The Fieldwork Experience

Purpose
The purpose of the fieldwork experience is to provide occupational therapy students with the opportunity to integrate academic knowledge with application skills at progressively higher levels of performance and responsibility. The unique contributions of fieldwork experience include the opportunity to test first-hand the theories and facts learned in academic study and to refine skills through client interaction under the supervision of qualified personnel. Fieldwork also provides the student with situations in which to practice interpersonal skills with patients/clients and staff and to develop characteristics essential to productive working relationships.

The goal of the educational process is to produce competent occupational therapy practitioners. Upon completion of Level II Fieldwork education, the student is expected to function at or above the minimum entry-level competence. Therefore, fieldwork experiences should be developed to offer opportunities for development of the necessary skills and abilities identified in the role delineation report.

Levels of Fieldwork

Level I
Level I fieldwork includes experiences designed to complement the related didactic course for the purpose of directed observations and participation in field settings. The Level I experience is not expected to emphasize independent performance. Level I provides exposure in psychosocial health, physical health, and pediatric populations to provide the student with some background to begin a Level II experience. The goal of Level I fieldwork is to introduce students to the fieldwork experience, to apply knowledge to practice, and to develop understanding of the needs of clients.

Level I fieldwork courses are OTA 10192 - Fieldwork 1A, OTA 20392 - Fieldwork 1B, and OTA 20492 – Fieldwork 1C. Students MUST pass the Level I fieldwork experiences to be eligible for a passing grade in the course and progress in the program. No part of the Level I fieldwork may be substituted for any part of Level II fieldwork.

Per ACOTE Standards, Level I fieldwork may be met through one or more of the following instructional methods:
- Simulated environments
- Standardized patients
- Faculty practice
- Faculty-led site visits
- Supervision by a fieldwork educator in a practice environment

Level II
The goal of Level II fieldwork is to develop competent, entry-level, generalist occupational therapy assistants. Level II fieldwork is intended to emphasize the application of an academically acquired body of knowledge by providing the student with an in-depth “hands on” experience in delivery of occupational therapy service to patients/clients. Level II fieldwork must be integral to the program’s curriculum design and must include an in-depth experience in delivering occupational therapy services to clients, focusing on the application of purposeful and meaningful occupation.

The Level II fieldwork experiences are each eight (8) consecutive weeks/forty hours per week and comply with the work schedule of the assigned facility. These fieldwork rotations, OTA 21092—Clinical Applications I and OTA 21192—Clinical Applications II, are scheduled after all coursework has been successfully completed. The experience may be completed on a part-time basis, as long as it is at least 50% of an FTE at that site. The student 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 three different settings.

Note: Clinical education must be successfully completed within 18 months of the didactic coursework.