



ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY STUDENT

A Master of Science degree in Occupational Therapy signifies that the holder is eligible to sit for the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy Examination, and that the holder is prepared for entry into the profession of occupational therapy. Therefore, it follows that graduates must have knowledge and skills to function in a broad variety of clinical, community, or school environments and to render a wide spectrum of occupational therapy services. All students admitted to the Occupational Therapy Program at The University of South Dakota must meet the abilities and expectations outlined below.

Regarding those students with verifiable disabilities, the university will not discriminate against such individuals who are otherwise qualified, but will expect applicants and students to meet certain minimal technical standards (essential functions) as set forth herein with or without reasonable accommodation. In adopting these standards, the university believes it must keep in mind the ultimate safety of the clients whom its students and graduates serve. The standards reflect what the occupational therapy program believes are reasonable expectations required of students and practitioners in performing essential functions of the profession.

- I. **Sensory Processing Demands:** Participating as a student requires functional use of vision, hearing, and touch along with awareness of body position and movement. Specific visual skills required include near and far vision, peripheral vision, color vision, and depth perception. Students must be able to perceive and interpret sensory information accurately to provide quality client care.
- II. **Cognitive Demands:** The successful occupational therapy student maintains a high level of alertness and responsiveness during classroom and fieldwork situations. The student must possess the ability to focus on a task for a prolonged period of time to allow for successful learning to take place. In addition, the occupational therapist must be able to recall information and organize information in an efficient and useful manner. This includes the ability to acquire, retain, and prioritize informational data, conceptualize and integrate abstract information, apply theoretical knowledge to specific client populations and justify a rationale for therapeutic interventions, and problem-solve to create innovative and practical solutions.
- III. **Physical Demands:** The successful occupational therapy student must possess sufficient motor abilities to allow for treatment intervention with a variety of clients. This includes functional use of all four extremities, which would allow the student to carry out assessments and to provide therapeutic interventions. Quick reactions are necessary not only for safety, but for one to respond therapeutically in most clinical situations. The student also needs to demonstrate good mobility skills including the ability to walk, climb, stoop, kneel, crouch, and crawl to allow one to complete therapeutic interventions on all types of surfaces. The student is regularly required to maintain positions for extended periods of time such as sitting, standing and writing. The student frequently is required to demonstrate good arm placement to allow for reaching and positioning of hands to successfully manipulate large and small objects. The student must be able to lift and carry up to 50 pounds, and push or pull up to 100 pounds.
- IV. **Psychosocial Demands:** The student must display the emotional maturity to interact with a variety of individuals with diverse age, diagnoses, culture, and socioeconomic backgrounds. The student frequently needs to address multiple, demanding tasks simultaneously and therefore needs to have established strategies for stress management.

V. **Communication Demands:**

Written: The student must be able to effectively communicate in written English. The format can range from a brief note with appropriate use of abbreviations to a descriptive narrative.

Verbal and Nonverbal: The student must be able to produce the spoken word and to interpret factual information along with nonverbal cues of mood, temperament, and social responses from clients, supervisors, and peers. Response to emergencies / crisis situations, as well as more routine communication must be appropriate to the situation. Communication must be accurate, sensitive, and effective.

Reading: The student must be able to read and comprehend information in English from a variety of written sources (e.g., textbooks, professional journals, medical/school records, and government regulations).

VI. **Environmental Demands:** The occupational therapy student must be able to negotiate and successfully achieve access to multiple environmental situations. These environmental situations may be physical, social, or cultural.

The physical environment would consist of nonhuman aspects. The student is occasionally exposed to wet or humid conditions (non weather); work near moving mechanical parts, fumes or airborne particles, hazardous materials, blood borne pathogens, outdoor weather conditions, risk of electrical shock, risk of radiation, and vibration. The noise level in the work environment will range from a classroom situation in which the noise level is low to an industrial or clinical environment where then noise level may be high.

The social environment would consist of norms, expectations, and routines of different environments. The occupational therapy student will be exposed to multiple treatment environments, which have implicit and explicit rules for behavior.

The occupational therapy student must demonstrate multicultural competency to interact with multiple client populations. Multicultural competency as outlined by the American Occupational Therapy Association include awareness of one's culture, willingness to explore and become knowledgeable about another culture, being respectful to individual diversities, and being able to select culturally sensitive therapeutic interventions.

VII. **Professional Behaviors:** The student is expected to demonstrate professional behaviors and attitudes during his/her participation in the classroom and clinical settings. This includes, but is not limited to: commitment to learning, dependability, written and verbal communication, interpersonal skills, professionalism, cooperation, clinical reasoning, and intrapersonal coping skills. Faculty will assess and mentor the development of each student's professional behavior. Students must be able to give and receive constructive criticism. Responsiveness to constructive criticism from faculty, clinical instructors, and peers is essential for success.

Comments: The description above is intended to reflect the essential functions in a general manner. It is not all-inclusive, and is not a contract, expressed or implied. The description also attempts to describe functions in multiple contexts from the didactic experience to the fieldwork experience. Keeping this in mind some essential functions may increase or decrease depending on the context.

END OF APPLICATION. THIS PAGE DOES NOT NEED TO BE PRINTED OR RETURNED.