

THE NSCC OTA PROGRAM CURRICULUM DESIGN

The NSCC OTA program curriculum design evolves from those frames of reference that reflect the mission and philosophy of the program and the institution. The curriculum design provides opportunities for students to address diverse, existing, and emerging occupational needs within our community. It provides the basis for program planning, implementation, and evaluation, selection, sequence, and scope of coursework. The curricular threads and educational goals of the program are embedded in the design.

The curriculum design incorporates the theories, foundations, and principles of Occupational Performance and PEO (Person, Environment and Occupation) as an overarching structure for course selection, sequencing, and content. The Occupational Therapy Practice Framework is then used to guide the pattern for how courses and course content are organized, presented. The OTPF also guides the techniques for evaluating student performance. Understanding the components of occupational participation and behavior, or “what is important” and “why we do what we do” is an integral component of the teaching and learning process throughout the curriculum. The occupational performance areas of ADL, IADL, education, work, play, leisure, rest/sleep, and social participation are embedded in lectures, assignments, discussions and assessment of the student’s ability to apply concepts of occupation to evidence-based, client-centered, occupation-based interventions and programming throughout the OTA curriculum.

Curricular threads:

A series of five major curricular threads are woven throughout the curriculum design and program with increasing complexity and application as the student moves through each semester. These threads include **student learning outcomes and reflect the educational goals** of the NSCC OTA program.

- Developing the professional – through use of the adult learning model, critical thinking, ethics, and **professional behaviors and responsibilities** are presented and required of the students.
- Developing knowledge and understanding of the profession – use and application of the occupational therapy practice framework to all practice settings, knowledge of the OT process, and grounding in the history and philosophy of the profession provide the students with a **solid concept of and respect for the profession** they are entering.
- Understanding Occupation – A review of the relationship of occupation to normal development followed by the challenges to engagement in occupation in areas of mental health, physical health, and the environment provides the student with the conceptual ability to apply occupation to a variety of circumstances and situations, and lays a foundation for the students to **apply that knowledge and to understand how to facilitate participation**.
- Maximizing Occupational Performance – once the students understand occupation, they can begin to learn and use therapeutic use of self, choose client-centered, relevant occupation-based activities

and interventions, and demonstrate skill based competencies. The importance of culture, education, socioeconomic factors, and spiritual beliefs and practices as they are seen through the lens of occupation facilitates student ability to ***work with a diverse group of individuals using effective interventions and programming.***

- Effective Practice and Practice Management – as students learn and articulate the rationale and need for role delineation, supervision, and documentation across the spectrum of practice settings they are able to apply that knowledge as they enter practice. Students learn to ***apply principles of management, collaboration, leadership, ethics, advocacy, accountability, and responsibility for their practice of occupational therapy*** as it applies to the content of each course.

The Faculty of the NSCC OTA program work together to ensure that these threads are woven throughout each course to the proper degree and level of complexity. Repetition of concepts, skills, and techniques is planned, not accidental, and promotes student clinical reasoning and application of occupation-based interventions once practicing as occupational therapy assistants.

CONTENT SEQUENCE

Within the curriculum design and focus on the occupational therapy practice framework, the program is carefully structured developmentally to facilitate adult student learning and progress. That development begins with foundational skills and information about occupation, the profession, and practice settings in the first semester, then moves to building an understanding of basic therapeutic skills, techniques, challenges to occupational performance, and initial clinical reasoning. During the final didactic semester, students must synthesize and utilize all of the prior information and skills as they use their developing clinical reasoning to choose and implement client-centered, preparatory and occupation based interventions and activities. Progressively more complex Level I Fieldwork experiences are scheduled during each of the three didactic semesters in order to enhance student comprehension of classroom learning. Level II Fieldwork makes up the final semester of the program with students having the opportunity to further learn, as well as apply their knowledge and skills in clinical settings.

At each developmental stage, and as the semesters progress, the students further develop interpersonal communication skills, as they consider the person, environmental and occupational performance challenges that impact engagement in occupation.

Semester One – “What is Occupational Therapy” - As students complete sequenced coursework guided by the PEO model and the Occupational Therapy Practice Framework, they learn to define occupations, come to understand the impact of occupation on development across the lifespan, and learn how occupational opportunity, in the context of culture and environment, influence occupational performance. Students begin to articulate the purpose, techniques, and parameters of occupational therapy documentation, and learn the history, foundational principles, and philosophies of the occupational therapy profession. Also included in this semester is training in use of basic research techniques in order to access consumer and professional literature or online resources, and to cite

sources using the APA format. During their first Level I fieldwork experience students observe the practice of occupational therapy one full day per week over a period of weeks. This facilitates their ability to place and apply classroom learning in practice settings. (Courses within this semester include OTAP 1310, 1320, 1130, 1210 and 1220)

Semester Two – “ What do Occupational Therapy Practitioners look for? ”- Students build on the foundational skills of research and documentation, their understanding of typical development, and the concept of occupation from the first semester in order to explore mental and physical health challenges which impact occupational participation and performance. They begin to utilize clinical reasoning to gather data about and determine performance problems in the OTPF performance areas as they apply to specific conditions, state those problems in objective, client-centered terms, and then research simple preparatory and occupation based interventions and activities to minimize those problems. Students learn group processes and dynamics and conduct groups in the classroom and in four different community settings which cross the lifespan. Students also develop skills of presentation and teaching as they share knowledge about conditions and interventions with their classmates. During this semester, students learn and apply principles and techniques of body mechanics, ergonomics, transfers, adaptive technology, environmental adaptation, adaptive positioning, driving evaluation overview, and functional mobility both with and without using adaptive equipment. Students learn about mental and physical assessments and apply the anatomical knowledge learned during their pre-requisite Anatomy and Physiology course to measurement of ROM and MMT. During their second Level I experience, students spend three full days in a practice setting where they focus on the psychosocial needs of the clients, regardless of the nature of the setting. (Courses within this semester include OTAP 1350, 1360, 1370, 1340, 1380, and 1240)

Semester Three “ How do Occupational Therapy Assistants Promote Occupation ”- During the final didactic semester, students focus on utilizing all that has been learned during the first two semesters as they learn additional intervention techniques and apply them through client-centered, and occupation-based treatment planning for pediatric, adult mental health and adult physical health challenges. Some of the specialized techniques and skills which are learned include interventions in mental health settings, splinting, sensory processing interventions, facilitation of eating/feeding, kinesiotaping, MFR, CIMT, and an introduction to PAMs. Student occupational performance is demonstrated and assessed as they research, plan, implement, demonstrate, and document preparatory and occupation based interventions for course specific conditions. A capstone course requires the student to use all of their previously acquired knowledge to educate and collaborate with a ‘well’ individual in their community. During this course, students initially collect data, including an occupational profile, and then use that data as they talk through six different health scenarios with their individual. This course provides a ‘steppingstone’ between didactic coursework and Level II fieldwork and opportunity for the student to practice skills of assessment, clinical reasoning, collaborative treatment and referral planning, and documentation without actually performing the techniques or interventions discussed. The student collaborates with their ‘OT’ instructor through each step of the course, so is also experiencing and applying communication, role delineation, and collaboration concepts and skills. The final Level I Fieldwork provides student with a full-time, week long experience at a practice setting. This more

intense fieldwork experience provides opportunities for the student to gain closely supervised practice of a variety of specific occupational therapy interventions. (Courses within this semester include 2210, 2310, 2330, 2320, 2220, and 2110)

Semester Four – During this semester, Students participate in two Level II Fieldwork experiences, each focused on a different type of practice setting under the supervision of a qualified OT and/or OTA FW educator. In addition to any requirement of the FW educator, the student participates online with the AFWC in a series of assignments and discussions designed to enhance the experience. Students also meet with the AFWC following completion of both of their Level II fieldwork experiences to review the process for the NBCOT exam, and licensure in the state of TN. (Courses within this semester include OTA 2610 and 2620)

Throughout the curriculum, students discuss and research how the person, the environment, and occupation impact and are impacted by physical, mental, and developmental challenges to occupational engagement and performance. The concept of occupational performance is applied with increasing complexity within each course as the student develops their knowledge and understanding of techniques to enhance participation in occupations. Students also are taught to recognize that, while there is a need for appropriate preparatory activities and these should not be ignored, evidence based, client-centered, and occupation based interventions and activities are the most effective and most reflective of occupational therapy practice.

The curriculum is designed, so that a graduate will be mindful of the changing dynamics of the health care system, and be able to collaborate with their clients, and the Occupational Therapist in order to implement intervention plans designed to enhance occupational performance. Students will be able to effectively utilize the Occupational Therapy Practice Framework and the Person, Environment, Occupation theory to ensure that service delivery is aimed at improving occupational performance.