

Pre-Occupational Therapy Program in the Biology Department at Winthrop University

INTRODUCTION

Occupational Therapists (OT) assist individuals with daily skills, work conditions, and rehabilitation after injury or illness. Several schools offer the Doctor of Occupational Therapy (OTD) degree, including The Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) and Methodist University (in Fayetteville, NC). These programs require a bachelor's degree in order to apply. Previously, there was discussion about moving all programs to the doctorate level for OT, however, it was determined that OTs can enter the profession with either a master's (MSOT) or doctorate (OTD).¹ However, individuals with a doctorate in OT are rising to the top.

Students interested in pursuing a career in occupational therapy may major in any area, but should ensure that they complete the prerequisites listed below. In addition, admission to occupational therapy programs is highly competitive so students will need to maintain a strong GPA. For example, students must maintain a 3.0 or higher cumulative GPA and prerequisite GPA with no grade below a "B-" for prerequisite courses for application to Methodist University's OTD program.²

Some programs also require students to take the GRE (Graduate Record Exam). Students must also complete OT experience of direct patient contact in a clinical setting. For example, Methodist University requires a minimum of 50 hours² and MUSC recommends a minimum of 30 hours.³ Students may consider BIOL 461 or BIOL 463 for internship credit, which will document the number of clinical hours obtained. Students are encouraged to complete clinical experience at a variety of OT locations and across different categories of OT, such as pediatrics and gerontology (this variety is a requirement in some programs).

COURSEWORK

The following are only guidelines; students should consult their advisors and programs of interest to plan their academic schedule.

Biology:

General Biology I and II with labs (BIOL 220, 222, 221, 223)

Upper level life science (BIOL 310, 316, or another upper level BIOL course, especially in the areas of neuroscience, biochemistry, or pathophysiology)

Human Anatomy and Physiology with labs (BIOL 307, 308)

Exercise Science:

Kinesiology or Biomechanics (EXSC 382)

Math:

Statistics (MATH 141/241)

Additional Courses:

Developmental Psychology (PSYC 206)

Abnormal Psychology (PSYC 213)

Social Science (PSYC, SOCL, ANTH, ECON, etc.)

Medical Terminology (NUTR 227)

Health Disparity/Health Equity Courses

WHAT ELSE YOU CAN DO TO PREPARE FOR OTD SCHOOL

The admissions process for OTD programs is highly competitive. Winthrop offers several opportunities for you to gain experience and skills that will help prepare you for OTD school and distinguish yourself as an applicant. You should speak to an advisor about identifying opportunities at Winthrop and in the community. Opportunities available within the Biology Department include:

- Internships (BIOL 461 or 463)
- Undergraduate Research (BIOL 370, 371, 450H, 470, 471, 472)
- Bench to Bedside Program
- Tri-Beta Honors Society
- Honors Program and Honors Thesis
- Pre-Health Professions Student Organization Membership/Leadership
- SEA-PHAGES Program
- Health Professions Connection Blackboard Organization (provides supplemental advising and other helpful information, resources, and services for students planning to go into health professions)

Notes:

- (1) Upcredentialing Update: Challenges in Allied Health Degree Requirements. (2022). Retrieved from: <https://eab.com/insights/expert-insight/professional-and-adult-education/upcredentialing-update-changes-in-allied-health-degree-requirements/>.

- (2) Program Admissions. Methodist University (2022). Retrieved from: <https://www.methodist.edu/otd/admissions/>.
- (3) Admissions Requirements. Medical University of South Carolina (2022). Retrieved from: <https://education.musc.edu/colleges/health-professions/academics/occupational-therapy/otd-el/admissions>.