



SCHOOL OF HEALTH  
AND MEDICAL SCIENCES  
*Occupational Therapy*

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# SETON HALL UNIVERSITY

## *Standards for Essential Functions*

Seton Hall University-School of Health and Medical Sciences is committed to the education of all qualified individuals, including persons with disabilities who, with or without reasonable accommodation, are capable of performing the essential functions of the educational program in which they are enrolled and the profession that they pursue.

It is the policy of each of the graduate programs in the Seton Hall University-School of Health and Medical Sciences to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 504 of the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1973, and state and local requirements regarding students and applicants with disabilities. Under these laws, no otherwise qualified and competent individual with a disability shall be denied access to or participation in services, programs, and activities solely on the basis of the disability.

### **Essential Functions/Technical Standards for Graduate Enrollment**

In accord with federal regulations established by the Americans With Disabilities Act, the following standards are described to assist each candidate in evaluating his/her prospect for academic and clinical success. General standards for the School of Health and Medical Sciences are followed by standards that apply to the professional discipline to which you have applied (see additional standards below). When a student's ability to perform is compromised, the student must demonstrate alternative means and/or abilities to perform the essential functions described.

It is important that each student reads each standard carefully. By signing of this manual, the student is indicating that s/he has read and understood these standards.

### **Observation Skills:**

Students must be able to acquire a defined level of required information as presented through educational experiences in both basic arts and sciences and clinical sciences. To achieve the required competencies in the classroom setting, students must perceive, assimilate, and integrate information from a variety of sources. These sources include oral presentation, printed material, visual media, and live demonstrations. Consequently, students must demonstrate adequate functional use of visual, tactile, auditory and other sensory and perceptual modalities to enable such observations and information acquisition necessary for academic and clinical performance.

### **Communication Skills:**

Effective communication is critical for students to build relationships with faculty, advisors, fellow graduate students, coworkers, clients, and their significant others in the student's various roles of learner, colleague, consultant, and leader. Students must be able to gather, comprehend, utilize and disseminate information effectively, efficiently and according to professional standards. Students are required to communicate in the English language both verbally and in writing, at a level consistent with competent professional practice. Students are expected to use grammar and vocabulary proficiently. They must be able to elicit information, gather information, and describe findings verbally and in writing (e.g., in a physical examination record and treatment plan). This communication should be comprehensible by patients, professionals, and lay-persons.

Students must be able to communicate effectively and sensitively with patients and colleagues, including individuals from different cultural and social backgrounds; this includes, but is not limited to, the ability to establish rapport with patients and communicate effectively judgments and treatment information. They should also be able to observe, recognize and understand non-verbal behavior.

### **Intellectual/Conceptual Abilities:**

Students must demonstrate critical thinking skills so that they can problem-solve creatively, master abstract ideas, and synthesize information presented in academic, laboratory and fieldwork settings. 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 some areas, this requires comprehension of three-dimensional relationships and understanding of the spatial relationships of structures. Students must develop and exhibit a sense of medical ethics, and also recognize and apply pertinent legal and ethical standards.

### **Motor:**

Students must possess the motor functions needed to manipulate tools or handle clients. These functions will vary depending on the particular program (See additional standards below). The motor capacities usually include the physical strength and coordination to

safely handle and move clients, perform medical procedures, or direct clients in various practice settings according to the needs of their discipline.

### **Behavioral and Social Skills:**

Students must demonstrate emotional stability and acceptable communication skills, and be capable of developing mature and effective interpersonal relationships with other students and health care workers. 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 the uncertainties inherent in the clinical setting.

Students must exhibit the ability and commitment to work with individuals in an intense setting to meet the needs of people of diverse cultures, age groups, socioeconomic groups and challenges without bias. These individuals may be severely injured; they may be limited by cognitive, emotional and functional deficits; and their behavior may create at times an aversive reaction. The ability to interact with these individuals without being judgmental or prejudiced is critical in establishing one's professionalism and therapeutic relationship. Compassion, integrity, concern for others, interpersonal skills, interest and motivation are all personal qualities that are critical to complete each program.

### **Professional Responsibility:**

Students must exhibit the ability to meet the challenges of any medical situation that requires a readiness for immediate and appropriate response without interference of personal or medical problems. This requires training for emergencies (e.g., CPR, infection control).

It is each student's responsibility to attend and be able to travel to and from classes and clinical assignments on time, and possess the organizational skills and stamina for performing required tasks and assignments within allotted time frames. This involves frequent oral, written, and practical examinations or demonstrations. The student must have the ability to perform problem-solving tasks in a timely manner.

Students will exhibit adherence to policies of the university, their program, and clinical sites. This includes matters ranging from professional dress and behavior, to attending to their program's academic schedule, which may differ from the University's academic calendar and be subject to change at any time.

Students must demonstrate knowledge of and commitment to the code of ethics of their profession and behavior that reflects a sense of right and wrong in the helping environment.

Students will take initiative to direct their own learning. They need to work cooperatively and collaboratively with other students on assigned projects, and

participate willingly in a supervisory process involving evaluation of abilities and reasoning skills.

### ***Essential Functions: Department of Occupational Therapy***

Occupational therapy is a widely varying field of practice, encompassing a set of skills that tend to differ from one job to another. This diversity of practice lends itself to the employment of individuals with many different traits and abilities.

Occupational therapists work with persons with many different kinds of disabilities, and have a deep commitment to serving the needs of disabled persons of all ages, whether those disabilities are of mind or body, are acquired, or developmental in character. Every effort will be made to meet the needs of occupational therapy students with disabilities, within the parameters of the academic educational program and fieldwork availability.

This being said, the Occupational Therapy curriculum at Seton Hall University educates and trains students as generalist practitioners, in keeping with the requirements of the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE), the accrediting agency for the profession's educational programs. Thus, students are prepared for employment in all areas of practice, and are prepared with the skills needed to succeed in clinical training and practice and for the certification exam that is required prior to practicing as a graduate of an accredited program, of which Seton Hall University's Occupational Therapy Program is one.

### **Standards for the Program in Occupational Therapy**

In addition to the general standards above, students applying to the Occupational Therapy Program must be able to:

- A. Participate in lab activities that require hands on contact with classmates and instructors in various stages of moderate undress for clinical training.
- B. Speak, understand and write the English language at a level consistent with competent professional practice.
- C. Observe and interpret signs and symptoms through vision, audition and touch. Students must possess functional use of the senses that permit such observation.
- D. Utilize hand and mechanical tools safely and effectively.
- E. Exhibit sufficient postural and neuromuscular control, sensory function and coordination to safely and accurately provide assessment and remediation.
- F. Demonstrate the use of accepted techniques accurately and safely when using equipment and materials of the profession.
- G. Participate in physical activity involving lifting of approximately 50 lbs., bending, moving and supporting others.
- H. Communicate effectively and sensitively with patients and colleagues, including individuals from different cultural and social backgrounds; this includes, but is

- not limited to the ability to establish rapport with patients and communicate judgments and treatment information effectively, with appropriate confidentiality.
- I. Demonstrate appropriate behaviors and skills in the classroom and fieldwork interactions with faculty, other students, fieldwork coordinator, fieldwork supervisors and professional colleagues. This includes, but is not limited to an ability to give and receive constructive feedback, adjust or modify responses according to the feedback received, collaborate with others on projects or assignments, adhere to facility and program rules and regulations, effectively communicate written and verbal information, and use sound judgment for safety and confidentiality.
  - J. Demonstrate the mental capacity to assimilate, analyze, synthesize, integrate concepts and problem solve to formulate assessments and therapeutic judgments and be able to distinguish deviations from the norm in self and others.

Standards for performance are outlined in the AOTA Fieldwork Performance Evaluation and in the Kasar Professional Development forms addended. Required behaviors are evaluated by faculty, fieldwork supervisors and fieldwork coordinator, as appropriate.

## **Standards for the Fieldwork in Occupational Therapy**

Many of these same capacities are required at fieldwork sites, recognizing that there is wide variability among site requirements and capacity. For example, the physical and mental abilities required to practice at a school for children, a rehabilitation center for spinal cord injured adults, and a psychiatric hospital differ according to the needs of patients and clients in those settings and the physical environment of the setting.

As the curriculum has extensive fieldwork requirements, in which students are required to demonstrate competence, the program will make every attempt to accommodate student needs yet it may not be able to assure that accommodation for disabilities will be universally available. Each fieldwork site has site-specific essential functions.

Persons with specific disabilities are advised to bring their special needs to the attention of the University Disability Support Services and the Occupational Therapy Academic Fieldwork Coordinator who will discuss the likely availability of special fieldwork accommodation. Disclosure of disabling conditions to fieldwork sites is the responsibility of the student. Only then can accommodation be discussed. A realistic assessment will be made of the student's likelihood to succeed in the program.

The Occupational Therapy curriculum has extensive fieldwork requirements including Level I and Level II experiences. Technical standards described in this document also apply to education at the field site.

Performance on Level II Fieldwork is evaluated using the AOTA Fieldwork Performance Evaluation" form, attached to this document. Student performance on

fieldwork is evaluated by the occupational therapy fieldwork educator at the clinical site.

Each fieldwork/clinical site has site-specific *Essential Functions* for performance as an occupational therapy student at that facility. Every student is required to meet the *Essential Functions* of the site. Students with specific disabilities are advised to bring their special needs to the attention of the University Disability Support Services and the Academic Fieldwork Coordinator within the Occupational Therapy Program. When these conditions are met, the Academic Fieldwork Coordinator can better work with the student to determine an appropriate field placement. Disclosure of a disability to the fieldwork site is the responsibility of the student. When the student has disclosed to the fieldwork site, the Academic Fieldwork Coordinator will work with the on-site fieldwork educator and the student to determine the need for any reasonable accommodation in meeting the *Essential Function* of an occupational therapy student at this fieldwork site. Regardless of accommodation, the student must meet the *Essential Functions* of the site and receive a passing grade on the “AOTA Fieldwork Performance Evaluation.”

The program will make every attempt to accommodate student needs, yet it **may not be able to** assure that accommodation is universally available, as each fieldwork site has site-specific *Essential Functions*.

## ***REFERENCES***

Scott, S., Wells, S. Hanebrink, S. (1999) *Educating College Students with Disabilities: What Academic & Fieldwork Educators Need to Know*. Bethesda, MD: AOTA, Inc.

*Joint Review Committee on Educational Programs in Athletic Training (2000) Guidelines for technical standards for entry-level athletic training education.*

Gleeson, P.B., & Utsey, C. (2000). *Manual for the PT and PTA ACCE*. Texas Consortium for Physical Therapy Clinical Education.

University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (2000) *Essential technical standards for Physician Assistant students.*