



Occupational therapists treat patients with injuries, illnesses, or disabilities through the therapeutic use of everyday activities. They help these patients develop, recover, and improve the skills needed for daily living and working. Occupational therapists typically do the following:

- Observe patients doing tasks, ask the patient questions, and review the patient's medical history
- Use the observations, answers, and medical history to evaluate the patient's condition and needs
- Establish a treatment plan for patients, laying out the types of activities and specific goals to be accomplished
- Help people with various disabilities with different tasks, such as helping an older person with poor memory use a computer, or leading an autistic child in play activities
- Demonstrate exercises that can help relieve pain for people with chronic conditions, such as joint stretches for arthritis sufferers
- Evaluate a patient's home or workplace and identify how it can be better suited to the patient's health needs
- Educate a patient's family and employer about how to accommodate and care for the patient
- Recommend special equipment, such as wheelchairs and eating aids, and instruct patients how to use that equipment
- Assess and record patients' activities and progress for evaluating clients, for billing, and for reporting to physicians and other healthcare providers

Patients with permanent disabilities, such as cerebral palsy, often need help performing daily tasks. Therapists show patients how to use appropriate adaptive equipment, such as leg or knee braces, wheelchairs, and eating aids. Patients can function independently and control their living environment by using these devices. Some occupational therapists work in educational settings with children one on one or in small groups. They evaluate disabled children's abilities, modify classroom equipment to accommodate certain disabilities, and help children participate in school activities. Some therapists provide early intervention therapy to infants and toddlers who have, or are at risk of having, developmental delays.

Therapists who work with the elderly help their patients lead more independent and active lives. They assess the patient's abilities and environment and make recommendations, such as using adaptive equipment or identifying and removing potential fall hazards in the home. In some cases, occupational therapists help patients create functional work environments. They evaluate the work space, plan work activities, and meet with the patient's employer to collaborate on changes to the patient's work environment or schedule.

Occupational therapists also may work in mental health settings where they help patients who suffer from developmental disabilities, mental illness, or emotional problems. They help these patients cope with and engage in daily life by teaching skills such as time management, budgeting, using public transportation, and doing household chores. Additionally, therapists may work with individuals who have problems with drug abuse, alcoholism, depression, or suffer from other disorders. (*Occupational Outlook Handbook*)

Students pursuing a pre-occupational therapy curriculum are expected to choose a major so that they can be working towards a baccalaureate degree concurrently with the pre-occupational therapy program. This requires a major/minor combination or a comprehensive major as well as completion of the UNK general studies requirements and other degree requirements as set forth in the college catalog. Occupational therapy schools do not specify which major a student should pursue in conjunction with his/her pre-occupational therapy studies. (Creighton University requires a Bachelor's Degree for admission.) The student should check with the specific school(s) of occupational therapy to which he/she intends to apply in order to ensure that any other requirements are fulfilled. Requirements can vary greatly between schools. **Gaining acceptance into an occupational therapy school is a very competitive process and admission is not guaranteed.**

Required Courses:

Take all of the following:

| | | |
|----------|--------------------------------------|---|
| BIOL 225 | Anatomy & Physiology | 4 |
| BIOL 226 | Anatomy & Physiology | 4 |
| BIOL 325 | Medical Terminology | 1 |
| CHEM 145 | Introduction to Chemistry | 4 |
| ENG 101 | Introduction to Academic Writing | 3 |
| ENG 102 | Academic Writing & Research | 3 |
| PHIL 120 | Introduction to Ethics | 3 |
| PSY 203 | General Psychology | 3 |
| SPCH 100 | Fundamentals of Speech Communication | 3 |
| PSY 230 | Human Development | 3 |
| PSY 231 | Abnormal Behavior and Society | 3 |

Take three credit hours of history. (HIST 110 ,210, 211, 215, 250, 251, etc.) (except HIST 188) 3

Take ONE of the following:

| | | |
|----------|-----------------------|---|
| BIOL 305 | Biostatistics | 3 |
| PSY 250 | Behavioral Statistics | 3 |
| STAT 241 | Elementary Statistics | 3 |

Recommended courses for electives:

| | | |
|----------|-----------------------------------|---|
| PE 108 | Introduction to Nutrition | 3 |
| MATH 102 | College Algebra | 3 |
| MIS 182 | Software Productivity Tools | 3 |
| PE 329 | Intro to Health Promotion | 3 |
| PE 360 | Intro to Anatomy/Biomechanics | 4 |
| TESE 421 | Individuals with Exceptionalities | 3 |

These courses meet the requirements at UNMC and Creighton University. Students should check with the specific school(s) to which he/she intends to apply to ensure all requirements are fulfilled. Requirements can vary greatly between different occupational therapy schools.

Academic Guidelines

An overall GPA of 3.5 or above (on a 4.0 scale) is preferred and will result in the student being a more competitive applicant. Each required course must be passed with a grade of "C" or better. A grade of "C-" will not be accepted. Students searching for electives outside their major requirements should consider courses from the following areas: biology, chemistry, mathematics, sociology, psychology, business administration, healthcare management, and healthcare economics. See your advisor for suggestions. Students should be aware of prerequisites on all courses and plan their coursework accordingly.

Non-Academic Guidelines

There is no magic formula for acceptance in to professional school. Admission is based on GPA, test scores, shadowing and medical experiences, community involvement and volunteerism, leadership qualities, the interview, the essay, and letters of recommendation. Shadowing and medical experiences are of utmost importance. Students should plan to shadow a minimum of 40 hours in their selected profession. Health Sciences offers opportunities to meet these non-academic guidelines through the Shadowing Program, the Health Science Club, and volunteer experiences. Research experience is not required, but will be looked upon favorably. Students should plan to be involved in these types of activities and experiences throughout their undergraduate career. Other important non-academic factors include good moral character, excellent interpersonal skills, a deep commitment to healthcare, evidence of leadership potential and service to others.

The Application Process

Students will make application to most schools through the Occupational Therapy Centralized Application System (OTCAS). The application comes open in summer and early application is strongly encouraged. Students should make application in the summer or early fall of the calendar year preceding the year in which they hope to enroll in professional school. Early application is strongly encouraged and early applicants are given preference. Students should make application in the summer or early fall of the calendar year preceding the year in which they hope to enroll in professional school. Check with the schools to which you are applying to verify their policies and procedures regarding supplemental applications.

Entrance Examination Requirement (GRE)

Some occupational therapy schools require that students present scores from the Graduate Record Exam (GRE). It is preferred that the GRE (if required) is taken no later than August of the calendar year preceding the year in which the applicant wishes to enroll in an occupational therapy program. Students register online at www.gre.org. The test consists of three sections: verbal reasoning, quantitative reasoning, and analytical writing.

Letters of Evaluation/Recommendation

Letters of evaluation will be required of applicants. Letters from a faculty member, occupational therapist, academic advisor, or employer would be appropriate. Information about the non-academic character of a student would be most useful as academic information is already in the application. If the school utilizes OTCAS, letters of recommendation should be submitted directly to OTCAS.

Interviews

Most schools screen applicants with some form of personal interview. The format of the interview may vary depending on the schools to which students are applying.

Criminal Background Checks

Prerequisite for enrollment into any health science professional program is consent for an external background check. This check includes, but is not limited to, past criminal offenses and registry information. If there is evidence of arrest for a crime(s), conviction for a crime(s), presence on an abuse registry, or other information which reasonably suggests that patient safety might be compromised, the student will be asked to provide additional information.

Citizenship/International Students

Professional schools in the health sciences vary as to whether they accept non-U.S. citizens. Some schools that do accept non-citizens require a substantial financial commitment up front. Since not all schools accept non-citizens and since the financial commitment of those that do may be substantial, students should thoroughly research and carefully consider such a decision and discuss it with their pre-health advisors early in their undergraduate years.

Websites

American Occupational Therapy Association
UNK Health Sciences

www.aota.org
www.unk.edu/healthsciences

Suggested Sequence of Key Courses

| | Fall | Spring |
|---------------|---|----------------------------------|
| Year 1 | CHEM 145 or CHEM 160 MATH: See advisor for appropriate course placement. | |
| Year 2 | BIOL 225 | BIOL 226 |
| Year 3 | Complete required major courses. | Complete required major courses. |
| Year 4 | Complete required major courses. | Complete required major courses. |

- A MATH ACT score of 22 or prior completion of College Algebra (MATH 102) is required for registration in CHEM 160.
- Completion of one semester of chemistry is required for entry into BIOL 225.

Students who are accepted into occupational therapy school prior to completing a baccalaureate degree at UNK may be eligible to receive a Bachelor of Science degree in Applied Health Sciences if they have completed all General Studies requirements and have at least 85 semester hours completed in pre-occupational therapy studies.