

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
MASTER OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PROGRAM
Fieldwork at Pitt

Overview

Master of Occupational Therapy (MOT) students at the University of Pittsburgh have the opportunity to gain practical, supervised experience throughout the curriculum. These experiences will take two forms: experiences that are part of the classroom learning process such as field trips or interactions with clients in the classroom, and experiences outside the classroom, fieldwork education. Fieldwork education includes both Level I and Level II experiences. Students work with clients of all ages who experience challenges in daily occupations because of physical, psychosocial, and/or developmental reasons. Students may work with clients in a variety of settings including hospitals, rehabilitation centers, skilled nursing facilities, public and private schools, day treatment programs, nursing homes, and adult day health programs.

The fieldwork experience provides the MOT student with the opportunity to learn professional responsibilities by having them modeled by qualified and experienced personnel and to practice these responsibilities under supervision. Fieldwork education is only conducted in sites that have a signed agreement (Memorandum of Understanding) with the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences (SHRS). This agreement formally identifies the responsibilities of the University and the fieldwork site.

MOT students are responsible for securing any and all required resources in preparation for and during Level I and II Fieldwork including but not limited to transportation, physical examinations and associated testing (e.g., drug), health insurance, liability insurance, background checks and clearances, parking, housing, food, and clothing.

Level I Fieldwork

Level I Fieldwork is integrated within three theory and practice courses: OT 2107 – Psychosocial/Cognitive Theory and Practice (Term 3); OT 2114 – Biomechanical Theory and Practice II (Term 5); and OT 2115 – Developmental Theory and Practice (Term 5). Level I Fieldwork is designed to enrich didactic coursework through direct observation and participation in selected aspects of the occupational therapy process. Level I Fieldwork is supervised by qualified personnel (e.g., currently licensed or otherwise regulated occupational therapy practitioners, psychologists, physician assistants, teachers, social workers, nurses, and others). The MOT student is assigned to a Level I Fieldwork site in the Greater Pittsburgh Area by the Academic Fieldwork Coordinator and/or course instructor. The qualifications of individuals supervising students during Level I Fieldwork are reviewed by the Academic Fieldwork Coordinator and/or course instructor to ensure that a meaningful learning experience can be provided.

Level II Fieldwork

Level II Fieldwork is completed in OT 2119 – Occupational Therapy Fieldwork Education A and OT 2120 – Occupational Therapy Fieldwork Education B (Terms 6 & 7). Level II Fieldwork is distinct from Level I Fieldwork. Students must successfully complete three Level I Fieldwork experiences prior to enrolling in Level II Fieldwork (OT 2119 and OT 2120). Level II Fieldwork is an in-depth experience in delivering occupational therapy services to clients in traditional and/or emerging settings consistent with our MOT program’s curriculum design. Level II Fieldwork is the final step in the preparation of the MOT student for entry-level practice. The learning experiences prepare the MOT student to assume the roles of practitioner, manager, and contributor upon graduation from the academic program. Each MOT student is assigned to specific Level II Fieldwork sites to ensure that he or she is exposed to a variety of clients across the life span and to a variety of settings. Students can complete Level II fieldwork in a minimum of one setting if it is reflective of more than one practice area, or in a maximum of four different settings. The MOT program only uses sites within the United States that allow for supervision by an occupational therapist who meets state regulations and has a minimum of one year of practice experience, subsequent to the requisite initial certification. Level II Fieldwork is a minimum of the equivalent of 24 full-time work weeks. Level II Fieldwork may be completed on a part-time basis as long as it is at least 50% of a full-time equivalent at the site. After successful completion of OT 2119 and OT 2120, the MOT student may complete OT 2121 – OT Fieldwork Education as an elective course. OT 2121 is designed as a six to eight week fieldwork experience that offers the opportunity to develop specialized skills in practice, management, and/or research. The MOT student is assigned to a Level II Fieldwork site by the Academic Fieldwork Coordinator and signs the Level II Fieldwork Acknowledgement Agreement. The performance of a student who does not successfully complete Level II Fieldwork is critically reviewed by the Academic Fieldwork Coordinator and occupational therapy faculty. Satisfactory completion of targeted intervention by the student may be required prior to enrolling in a subsequent Level II Fieldwork. The faculty reserves the right to place a student at a site in the Greater Pittsburgh Area based on the student’s academic performance and/or professional behavior. Level II fieldwork (OT 2119 and OT 2120) must be completed within 3 years of completing didactic coursework.

Clinical Preceptorship for Master of Science (MS) Students

Clinical Preceptorships provide experiential learning in a specialized area of occupational therapy practice (e.g., pediatrics, acute care) for the purpose of developing a familiarity with the U.S. Health Care System and advanced skills related to a specialty practice area.

All of the MS students are occupational therapists. Some have been educated in the United States and some have received their education internationally. Of note, the international students graduated from WFOT approved occupational therapy curricula in their home country.

Therefore, they have already completed Level I and Level II fieldwork experiences. In addition, some students have completed paid employment in occupational therapy upon graduation. They are currently in the U.S. to earn an MS degree in Occupational Therapy. Upon degree completion, some students wish to remain in the U.S. while others will return home to practice as occupational therapists.

The goal of this preceptorship for students **educated in the United States** is exposure to a less familiar venue providing Occupational Therapy services. The specific course objectives are to 1) understand the evaluation, intervention and documentation used at assigned clinical sites and 2) find, analyze, and integrate scholarly works from both occupational therapy and other appropriate sources.

The goal of this preceptorship for **international students** is exposure to the U. S. Health Care System. The specific course objectives are to 1) understand the evaluation, intervention and documentation used at assigned clinical sites and 2) find, analyze, and integrate scholarly works from both occupational therapy and other appropriate sources. From past experience with international students, we know that cultural differences related to interpersonal dynamics, reimbursement and documentation, among others, will become apparent and are likely areas of discussion that can be anticipated.

As with any student, we suggest that supervisors complete a baseline assessment of the student's skills in the first week and plan their responsibilities accordingly. Supervisors may give students increased responsibilities as deemed safe and competent just as would be done with any fieldwork student, perhaps most similar to the way a Level II Fieldwork student would be approached.