

East Tennessee State University's Doctor of Occupational Therapy Program

The Doctor of Occupational Therapy (OTD) program at East Tennessee State University (ETSU) provides students with the necessary academic foundation and clinical training to become highly skilled occupational therapists. Given the specialized and demanding nature of the profession, students are expected to meet high academic and technical standards throughout the program. The OTD program is designed to equip students with the skills, knowledge, and experience to navigate complex clinical environments effectively.

Students must be able to meet the program's Minimal Technical Standards with or without accommodations. Adherence to these standards is necessary for the safety and welfare of students and clients. Reasonable accommodations will be provided to help students meet these standards when appropriate, in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. These standards cannot be waived. Prospective students with disabilities are encouraged to reach out to Disability Services for further information.

Before beginning the program, all applicants must confirm their ability to meet these standards. If, at any time, a student or faculty member determines that these standards cannot be met—even with accommodations—the student may be ineligible for admission or continued enrollment in the program. ETSU encourages prospective students to engage in conversations about the Minimal Technical Standards and how they may be impacted by individual circumstances. It is important to note that while ETSU provides reasonable accommodation within the university setting, affiliated clinical sites may not be able to offer the same level of support. ETSU has no control over requirements set forth by affiliated clinical sites.

Minimal Technical Standards

Cognitive and Intellectual Capabilities:

The ability to engage in rigorous learning activities across different settings—classrooms, clinical simulations, and fieldwork—is vital to success in the OTD program. Students must possess strong critical thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills. These skills allow students to make proper assessments, sound judgments, appropriately prioritize therapeutic interventions and measure and record client care outcomes. Candidates must have the ability to measure, calculate, reason, and analyze data. This includes the ability to synthesize information, evaluate complex situations, make evidence-based decisions, and adapt therapeutic strategies based on the data and client needs. Candidates must have the ability to use technology for searching, recording, storing, and retrieving information. In addition, candidates must be able to comprehend three-dimensional relationships and understand the spatial relationships of anatomic structures. Students are expected to handle both written and oral instructions, retain and apply knowledge, and work collaboratively with peers and faculty in addressing clinical challenges.

Communication Competencies:

Effective communication is a cornerstone of occupational therapy practice. Students must be able to express themselves clearly and respectfully in a variety of settings, including one-on-one interactions, group discussions, and through written and electronic communication. They must be

able to communicate with diverse groups, such as clients, caregivers, healthcare professionals, insurance providers, and policymakers. Students should be able to elicit relevant information, give clear instructions, and document clinical observations accurately. Proficiency in creating digital content, utilizing health information systems, and navigating electronic records is also essential for modern practice.

Observational Abilities:

To succeed in the OTD program, students must demonstrate the ability to accurately perceive, and process information presented in both academic and clinical contexts. This includes recognizing the spatial relationships between various body parts and understanding nonverbal cues during client interactions. Students must be able to observe, assess, and interpret complex details regarding client behavior, physical condition, and response to interventions. This skill is vital for making informed decisions in client assessments and treatment planning.

Social and Interpersonal Skills:

Occupational therapists must cultivate effective, empathetic, and professional relationships with clients from diverse backgrounds and abilities. Students should be capable of demonstrating emotional intelligence, including empathy, active listening, and conflict resolution. Strong interpersonal skills are essential for building rapport with clients, their families, and members of the healthcare team. In addition to communication, students should be able to manage stress, balance competing demands, and exhibit flexibility when faced with changing circumstances in both clinical and academic environments.

Gross Motor and Fine Motor Skills:

Students must demonstrate physical abilities adequate for moving between rooms, maneuvering in tight spaces, and performing both gross and fine motor tasks necessary for safe and effective occupational therapy care including the manual dexterity to engage in procedures involving grasping, manipulating, pushing, pulling, holding, extending, and rotating. Occupational Therapy Program candidates must have sufficient motor function to elicit information from patients by touch, palpation, auscultation, percussion, and other standardized and non-standardized evaluative procedures. Candidates must be able to provide general occupational therapy, including the ability to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation, lift and transfer patients, and to stand/sit long periods of time.

Professionalism and Ethical Conduct:

Students are expected to exhibit professional behavior at all times, demonstrating personal responsibility, integrity, and respect in all interactions. This includes adhering to high standards of punctuality, reliability, and cooperation in both classroom and clinical settings. Students should consistently maintain a professional appearance and demonstrate initiative in their learning and work. They must also understand and comply with ethical and legal standards in occupational therapy practice, including maintaining client confidentiality and ensuring the safety and well-being of all individuals they work with.

Technological Proficiency:

Students must be comfortable using basic technology tools, including email, internet searches, and office software applications (e.g., Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, and Excel). Additionally,

students should be able to navigate electronic health records, participate in telehealth sessions, and use other digital platforms commonly employed in healthcare settings. Proficiency with these tools is critical for managing client information, documenting therapy sessions, and participating in remote or virtual learning experiences.

Clinical and Pre-Clinical Skills:

In addition to academic knowledge, students must be prepared to apply their skills in real-world clinical settings. This involves the ability to work with clients who have a variety of diagnoses and functional limitations. Students must use sound clinical judgment when assessing risks and safety concerns and respond effectively to emergency situations. The ability to plan, execute, and document individual and group therapy interventions within established timeframes is crucial. Students must also demonstrate competency in conducting safe and effective evaluations and interventions using appropriate clinical reasoning across various environments, such as hospitals, rehabilitation centers, and community settings.