ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS
for the
Occupational Therapy Assistant Student

Becoming an occupational therapy assistant requires the completion of an education program that is both intellectually and physically challenging. The student will be expected to acquire knowledge, motor skills, and behavior and attitudes that are necessary to provide ethical, safe, effective, compassionate patient care. The purpose of this document is to inform candidates to the occupational therapy assistant (OTA) program of the demands that they can reasonably be expected to meet, with or without reasonable accommodation, while participating in the program.

Decisions made by the candidate to enter this program should be made after careful consideration of the following technical standards. These standards reflect reasonable expectations of the OTA student for the performance of common occupational therapy functions encountered in the program. They are also reasonable expectations of employers; however, employers may have different standards. The ability to meet these standards with or without accommodations does not guarantee employment upon graduation.

Each candidate in this Associate in Applied Science degree program should possess the following abilities and skills:

- **Motor:** The candidate should have sufficient gross and fine motor capabilities to execute the movements and skills required to provide safe and effective occupational therapy treatment. This includes, but is not limited to:
  
  1. Sufficient coordination, speed, strength and agility to assist and guard (protect) patients who are walking, exercising or performing other activities.
  2. Ability to adjust, move and position patients and equipment which involves bending, twisting, pushing and pulling, and reaching in order to guide, transfer and lift equipment and individuals.
3. Ability to guide, resist, and assist patients, and to provide emergency care, which involves activities including standing, kneeling, sitting, walking and crawling.

4. Ability and dexterity to fabricate, apply and monitor adaptive equipment, perform and demonstrate functional activities and administer components of sensory, motor and Activities of Daily Living Skills (ADL) assessments.

5. Sufficient endurance to move about a classroom or clinical environment steadily throughout the day, including movement across distances, movement from one floor to another, and negotiation of small spaces.

- **Sensory:** Candidate should have sufficient sensory abilities to assess and monitor patients, observe physical movement, participate in physical measures, and recognize and respond to patient needs and unsafe situations. Candidate should have the ability to obtain information in classroom, laboratory or clinical settings through observation, auscultation, palpation and other measures, and requires abilities including, but not limited to:

  1. Visual ability (corrected as necessary) to recognize and interpret facial expressions and body language, to observe patient performance in therapy, to read or set parameters on occupational therapy equipment, and to interpret and assess the environment.
  2. Auditory ability (corrected as necessary) to recognize and respond to verbal directions and requests, to be aware of safety mechanisms in the environment, and for effective communication between patients/families/co-workers.
  3. Tactile ability to palpate muscle contractions, to discriminate hot and cold modalities, to exert the necessary pressure to fabricate splints, and to identify joint articulations.

- **Communication:** Candidate will need to communicate effectively and efficiently with peers, faculty, patients and their families, and other health care providers orally, in writing, and non-verbally. This includes, but is not limited to:

  1. Ability to read at a level that allows the essential functions of an assignment to be completed safely and effectively.
  2. Ability to effectively articulate and interpret information to patients, family members, other health care professionals and third party payers as appropriate.
  3. Ability to recognize, interpret, and respond to nonverbal behavior of self and others.

- **Behavior:** Candidate should be capable of exercising good judgment, developing empathic and therapeutic relationships with patients and others, working in stressful situations, and tolerating close physical contact with co-workers and patients. This includes, but is not limited to:
1. Ability to work with multiple patients/families and colleagues at the same time.
2. Ability to work with lab partners, patients, families and others under stressful conditions, including but not limited to medically or emotionally unstable individuals, situations requiring rapid adaptations, the provision of CPR, or other emergency interventions.
3. Ability to prioritize multiple tasks, integrate information and make decisions.
4. Ability to work with individuals of varying ages and socioeconomic, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.
5. Ability to consistently act in the best interest of patients/clients and promote a therapeutic environment.
6. Ability to work collaboratively with all (both male and female) OTA students and with program faculty in classroom, lab and clinical settings.
7. Ability to accept feedback and appropriately modify behavior in response to supervisory feedback.
8. Ability to demonstrate values, attitudes, and behaviors consistent with the OT Professional Code of Ethics.
9. Ability to handle personal and professional problems appropriately so they do not interfere with classroom and clinical performance.

**Critical Thinking:** Candidate should possess sufficient abilities in the areas of critical problem solving, reasoning, and assessment to be able to comprehend and process information in a timely manner. Candidate will be asked to prioritize, organize and attend to tasks and responsibilities efficiently. This includes, but is not limited to:

1. Ability to collect and interpret data.
2. Ability to prioritize multiple tasks, integrate information and make decisions.
3. Ability to apply knowledge from basic and technical education to the provision of occupational therapy care which includes the ability to plan and implement treatment programs that are applicable and practical and provide creative treatment alternatives.
4. The ability to problem solve in order to act safely and ethically in the occupational therapy lab and clinic.

**The capstone experience** of this educational program occurs during the final two quarters, when the candidate provides occupational therapy care in clinic settings under the supervision of occupational therapy practitioners. The candidate should have the capacity to complete eight to ten hour days, and 40-hour weeks, in clinical education experiences for two ten week periods. The clinical education experience provides for an integrative measure of the candidate’s capabilities, requiring that the candidate consistently demonstrate
skill and proficiency of performance at the entry level of an occupational therapy assistant.

**Additional information:** In order to be eligible for placement at a clinical education site, students admitted to the program will need to:

1. Obtain certification (health professional level) in cardiopulmonary resuscitation through an approved course for health care providers.
2. Complete an approved 7-hour course for health care providers on blood borne pathogens.
3. Provide proof of health status including but not limited to proof of MMR and chicken pox vaccination, hepatitis B vaccination (or signed waiver), current tetanus immunization, and current TB test.
4. Complete a Washington State Patrol background check (Children and Vulnerable Adults Act)
5. Complete other pre-clinical screenings as needed such as drug testing and finger printing.

Candidates for the Occupational Therapy Assistant Program are required to certify that these standards have been provided to them. Applicants who believe they do not meet the standards may request accommodation. Accommodation is arranged through the Disability Support Services office. Additional information about requesting accommodation is available at [http://www.greenriver.edu/DSS/](http://www.greenriver.edu/DSS/).
Occupational Therapy Assistant Application
Essential Functions Acknowledgment

Please sign and return this portion of the document to the admissions coordinator with the application packet.

My signature acknowledges that I have been provided with the document “Essential Functions” for OTA students and am familiar with its content. I understand that I may request reasonable accommodations in order to meet these standards.

Name (please print):__________________________________________________

Signature: ___________________________ Date: ______________

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