



FAQ Advising Form

Missouri Health Professions Consortium

A.A.S in Occupational Therapy Assistant

The following *Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Form* is designed to assist faculty and staff at each of the participating Missouri Health Professions Consortium (MHPC) partner institutions in addressing inquiries posed by prospective students during the advising process. The following list is not comprehensive, but is based on questions posed during previous academic cycles.

Admissions

Q. What are the minimum requirements for acceptance into the MHPC OTA Program?

- A.** The criteria below is also outlined in the OTA application packets, please note the technology requirement.
- Meet all requirements for admission to the college, including a completed student admissions file, and arrange for high school and all college transcripts to be sent to the college.
 - Have an overall/cumulative 2.5 GPA or higher in the required general education coursework *at the time of application submission*.
 - Enroll in and be on schedule to complete the Year 1 coursework (all general education courses) with a 'C' or better while maintaining the minimum cumulative grade point average of 2.5 or higher. Anatomy & Physiology courses must be no older than 5 years.
 - For entry into the program, students must complete all general education coursework PRIOR to the Year 2 (Professional OTA Coursework) start date in January.
 - Admission is contingent upon receipt of an official and clean criminal background screening, drug screening, Family Care & Safety Registry (FCSR), immunizations, and physical examination (forms will be provided to those students selected for admission).
 - Obtain "Basic Life Support (BLS) for Healthcare Providers" certification in the fall semester prior to the program start date in January and maintain this certification for the duration of the program. BLS for Healthcare Provider certification is available through the American Heart Association (www.heart.org) and may be offered through the community colleges participating in the MHPC OTA Program.
 - Complete and submit the Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) program Application for Admission for the May 31st deadline.
 - Arrange to observe, a **minimum** of 8 hours, an occupational therapist or occupational therapy assistant at the clinical site(s) of your choice. Read and complete the Applicant Observation form, and obtain the clinician's signature for verification. It is recommended that applicants complete more than 8 hours observation in more than one clinical OT setting.
 - Submit a minimum of two recommendations, using the form included with the OTA Application packet. Recommendations must be professional references submitted by individuals, other than family members, who can attest to your character and work ethic, and preferably by someone familiar with the OT profession.
 - Submit a 1-2 page essay on why you want to join the occupation therapy profession. Include in this essay your definition of occupational therapy and the reflections of your observation at the occupational therapy clinical site. (Tip: Do not exceed 2 pages or you will lose points in the scoring process).
 - Submit various other forms included in the OTA Application packet to include the *Application for Program Admission, Student Release of Information Form, Acknowledgement of Technology Requirements Form, and Performance Standards for Occupational Therapy Students*.

- Understand that the technology utilized in the program include, but are not limited to: internet, e-mail, Blackboard, interactive television (ITV), online database searching, web-based lecture capture, internet streaming video review, and other e-technologies as assigned as integral components of the MHPC OTA Program. Access to a scanner will be necessary for students selected to the OTA Program in order to submit required paperwork and/or class assignments electronically.
- Students selected to the program at all campuses must attend a mandatory orientation session to take place on the University of Missouri campus in Columbia on a Saturday in November or December.

Q. The program requires that you have observation experience. How do I set this up?

A. It is suggested that you contact local facilities that employ occupational therapists and/or occupational therapy assistants (e.g., hospitals, nursing homes, rehabilitation centers, or school systems). You can find these phone numbers in the Yellow Pages under Occupational Therapy or Rehabilitation. These requests are made quite frequently and you will find most facilities accommodating. Be prepared to discuss your reason for the request and your availability. It is recommended that you begin this process at least 6 months before the application is due as some facilities will not be able to accommodate your request on a short time frame. It is also recommended that you observe OT services in multiple settings to gain an understanding of the diversity of the profession.

Q. If I meet minimum requirements am I guaranteed admission into the Program?

A. No. The MHPC OTA Program is very competitive and there are a limited number of seats per campus. Depending on the number of applications received for your campus, not everyone who meets the minimum requirements can be accepted. An average of 15 students per campus cohort will be admitted annually into the OTA Program.

Q. How do I strengthen my application?

A. Applications are assigned a screening score based on points earned in the following categories:

- *Cumulative GPA.* A 4.0 GPA in the required general education coursework will earn the maximum number of points in this category.
- *General Education Coursework.* While an applicant is not required to complete all general education courses before applying to the Program, those who have completed all general education courses before the application deadline will earn more points in the application review process.
- *Observation.* Applicants who complete twenty or more observation hours in two or more distinctly different practice settings will earn more points in this category than an applicant who observes only the minimum 8 hours.
- *Recommendations.* Applicants are awarded points based on the recommendation forms submitted by the professional reference. Recommendations should be completed by someone, other than a relative, who can attest to the applicant's character and work ethic and preferably by someone who is familiar with the occupational therapy profession.
- *Essay.* A rubric is utilized to grade the applicant's essay on essential elements, critical thinking, clarity & organization, professionalism and mechanics of writing. Maximum screening score points are awarded to those essays which clearly answer the question of why the applicant would like to join the occupational therapy profession and incorporate a reflection on the observation experience. High scored essays will include those which are outstanding in content, organization and style and are compelling in nature, drawing on personal experience to persuade reviewer. It is recommended that applicants utilize the essay scoring rubric and visit their campus writing center for assistance with their essay. The rubric is available in the OTA Application packet.

- *Interview.* Applicants who meet selection criteria will be invited to interview with OTA faculty as a component of the student selection process. Interviews will take place in Columbia on a Friday or Saturday in July. Applicants selected for interviews will be notified by email at least one week in advance of the interview date/time. It is suggested that applicants become familiar with the occupational therapy profession and be able to explain their reasons for wanting to become an OTA, as well as brush up on their professional interviewing skills to prepare for the interview. Attending an interview does not guarantee that one will be accepted into the program.
- *Apply to multiple campuses.* Applicants who apply to more than one campus could potentially increase their chances of being accepted to the program. One must apply for college admission and submit all official transcripts to each campus where they wish to apply to the OTA program, prior to the application deadline. If accepted to the program at more than one campus, the applicant will be able to select which of those campuses he or she wishes to enroll and attend the OTA Program. Applying to multiple campuses does not guarantee that one will be accepted into the program.
- *MHPC institutional credit.* Applicants who complete at least two general education courses at one or more of the MHPC member colleges will be awarded points during the application review process.
- *Work or Volunteer experience.* Applicants who have paid work experience or unpaid volunteer experience in an OT-related setting may be awarded points during the application review process.

Q. If I have worked in a rehab setting do I still have to submit an observation form?

- A.** Yes. You may count paid work experience as 8 hours of observation at your place of employment if the OT Practitioner with whom you have worked is comfortable signing off on the observation form. However, it is recommended that you complete additional observation hours in different practice settings and with different practitioners in order to expose yourself to multiple settings/companies and gain a better understanding of the OT profession. Be sure to list your work experience on the application page as additional points may be awarded for individuals who have volunteer or paid work experience in an occupational therapy setting.

Q. If I applied last year do I have to fill out a new packet?

- A.** Yes. Application packets are updated on a yearly basis and the admission criteria or forms may change slightly. Therefore it is imperative that each student resubmit an updated packet. Last year's observation may be utilized but students will earn more points by completing additional observation hours at distinctly different practice settings. Last year's recommendation forms and essay may also be utilized. The OTA office has your previous application on file and will match your new items to your previous application materials.

Q. Once my application is submitted what happens?

- A.** Upon arrival at the MHPC OTA Program office, the OTA application packets are converted to an anonymous format and reviewed by staff. Transcripts are requested from each community college where the applicant wishes to apply for program admission in order to calculate cumulative GPA and verify general education coursework completion. An average of 15 students per campus cohort will be admitted annually into the OTA Program. Screening scores based on the selection criteria and personal interview will be recorded and used to determine the ranking of applicants by campus cohort for program admission in each academic cycle. Each campus cohort will utilize the same selection criteria. News of official acceptance into the program will be communicated to candidates during the first week of August. Program admission is contingent on completion of any remaining general education courses and maintaining the minimum 2.5 GPA in the fall semester prior to classes beginning in January.

Technology

Q. Do I have to have access to a high speed internet connection at home?

A. No, you do not need access to a high speed internet connection in your home, however many assignments will require access to this technology. Students who do not have access in their home will have access on their home campus through computer labs. Current MHPC OTA students report that it is more convenient to have high speed access at home as they are not restricted by computer lab hours to complete assignments. MHPC OTA faculty is aware that some students will need to utilize on-campus computer labs to complete assignments and exams which are structured with these constraints in mind.

Q. Do I need a laptop for this program?

A. No, you do not need a personal laptop for the program as you will have access to computer labs at your home campus. However, many current MHPC OTA students prefer to have a laptop with wireless access in order to review lectures and course material during class time when engaging in ITV courses.

Q. Do I need to be proficient with internet or other technologies in order to be successful in this program?

A. Yes. It is highly recommended that students enrolling in the MHPC OTA Program are comfortable with basic internet and web-based technologies such as e-mail, online database searching, and other word processing technologies. Most assignments in the curriculum are completed using a PC and submitted in an online format. Blackboard is readily utilized in conveying course content. Students enrolled in the professional year of the program will have visiting student access to University of Missouri E-Technologies, including Blackboard, in order to utilize the same virtual learning environment across campuses. Students do NOT need to be familiar with Blackboard or other e-technologies prior to entering the program, as tutorials and training will be provided. However, students will need to be comfortable utilizing these technologies after receiving the training provided. In addition, students will need access to a scanner in order to submit required paperwork and/or course assignments electronically.

Q. Do I have to come into campus for class?

A. Yes. In addition to asynchronous virtual learning environments such as Blackboard, a large portion of coursework is taught via Interactive Television (ITV). Students will need to travel to the State Fair Campus in Sedalia, the East Central Campus in Union, the North Central Missouri College campus in Trenton, the Three Rivers College campus in Poplar Bluff, or the Moberly Area Community College campus in Columbia depending on which college the student is enrolled. In addition, North Central students will attend the weekly clinical lab sessions at the State Fair campus in Sedalia, and Three Rivers students will attend the weekly clinical lab sessions at the East Central campus in Union.

ITV broadcasts generally originate from the Columbia campus; therefore MACC students may have an instructor in the room with them, while SFCC, NCMC, TRC, and ECC students will generally be interacting in a distance format via ITV. In addition to travel related to didactic ITV coursework, ALL students enrolled in the MHPC OTA Program professional year coursework are required to travel to the Columbia campus 4 times a semester for centralized labs.

Program Structure

Q. Will I have face to face interaction with my instructors?

A. Yes. Every week or potentially every other week, a designated MHPC OTA instructor travels to the campuses in Union, Sedalia and Columbia to conduct lab activities. A MHPC OTA Faculty member is

assigned to each campus. Therefore, while the instructors may rotate traveling in order to have an opportunity to interact with all students at all campuses, each campus will have a dedicated faculty member assigned to the on-site lab, to those on-site students and who conducts the majority of on-site labs. In addition to face to face interaction in the lab setting, students will have opportunities to set up one-on-one advising sessions with their dedicated faculty member.

Q. Who confers my degree?

- A. Since the University of Missouri cannot confer an associate's level degree, successful graduates of the MHPC OTA Program will earn their degree from the college in which they are enrolled.

Q. Is there an option to transfer credits to the University of Missouri?

- A. Articulation agreements are in place to provide students who have graduated from the *Missouri Health Professions Consortium (MHPC) OTA Program* the opportunity to complete a Bachelor of Health Science (BHS) degree at MU. Any student who has earned an Associate in Applied Science in Occupational Therapy Assistant from the MHPC OTA Program is guaranteed that MU will accept designated freshman and sophomore elective credits, all general education credits and will apply 60 credit hours to the BHS degree. Graduates of the MHPC OTA Program are **NOT** guaranteed admission to the University of Missouri's Master of Occupational Therapy Program, but rather would be evaluated equally to other prospective students as long as they meet the prerequisite requirements for entry into the program. For information regarding prerequisites for application to the MU Master of OT Program please visit: <http://shp.missouri.edu/ot/about.php>.

Q. Where can I get more information about the OTA program?

- A. In order to gain more information regarding the professional year of the program one can visit the MHPC website at <http://mhpc.missouri.edu>. This website will provide a general overview of the Consortium as well as information specific to both the OTA and PTA Programs. A student handbook for the OTA Program is available in PDF format for very specific information regarding student expectations and program specific policies.

Q. When is it appropriate to contact the MHPC OTA office or the MHPC OTA Program Director?

- A. While you may contact the MHPC OTA Program office directly, they will not be able to answer specific questions regarding general education requirements or transfer of credit as these decisions are made at the community college level and should be directed to the admissions or registrar offices of those community colleges. The MHPC OTA Program office is the primary point of contact for OTA application questions and once students are accepted into the professional year of the OTA Program. Kim Earney would be the primary point of contact and is available at (573)884-5689 or via e-mail at earneyk@missouri.edu.

Q. Can I enroll part-time or complete the professional year of the program over several semesters?

- A. No. While the general education requirements can be completed on a part-time basis, once enrolled in the professional year students must complete all courses in the order in which they are offered on a full-time basis. It is NOT recommended that students work during the professional year as the curriculum and time demands are stringent. Students should anticipate a Monday through Friday schedule running from 8 am to 5 pm. In addition to coursework, students will be required to attend labs running full days on Wednesdays and clinical fieldwork rotations with a time commitment of up to 10 hours a week during the spring and summer semesters. Fieldwork rotations during spring and summer semesters generally are

scheduled on Tuesdays and Fridays, but they can vary depending on the clinical site placement and may require time commitments in the evenings and/or weekends. Students complete full-time clinical fieldwork rotations (40+ hours per week) during the fall semester. The Professional Year does not run on a traditional academic cycle. Classes will begin the Monday after New Year's Day and will run through the end of the Fall Semester. Completion of professional year coursework takes one full calendar year.

Accreditation

Q. What does accreditation mean and why is it important to graduate from an accredited program?

A. Accreditation is a review by experts of the quality of higher education institutions and their programs. As a student, you should care about accreditation because it assures that a minimum level of quality has been met in an educational program. In order to take the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT) exam to become a Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant (COTA), one must graduate from an accredited program. State licensing may also be required to practice as a COTA and the state licensing depends on the results of the NBCOT exam. To further understand the importance of choosing an accredited program, please view this video clip <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2zBdyBNwwmo>.

For more information regarding the accreditation process, please contact the American Occupational Therapy Association:

ACOTE
c/o Accreditation Department
American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA)
4720 Montgomery Lane, Suite 200
Bethesda, MD 20814-3449
Phone: 301-652-2682
TDD: 800-377-8555
accred@aota.org
www.acoteonline.org

Q. Is the OTA Program accredited?

A. Yes, the MHPC OTA Program is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) of the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA). Following successful completion of coursework and passing of the national certification exam, graduates of the MHPC OTA Program will be a Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant (COTA). A felony conviction may affect a student's ability to secure a clinical fieldwork rotation and/or graduate's ability to sit for the NBCOT Certification Exam or attain State Licensure.

For more information about the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT) exam please visit the NBCOT website at www.nbcot.org.

General

Q. Once accepted, what are the criteria for remaining in the MHPC OTA Program?

A. Unprofessional behavior or poor academic performance can result in dismissal from the professional program. Academic performance standards require students to maintain a cumulative 2.5 GPA or higher and individual course grades may not fall below a 'C' in order to progress through the program. Because

the program is sequential students will not be allowed to progress to the next semester without successfully completing the preceding semester requirements. Students must achieve a cumulative GPA of 2.5 or greater for professional coursework in order to graduate from the program.

Q. Where can I get more information about Occupational Therapy?

A. More information regarding the profession of occupational therapy can be found by visiting the American Occupational Therapy Association website at www.aota.org.

– **Ask About OT or OTA Education**

For further information about studying to become an occupational therapist or occupational therapy assistant, send inquiries to educate@aota.org.

– **Ask an OT or OTA Student**

To ask questions of an OT or OTA student, send inquiries to AskAStudent@aota.org. Allow up to 1 week for a response.

– **Live Chat!**

If you are a prospective student, join a live video and chat session. Information can be found at: <http://www.aota.org/Students/Prospective.aspx>

Q. What if I have a felony conviction?

A. Even with successful coursework completion students may be prohibited from sitting for the NBCOT Certification Exam if they have a felony conviction. It is recommended that prospective students who do not have a clean criminal background contact NBCOT directly to inquire as to whether the conviction would prohibit sitting for the certification exam (www.nbcot.org) as well as the professional registration/licensing agency in the state which they wish to practice. In addition, any conviction, felony or misdemeanor, may prohibit students from placement in fieldwork sites. While the program will work with the student in attempts to find a suitable fieldwork placement, ultimately a student would not be able to graduate from the program if a willing fieldwork location cannot be identified.

Q. What if I do not pass the drug screen?

A. Offers of acceptance to the MHPC OTA Program are made as conditional offers. The conditions include satisfactory completion of a negative alcohol, drug, and/or controlled substance test. Students who refuse to authorize and pay for testing or who tests positive for drugs, alcohol, or controlled substances will not receive a final offer of admission, or will not be allowed to continue in the OTA program.

Q. I thought this was a COTA program why does all of the information refer to it as an OTA Program?

A. The difference is that a student cannot be a COTA until they complete the program and pass their certification exam. One cannot practice in the State of Missouri as an occupational therapy assistant (OTA) unless they pass the NBCOT Certification exam and attain State Licensure. Once a graduate of an accredited program passes the certification exam they are referred to as a COTA, and once this status is attained COTA's are eligible to apply for permanent licensure in the State of Missouri.

Q. Are there additional tuition and fees for the professional year of the program?

A. Yes. While all tuition and fees related to general education coursework are consistent with current community college policies, there is an additional cost for the professional year courses. Since it costs more to deliver the professional year of the program, additional fees related to support and technology services are assigned to the 48 credit hours taken in the professional year of the program. In addition,

students can anticipate additional costs related to immunizations, specialty certifications, lab supplies and screening procedures. An estimated cost sheet is included in the OTA Application packet.