

PRE-OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

According to The American Occupational Therapy Associations (AOTA (<https://www.aota.org/>)), occupational therapy helps people with an injury, illness, or disability learn or re-learn to do everyday activities. For adults, this could include activities like getting dressed, cooking, and driving. For children, this could include activities like learning or playing. Occupational Therapy got its name from its focus on helping patients with everyday activities—or “occupations”.

AOTA requires students pursuing a career in occupational therapy to enter the profession with a post-baccalaureate degree. The Occupational Therapy (OT) profession has a dual entry education program. Students interested in the profession may complete a master’s or doctorate level program. UWM offers a master’s in OT (MSOT (<https://uwm.edu/healthsciences/academics/masters-occupational-therapy/>)). Successful completion of an undergraduate degree is required for entry into a graduate program. Students may complete any undergraduate degree in preparation for a graduate level OT Program as long as all prerequisite courses and other requirements are met.

The UWM bachelors degree in Occupational Science and Technology (OST) (<https://uwm.edu/healthsciences/academics/bachelors-occupational-studies/>) prepares student exceptionally well for the UWM and other graduate level OT Programs. The **foundation courses** of the degree include the human anatomy, human physiology, psychology, statistics, and natural science with a lab courses that are common prerequisites for graduate OT Programs. The **core courses** of the OST degree allows students to delve into content in the areas of disability, assistive technology, health, medical conditions, and other contemporary issues in the area of health and disability. Within the curriculum, there is also a sequence of four research courses, which helps students gain knowledge and skills required for graduate level research.

The OST degree has three **tracks** to allow **focused study**. All tracks help students to work in the area of disability. The **Disability and Occupation track** and the **Applications of Assistive Technology track** are ideal for students interested in OT graduate education.

Paid and unpaid experience working with individuals with a disability, shadow experiences with OTs in different settings, and a strong personal statement are also often requirements for application to different graduate OT Programs. It is important to work with the Pre-Occupational Therapy (Pre-OT) advisor Aggie Northrup, MS (<https://uwm.edu/healthsciences/directory/northrup-aggie/>) beginning in freshman year or upon entry to the OST Degree (or other degree) Program in order to plan all needed activities into your college career. Having the Pre-OT designation on your transcript record will allow you access to key information about UWM OT Program information sessions, assistance with your application, student organizations, and more.

Requirements

The UWM Occupational Therapy (OT) Program’s vision is to be a leader in accessibility and inclusivity recognized worldwide by our academic peers, field practitioners, alumni, present and future students, those they serve, and the public. Students from diverse backgrounds are encouraged to apply to the program. UWM’s OT Program is one of the largest in Wisconsin. As the only public OT Program in the Greater Milwaukee area, we offer a top-notch academic experience at a fraction of the

cost of private schools. You may find the UWM OT Program admission requirements on the College of Health Sciences Occupational Therapy MS (<http://catalog.uwm.edu/health-sciences/rehabilitation-sciences-technology/occupational-therapy-ms/>) catalog page.

Successful completion of UWM’s Bachelor of Science Degree in Occupational Science and Technology (OST) prepares you extremely well for graduate education in Occupational Therapy (OT). Courses cover topics in the areas of disability, assistive technology and universal design, disability and occupation, and much more. Please see the Sample 4 Year Plan for the Disability and Occupation Track (<https://uwm.edu/healthsciences/wp-content/uploads/sites/129/2021/03/BS-OST-disability-and-occupation-track-4-year-plan.pdf>) or the Applications of Assistive Technology Track (<https://uwm.edu/healthsciences/wp-content/uploads/sites/129/2021/03/BS-OST-applications-of-assistive-technology-track.pdf>) of the OST degree. For more information about the BS in Occupational Science and Technology, you may wish to contact Patricia Thomas, MPA, CTRS (<https://uwm.edu/healthsciences/directory/thomas-patricia/>), OST Program Director. Please note, completion of the OST degree does not guarantee admission to UWM’s MSOT program.

It is important to note while admission to an OT program is competitive, there are many individuals and resources available at UWM to help you prepare a quality application. UWM’s Student Success Center offers supplemental instruction and tutoring. The Writing Center offers one on one sessions. The Career Planning and Resource Center offers assistance with resumes and securing paid and unpaid experiences in the area of disability, rehabilitation, and OT. The Norris Center provides on campus health and mental health services. Many of the instructors who teach in the OST degree have a background in rehabilitation, disability, and/or health. One of the best resources for success is the Pre-Occupational Therapy Advisor. It is important to work with Aggie Northrup, MS (<https://uwm.edu/healthsciences/directory/northrup-aggie/>), the Pre-OT Advisor, as early in your undergraduate career as possible. For more information about Pre-OT Advising, please contact the Office of Student Affairs at 414-229-2758.

I’m a new student. How do I start?

You are assigned an academic advisor upon admission to UWM. New Student Orientation (NSO) (<https://uwm.edu/healthsciences/students/new-student-orientation/>) helps those who are new to campus learn and understand the enrollment process and enroll in classes for their first semester at UWM! You should ask to have the designation “Pre-Occupational Therapy” added to your academic record.

Who is my advisor?

Undergraduate students who have declared an intent to pursue Pre-Occupational Therapy are advised by Aggie Northrup (<https://uwm.edu/healthsciences/directory/northrup-aggie/>). Contact Aggie at 414-229-2758 or withowski@uwm.edu (witowski@uwm.edu).

When should I meet with my advisor?

Students are encouraged to meet with their advisor at least once per semester to ensure timely progress to graduation.

- **Enrolling for spring semester?**

Schedule an appointment with your advisor in October or November.

- **Enrolling for fall semester?**

Schedule an appointment with your advisor in March or April.

Students are also welcome to schedule an appointment with their advisor at any time to discuss academic challenges, career opportunities, or any other questions.

How can my advisor help me?

CHS boasts professional academic advisors who understand the challenges of balancing academics, work, family, and the social aspects of college life. Advisors partner with you to:

- Explore your academic and career interests
- Plan the sequence of your courses
- Prepare for course enrollment
- Access tutoring and other academic support
- Identify opportunities for campus involvement
- Connect you to campus resources
- Plan for graduation