

Essential Functions and Technical Standards for Program Admission and Continued Enrollment

The Essential Functions and Technical Standards for admission and continued enrollment establish the expectations and requisite abilities considered necessary for professionals in the field of occupational therapy. The definition of essential functions, or essential requirements, is “the expected or desired outcomes acquired through participation in the program and include skills, knowledge and judgments that all students must demonstrate to graduate, with or without reasonable accommodation... Students acquire the necessary skills to meet this requirement through the learning that takes place in the course” (Blacklock & Montgomery, 2016, p. 7). The definition of technical standards is “the nonacademic criteria essential for the student to participate in the program... to learn and perform the essential requirements” (Blacklock & Montgomery, 2016, p. 7).

Graduate students in the entry-level Occupational Therapy graduate programs at East Carolina University are to achieve the level of competency required for graduation and practice as applicable. It is recognized the degrees of ability vary widely among individuals, but all students must be able to achieve competency in the Essential Functions and Technical Standards in all areas, such as cognition, critical thinking, physical and emotional demands, ethical standards, communication, safety, etc., needed to evaluate and treat those with physical and mental disabilities and analyze medical data to determine realistic rehabilitation goals for clients.

Admission candidates who feel they may not be able to demonstrate the Essential Functions and Technical Standards set forth are encouraged to contact the Department of Occupational Therapy. Any admission’s candidate, who may require accommodations to fulfill the Essential Functions and Technical Standards, due to a disability, is encouraged to contact the university’s Department for Disability Support Services at 252-737-1016 or dss.ecu.edu. The Department of Occupational Therapy seeks to ensure that qualified persons with disabilities are not denied admission or subject to discrimination in the admission to the Program. The Department of Occupational Therapy is committed to enabling students, by any reasonable means or accommodations, to complete the Entry-Level Occupational Therapy Graduate Program at East Carolina University.

Essential Functions

The essential functions are the expected outcomes of the entry-level occupational therapy graduates. Throughout students’ progress in the Program, students must demonstrate the appropriate competency levels in essential functions to graduate from the Entry-Level Occupational Therapy Graduate Program. The essential functions include:

1. Utilizing appropriate and effective spoken, written, and nonverbal communication with clients, caregivers, and other professionals from a variety of cultural backgrounds.
2. Possessing the intellectual, ethical, physical, and emotional capabilities required to undertake the full curriculum and achieve the levels of competence required by the Occupational Therapy Program.
3. Having the cognitive ability to learn complex information, perform clinical problem-solving, and synthesize and apply information from the discipline of occupational therapy and related disciplines to formulate diagnostic and treatment judgments.
4. Possessing sufficient motor, sensory, and cognitive abilities to perform routine client/patient care and ensure client safety.

5. Having the capacity to maintain composure and emotional stability during periods of high stress and emergency situations.
6. Demonstrating affective skills, demeanor, and rapport that relate to professional education and quality client/patient care.
7. Demonstrating flexibility and the ability to adjust to changing situations and uncertainty in both academic and clinical environments.
8. Having the ability to reliably and critically self-evaluate professional, technical, and personal skills that contribute to positive client outcomes.
9. Having the ability to accept constructive criticism and respond by appropriate modification of behavior.

Technical Standards

The technical standards are the nonacademic qualifications of applicants and students to participate in and graduate from the Entry-Level Occupational Therapy Graduate Program. The ability to meet these technical standards with or without reasonable accommodation is required for admission and must be maintained throughout a student's progress in the Entry-Level Occupational Therapy Graduate Program. Students should carefully review the technical standards to determine if accommodation is needed to successfully perform any of the required academic and clinical skills.

Intellectual/Cognitive Abilities

A student must possess adequate intellectual, ethical, emotional, and cognitive skills to:

- Achieve academic and clinical knowledge and lifelong learning skills.
- Participate in clinical, community-based, and other settings and achieve the competence levels required by the academic and off-campus clinical supervisors.
- Critically think using logical reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions, or approaches to problems.
- Critically solve problems by identifying complexity of the problems and reviewing related information to develop and evaluate options and implement solutions for successful client outcomes.
- Self-evaluate, identify, and communicate limits of one's own knowledge and skills.
- Accept constructive written and verbal feedback from faculty, supervisors, colleagues, and peers in order to improve skills and abilities.
- Identify and utilize resources in order to increase knowledge and skills.
- Utilize detailed written and oral instruction in order to independently make decisions.
- Measure, analyze, judge, and synthesize, as needed, in the academic and clinical settings.
- Write in a concise and accurate manner; and, when in the clinic, document evaluation and intervention sessions in a timely and accurate manner.
- Manage one's own time and others effectively and efficiently.
- Develop specific goals and plans to prioritize, organize and accomplish your work in a timely manner.
- Understand by actively learning the implications of new information for both current and future problem-solving and decision-making.
- Determine when something is wrong or is likely to go wrong, and take appropriate action to avoid a negative consequence.
- Be creative about a given problem or situation by developing, designing, or creating new applications, ideas, relationships, or assistive technology to facilitate client positive outcomes.
- Conduct research to increase knowledge base and add to current evidence-based practice.

Motor Skills

A student must possess adequate motor skills to actively participate in classroom, community, and clinical activities which require:

- Considerable use of arms and legs.
- Moving one's body to stand, walk, climb, bend, reach, stoop, balance, kneel, crouch/squat, crawl, twist, and handle materials.
- Lifting (i.e., Floor to mid-thigh 20-50 pounds; Mid-thigh to shoulder level 10-50 pounds; Shoulder level and above: 10-50 pounds).
- Pushing/Pulling (i.e., Floor to mat 10-100 pounds; Mid-thigh to shoulder level: 10-100 pounds; Shoulder level and above: 10-100 pounds).
- Carrying with both hands more than 10 feet at least 10 or more pounds.
- Sufficient gross/fine motor coordination to execute movements reasonably required during classroom, community, and clinical activities in general care and emergency treatment for all clients such as:
 - Evaluations (i.e., muscle palpation, range of motion, sensory testing, etc.)
 - Reaching and manipulating equipment in all required positions
 - Finger dexterity when performing precise measurements or splint/assistive technology fabrication
 - Documenting needs
 - Planning and implementing intervention sessions

Observation Skills

A student must possess visual acuity, depth-perception, accommodation, color discrimination, and peripheral vision to:

- Observe others' movements and body language.
- Observe a person accurately: at a distance or close-up, with and/or without instrumentation.
- Acquire necessary and relevant information from written documents and for written documents.
- Visualize information presented in images from various formats.
- Interpret evaluation results.
- Perform formal and informal evaluations and treatment sessions including use of visual acuity, accommodation, and vision to discern differences and variations of movements, dexterity, functional performance, muscle integrity, etc.
- Interpret and translate/explain what the observations mean in relation to a person's performance and/or capabilities.

Interpersonal, Emotional, and Social Attributes

A student must possess adequate interpersonal, emotional, and social attributes to:

- Display mature, empathetic, and effective professional relationships by exhibiting compassion, integrity, and concern for others.
- Manage high stress in both the academic and clinical setting, and, if needed, recognize the need to ask for help.
- Demonstrate emotional stability to function effectively under stress and the ability to adapt to an environment that may change rapidly without warning or in unpredictable ways.
- Recognize and show respect for individuals of different ages, genders, races, religions, sexual orientations, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, and disability levels.
- Recognize when others (i.e., students, faculty clients, family member) do or do not understand his/her written and/or verbal communication.
- Manage apprehensive clients presenting with a range of moods and behaviors in a tactful and congenial manner, so as not to alienate or antagonize.

- Maintain emotional and mental health to fully utilize intellectual abilities and exercise good judgment including prompt completion of all academic and clinical responsibilities.
- Demonstrate honesty, integrity, professionalism, and ethical behavior as set forth by the American Occupational Therapy Association and North Carolina Board of Occupational Therapy.
- Maintain confidentiality of student/client information via all forms of communication (i.e., verbal, computer, and social media).
- Be socially perceptive of others' reactions and understand why they react as they do.
- Encourage and build mutual trust, respect, and cooperation among team members.

Communications Skills

A student must demonstrate the communication skills to:

- Speak, hear, and observe others for the purpose of eliciting and perceiving information.
- Provide information to others (i.e., faculty, classmates, supervisors, clients, caregivers) by telephone, in writing, email, and/or in-person. Confidentiality is considered at all times.
- Communicate effectively and efficiently in verbal and written English formats with classmates, clients, family members, and all members of the health care team, during both emergency and non-emergency situations.
- Modify communication style to meet diverse communicative needs.
- Ensure confidentiality of all client-related information in verbal and written format.
- Fluently communicate ideas related to a specific goal, topic, etc. for a positive client outcome.
- Resolve conflicts and negotiate with others; provide consultation and advice to others; communicate with person outside the organization; and, guide, direct and motivate subordinates.
- Effectively communicate and schedule events, programs, activities, and work responsibilities.
- Educate and train other students, professional, clients, and caregivers in a verbal or non-verbal manner that is at an appropriate level of understanding.

Students with Disabilities

East Carolina University and the Occupational Therapy Programs do not discriminate against qualified applicants or enrolled students with disabilities. These essential functions and technical standards are not intended to discourage any applicant or enrolled student who with or without reasonable accommodations can meet these requirements and complete the curriculum.

Reasonable/Unreasonable Accommodation

An accommodation is unreasonable if it poses a direct threat to the health or safety of the student, client, or others, if making it requires fundamental alteration of an element of the curriculum, if it lowers academic standards, or if it poses an undue administrative or financial burden on the school or experiential learning location, clinical fieldwork placement site, or capstone project site. No disability can be accommodated with an auxiliary aid or intermediary that provides a selective function, cognitive support, or occupational therapy knowledge. Aids or intermediaries also may not act as a substitute for performing essential skills or supplement clinical and ethical judgment.

Fieldwork and Capstone Accommodations

A student must follow university's policy and guidelines regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) if they want ADA accommodations during all fieldwork and capstone experiences. Students requesting accommodations during fieldwork and/or capstone must contact the Department for Disability Support Services for assistance to identify appropriate accommodations. These accommodations may be different from academic accommodations and may require a different accommodation letter from the Department for Disability Support Services. The student should consult with the Department for Disability Support Services for assistance in identifying appropriate fieldwork and/or capstone accommodations. Once the student received this accommodation letter, they will consult

with the Academic Fieldwork Coordinator/Assistant and/or the Doctoral Capstone Coordinator and provide both verbal and written approval from the appropriate coordinator site(s) to determine if the site(s) are able to provide these reasonable accommodations.

Resuming Curriculum Post-Injury/Impairment or Leave of Absence

In the event a student has had an extended leave of absence from the Program for any reason or suffered an injury or period of illness that temporarily affected their ability to perform the essential functions or meet the technical standards, the Program may require that they demonstrate or provide evidence of their ability to resume the curriculum and participate in clinical care. Participation in a treatment or rehabilitation program does not guarantee continued enrollment. In certain circumstances the Program may require the student to undergo a medical evaluation from a provider trained in fitness for duty evaluations.

Blacklock, B., & Montgomery, T. (2016). Understand technical standards in health science and medical education. *Disability Compliance for Higher Education*, 21(11), 7. <https://doi.org/10.1002/dhe.30188>

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Attestation for the Occupational Therapy Program's Student Essential Functions and Technical Standards

Candidates for the Entry-Level Occupational Therapy Graduate Program who have been accepted for admission will be required to verify they understand and meet these Essential Functions and Technical Standards with or without reasonable accommodation(s). Admission decisions are made on the assumption that each candidate can meet and fulfill the Essential Functions and Technical Standards with or without reasonable accommodation(s).

The Department for Disability Support Services at East Carolina University will review a student's request for accommodation and confirm that stated condition qualifies as a disability under applicable laws. The members of the Department for Disability Support Services and Department of Occupational Therapy at East Carolina University will jointly decide what accommodations are suitable and possible in terms of reasonable accommodation(s) in the classroom and fieldwork/capstone environment. This process includes a review of whether the accommodations(s) would jeopardize client safety or the educational process of the student, other students, or the institution, including all coursework, community educational events, competency requirements, fieldwork placements, and capstone project and experience deemed essential to graduation.

The Department of Occupational Therapy will determine whether it agrees with the student and the decisions made by the members of the Department for Disability Support Services and Department of Occupational Therapy at East Carolina University. If the Department of Occupational Therapy agrees with the student and those decisions, the students will be deemed capable of performing all Essential Functions and Technical Standards established by the Program.

Should a student's needs change at any time in the course of a student's enrollment in the program, they may request accommodation through the Department for Disability Support Services at East Carolina University.

Student Attestation

Please sign ONE of the following statements.

Candidates/students NOT requesting accommodation:

I certify I have read and understand the Essential Functions and Technical Standards of the Department of Occupational Therapy at East Carolina University for Program Admission and Continued Enrollment, and I believe to the best of my knowledge that I am able to meet each of these functions and standards without accommodation.

Candidate/Student Signature

Date

Candidates/students requesting accommodation(s):

I certify I have read and understand the Essential Functions and Technical Standards of the Department of Occupational Therapy at East Carolina University for Program Admission and Continued Enrollment, and I believe to the best of my knowledge I am able to meet each of these functions and standards with certain accommodation(s). I will contact the Department for Disability Support Services at East Carolina University to explore reasonable accommodation(s).

Candidate/Student Signature

Date

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