

**Department of Occupational Therapy
School of Physical and Occupational Therapy
Faculty of Medicine**

**Essential skills and Attributes
Required for Successful Completion of the
Occupational Therapy Program at McGill University**

McGill University, February 2014

Preamble

The McGill Occupational Therapy program is responsible to society for providing its students with opportunities to develop the qualifications (academic knowledge, professional behaviours, attitudes and clinical skills) to enter the profession of Occupational Therapy. This document describes the skills and attributes required for successful completion of the Occupational Therapy program at McGill University.

An offer of admission to the Occupational Therapy program should not be interpreted as evidence that the Occupational Therapy program has independently verified an applicant's skills and attributes in the domains described below. These skills and attributes, however, must be acquired through the program of study if students are to be successful in achieving the competency standards of the profession at an entry-to-practice level.

The competencies and roles for Occupational Therapy are described in detail in the *Profile of Occupational Therapy Practice in Canada*¹, *The Essential Competencies of Practice for Occupational Therapists in Canada*² and the *Référentiel de compétences lié à l'exercice de la profession d'ergothérapeute au Québec*³. Students must be able to demonstrate sound clinical and professional judgment and demonstrate responsible decision making, in order to become graduates who are cognizant of practice accountability issues, laws, and regulations, professional codes of ethics and standards of evidence – based practice.

The following section describes the skills and attributes required of students for their success in our educational program and in the profession of occupational therapy. Note, that while some specific examples of the physical, mental, and emotional requirements are included, these examples are not exhaustive. This description of skills and attributes is not intended to preclude individuals with disabilities or special needs who may require reasonable accommodation.

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION

Students who anticipate that reasonable accommodation will enable them to meet the required standards for the listed skills and attributes are responsible for articulating their requirements. Requests for accommodation need to be made as early as possible. Requests are considered

¹ The *Profile of Occupational Therapy Practice in Canada* was published in October 2007 by the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists. The document is available for download from the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists website, specifically at <http://www.caot.ca/pdfs/otprofile.pdf>.

² The *Essential Competencies of Practice for Occupational Therapists in Canada*. 2003. (2nd Edition) as published by ACOTRO and available on the COTM website at <http://www.cotm.ca/pdf/EssentialCompetencies-publicationready.pdf>

³ For more complete information about the OEQ competencies, consult the OEQ at <http://www.oeq.org/publications/documents-professionnels.fr.html>.

on a case-by-case basis and are reviewed in collaboration with the student and the Office for Students with Disabilities. Any information shared will remain confidential and any records generated in this regard shall be retained independently from a student's file.

Description of the Skills and Attributes for Students in the Master's Occupational Therapy Program

All students must have the required skills and attributes, with or without reasonable accommodations. The skills and abilities are grouped in six broad areas:

- Aptitudes and attitudes
- Communication
- Information gathering
- Critical thinking skills
- Psychomotor/physical skills
- Coping and resilience

Aptitudes and attitudes

Students seeking to enter the Occupational Therapy program must have an interest in promoting health and well-being through occupation. Students in the program must demonstrate integrity, sensitivity, compassion, and concern for others. They must have the cognitive abilities to understand and develop the theoretical knowledge and technical expertise to work collaboratively with their peers, clients, and colleagues. They must be respectful of individuality and diversity, being able to build trusting relationships, demonstrate excellent interpersonal skills to engage and motivate clients and families, demonstrate creative problem solving skills and be able to manage multiple, potentially competing demands. Students must be able to deal with the academic rigor of classroom and clinical milieu and must be open to developing themselves personally and professionally via reflection and feedback.

Communication skills

Students must be able to speak, hear and observe in order to efficiently elicit information, and observe non-verbal communication and behaviour. Students will be required to communicate effectively and sensitively with fellow students, faculty, clients and families and all members of the health care team. They must be able to summarize coherently a client's condition, assessment and intervention plan verbally and in text (handwriting and /or electronically) to maintain clear, accurate and appropriate records of client encounters and action plans that comply with regulatory and organizational record keeping standards. Students should note that the level of communication fluency required is often higher than is generally assessed in standard testing of language fluency; students are responsible for achieving the high level of communication that may be required in the program. In particular, students require the level of communication necessary to facilitate client safety, informed decision-making and fully independent and ethical interaction with clients.

Information gathering skills

Students must be able to gather information about a client's status that is typically acquired through visual, auditory and tactile senses. Gathering information may include activities such as reading charts or other written documentation, listening to clients, observing body language, palpating parts of the body, and using assessment tools in a variety of complex environments (client's home, public institutions, community organizations, workplace, etc.).

Critical thinking skills

Students must demonstrate the cognitive skills necessary to remember, understand and apply knowledge/skills and to analyze, integrate and synthesize information. In addition, the student must be able to comprehend multidimensional and spatial relationships. Effective problem solving, conceptual thinking and judgment are necessary to address client needs, and to engage the client through occupation in a safe and efficient manner. Students use relevant models, frameworks and theories of occupational therapy to apply relevant and current scientific knowledge. Students must demonstrate these critical thinking skills in all learning environments, including the classroom, community and institutional settings in order to build a foundation for evidence-informed practice. Students must also demonstrate a capacity to accurately assess and reflect on their own performance to further direct their learning.

Psychomotor/Physical skills

Students must consistently demonstrate the physical health/skills required to provide safe, effective and efficient service (assessment and intervention) for their clients, subject to any reasonable accommodation that may be required. Examples of physical activities might include client lifts or transfers, positioning clients in bed or wheelchairs, assisting with walking activities, maneuvering in confined spaces and generally reaching, bending, walking or standing for much of the day. Students must be able to use/manipulate common assessment and intervention tools/instruments either directly or in an adaptive form. In addition, students are expected to participate in all learning experiences of the educational program on a full time basis (*i.e. up to 8 hours of classroom or fieldwork per day*).

Coping and Resilience

Students must consistently demonstrate the coping skills required to deal with every day challenges that arise. Students must also be able to tolerate the physical, emotional and mental demands of the program and perform effectively under stress. It is critical that students be able to adapt to changing environments including fieldwork experiences and function well in the face of uncertainties that are inherent in working with clients. Students must consistently demonstrate resilience and the balance required to enable them to manage difficult or ethically challenging scenarios that frequently arise in all OT practice settings.

Approved by: Occupational Therapy Program – February 14, 2014

This policy document has been adapted from the University of Manitoba, November 2009, document entitled *Essential skills and attributes required for the study of Occupational Therapy at the University of Manitoba* and the 2009 policy document of the Ontario Council of University Programs in Rehabilitation Sciences (OCUPRS) entitled *Essential Skills and Attributes Required for the Study of Occupational Therapy*.