

## FAQs for Applicants to the MWU OT Program – Downers Grove, IL

### **What are the benefits of the MWU OTD program versus a master's program?**

- Our Program is designed to prepare graduates to become practice leaders in their workplaces, whether they work in traditional healthcare settings or emerging community-based settings. Our OTD program consists of advanced coursework focused on program development, advocacy, leadership, administration and management, and education that go beyond the skills necessary for entry-level practice.

### **What makes the MWU OT Program unique compared to other OTD programs?**

- The Midwestern University OT Program is unique in several ways. We have 13 core faculty, all of whom teach, mentor students, engage in research, and serve as occupational therapists, consultants, or leaders within a variety of settings. We have a close mentorship model (1 faculty to 3-4 students per cohort) and students are supported in their coursework, research projects, and capstone experiences by the mentor and other faculty. Our curriculum is strongly occupation-focused, and we utilize a wide variety of authentic experiences for students to learn the skills and critical reasoning to become an OT, such as fieldwork, standardized patient experiences, and lab sessions in many courses. The Program collaborates with hundreds of partners for fieldwork, experiential learning, and internship opportunities.

### **What is the accreditation status of the MWU Program?**

- We are a fully accredited Occupational Therapy doctoral degree program by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE). We have successfully graduated one OTD cohort per year since 2020. Prior to transitioning to the OTD, we were a fully accredited master's program and graduated 22 cohorts of students between 1997 and 2018.

### **How do I apply?**

- You can apply online through the Centralized Application Service for Occupational Therapy (OTCAS) at [www.otcas.org](http://www.otcas.org). There is not a separate application for Midwestern University. OTCAS usually becomes available during the middle of the summer (approximately mid-July). We have rolling admissions, so we encourage you to submit your application as early as possible.

### **What is the minimum GPA required for admission?**

- You are encouraged to have a minimum cumulative undergraduate grade point average (GPA) of 3.00 on a 4.00 scale. Grades of C or better are required for prerequisite coursework; grades of C- are not acceptable.

### **Do I need to take the GRE?**

- No, GRE scores are not required to apply.

### **What prerequisite courses do I need to take?**

- You can view all required prerequisite courses, and all other application requirements, at <https://www.midwestern.edu/academics/degrees-programs/college-health-sciences/doctor-occupational-therapy-program/doctor-occupational-therapy-downers-grove-campus>

**Do I have to complete all of the prerequisite courses before I submit my application?**

- You do not have to have your prerequisites completed prior to applying to the program. All of your courses must be complete before matriculation into the program.

**Does it matter when I completed my prerequisites or when I obtained my baccalaureate degree?**

- It does not matter how recently you earned your degree. In fact, we encourage people to apply who are considering a career change, or may be returning to graduate school after an absence. However, it is required that the Anatomy and Physiology courses have been completed within the previous five years.

**What are the undergraduate majors of your students?**

- There is no specific major required for our program, as long as all of the prerequisite courses are completed. Our students have baccalaureate degrees in all areas, with the most common being psychology, kinesiology, and exercise science. We encourage students from diverse academic backgrounds to apply; many of our students majored in areas such as business, art, and English.

**What are the most important qualifications that you look for in an applicant?**

- We look for applicants who are well-rounded and have a strong history of academic excellence, a commitment to service, and experience in leadership roles. We look for applicants who are person-centered and who are sensitive to individuals or groups who experience disability, social stigma, or limited access to healthcare.

**Are there certain settings you prefer my OT observations to be in? How many hours of observations do I need?**

- We do not require a certain number or type of OT observations. We prefer applicants to observe or experience OT in diverse settings to ensure that the applicant understands the variety of settings and practice within OT. We also encourage applicants to consider opportunities to observe in other healthcare and social service fields where they will encounter diverse populations.

**Can I visit the MWU OT Program? Are there open houses?**

- The Admissions Department offers regular campus visits. Contact the Admissions Department by phone at 630-515-6171, or 800-458-6253, or by email at [admissil@midwestern.edu](mailto:admissil@midwestern.edu) for more information.
- The OT Program also schedules regular open houses and campus visits. Contact the OT Admissions Chair at [esimps@midwestern.edu](mailto:esimps@midwestern.edu) for more information.

**What is the expected timeline after I apply?**

- We utilize rolling admissions: our Admissions Committee reviews incoming applications on an on-going basis. Starting in the fall, we invite the strongest applicants to participate in individual interviews on campus. Interview sessions are scheduled each month. After an interview, applicants will receive a decision within approximately three weeks.

### **How many students does Northwestern accept each year?**

- We admit up to 50 students each year, with classes beginning in the Fall Quarter.

### **What is the length of your program?**

- Northwestern University is on the quarter system. Our program is 11 quarters long over 33 months. Cohorts start in the fall quarter of their first year and graduate at the end of the spring quarter of their third year.

### **What are the costs of tuition?**

- You can visit the Office of Student Financial Services for all information on tuition and financial aid at <https://www.northwestern.edu/offices-departments-centers/financial-aid-il> or at [ilfinaid@northwestern.edu](mailto:ilfinaid@northwestern.edu), 630-515-6101
- Specific information on current tuition and fees for the OT Program is available at <https://www.northwestern.edu/admissions/tuition-fees?program=554>

### **Are there scholarship opportunities?**

- Northwestern University has various scholarships available that can be viewed at <https://www.northwestern.edu/admissions/paying-college/scholarships>.
- There is also an opportunity that is specific to Northwestern University OT students: The *Practice Leadership Scholarship* is awarded each year to one student demonstrating a commitment to the mission and vision of the OT Program.
- The Illinois Occupational Therapy Association is now part of the AOTF Endowed Scholarship Program. More information is available at <https://www.ilota.org/scholarship> and <https://www.aotf.org/Scholarships>.
- The American Occupational Therapy Association advertises scholarship opportunities at <https://www.aota.org/education/find-a-school/aota-ek-wise-scholarship>.
- Additional scholarships are available through public agencies and private foundations/organizations.

### **How do Northwestern's OT courses align with today's practice?**

- Our courses are designed to reflect the most recent available evidence and practice trends. Our faculty maintain their professional qualifications by attending professional development courses and conferences, maintaining their memberships in their state and national professional associations, and taking on leadership roles within the profession. By doing so, they can ensure that the content they include in courses reflect best-practice recommendations and evidence.

### **What are the classes I would take, and when would I take them?**

- You can view all courses in the course catalog at <https://catalog.il.northwestern.edu/occupational-therapy-program-0>

### **What does a typical day look like?**

- Block schedules vary by quarter, but generally, students are in class on Mondays through Thursdays from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM, with an hour break for lunch.

### **What is MWU student life like?**

- Outside of classes, there are various opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities, which can be viewed at <https://www.midwestern.edu/student-experience/downers-grove-il-campus/get-involved-il>
- If eligible, students also have the opportunity to participate in part-time employment through various Federal Work Study positions available: <https://www.midwestern.edu/admissions/paying-college/financial-aid/financial-aid-types>

### **What percentage of MWU OT graduates pass the exam on the first attempt?**

- While the first-attempt pass rates are not made available by the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT), overall new-graduate pass rates of our OTD graduates within one year of graduation have averaged 97% since 2020.

### **In what settings do recent graduates practice?**

- Our graduates obtain jobs in all areas of OT practice. Some of these settings include hospitals, outpatient rehabilitation clinics, schools, skilled nursing facilities, community-based mental health, home health, and early intervention. Many graduates have created jobs or obtained jobs as a direct result of their Doctoral Capstones.

### **What is the salary of recent graduates?**

- The average salary of 2022 graduates who responded to our alumni survey reported an average starting salary of approximately \$73,000.
- The median annual salary of occupational therapists nationwide was \$93,180 in 2022 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, Retrieved from <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/occupational-therapists.htm>).
- Another report shares that the average salary of *entry-level* occupational therapists is \$64,880 (Pay Scale, Inc., Retrieved from [https://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Occupational\\_Therapist\\_\(OT\)/Hourly\\_Rate/5a17fd1f/Entry-Level](https://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Occupational_Therapist_(OT)/Hourly_Rate/5a17fd1f/Entry-Level)).