

# OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSISTANT PROGRAM APPLICATION GUIDE



## **Overview of the Occupational Therapy Assistant Profession**

**Nature of Work:** The fundamental purpose of occupational therapy is to support the development and maintenance of a person's ability, across the lifespan, to perform the tasks and roles essential to productive and meaningful living. Occupational Therapy Assistants (OTAs) provide services to individuals whose participation in daily life is impacted by physical illness, psychosocial challenges, developmental differences, or the aging process. Through occupational therapy intervention, clients are supported in achieving their highest possible level of independence in areas such as self-care, home management, leisure, and work. The OTA implements treatment plans under the supervision of an occupational therapist (OT) and provides a wide range of intervention approaches. These may include activities of daily living and home management training, environmental modifications, safety training during daily occupations, training and educating on assistive technology, wheelchair positioning and adaptations, sensory integration, life skills training for individuals with mental health conditions, job site analysis, energy management techniques, cognitive and neuromuscular retraining, chronic condition management, and health and wellness promotion. Additional responsibilities include documenting client progress, assisting with discharge planning, maintaining clinical equipment, and supervising occupational therapy aides.

**Skills and Abilities:** To pursue a career as an Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA), individuals must possess the physical, cognitive, and interpersonal abilities necessary to provide safe and effective client care. OTAs work with individuals of all ages, abilities, temperaments, and personalities in a variety of clinical and community-based settings. Effective practice requires physical stamina, manual dexterity, effective communication skills, self-initiation, organization, problem-solving, adaptability, and a professional, caring demeanor.

All students admitted to the Occupational Therapy Assistant Program must be able to perform the essential technical functions of the program. These technical functions represent the non-academic requirements that students must be able to meet, with or without reasonable accommodations, to successfully complete the program and perform the essential duties of an entry-level OTA.

## **Technical Standards for the Occupational Therapy Assistant Program include, but are not limited to, the following:**

### **Motor and Physical Abilities**

- Demonstrate sufficient manual dexterity, coordination, strength, endurance, and balance to safely perform required therapeutic activities and clinical tasks.
- Safely assist with client mobility, positioning, and transfers, including lifting, pushing, and pulling, in accordance with facility policies and safe body mechanics.
- Safely assist with lifting, transferring, and positioning clients and equipment, which may involve moderate to heavy lifting, with or without assistance, in accordance with safe body mechanics and facility policies.
- Perform fine motor tasks such as handling tools, adaptive equipment, and therapeutic materials.
- Tolerate standing, walking, bending, reaching, and repetitive movements for extended periods.

### **Visual, Auditory, and Sensory Abilities**

- Possess adequate visual acuity to observe client performance, read documentation, and safely use equipment.
- Demonstrate sufficient auditory ability to communicate with clients and team members and to respond to environmental cues.

### **Communication Abilities**

- Communicate effectively in written, verbal, and nonverbal forms.

- Read, comprehend, and apply technical and professional materials.
- Document client information accurately, clearly, and efficiently.
- Interact professionally with clients, families, and members of the healthcare team.

### **Cognitive, Behavioral, and Professional Abilities**

- Demonstrate sound judgment, problem-solving, and decision-making skills.
- Adapt activities and interventions based on client needs and responses.
- Manage time, organize tasks, and meet deadlines in academic and clinical environments.
- Maintain professional behavior, emotional stability, and ethical conduct in stressful or demanding situations.

Applicants are responsible for assessing their own ability to meet these technical functions. Students who require accommodations are encouraged to contact [Center for Access and Accommodations](#) to discuss reasonable accommodations in accordance with applicable laws.

### **Accreditation**

The Occupational Therapy Assistant Program at Lewis and Clark Community College (L&C) is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) of the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA). ACOTE is located at: 7501 Wisconsin Avenue, Suite 510E, Bethesda, MD 20814  
ACOTE can be contacted by:

**Phone:** (301) 652-6611

**Email:** accred@aota.org

**Website:** [www.acoteonline.org](http://www.acoteonline.org)

### **Certification and Licensure Eligibility**

Graduates of the Occupational Therapy Assistant Program are eligible to sit for the national certification examination for occupational therapy assistants administered by the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT). Upon successful completion of this examination, individuals earn the credential of Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant (COTA).

State licensure is required to practice as an OTA. Graduates seeking employment in Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation or Missouri Division of Professional Registration jurisdictions must meet all licensure requirements after passing the NBCOT examination. NBCOT and state licensing boards may deny certification or licensure to individuals whose background includes circumstances that could jeopardize public safety, including certain felony convictions.

### **Application Deadlines and Review Process**

The primary application deadline for the Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) Program is June 1 (or the following Monday when June 1 falls on a weekend). A new program cycle begins each spring semester. Applications received by the June 1 deadline are considered in the first round of review. If seats remain available, additional application reviews may occur in early fall and at the end of the fall semester. To be eligible for review, all required application materials must be submitted by the applicable deadline. Because the number of qualified applicants may exceed the number of available positions in each cohort, admission to the OTA Program is selective. Completed applications are reviewed by the admissions committee using a numerical ranking system based on established admission criteria.

## To Be Considered for Admission to the Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) Program, Applicants Must Complete the Following:

Information can also be found at <https://www.lc.edu/academic-programs/degrees-certificates/occupational-therapy-assistant.html>

This checklist is designed to assist students with the application process for the Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) Program. Interested students are encouraged to meet with the OTA Program Coordinator to review application requirements and timelines. Completion of the application does not guarantee admission to the program.

### Initial Application Steps

- [Apply to Lewis and Clark Community College](#) and declare Pre-OTA as your program of study
- [Schedule an appointment with the OTA Program Coordinator](#) (email Debbie Witsken-dwitsken@lc.edu)

### Complete Additional Application Requirements

*All application materials below must be submitted by June 1 to be considered in the first round of review.*

- Complete and submit [Applicant Essay Questions](#)
- Complete eight (8) hours of clinical observation and submit the [Clinical Observation Verification and Evaluation Form](#)
- Submit two (2) [Professional Recommendation Forms](#)
- Meet the minimum cumulative GPA requirement of 2.75 or higher (on a 4.0 scale). *GPA is calculated based on coursework completed within the last five years. Additional GPA guidelines apply for students with fewer than 12 recent college credit hours.*
- [Request official transcripts](#) from all non-Lewis and Clark Community College institutions (including high school or GED, if not already on file) and submit an unofficial copy to the [OTA Program](#).

### Meet Academic Requirements Prior To Program Start

*The prerequisite courses listed below must be completed by the end of the fall semester prior to beginning the OTA Program. These courses are not required at the time of application, but must be successfully completed before program entry.*

- Qualify for ENGL 131- First Year English by appropriate L&C placement test score (through the Assessment Center) or have completed one semester of college level English.
- Qualify for MATH 116-Intermediate Algebra by appropriate L&C placement test score (through the Assessment Center) or standardized test score or completion of MATH 112- Elementary Algebra with a grade of C or better
- Complete the following courses with a grade of C or better: SOCI 131-Introduction to Sociology; PSYC 131-General Psychology; and BIOL 132- Human Biology

### Prove Residency

- Prove residency in Lewis and Clark Community College District No. 536, Southwestern Illinois College District No. 522, or East St. Louis Community College Center thirty days before beginning the OTA Program. Students who are residents in other community college districts, who have a CAREER agreement with L&C, may be eligible to apply if there is not an OTA program in the student's home district.

Enrollment: <a href="mailto:Enroll@lc.edu">Enroll@lc.edu</a> 618-468-2222	Academic Advisor: Heather Amburg ( <a href="mailto:hamburg@lc.edu">hamburg@lc.edu</a> ) 618-468-2274	Financial Aid: <a href="mailto:Finaid@lc.edu">Finaid@lc.edu</a> 618-468-2223	Assessment Center: <a href="mailto:Testingcenter@lc.edu">Testingcenter@lc.edu</a> 618-468-5232	OTA Program Coordinator: Debbie Witsken ( <a href="mailto:dwitsken@lc.edu">dwitsken@lc.edu</a> ) 618-468-4419	OTA Division Assistant: Leah Sandidge ( <a href="mailto:lsandidge@lc.edu">lsandidge@lc.edu</a> ) 618-468-4402
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## **Additional Application Requirements**

The items listed below must be submitted by June 1 for the applicant to be considered in the first admissions cycle for a spring semester start date in the OTA Program. If all seats in the program are not filled with the first admissions cycle, additional seats will be filled with qualified applicants until the start date of the spring semester.

### **Applicant Essay Questions**

An appropriate response would be 1-2 paragraphs per question. Essays will be evaluated using a standardized rubric that considers content, clarity, organization, grammar, and professional writing style.

1. What interests you in the field of occupational therapy, and why are you pursuing a career as an Occupational Therapy Assistant rather than another healthcare profession?
2. Describe how you became interested in occupational therapy. Include any personal, educational, volunteer, or observational experiences that have helped shape your understanding of the OTA role.
3. What are your short-term and long-term goals as an Occupational Therapy Assistant, and how does completion of the OTA Program support those goals?
4. Identify two personal strengths that will contribute to your success in the OTA Program and in clinical practice. Additionally, discuss one area you recognize as a challenge and how you plan to address it.
5. Describe a time when you made a positive impact on another person's life. What did you learn from this experience, and how does it relate to your interest in occupational therapy?

### **Clinical Observation and Verification Overview**

Applicants are required to complete eight (8) hours of clinical observation in an occupational therapy setting. Observations must be completed with a licensed Occupational Therapist (OT) or Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) who is providing direct client care. Applicants are responsible for arranging their own observation experience. Observation hours may be completed in one or multiple settings, such as hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, outpatient clinics, or schools.

After the observation is completed, the applicant should send the Clinical Observation Verification and Evaluation Form link to the supervising OT practitioner for completion and submission. When submitted, the form is sent directly to the OTA Program Admissions Committee. If observation hours are completed in more than one setting or with more than one practitioner, a separate form must be submitted for each experience. Applicants are encouraged to review the Clinical Observation Verification and Evaluation Form prior to the observation to better understand expectations for successful completion of this requirement.

**NOTE:** During clinical observation experiences, applicants are expected to wear business-casual attire appropriate to the setting. Jeans, shorts, and sandals are not permitted. Applicants should always maintain professional behavior, including being polite and courteous, asking questions at appropriate times and away from clients or patients, and expressing appreciation to the supervising OT practitioner for the opportunity to observe.

### **Professional Recommendation Form**

Applicants are required to submit two (2) Professional Recommendation Forms. Each form should be completed by a qualified professional reference, such as an instructor, employer or supervisor, occupational therapy practitioner (OT or OTA), volunteer supervisor, or academic advisor who can speak to the applicant's professionalism, communication skills, and readiness for the OTA Program.

Applicants should send the OTA Program Professional Recommendation Form link directly to each recommender. The recommender will complete the form by rating the applicant in several professional and academic areas. Once submitted, the form is sent directly to the OTA Program Admissions Committee.

## Admission Point System

Maximum points possible are designed as follows:

Area	Points
Grade Point Average (GPA) (total points awarded based on GPA earned over last 5 years)	50
Meeting with OTA Program Coordinator for advising session prior to application deadline	5
Completion of prerequisite and general education courses* Prerequisites – BIOL-132, SOCI-131, PSYC-131; General Education Courses – ENGL-131, PSYC-232, BIOL-141, BIOL-142, SPCH-131 or 145, Humanities Elective	9
Being a full-time student and maintaining 2.75 GPA over last year	5
Clinical Observation and Verification Form	6
Two Professional Recommendation forms	10
Applicant Essay Questions	15
<b>TOTAL POINTS:</b>	<b>100</b>

## Application Ranking and Provisional Acceptance

Applicants who have met all application requirements will be ranked based on a point system, with a maximum of 100 points possible. Admission offers are extended to applicants who earn at least the minimum required number of points, provided seats are available.

Up to 24 applicants meeting the minimum point threshold will be offered provisional acceptance to the Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) Program. Provisional acceptance indicates that the applicant has met initial admission criteria but must still complete additional requirements prior to program entry.

To receive full acceptance, provisionally accepted students must complete the remaining requirements outlined on the following page before the start of the spring semester. Specific deadlines will be communicated during OTA Program Orientation.

If all program seats are not filled during the initial admission cycle, additional offers may be extended to qualified applicants from subsequent review cycles, as seats remain available, up until the program start date.

## Requirements for Full Acceptance into the OTA Program

Applicants who are offered provisional acceptance must complete the following requirements before beginning the OTA Program:

- ✓ Complete the following prerequisite courses with a grade of C or higher:
  - Human Biology (BIOL 132)
  - Introduction to Sociology (SOCI 131)
  - Introduction to Psychology (PSYC 131)
- ✓ Be eligible for MATH 116, which may be demonstrated by:
  - Earning a grade of C or higher in MATH 112, or
  - Placement testing, or
  - Approved standardized test scores or high school math courses completed
- ✓ Earn a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.75 on a 4.0 scale, calculated using coursework completed within the past five years. *If fewer than 12 college-level credit hours have been completed within the past five years, additional GPA guidelines will apply based on prior academic history.*
- ✓ Attend OTA Program New Student Orientation
- ✓ Review and sign all required OTA Program release forms

## **Health and Compliance Requirements for OTA Program Participation**

To participate in OTA Program learning activities, including on-campus labs, off-campus experiences, and clinical-related coursework during the first year of the OTA Program, students must complete the following health and medical requirements no later than the end of January.

Compliance with all required health and medical items will be verified through the College's designated third-party screening system, Viewpoint. Within Viewpoint, students will have access to detailed instructions and specific guidelines for each required item. Students should not begin this process until directed to do so by the OTA Program Coordinator.

### **Self-Pay:**

- ✓ Viewpoint Account
- ✓ Satisfactory Physical Exam (LC Healthcare Form)
- ✓ Proof of immunizations
  - MMR – must have 2 doses
  - Td/Tdap – within last 10 years
  - Varicella (chicken pox) – must have 2 doses
  - Proof of a negative TB skin test (2-step required) or chest x-ray
  - HEP B release or verification of 3 doses of HEP B vaccine

### **Paid by Course Fees:**

- ✓ Background check
- ✓ Drug screen
- ✓ CPR certification for Basic Life Support for Infants through Adults (CPR and AED)
- ✓ Student Membership to American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA)
- ✓ Student Membership to Illinois Occupational Therapy Association (ILOTA)

### **Additional Requirements:**

- ✓ Proof of health insurance
- ✓ COVID vaccination OR exemption (personal statement, medical or religious exemption)
- ✓ Payment of OTA Club Activity Fee (\$30- self pay)

All required general education coursework must be completed prior to the start of the second semester of the Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) Program for full-time students. The only exception is the Humanities elective, which may be completed at any time prior to program completion.

## Program Enrollment Options

The Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) Program is offered in both full-time and part-time enrollment options. While all students must meet the same academic, technical, and clinical requirements for graduation, the sequence and duration of coursework differ by enrollment option.

Feature	Full-Time Enrollment	Part-Time Enrollment*
<b>Best suited for</b>	Students able to commit to a structured, rigorous course sequence	Students who will be more successful with a reduced course load
<b>Program length</b>	Approximately 2 years (4 semesters and 2 summers)	Approximately 3 years (6 semesters and 2 summers)
<b>Course sequence</b>	Follows a required, consecutive course sequence	Follows the same required course sequence over an extended timeline
<b>On-campus commitment</b>	3–4 days per week depending on semester	1–3 days per week depending on semester
<b>General education coursework</b>	Must be completed prior to the start of the second semester, except for the Humanities elective	Sequencing of general education coursework reviewed individually
<b>Advising requirement</b>	Standard program advising	Required meeting with the OTA Program Coordinator to review sequencing and progression

*\*Enrollment in the part-time option is limited to no more than six (6) students per cohort. In some cases, students who are unsuccessful in a course may be required to transition to the part-time enrollment option based on program progression policies.*

## Program Completion Requirements

To successfully complete the Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) Program, students must meet the following requirements:

### Enrollment and Progression

- ✓ Register for all required OCTA courses each semester as outlined in the OTA Program curriculum.
- ✓ Successfully complete all coursework each semester, including OCTA and required general education courses, with a grade of C or higher to progress to the next semester.

### Time to Completion

- ✓ Complete the didactic (academic) portion of the OTA Program within three (3) years of initiating OTA coursework.
- ✓ Successfully complete the supervised clinical education (Fieldwork) component within eighteen (18) months following completion of the didactic portion of the program.

## Graduation Requirements

To be eligible for graduation with an Associate of Applied Science (AAS) Degree in Occupational Therapy Assistant, a student must meet the following requirements:

- ✓ Earn a grade of C or higher in all required coursework, including:
  - All Occupational Therapy Assistant program courses (OCTA prefix)
  - All required general education courses for the degree
- ✓ Satisfy all additional requirements for the Associate of Applied Science degree as specified by Lewis and Clark Community College (*Refer to the College Catalog for detailed degree requirements.*)
- ✓ Submit an [application for graduation](#) by the published deadline

**Associate in Applied Science Degree****Occupational Therapy Assistant****Full-Time Curriculum**

<b>Course No.</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Credit Hours</b>
<b>Freshman</b>		
<b>Spring Semester</b>		
BIOL-141	Anatomy & Physiology I	4
ENGL-131	First-Year English	3
OCTA-134	Fundamentals to OT	3
OCTA-138	Therapeutic Modalities	2
OCTA 163	Professional Terminology in OT	1
PSYC-232	Human Development	3
<b>TOTAL</b>		16
<b>Summer Session</b>		
BIOL-142	Anatomy & Physiology II	4
SPCH-131 or SPCH-145	Public Speaking	3
OCTA 141	Health Conditions in OT (starting summer 2025)	2
<b>TOTAL</b>		9
<b>Fall Semester</b>		
OCTA-142	Theory of Psychosocial Occupation	3
OCTA-146	Theory of Physical Occupation	4
OCTA-151	Occupation: Infant to Young Adult	3
OCTA- 168	Foundations of OT Interventions	2
<b>TOTAL</b>		12
<b>Sophomore</b>		
<b>Spring Semester</b>		
OCTA-234	Practice of Psychosocial Occupation	2.5
OCTA-238	Practice of Physical Occupation	4
OCTA-242	OT in Productive Aging	2
OCTA-250	Exploration of Occupational Practice Fieldwork	3
OCTA 220	Pediatric Interventions in OT	0.5
<b>TOTAL</b>		13
<b>Summer Session</b>		
OCTA-244	Occupation Across the Lifespan	3
HUM	Humanities Elective	3
<b>TOTAL</b>		6
<b>Fall Semester</b>		
OCTA-254	Level II Fieldwork	4
OCTA-258	Level II Fieldwork	4
<b>TOTAL</b>		8
<b>TOTAL CREDIT HOURS:</b>		<b>63</b>

## OTA Program Outcomes

The total number of graduates from the Lewis and Clark Community College (L&C) Occupational Therapy Assistant Program during the 3-year period (2023-2025) was 31 with an overall graduation rate of 78%.

Graduation Year (December graduation)	Number of Students who earned an AAS- Occupational Therapy Assistant	Graduation Rate	NBCOT Pass Rate (test year after graduation)
2023	12	80%	90%
2024	5	63%	82%
2025	15	83%	TBD
Totals	32	78%	

## Important Information and Next Steps

Graduates of the Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) Program are eligible to sit for the national certification examination administered by the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT) and pursue state licensure as required for professional practice.

Applicants should be aware that eligibility for certification, licensure, and participation in required clinical learning experiences is contingent upon meeting professional, legal, and compliance requirements, including background checks, drug screening, and other health-related criteria. These requirements are reviewed in detail during program orientation and prior to clinical placement.

Students with questions about program requirements, application materials, or enrollment options are encouraged to contact the OTA Program Coordinator for additional guidance.

Thank you for your interest in Lewis and Clark Community College's Occupational Therapy Assistant Program.

Program Coordinator: Debbie Witsken

[dwitsken@lc.edu](mailto:dwitsken@lc.edu)

Program Academic Advisor: Heather Amburg

[hamburg@lc.edu](mailto:hamburg@lc.edu)

## Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination Statement

Lewis and Clark Community College (L&C) is committed to the fundamental principles of human dignity, equality of opportunity, and academic freedom. This commitment requires that decisions involving students and employees be based on individual merit and be free from discrimination or harassment in any form. L&C provides equal educational and employment opportunities and affirms its commitment to affirmative action. Program services and employment opportunities are administered without regard to sex, race, ethnicity, color, creed or religion, national origin, disability, age, marital status, military status, sexual orientation, or other protected categories.