



# Health Advisors' Handbook

Division of Occupational Therapy

## **ACADEMIC PROGRAM**

### **Occupational Therapy Doctorate Academic Year 2024-2025**

Division of Occupational Therapy  
Department of Rehabilitation Sciences  
College of Health Professions  
Medical University of South Carolina  
151-B Rutledge Avenue, MSC 962 Charleston, SC 29425  
Phone: 843-792 5377; Website: [www.musc.edu/chp/otd](http://www.musc.edu/chp/otd)

**Program:** Occupational Therapy

**Degree:** Occupational Therapy Doctorate (OTD)

For the most current information and details, visit our website: [chp.musc.edu/otd](http://chp.musc.edu/otd)

The MUSC Division of Occupational Therapy is among the nation's finest, ranked in the top 10% of occupational therapy programs by U.S. News and World Report. The division offers an entry-level [Occupational Therapy Doctorate](#) in two formats, residential and hybrid, as well as a [post-professional Occupational Therapy Doctorate \(PPOTD\)](#) for practicing occupational therapists.

## What is Occupational Therapy?

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Occupational therapists are motivated and creative problem solvers who like working with people and translating scientific knowledge into everyday practicalities. They are collaborators who bring about desired change and attainment of meaningful goals. Sometimes new skill development is necessary, other times adapting the environment is essential for a productive life.

When people experience trauma, stress, or chronic health conditions their daily routines are often disrupted making it difficult to get up, get dressed, and go to work, make dinner, or enjoy family and friends. That's when occupational therapists intervene to promote performance and participation in life. Helping people engage in everyday tasks and life roles is the trademark of an occupational therapist; it's the key to successful living.

Occupational therapists are in demand. Hospitals, rehabilitation centers, outpatient clinics, home health agencies, community outreach programs, private practices, school-based settings, and specialty practices all employ occupational therapists.

The US Bureau of Labor Statistics lists [occupational therapy](#) as one of the top 20 professions for projected job growth in the next five years. Salaries in South Carolina begin in the mid-\$50,000 range and vary by region. Practitioners can advance their careers in traditional settings, branch out into emerging areas of contemporary practice, and become leaders, entrepreneurs, educators, and researchers.

## About the Profession

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### *What is an occupational therapist?*

Occupational therapists help people to develop or adapt the skills they need for everyday living. A homemaker with rheumatoid arthritis learns to become more self-reliant using energy conservation and work simplification techniques. A high-school student with a spinal cord injury learns to navigate life from a wheelchair and to use technology to participate in the classroom. A child born with a developmental disability learns to play with other children. Occupational therapists work in many traditional and emerging settings. They may work as members of a health care team to provide needed rehabilitation services, or they may work with school systems or local agencies to help those in need to participate more fully in life.

### *How does occupational therapy differ from other health professions?*

Occupational therapy is a health profession dedicated to helping people participate fully in life. When people are faced with overcoming the effects of delay, deprivation, trauma, or stress, occupational therapists help them engage in occupations or everyday activities that are personally meaningful, socially satisfying, and culturally relevant. When occupational therapists

focus on the pattern of occupations and the ways in which occupations shape people's lives, they act as agents of prevention, education, and restoration.

*What is most satisfying about this career?*

The most satisfying aspect of an occupational therapy career is making a positive impact on the way people live their lives. Occupational therapists must be excellent observers of human behavior, good problem-solvers, great listeners, and persistent advocates for their clients. They find the most effective means of collaborating with their clients to achieve meaningful solutions. Effective occupational therapists display a combination of creative and pragmatic approaches, along with excellent interpersonal communication skills.

*What opportunities are available to become specialized in occupational therapy or to work with different populations?*

There are many opportunities for specialization in occupational therapy once you have graduated, passed the certification exam, and begun entry level practice in the field. Probably the most frequently pursued specializations are in the area of adult rehabilitation, pediatrics, and hand therapy. Emerging areas of practice include ergonomics, vision rehabilitation, community consultation, driver rehabilitation, and working with elders in assisted living. Occupational therapists may also work in Native American health centers, prisons and detention centers, industrial and corporate settings, rural communities, and in school systems. The possibilities for working in different settings with unusual populations also abound. The education you receive as an occupational therapy student provides you with the professional skills and attitudes, and critical thinking tools to make a significant contribution in many settings for many people who have not traditionally been served by occupational therapy.

*What is the job outlook for occupational therapy?*

The U.S. Bureau of Labor lists occupational therapy in the top 20 professions for projected job growth. The uniqueness of occupational therapy, its focus, habilitation and rehabilitation, its contribution to wellness and its ability to serve a wide variety of clients/patients in multiple settings, all bring a variety of employment opportunities to graduates. The Department of Labor expects occupational therapy to grow much faster than average, which means a projected growth rate of over 27 percent between 2014 to 2024.

*What salary can I expect as a new graduate?*

Salaries vary according to geographic region. In South Carolina, the average starting salary is currently \$55,000. The average salary for an occupational therapist in the United States is \$80,150 per year.

## Why the MUSC Occupational Therapy Doctorate program?

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### *The Program*

The Occupational Therapy Educational program at MUSC was the first professional, graduate entry-level program in the state of South Carolina. The entry-level OTD is distinguished among the nation's finest occupational therapy doctoral programs through its commitment to supporting health and participation in life. The program embraces the university's core values: compassion, collaboration, respect, integrity, and innovation.

The Occupational Therapy Doctorate (OTD) degree prepares students for lifelong and rewarding careers. Graduates are prepared to improve the quality of life for people who experience difficulties and challenges to everyday living.

Our high-quality program is provided residually at an academic medical center, as well as in a hybrid format. The curriculum is rigorous and engaging. Educational technology enhances classroom learning, group work develops professional skills, and experiential learning refines practice skills.

Interprofessional education is a hallmark of the program and involves connections with other health professionals across the campus and in the community. Research shows that working in teams produces better outcomes. Teamwork supports innovation and promotes excellence. Students have the opportunity to engage in interprofessional service activities like the CARES Therapy Clinic or medical mission trips. They may also elect to take additional interprofessional elective coursework or participate in the [MUSC Interprofessional Education Fellowship](#).

### *Fieldwork*

Beginning in the second year, fieldwork experiences are an integral part of the curriculum and allow opportunities for direct observation and participation in a variety of practice settings and contexts. These experiences help integrate learning from the classroom and lab and enhance capacity for becoming a proficient occupational therapist.

Fieldwork rotations occur during semesters seven and eight. Two full-time 12-week fieldwork rotations occur at facilities throughout the state and across the country working under the direct supervision of a clinical instructor. The final semester involves a Doctoral Capstone course.

### *Global Health Initiatives*

Participation in global health initiatives is a transformative experience that the MUSC OT Division offers for our occupational therapy students, broadening their perspectives and enhancing their skills. These initiatives expose our students to diverse health systems, cultures, and populations, fostering a deeper understanding of health disparities and social determinants of health. Students learn to adapt their therapeutic approaches to different contexts, enhancing their problem-solving skills and cultural competence. Travel abroad is an option during fieldwork and capstone experiences.

### *Capstone*

The 14-credit capstone course provides an in-depth, customized experience specific to the interests, skills, and professional goals of the occupational therapy student.

### Cost of Attendance

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Prospective students may find the [estimated cost of attendance](#) for the residential and hybrid OTD programs on the MUSC Financial Aid Services website.

### Accreditation

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The [entry-level occupational therapy doctoral degree program](#) is accredited by the [Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education \(ACOTE\)](#) of the [American Occupational Therapy Association \(AOTA\)](#), located at

7501 Wisconsin Avenue, Suite 510E, Bethesda, MD 20814. ACOTE's telephone number c/o AOTA is (301)652-AOTA and its web address is [www.acoteonline.org](http://www.acoteonline.org).

The MUSC Hybrid OTD Program is awaiting substantive change approval from ACOTE, which is expected in August 2024.

## NBCOT Program Outcomes

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Graduates will be eligible to sit for the national certification examination for the occupational therapist administered by the [National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy \(NBCOT\)](#). After successful completion of this exam, the individual will be an Occupational Therapist, Registered (OTR). [NBCOT Exam Data](#) is available for ELOTD classes through 2023. Passing the NBCOT Certification Examination is necessary, but each state may have additional requirements for state [licensure](#). You can find information about state licensure here. Note that a felony conviction may affect a graduate's ability to sit for the NBCOT certification examination or attain state licensure.

## What makes a competitive applicant?

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The program takes a holistic approach to admissions. That means we consider a combination of GPA, relevant work experience, volunteerism, etc., in addition to the in-person interview (if offered). Applicants receive additional profile points on their application for unique life experiences and service experiences in the AmeriCorps, the Peace Corps, or prior military service.

Applicants should demonstrate strong academic backgrounds and life experiences to be competitive. These may include additional OT volunteer work over and above the minimum 15 hours, volunteering in a community setting other than OT, significant leadership experience, research activity, scholarship history, and significant academic or community volunteer awards.

## Admissions Requirements

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The GRE is no longer required for admission.

- A bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited college or university.
- A minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 is required. A minimum prerequisite GPA of 3.0 is also required.
  - \*Clemson University students who are on the Accelerated Pathway track must provide signed verification of Clemson general education requirements validated by the Clemson Registrar's Office by time of matriculation into MUSC.
  - Coastal Carolina University students who are on the Accelerated Pathway track must provide signed verification of CCCU general education requirements validated by the CCU Registrar's Office by time of matriculation into MUSC.
- Complete 20 hours of prerequisite coursework at a regionally accredited college or university. A minimum of 12 hours need to be completed by the application deadline. The remaining hours must be completed by matriculation into the program. In-person and online courses are accepted. (see course list below)
- Three references from individuals who know you and your abilities. We prefer two academic (professors or advisors) who are familiar with your academic ability and accomplishments, and one professional, preferably an occupational therapist.

- Complete a minimum of fifteen (15) hours of shadowing or observation in occupational therapy. Shadowing can be completed in-person, via telehealth, or through webinars.
  - We cannot assist in finding placement for shadowing opportunities.
  - Certificate of completion must be submitted with application for webinars. Accepted webinars could include:
    - AOTA Online Modules/Continuing Education
    - OT State Association Online Modules/Continuing Education
- Complete an application through the [Occupational Therapy Centralized Application Service \(OTCAS\)](#). [Fee waivers may be available](#) to qualified applicants.
- Complete the MUSC application. [Cost to apply](#).
- Submit a resume and personal statement through OTCAS. The personal statement should describe why you should be admitted to the program and any unique attributes you would bring to the profession.

## Early Admission

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MUSC offers early admissions for students who meet the eligibility criteria. Early admissions is determined by a holistic review of the application by the Admissions Committee, and an interview is not required. Applicants who are interested in early admission must submit their completed MUSC and OTCAS applications by September 1st for consideration. Applicants are not required to withdraw applications from other programs if they are accepted into the program.

Applicants must have the following to be considered for early admission:

- Submission of the completed OTCAS & MUSC Application by September 1.
- An overall cumulative GPA of 3.5 or higher
- A prerequisite GPA average of 3.5 or higher (at least 12 of 20 prerequisite hours completed at the time of application)
- At least Anatomy & Physiology I (or equivalent course) with a B or higher

Note: Before applying to our program, please be aware that a felony conviction may affect your ability to sit for the examination administered by the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy after you graduate and, subsequently, your ability to attain state licensure. The National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy offers an early determination to assess examination eligibility. Go to [www.nbcot.org](http://www.nbcot.org) and read the Early Review section for details.

## Prerequisite Courses

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Prerequisite Courses	Semester Hours
Human Anatomy (must include lab) within 10 years*	4
Human Physiology (must include lab) within 10 years*	4

Statistics 3

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Lifespan Human Development 3

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Abnormal Psychology	3
Sociology/Anthropology	3
Medical Terminology (recommended)	1
TOTAL	21

## Prerequisite Special Notes

- \*Anatomy and Physiology prerequisites need to be rigorous courses. A minimum of 3.0 (B) is strongly preferred for all Anatomy and Physiology Lecture and Lab courses. Advanced Placement courses are not accepted. Combined Anatomy and Physiology courses are accepted; however, you MUST take Anatomy and Physiology I and II to fulfill the separate Anatomy and Physiology requirements, including labs.
- [View Frequently Approved Prerequisites for the OT program](#). To speak with an admissions specialist about your coursework or request an unofficial transcript evaluation, please call 843-792-2536 or email [oesadmis@musc.edu](mailto:oesadmis@musc.edu). The Office of Enrollment Management offers unofficial transcript evaluations between March 1 and 12pm on June 30.
- If all prerequisite coursework has not been completed by the application deadline, please include courses in progress and those you plan to complete in the "Plans for Remaining Academic Year" in the application's supplemental forms section.
- Dual enrollment courses are accepted for prerequisite courses so long as the course appears on your college transcripts.
- We do not accept advanced placement, transfer of credit, or credit for experiential learning. Applicants do not receive credit for previous coursework and/or experience.

## Application Process

- **Complete the MUSC Application.** Opens July 1.
- **Complete the OTCAS Application.** Opens July 22. The following application items are submitted via OTCAS.
  - Official transcripts from all colleges or universities attended for all college credit courses.
  - Resume
  - Three references: Two academic and one from an occupational therapist (see above)
  - Personal Statement. See details above.
  - Plans for Remaining Academic Years Form
  - Log of Occupational Therapy Experience (15 hours minimum)

All above information must be received on or before the application deadline to be considered for admission to the program. It is the applicant's responsibility to review the progress of his/her application by viewing the [Application Progress Portal](#) and ensure that all application materials (including official reference forms, and all official transcripts are received by the application deadline).

## Early Admissions Timeline:



July 1	MUSC Application Opens
July 22	OTCAS Application Opens
September 1	Early Admission Application & Materials Due Date
Mid-September	Admissions Committee Review
October	Admissions Offers Made
August 2025	Orientation & Classes Start

## Regular Admissions Timeline

July 1	MUSC Application Opens
July 22	OTCAS Application Opens
November 2	Applications & Materials Due Date
Mid-December	Interview Offers Start
January	Interviews Conducted
Mid-February	Admissions Offers Made
August 2025	Orientation & Classes Start

## International Applicants

MUSC's OT programs are unable to admit international students requiring an F-1 visa. Applications will only be accepted from U.S. citizens, permanent residents, or those holding other valid nonimmigrant visa classifications that allow participation in lawful study while in the United States.

## Use of Marijuana and/or CBD Products

Marijuana is a Schedule 1 drug and is illegal to purchase in South Carolina. Apart from a narrow and limited scope of codified/documented medical exceptions, it is illegal for individuals to use marijuana/tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) in South Carolina. Although cannabidiol (CBD) products may be purchased and used in South Carolina, please be aware that CBD products may contain higher levels of THC than represented on packaging and use of CBD products can result in a positive drug screen for THC/marijuana. Be aware that current drug testing methods cannot accurately ascertain the origins of THC

metabolites (i.e., whether from marijuana or CBD products). Your academic program has the authority to conduct random and/or scheduled drug testing; if your test result is reported as positive for THC metabolites (even if you only used a CBD product), your ability to be accepted into the program, progress in the program, and/or successfully complete the program may be negatively impacted.

## Scholarship Eligibility

MUSC offers scholarships for which you may be eligible. Some are awarded based on academic achievement; others are awarded based on community service, for example. However, the majority of scholarships awarded at MUSC are based on financial need. This means those scholarships are only awarded to students who need some financial assistance to cover the cost of tuition and fees. If you would like to be considered for a financial need-based scholarship, you must have an up-to-date Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) on file. Make sure you list Medical University of South Carolina on your FAFSA form, along with MUSC's code: 003438. We encourage you to submit the FAFSA as early as possible. It is recommended to submit the FAFSA in January if you plan to enroll in the Fall.

## Application Deadline

Start Term	Application Type	Available	Deadline
Fall 2025	Early	July 1, 2024	September 1, 2024
Fall 2025	Regular	July 1, 2024	November 2, 2024

## Applicant Statistics

### 2024 Entering Class - Occupational Therapy Doctorate

Applied		Offered		Entering Students	
Number	298	Number	105	Number	64
In-State	63	In-State	43	In-State	36
Out of State	235	Out of State	62	Out of State	28
Female	292	Female	101	Female	63
Male	6	Male	4	Male	1
Average age	22.66	Average age	22.7	Average age	22.9
Average Cum GPA	3.64	Average Cum GPA	3.73	Average Cum GPA	3.69
Avg. Pre-req GPA	3.61	Avg. Pre-req GPA	3.74	Avg. Pre-req GPA	3.72