

WCSU Pre-Health Programs

Pre-Occupational Therapy



Background on Occupational Therapy Programs

An occupational therapist is a healthcare professional who helps people participate in the activities they want and need to do in their daily lives. They work with individuals of all ages who have physical, sensory, or cognitive challenges, aiming to improve their independence and quality of life. Occupational therapists work in schools, hospitals and inpatient clinics, outpatient clinics, nursing homes, and other home and community settings.

Students pursuing a career in Occupational Therapy can apply to the Master in Occupational Therapy (MOT) or the Doctorate in Occupational Therapy (DOT) program. According to the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), entry into the occupational therapy profession can be achieved at either the Masters or Doctoral degree level, and there are no plans to require the Doctoral degree. Historically speaking, the master's level program was designed for candidates interested in becoming a practicing occupational therapist, whereas the doctoral level degree was more appropriate for professionals interested in research and academia.

The pre-requisites for occupational therapy programs *vary*. It is important for students to determine the specific requirements for each occupational therapy program they wish to apply to, in consultation with a pre-health advisor. Most occupational therapy programs require the following courses.

Pre-Requisite Coursework

Each MOT/DOT program has their own pre-requisite course requirements, so make sure that you consult each school's website in advance so that you can organize your coursework as appropriate. The table below provides a summary of required courses that you can use as a general framework.

Courses	MOT/DOT Prerequisites
BIO 103: General Biology 1	Most programs require
BIO 105/106: Anatomy & Physiology 1 & 2	All programs require both
CHE 110/111: General Chemistry 1 & 2	Some programs require one or both
PHY 120: General Physics 1	Some programs require
MAT 120: Elementary Statistics	All programs require
PSY 100: Intro to Psychology	All programs require
PSY 202: Psychopathology	All programs require
PSY 205: Social Psychology	Some programs require
PSY 210, 211, 320: Lifespan Development	All programs require 3-9 credits. WCSU offers them separately, so it will be 9 credits
SOC 100: Intro to Sociology	All programs require

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Grades:

Occupational therapy programs typically require a minimum GPA of 3.0 to be considered, with a grade of B- or better on all prerequisite coursework. The average GPA of students admitted to MOT/DOT programs is 3.5 or higher.

Recommended Undergraduate Degree Programs:

Students can choose any undergraduate degree major they wish and still apply to a MOT/DOT program as long as they complete the prerequisite coursework required to apply. Many students pursuing MOT/DOT programs choose to declare the following majors at WCSU, as degree requirements align with completion of prerequisite coursework: BS in Public Health, Allied Health; BS in Public Health, Community Health, or BA in Psychology. A psychology minor is recommended for students who don't choose the BA in Psychology major.

Pre-Requisite Occupational Therapy Experience

Most MOT/DOT programs require applicants to have volunteer or paid experience working with patients under the supervision of a licensed physical or occupational therapist. The program may specify the settings and types of experiences required (outpatient vs. inpatient). Applicants may also be required to have a licensed physical/occupational therapist verify the experiential hours.

Entrance Exams

Some MOT/DOT schools have no required entrance examination but virtually all require a bachelor's degree.

Some schools require the GRE (Graduate Record Examination). It's a standardized test that is about 2 hours long. The GRE tests your writing, reading, vocabulary, math, and logic skills - and also will test your decision making and carefulness. You can take official GRE practice tests at the ETS (the test provider) website. ETS offers two free practice tests and some paid ones as well. The website where you find the practice tests is <https://www.ets.org/gre/test-takers/general-test/prepare/powerprep.html>

Other Application Requirements

Other requirements for applying to MOT/DOT programs include the following:

1. Letters of Recommendation: Typically 1-4 letters, and they must be from a combination of licensed occupational therapists and academic advisors/professors
2. Personal Essay: These are specific to each program you apply to. Many programs have supplemental essays as well.
3. Interview: MOT/DOT programs may require competitive applicants to visit the campus for a formal interview. Applicants may be required to speak with a single faculty member, a student, a physical therapist, a panel of interviewers, or participate in an orientation session.
4. Criminal Background Check: MOT/DOT programs may ask applicants to disclose any previous felony or misdemeanor convictions as part of the application process. MOT/DOT programs may require criminal background checks and/or drug tests in order to verify an individual's suitability to participate in experiential education rotations, to confirm a student's eligibility for licensure, and to ensure patient safety.

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Application Process

Most, but not all professional MOT/DOT programs participate in the Occupational Therapy Central Application System (OTCAS). Applicants who wish to apply to nonparticipating OTCAS programs must apply directly to the institution using the OT program's local application. More information about OTCAS can be found through the following website: <https://www.aota.org/education/find-a-school/ot-cas>

Application Timeline

The timeline for applying to MOT/DOT programs can vary by program for non OTCAS participating schools. Make sure to check the institution's website for specific application deadlines. The OTCAS application cycle is adjusted each year, and the specific timeline can be found on the OTCAS website, but the application cycle typically opens in July of each year for the cohort starting the following year. Check the school's specific admissions details to be sure, as each program varies.

Helpful Websites

www.aota.org: American Occupational Therapy Association

<https://acoteonline.org/all-schools/>: Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education. This site will link you to admissions requirements to specific schools