

Fieldwork Education

Purpose and Philosophy

The Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) standards for occupational therapy assistant education state, “Fieldwork education is a crucial part of the preparation of the occupational therapy assistant,” and the fieldwork experiences “should provide the student with the opportunity to carry out professional responsibilities under supervision of a qualified practitioner serving as a role model” (ACOTE, 2011).

Fieldwork education for the occupational therapy assistant student is divided into two levels of training, Level I and II fieldwork.

The first area of training is Level I fieldwork (clinical), and its purpose is to “introduce the student to the fieldwork experience, to apply knowledge to practice, and to develop understanding of the needs of clients” (ACOTE, 2011). The second area of training is Level II fieldwork (practicum), which is intended to develop “competent, entry-level, generalist occupational therapy assistants” (ACOTE, 2011) Students in Level II fieldwork should be exposed to “a variety of clients across the life span and to a variety of settings.”

Level I and Level II fieldwork provide the OTA student with “hands-on” experience in delivering occupational therapy services. They provide the OTAS with a unique opportunity to test and integrate the principles and concepts learned during academic preparation with the application of skills at a higher level of performance and responsibility. Critical thinking skills are refined through client intervention. The clinical/practicum education sites assigned to students reflect a diverse population and service delivery model in both traditional and emerging/nontraditional practice settings.

Upon completion of Level II fieldwork, the student is expected to be at entry-level competency.

The OTA Program is responsible for ensuring that a fieldwork site meets all policies, procedures, and applicable regulations of Navarro College, the Health Professions Division, the OTA Program, and ACOTE standards. Fieldwork sites are educational settings. The Navarro College OTA Program is responsible for the assignment of students to any level of fieldwork education. All contact with potential/current fieldwork sites is done through the OTA program, not the student.

Students are expected to provide their own transportation to and from fieldwork education sites.

Level II Fieldwork Progression

Level II fieldwork (practicum) must be a minimum of 16 weeks full-time fieldwork (40 hours per week). Level II fieldwork can be completed in a minimum of one practice setting and a maximum of three settings, if the rotations meet the ACOTE standards for diversity in OT practice areas, client ages, and ethnic and socio-cultural factors. Settings can include traditional practice areas and emerging practice areas. Traditional practice areas can include institutional settings (i.e. inpatient and rehabilitation hospitals, nursing facilities, prisons), outpatient settings, home and community settings, and research facilities. Emerging practice areas can include ergonomics consulting, driver rehabilitation, home modification consulting, low-vision, private practice community health, technology and assistive device consulting, welfare-to-work services, health and wellness consulting, Ticket to Work services, and programs which address the psychological and/or social needs of children and youth.

Level II fieldwork is divided into two rotations. Each Level II rotation includes 16 hours of educational activities lead by the Academic Fieldwork Coordinator. These educational activities may consist of computer assignments (including tests), discussion groups, HIPAA education and testing, and/or other learning activities. A student cannot substitute Level I fieldwork for any part of Level II fieldwork.

The final grade for the Level II fieldwork (practicum) is based on the fieldwork educator's evaluation of the student's performance in fieldwork (based on AOTA Fieldwork Performance Evaluation for the Occupational Therapy Assistant Student). The student must achieve a score of 70 or above on the AOTA Fieldwork Performance Evaluation for the Occupational Therapy Assistant Student and achieve a three (3) or better on all items of the Fundamentals of Practice in order to pass the Level II fieldwork. The final grade will be recorded as Pass/Fail.

The student will evaluate the fieldwork experience at the completion of the rotation using the AOTA Student Evaluation of Fieldwork Experience (SEFWE). In addition, students will be required to complete a daily/weekly supervision log that records amount and type of supervision provided during the fieldwork experience.

If the Fieldwork is done on a part-time basis, the plan must be initiated and approved by Fieldwork Coordinator. The part-time fieldwork must be completed at least 50% of a full-time equivalent. Part-time fieldwork will be a minimum of 20 hours per week.

The student must complete both Level II fieldwork practicums within 16 months of completing academic work to ensure that the knowledge necessary for Level II fieldwork is current.

A student can be considered unsuccessful in a fieldwork course if:

1. The student is withdrawn from the facility due to the student's ability to meet client safety requirements, state health regulations, or other state or federal regulations.
2. A student withdraws for any reason.
3. The student does not meet the passing grade standards of the AOTA Fieldwork Performance Evaluation for the Occupational Therapy Assistant Student.

If a student is unsuccessful in or withdraws from Level II fieldwork, the student will schedule a meeting with the AFWC and/or Program Director to assess barriers to success. As part of remediation, a student may be required to enroll in additional coursework. The student is directed to the Readmission Policy/Procedure in the OTA Student Handbook for additional information.

Any behavior in the fieldwork setting that may be judged as detrimental to clients shall be considered reason for immediate withdrawal with a grade recorded as "F". A student who has been dismissed from Level I or Level II fieldwork for failure to adhere to the American Occupational Therapy Association Code of Ethics, failure to adhere to safety regulations, or failure to use sound judgment in regard to safety of self and others will not be eligible for re-admission into the OTA Program.

The student is directed to the OTA Fieldwork Manual for policies and procedures outlining Level I and Level II fieldwork.