OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY DOCTORATE (O.T.D.), ENTRY-LEVEL

Program accreditation
Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education of the American Occupational Therapy Association

The O.T.D. program prepares students for entry-level practice while also providing advanced training in evidence-based practice, interprofessional and collaborative care and program and career development. In April 2014, the Board of Directors of the American Occupational Therapy Association, responding to changes seen in higher education, health care and the profession, issued a statement in support of a doctoral-level single point of entry for occupational therapists. The recommended target date for completion of the transition is 2025. The Board’s rationale included:

- Greater demands for practice-based scholarship and research
- A need to prepare graduates with professional autonomy and avoid de-professionalization
- An increased focus on primary care, interprofessional care teams and specialization in practice
- Trends in health care professions to transition to the entry-level doctorate
- Creation of an unambiguous entry level that reflects equivalent preparation of all practitioners entering the profession

The entry-level O.T.D. program is designed to prepare students for careers in a wide range of occupational therapy practice settings. Graduates will be eligible to apply for licensure to practice in any state.

Program goal

The primary mission of the Department of Occupational Therapy is the preparation of excellent, innovative, adaptable and responsible occupational therapists as professional leaders for the state, the nation and the world. Our mission represents an integration of the missions of the university and the School of Allied Health Professions. In pursuit of this mission, the department:

- Fosters student commitment to scientific inquiry and professional competence and promotes growth, balance and dedication to lifelong learning
- Promotes faculty excellence and collaboration in teaching, scholarship, research and service that models integrity and competence
- Collaborates with the community through education, consultation and the development of strong linkages with clinical educators and the community
- Interacts dynamically with the OT profession and stakeholders, contributing proactively to the evolution of the profession.

Student learning outcomes

1. Meet foundational requirements: As part of a broad foundation in liberal arts and sciences, including biological, physical, social and behavioral sciences, to meet the needs of individuals and communities, students will be able to employ logical thinking, critical analysis, clinical reasoning and problem-solving to demonstrate oral and written communication skills, innovative use of computer technology, knowledge of human structure and function, awareness of social development and apply the use of statistics to interpret tests and measurements. (Objectives B.1.1-B.1.11 in ACOTE Standards)

2. Basic tenets of occupational therapy: Students will be able to explain the meaning and impact of occupation in meeting society’s current and future occupational needs, including articulating the historical and philosophical base of the profession, its role as a central construct in OT theory development, its relationship to the promotion of health and wellness and prevention of disease and disability. Recognizing the importance of activity analysis in the process of formulating intervention plans will be an emphasis for student learning. (Objectives B.2.1-B.2.11 in ACOTE Standards)

3. OT theories, models and frames of reference: Students will be able to describe, integrate and apply a variety of occupational therapy theories, models of practice and frames of reference in evaluation and intervention and will articulate the process of theory development and its desired impact and influence on the individual and society. Students will be able to discuss how practice influences and is influenced by history, theory and sociopolitical climate. Occupational therapy theories and models covered in the curriculum will include but not be limited to: the model of human occupation, sensory integration, biomechanical and rehabilitation models, motor control and movement recovery models. (Objectives B.3.1-B.3.6 in ACOTE Standards)

4. OT screening, evaluation and referral: To analyze, synthesize, evaluate and diagnose problems related to occupational performance and participation, students will be able to use evidence-based reasoning to select appropriate tools, both standardized and non-standardized; analyze psychometric properties of assessment tools; evaluate occupational performance across all areas of occupation; distinguish between roles of occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants; make appropriate client referrals; interpret test results; and document services to assure accountability, reimbursement and need for services. (Objectives B.4.1-B.4.11 in ACOTE Standards)

5. Intervention planning: In accordance with the Occupational Therapy Practice Framework, students will learn to develop occupation-based intervention plans and strategies from the level of individual to population-based interventions in traditional and emerging practice environments. Intervention planning will be based on appropriate theoretical approaches, information acquired via occupational profiles, evaluation of client factors — body function and structure strengths/weaknesses, performance patterns, contextual issues, activity demands, and performance skills. Students will be able to choose appropriate therapeutic activities, learn the value of therapeutic use of self, modify environments, incorporate assistive technologies, fabricate needed orthotics and train clients in areas of mobility and transfer, feeding and eating, and activities of daily living. Students will educate clients as needed and safely use superficial thermal and mechanical modalities as preparatory measures to improving occupational performance. (Objectives B.5.1-B.5.28 in ACOTE Standards)

6. Context of service delivery: Students will demonstrate knowledge of the variety of contexts that affect and are affected by occupational therapy service delivery. They will be able to compare and contrast differences in service delivery systems, including health care, education, community and social systems. They will be able to discuss the impact of socioeconomic and political influences on occupational therapy and advocate for changes in policies and
systems to address society’s occupational needs. They will integrate national and international resources in education, research, practice and policy development. (Objectives B.6.1-B.6.6 in ACOTE Standards)

7. **Leadership and management:** Students will be able to identify and evaluate how contextual factors affect service delivery and management of services; awareness of how federal and state laws guide service delivery; understanding of the requirements for licensing and certification, documentation and reimbursement; and the essential nature of competency-based procedures for legal and ethical supervision of occupational therapy personnel, non-occupational therapy personnel and fieldwork students. Students will demonstrate the ability to design and write program development plans for the provision of occupational therapy services to individuals and populations. (Objectives B.7.1-B.7.12 in ACOTE Standards)

8. **Scholarship:** Students will be able to articulate the importance of knowledge development for the profession; locate, critique and interpret research evidence; apply research literature to make evidence-based practice decisions; use and interpret basic descriptive, correlational and inferential quantitative statistics and code; analyze and synthesize qualitative data; and demonstrate an understanding of the grant process. Students will complete a culminating project that involves the design of a scholarly proposal, implementation and documentation of the study. (Objectives B.8.1-B.8.10 in ACOTE Standards)

9. **Professional ethics, values and responsibilities:** Students will be able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the American OT Association Code of Ethics and Ethics Standards and AOTA Standards of Practice; the importance of membership in professional organizations; the value of supporting and educating other professions about OT; identification and development of strategies for ongoing professional development; responsibilities related to liability; conflict resolution; contractual service provision; and ethical supervision. Students will discuss and justify the varied roles of occupational therapists, including program and policy development, advocate, administrator and leader. (Objectives B.9.1-B.9.13 in ACOTE Standards)

10. **Fieldwork:** Through a carefully coordinated process of fieldwork, students will be able to apply concepts learned in the classroom to practice settings under careful supervision of trained and qualified occupational therapy practitioners. Gradation of time spent, responsibilities and expectations placed on students will be provided through assignment, first to fieldwork level I and then to fieldwork level II experiences across a wide range of settings and practice areas. (Objectives C.1.1-C.1.19 in ACOTE Standards)

11. **Doctoral experiential component:** Through completion of a professional portfolio, a doctoral experiential component, and evaluation and dissemination, students will demonstrate leadership and advanced skills in one or more of the following areas: clinical practice, administration, research, program or policy development, advocacy, education or theory development. Upon completion of all course work, fieldwork and doctoral experiential requirements, students will be prepared to take the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy examination, thereby qualifying them for state licensure and practice of occupational therapy at the entry level. (Objectives C.2.1-2.5 in ACOTE Standards)

**VCU Graduate Bulletin, VCU Graduate School and general academic policies and regulations for all graduate students in all graduate programs**

The VCU Graduate Bulletin website documents the official admission and academic rules and regulations that govern graduate education for all graduate programs at the university. These policies are established by the graduate faculty of the university through their elected representatives to the University Graduate Council.

It is the responsibility of all graduate students, both on- and off-campus, to be familiar with the VCU Graduate Bulletin as well as the Graduate School website (http://www.graduate.vcu.edu) and academic regulations in individual school and department publications and on program websites. However, in all cases, the official policies and procedures of the University Graduate Council, as published on the VCU Graduate Bulletin and Graduate School websites, take precedence over individual program policies and guidelines.

Visit the academic regulations section for additional information on academic regulations for graduate students. (http://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regis)

**Degree candidacy requirements**

A graduate student admitted to a program or concentration requiring a final research project, work of art, thesis or dissertation, must qualify for continuing master’s or doctoral status according to the degree candidacy requirements of the student’s graduate program. Admission to degree candidacy, if applicable, is a formal statement by the graduate student’s faculty regarding the student’s academic achievements and the student’s readiness to proceed to the final research phase of the degree program.

Graduate students and program directors should refer to the following degree candidacy policy as published in the VCU Graduate Bulletin for complete information and instructions.

Visit the academic regulations section for additional information on degree candidacy requirements. (http://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regis/grad/candidacy)

**Graduation requirements**

As graduate students approach the end of their academic programs and the final semester of matriculation, they must make formal application to graduate. No degrees will be conferred until the application to graduate has been finalized.

Graduate students and program directors should refer to the following graduation requirements as published in the Graduate Bulletin for a complete list of instructions and a graduation checklist.

Visit the academic regulations section for additional information on graduation requirements. (http://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regis/grad/graduation-info)

**Other information**

All graduates of an occupational therapy program are required to take the national certification examination to become a registered occupational therapist and use the credentials OTR. The national certifying organization for occupational therapy is the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy. Other licensure or certification
requirements have been established by all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam and Puerto Rico. Most licensure requirements include board certification as a registered occupational therapist. Some licensure or certification agencies consider individuals convicted of a felony ineligible for licensure or certification. For specific information, prospective students should contact the licensure or certification agency for occupational therapy.

**Admission requirements**

| Degree: O.T.D. | Semester(s) of entry: Summer | Deadline dates: Dec 1 (OTCAS and VCU graduate applications) | Test requirements: GRE |

In addition to the general admission requirements of the VCU Graduate School, applicants must meet the following requirements:

1. A bachelor’s degree from an accredited college or university
2. A minimum grade-point average in all college courses of 2.7 (based on a 4.0 system)
3. A minimum grade-point average in prerequisite courses of 3.0. (without rounding)
4. A one-page, “value-added” essay submitted as a PDF file to otentrylevel@vcu.edu
5. An Occupational Therapy Centralized Application Service application (https://portal.otcas.org) including these items:
   a. A personal statement that addresses:
      i. Why applicant is selecting OT as a career
      ii. How a master’s degree in OT relates to immediate and long-term professional goals
      iii. How the applicant’s personal, educational and professional background will help achieve these goals
   b. Evidence of completion of a minimum of 30 observation hours in one or more settings under the supervision of a licensed OTR or COTA
   c. Three letters of recommendation (One letter from an occupational therapist is preferred, but it is not essential.)
   d. Ten prerequisite (http://www.sahp.vcu.edu/departments/occu/programs/entry-level-otd/prerequisite-courses) courses (30-32 semester credit hours)
6. A course on medical terminology (strongly recommended, but not required)
7. For non-native English-speaking applicants, regardless of immigration status, a Test of English as a Foreign Language iBT score of greater than 102, a TOEFL CBT score of greater than 253, a TOEFL PBT score of greater than 610 or an International English Language Testing System score of greater than 6.5

The VCU entry-level occupational therapy doctorate is a 104 credit program that spans three years (nine semesters). Applicants apply for the program between July and Dec. 1 of the year preceding enrollment. Orientation and summer semester classes begin the first week of June. The first semester is a seven-credit part-time semester and the second summer semester is a five-credit part-time semester. All other semesters, including the last year of two semesters of Level II fieldwork and the final semester of doctoral practicum are full-time semesters. Five courses in the curriculum (OCCT 780, OCCT 781, OCCT 782, OCCT 783 and OCCT 784) taken during the second summer and the second and third spring semesters will be taught in a hybrid format, which will require some on-campus hours with the remainder taught using the Blackboard course management system. Students will be required to have a computer or tablet with access to the Internet.

**Degree requirements**

In addition to general VCU Graduate School graduation requirements, students must complete all School of Allied Health Professions requirements and successfully complete 104 credit hours.

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<tr>
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<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Credit Hours</th>
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<td>Introduction to the Profession of Occupational Therapy</td>
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<td>OCCT 759</td>
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Total graduate credit hours required (minimum) 104  

### Sample plan of study

#### Year one

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