

# OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSISTANT - AAS

## Program Description

St. Catherine University founded the first two-year occupational therapy assistant (OTA) program in the country more than 50 years ago and has a long history of successfully educating certified occupational therapy assistants (COTAs). The program is designed to help students master occupational therapy skills and develop and refine leadership, interpersonal, and communication skills.

Certified occupational therapy assistants make a difference in people's lives. Occupational therapy assistants work in collaboration and cooperation with registered occupational therapists to help people engage in human occupations or "day-to-day" activities that contribute to their physical, psychological and spiritual health, well-being and overall quality of life.

Students entering the St. Catherine University, OTA program will experience the LIFE core curriculum (<https://catalog.stkate.edu/undergraduate/core-curriculum/liberal-arts-science-core-curriculum-associate-programs/#newforfall2022text>) which reflects a commitment to St. Kate's mission to educate women *to lead and influence*, as well as its vision *to be respected globally for educating women who transform the world*. This mission, rooted in the mission of the Sisters of St. Joseph, is based on three core principles: women, Catholic, and liberal arts.

Students are strongly encouraged to research and understand the occupational therapy profession before beginning the program. Information regarding the profession and career options can be found on the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) website <https://www.aota.org/>.

## Philosophy and Curriculum Design

The philosophy of the Occupational Therapy Assistant Program is that human beings learn through engagement in meaningful occupations. Engagement in occupation influences the health and well-being of individuals and their communities. The OTA Online program takes a holistic view of the person, believing that the mind, body, and spirit are interdependent.

## Didactic and Lab Experiences

Students will benefit from personal attention in their didactic, lab, and fieldwork experiences. Our associate of applied science degree program offers a 16-month (4 consecutive semesters) online track with face-to-face labs in Virginia, Texas, California, and Minnesota. Labs are an important component of the OTA program and attendance is required in order to complete the program.

## Fieldwork Experience

Students can interact with individuals and groups, including well populations and those with physical, psycho-social or developmental disabilities; work in a variety of settings, including hospitals, nursing homes, schools, rehabilitation facilities, community centers and clients' homes; and practice their profession in collaboration with other healthcare team members. Each student completes more than 700 hours of directed fieldwork experience in a variety of healthcare and community settings. Students may have fieldwork experiences within traveling

distance of their homes, although travel to a site beyond that may be required to expand the opportunities due to unforeseen variables.

All St. Catherine University students enrolled in a health care program must meet minimum immunization requirements and remain compliant throughout the completion of their program. These requirements are defined by the terms of our clinical/fieldwork contracts and are standardized across programs. OTA program students must also complete *Basic Life Safety for Healthcare Providers (BLS)*. This must be an American Heart Association or American Red Cross certification and must be completed prior to the first Level I fieldwork. Options other than these must be approved by a Compliance Administrator in the Clinical Clearance office.

Most states have regulations that require that all students going into a clinical setting have a criminal background check. Background checks are done prior to classes starting or within the first two weeks of class each year and the University provides all forms. Any identified problems on a background check may have an impact on a student's ability to attend labs or participate in fieldwork, and therefore progress in the program.

## Professional Behaviors

Developing appropriate professional behaviors is important to becoming a competent practitioner. It is the goal of the OTA program to help students develop and nurture professional behaviors in the academic setting, allowing students to refine them in their clinical fieldwork settings. Upon graduation, as an entry-level OTA, students will be ready to uphold the ethical standards, values, attitudes and behaviors of the occupational therapy profession.

## Accreditation

St. Catherine University's occupational therapy assistant program is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) of the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) located at 6116 Executive Boulevard, Suite 200, North Bethesda, MD 20852-4929. ACOTE's telephone number at c/o AOTA is (301) 652-6611 and its web address is <https://acoteonline.org/>.

## Certification

Graduates of the OTA program are able to sit for the national certification examination administered by the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT). NBCOT is located at One Bank Street, Suite 300, Gaithersburg, MD, 20878. The phone number for NBCOT is (301) 990-7979, email is [info@nbcot.org](mailto:info@nbcot.org), and the website is [www.nbcot.org](http://www.nbcot.org).

When graduates apply to take the certification examination with the NBCOT, they are asked to answer questions related to felony convictions. Graduates will also be asked questions about felony convictions as they apply for state licensure. A felony conviction may affect a graduate's ability to complete fieldwork experiences, sit for the NBCOT certification examination, or attain state licensure. For further information on these limitations, contact NBCOT or your state licensing board.

After successful completion of the NBCOT exam, the individual will be a Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant. Many states have some form of regulation in order to practice. Generally, state regulations are based on the successful completion of the NBCOT certification examination.

## Time to Complete the Program

Students complete their professional (OTA) course sequence in as few as 16 months (4 consecutive semesters). A maximum of two courses from the supporting course and LIFE general education core can be taken during the first three semesters of OTA coursework. Level II Fieldwork is completed in the final semester in accordance with the curriculum design and the program policies.

## Eligibility Requirements to Begin the Professional Sequence of Courses:

After admission to the University, students must meet the following requirements to be eligible to begin the professional sequence of courses.

- An overall GPA of 2.5
- A cumulative prerequisite GPA of 2.5
- No more than two general education core requirements remaining to be completed
- All prerequisite courses must be taken for a letter grade, except Medical Terminology, which may be taken S/U (All courses must be taken at an accredited school).

## Prerequisite Requirements

Prerequisites must be completed with a grade of C or better (except Medical Terminology, which may be taken S/U) prior to beginning the professional sequence of courses. A minimum prerequisite and cumulative GPA of 2.5 is required.

Any of the four courses in which a grade less than a C is earned must be repeated.

Students should strive for more than the minimum grade of C for all prerequisites; earning C in all courses will not meet the 2.5 prerequisite GPA requirement.

## Academic Progression

In order to successfully complete the OTA Program, the student must meet the following requirements:

- Earn a D or better in every general education core requirement.
- Earn a C or better in every prerequisite, supporting course, and OTA program course.
- Earn a term grade point average of 2.5 every term.
- Maintain an institutional grade point average of 2.5 throughout the program.

Failure to meet any one of these requirements will result in a student being placed on probation. Students placed on probation for a second time will be dismissed from the program. Specific and detailed progression policies are available to admitted students.

**See also:** Master of Arts in Occupational Therapy (<http://catalog.stkate.edu/graduate/health/occupational-science-therapy/maot/>) (graduate catalog) (<http://catalog.stkate.edu/graduate/health/occupational-science-therapy/maot/>)

## Curriculum

In addition to the program-required courses, students must complete the LIFE general education core curriculum (<http://catalog.stkate.edu/>

<http://catalog.stkate.edu/> undergraduate/core-curriculum/liberal-arts-science-core-curriculum-associate-programs/).

The A.A.S. OTA program requires a minimum of 63 credits.

## Prerequisite Requirements

All prerequisites must be completed before starting OTA courses. Any of the four courses in which a grade less than a C is earned must be repeated. Students should strive for more than the minimum grade of C for all prerequisites; earning a C in all courses will not meet the 2.5 prerequisite GPA requirement.

Code	Title	Credits
BIOL 2400	General Anatomy and Physiology with Lab <sup>1</sup>	4
IPE 1020	Medical Terminology	1
PSYC 1000	General Psychology	4
PSYC 2020	Lifespan Developmental Psychology <sup>1</sup>	4
<b>Total Credits</b>		<b>13</b>

<sup>1</sup> Must have been completed no more than five years prior to entering the University to be considered for transfer.

## Required OTA Courses

Code	Title	Credits
<b>A minimum grade of C is required in these courses. A major GPA of 2.5 or higher is required. Earning C in all courses will not meet the 2.5 GPA requirement.</b>		
OTA 1100	Foundations of Human Occupation with Lab	2
OTA 1120	Role of the OTA with Lab	2
OTA 1140	Psychosocial Approaches I with Lab	2
OTA 1150	Professional Growth and Engagement with Lab	2
OTA 1280	Level I Fieldwork	1
OTA 1290	Level I Fieldwork	1
OTA 2240	Psychosocial Approaches II with Lab	2
OTA 2250	Rehabilitation Practice I with Lab	2
OTA 2265	Rehabilitation Practice II	2
OTA 2275	Pediatric Practice I	2
OTA 2355	Level II Fieldwork	6
OTA 2365	Level II Fieldwork	6
OTA 2370	Pediatric Practice II with Lab	2
OTA 2380	Aging with Lab	2
OTA 2390	Primary Care and OT with Lab	2
OTA 2420	Applied Skills with Lab	2
<b>Total Credits</b>		<b>38</b>

## Required Supporting Course

A maximum of two courses from the supporting course and LIFE general education core lists can be taken during the first semester of OTA coursework.

Code	Title	Credits
<b>A minimum grade of C is required in this course</b>		
PHIL 2440	Healthcare Ethics	4
<b>Total Credits</b>		<b>4</b>