities will be provided if necessary for these students to meet minimum abilities. Whether or not a requested accommodation is reasonable will be determined individually in consultation with Student Support Services. A reasonable accommodation is intended to reduce the effects that a disability may have on a student’s performance. Accommodations do not lower course standards or alter degree requirements but give students a better opportunity to demonstrate their abilities.

### **ESSENTIAL SKILLS AND FUNCTIONS**

It is the expectation that occupational therapy students verify that they understand and are able to perform each of the expected essential skills and functions, with or without reasonable accommodations in order to fully participate in and complete the graduation requirements for a Doctor of Occupational Therapy degree. Upon signing the Acknowledgement Statement in Appendix F, students verify that they are able to complete the following essential skills and functions in a safe, reliable, and efficient manner in accordance with legal and ethical standards.

#### **PHYSICAL**

Students are required to demonstrate the following physical skills and functions that would allow them to engage with the curriculum and interact with their environment to perform skilled therapeutic assessments and interventions when working with clients in all practice settings: gross motor movement, strength, and coordination; fine motor movement, strength, coordination; fine motor dexterity; core strength and endurance to sit and stand for long periods of time; balance and

flexibility for sitting, standing, bending, stooping, kneeling, crawling, climbing, reaching; and carrying, lifting, pushing, and pulling up to 40 pounds.

### **COGNITIVE/PROCESSING**

Students are required to demonstrate the following cognitive and sensory processing skills that would allow them to initiate their learning, attend to and observe their environments, take in and process information, and create solutions during the delivery of skilled therapeutic services. Required cognitive and sensory processing skills include regulation of visual, auditory, olfactory, gustation, and proprioceptive sensory processes; appropriate arousal level for the classroom/lab/clinical experiences to be motivated and engaged; selective and divided attention for a variety of tasks; short-term, long-term, and working memory for comprehension, retention, and recall of information; reflective thought; critical thinking and reasoning for problem-solving; and analysis and integration of information.

### **EMOTIONAL/PSYCHOSOCIAL**

Students are required to demonstrate the following emotional skills to help them optimize their learning and present the healthiest versions of themselves before serving clients, groups, and populations in a variety of settings: management of stress; emotional stability and self-control; ability to adapt; open-minded to various experiences, cultures, and backgrounds different from their own; willingness to engage with others; confidence; empathy; compassion; and self and social awareness.

### **COMMUNICATION**

Students are required to demonstrate the following communication skills that can help them to develop professional and therapeutic relationships with individuals they engage with during the academic program as well as the individuals they serve and work with throughout the therapeutic process: strong active listening and interpersonal skills; concise and informative formal speaking; informal conversation in both face-to-face and on the phone contexts; awareness of non-verbal language; reflective reading and writing; professional writing using APA format; ability to give and receive constructive feedback; and effective conflict resolution.

### **PROFESSIONAL ATTRIBUTES**

Students are required to demonstrate the following professional skills and behaviors to help them transform into entry-level occupational therapists in the classroom, clinic, and community: professional presentation and hygiene; organization; time management; ability to collaborate with team members; flexibility and creativity of thought; accepts personal responsibility; commitment to learning community; self-assesses; commitment to leadership and service; and professional values and ethical standards.

### **TECHNOLOGY:**

Students are required to demonstrate the following technical skills related to the ability to use technology to optimize their learning while also using technology to maximize function and occupational participation for their clients: general computer use for creating, editing, and saving files; access to and use of the Internet; regular use of email; use of Microsoft Office to create Word documents, Excel spreadsheets, and PowerPoints; Google drive functions; App access and functions, research through databases; and data entry and analysis.

## **CLINICAL EDUCATION CONSIDERATIONS**

Fieldwork and community sites may have additional essential skills and functions beyond those pertaining to the OTD program. Accommodations given during clinical education are determined by the clinical or community site.

A student who is unable to fulfill the essential skills and functions, as described above, may have their offer of admission withdrawn or be dismissed from the program if:

- 1) He or she has requested and received a reasonable accommodation and is unable to meet program qualifications including the “Essential Skills and Functions.”
- 2) The requested accommodation(s) would fundamentally alter the nature of the Briar Cliff University OTD program, or
- 3) The requested accommodation(s) would create a significant risk of harm to the health or safety of others.

### **Reference:**

American Occupational Therapy Association. (2020). Occupational therapy practice framework: Domain and process (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 74(2), <https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2020.74S2001>

Accreditation Council for OT Education (2018). *Standards and interpretive guidelines*. <https://acoteonline.org/accreditation-explained/standards/>

Durham Tech Community College (2022, April). *Essential skills requirement for occupational therapy practice*. <https://www.durhamtech.edu/sites/default/files/media-files/essentialskills/occupational-therapy.pdf>

Turner A., Alsop A. (2015). Unique core skills: Exploring occupational therapists’ hidden assets. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 78(12), 739-749. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308022615601443>

\*The Briar Cliff University entry-level doctoral occupational therapy degree (OTD) program has been granted Candidate for Accreditation status by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) of the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), 6116 Executive Boulevard, Suite 200, North Bethesda, MD 20852-4929, (301) 652-AOTA, [www.acoteonline.org](http://www.acoteonline.org). Candidate for Accreditation is a pre-accreditation status that indicates the program is progressing toward accreditation and may matriculate students in professional courses. Candidate for Accreditation does not assure eventual accreditation