

Applying to the MS in Occupational Therapy at Southern CT State University

Admission requires a baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution. In addition, applicants must have completed all prerequisite coursework prior to matriculation.

All qualified applicants will be considered regardless of race, color, creed, gender, age, sexual orientation, marital status, national or ethnic origin, or ability, as long as the applicant is able to complete the essential functions of an occupational therapist (see below). A cohort of forty (40) students will be admitted to begin classes in the summer semester.

Students do not need to have earned their bachelor's degree from one of the four Connecticut State Universities (CSU, Eastern, Western, Central, Southern), however, we have a commitment to those who have graduated from the CSUs. A minimum of 20 seats will be available for CSU graduates who meet admission criteria. If less than 20 students from the CSUs are accepted within the application cycle, the seats will be open to other applicants.

Application Process

- Complete the [graduate application](#) to Southern CT State University (SCSU).
For more information about the graduate school application process please see [their admissions page](#).

You will be required to provide:

- 1) all official transcripts
- 2) a resume/CV
- 3) a document to ensure you have completed all required prerequisites.

- Complete the [CASPER assessment](#).
Casper is an online, open-response situational judgment test (SJT). It asks what you would do in a tough situation, and more importantly, why. This helps determine behavioral tendencies of applicants pursuing people-centered professions. Candidates can justify their reasoning, express their values, and share their individual perspectives and experiences. Applicants are scored on traits and skills such as collaboration, problem-solving, ethics, empathy, and self-awareness.

You will be taking the exam called the US Casper 2. This is the specific exam that is for graduate educational programs.

For more information about CASPER please see <https://acuityinsights.app/casper/> and <https://acuityinsights.app/faq/>.

For the best [preparation](#), we recommend using the free practice sessions and sample scenarios provided directly on the acuityinsights.app website.

- Request that your CASPER score be sent to the SCSU occupational therapy program.

➤ You may then be invited to participate in an interview process called the multiple mini interview (described below).

➤ If you are invited to the MMI, you will also be emailed an online shadow experience so that you can become familiar with all of the varied areas of OT practice prior to the interview experience.

Required Prerequisites

➤ The required prerequisites include

➤ Human Anatomy and Physiology I and II with lab (8 cr)

Lecture content for A&P may be online, however the lab portion must be in person and all testing must occur in person.

➤ Abnormal Psychology (3cr)

➤ Lifespan or Human Development courses that cover the lifespan (3-9cr)

If you cover the lifespan in one course then 3 credits is sufficient. If your UG program requires 2 or 3 separate courses to cover the entire lifespan, then you may need 9 credits for this. The important issue is that your course or course series has covered infancy through older adult.

➤ Sociology or Social psychology (3cr)

➤ Research methods or Introductory Statistics (3cr)

Please see [this document](#) for course names and numbers that will meet these prerequisites at SCSU or the CT State Community Colleges.

➤ Performance on Prerequisites

➤ All prerequisite course grades must be a B- or better,

➤ Prerequisite combined GPA must be a 3.0.

➤ Prerequisite Courses must be taken for a grade and not as pass/fail.

➤ Any single prerequisite course may have been retaken, but only once.

➤ Prerequisites have no expiration date.

➤ Deadlines for Prerequisites

➤ **Only one prerequisite course may be in progress at the time of application deadline.**

➤ If a prerequisite is in process at the time of application deadline, applicants may be awarded conditional acceptance and admission may be revoked if the prerequisite grade and/or cumulative GPA requirement is not met.

➤ Recommended Undergraduate Courses

➤ Courses related to social justice/ social bias/ gender, sexuality, social determinants of health, cultural humility, or racial bias

➤ Kinesiology

➤ Foreign language / spanish for healthcare

What we do not require

The MS degree program in Occupational Therapy (OT) at SCSU does not require letters of recommendation or personal statements as these methods have been documented to have the potential to be biased, to have minimal additional predictive validity for your success, and with the growth of AI, authenticity is difficult to determine (Chapman et al., 2020; Dalal et al., 2022; Johnstone 2023; Newkirk-Turner, & Hudson, 2022; Niessan & Newman, 2022; Woo et al., 20203; Zhao et al., 2023).

How will your application be reviewed?

Your application to the Occupational Therapy (OT) MS degree program at SCSU will be considered using a process of holistic review.

What is a holistic review?

Holistic review may be defined as “a flexible, individualized way of assessing an applicant’s capabilities by which balanced consideration is given to experiences, attributes, and academic metrics” (Addams, Bletzinger, Sondheimer, White, & Johnson, 2010, p.10). This definition and model was first developed by the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) but it has now been widely adopted by a variety of other health professions.

A holistic admissions process is mission-driven (Addams et al., 2010) as a foundational tenet. The AAMC, in 2011, stated that “selection criteria are broad-based, clearly linked to school-specific mission and goals, and promote diversity as an essential element to achieving institutional excellence” (p. 43). For holistic admissions, both the mission of the program and of the university must reflect diversity as an important characteristic. SCSU is quite clear in its commitment to diversity (see <https://www.southernct.edu/dei>) and prides itself as an institution that supports the upward mobility of its students (see our rank on <https://www.socialmobilityindex.org/>).

We chose a holistic admissions process based on the evidence regarding the relationship of grades and GPA to social class and the impact of traditional admissions processes on class makeup (Sternberg, 2010). Our committee review will focus on how an applicant is able to contribute to the SCSU OT program and the profession of occupational therapy after graduation. Holistic review in our program uses the Experience, Attribute, Metric Model (E-A-M).

What is the E-A-M model?

E= experience, A = attributes and M = Metrics

Experience refers to the applicant’s lived events that perhaps resulted in growth, knowledge or wisdom. Experiences provide important data in holistic review and may include community service, mission work, travel, healthcare experience, or leadership. Any type of difficult experience that might demonstrate “grit” or perseverance is typically considered. Overcoming difficulties in work-life balance may similarly demonstrate resilience. For our program, experiences will be explored during multiple mini interview stations (see information about this below).

An attribute may refer to a quality, characteristic, ability or skill of a person or population. For our program attributes will be measured during multiple mini interview stations. The CASPER test also measures attributes, but in turn produces a score that becomes a metric.

Metrics are the measurements of academic achievement or testing that most people associate with traditional college admissions (such as GPA). The CASPER test score will be a second metric for our admissions process.

What will make a competitive application for our program?

We believe that excellent occupational therapists are creative in their problem solving and interventions, hopeful in their expectations of the possibility of positive growth and change in their clients, powerful in their ability to be a champion for others, and open-minded and humble enough to be accepting and non-judgmental of others who are different from themselves. Occupational therapists must be curious about others and eager to work with others. Working in healthcare can be demanding and we also seek individuals who can demonstrate resilience and perseverance. Other attributes commonly needed by occupational therapists are skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and leadership. Occupational therapists must also value life-long learning.

We will be asking applicants to show us these qualities through a variety of means:

- Our interviews will be conducted as multiple mini-interviews (Wagner, Maddox, Glazer, & Hittle, 2020). We require an interview, in part, because oral communication skills are the most frequently employer-requested 21st century skill (Rios et al., 2020). However, we run them as multiple mini-interviews because of the evidence that finds them to be less biased than traditional interviews and to be predictive of outcomes for healthcare students (Ali et al, 2022; Wildermuth, 2022).
- We will be asking you to show us your creativity, curiosity, problem solving, ethics, and other 21st century skills such as collaboration, communication, and critical thinking (Rios et al., 2020). Measures such as these have been shown to be less biased than traditional tests used for college admissions and predictive of college success (Almlund et al., 2011; Sternberg, 2010). The CASPER test is one such measure. We will use others during the multiple mini interview experience.
- In your interview stations, you will be asked about life experiences that will help you perform as an occupational therapist and support the mission of the program and the university such as:
 - exposure to other cultures (semester abroad or mission work for example)
 - fluency in a language other than English
 - prior or current full-time or part-time employment
 - healthcare experience
 - leadership experiences
 - community service
 - prior exposure to occupational therapy
 - involvement in a variety of personally meaningful occupations
 - experiences that showcase determination, perseverance

Our metrics establish a baseline “floor” and they have been selected based on data to assist the program in determining that an applicant who is admitted and enters the program will be able to complete the program and pass the required national certification exam. However, these are just one portion of the application review. Our metrics include:

- Prerequisite GPA
- CASPER score

These are examined in an initial screening to determine who will be invited for an interview.

Requirements for International Students

Students who are not native speakers of the English language must document language proficiency. Please contact the graduate admissions office with questions and see their [web information](#) regarding acceptable documentation.

Requirements for Licensure as an Occupational Therapist

[SCSU welcomes under documented students](#). However, prospective students must be aware that while you will be allowed to sit for the national certification exam (NBCOT), all 50 states of the United States require licensure for practice as an occupational therapist. In the state of Connecticut, licensure requires a social security number. Some other states (for example California) allow undocumented graduates to apply for licensure with an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) rather than a social security number. However, an ITIN also requires an [application process](#) and authorization to work in the U.S.

Policies for Transfer Students and Transfer Credits

Because of the integrated nature of our curriculum, our program does not accept transfer students or transfer credits for any required courses. Accepted students must complete all required occupational therapy courses.

Policies for Advanced Placement

The university provides [advanced placement credit](#) for undergraduate coursework. However, AP credit may not be used in place of any of the occupational therapy prerequisites.

Credit for prior experience

We do not provide credit for prior academic studies or professional experience.

PLEASE NOTE

Current tuition and fee rates are provided [here](#). University policies regarding [tuition and fees](#) and [refunds](#) are provided as well. Students wishing to defer their admission, must email gradadmissions@southernct.edu by 3pm on the first day of classes for the term in which they were originally admitted. A deferral request may be made for a maximum of one year. Students who have registered and must withdraw will [do so through the university](#).

All applicants should note that [the University requires](#) a minimum cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.0 to earn a graduate degree.

ACCREDITATION

*The entry-level occupational therapy master's degree program has applied for accreditation and has been granted Candidacy Status by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) of the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), located at 7501 Wisconsin Avenue, Suite 510E, Bethesda, MD 20814. ACOTE's telephone number c/o AOTA is (301) 652-AOTA and its web address is www.acoteonline.org. The program must have a pre accreditation review, complete an on-site evaluation, and be granted Accreditation Status before its graduates will be eligible to sit for the national certification examination for the occupational therapist administered by the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT). After successful completion of this exam, the individual will be an Occupational Therapist, Registered (OTR). In addition, all states require licensure to practice; however, state licenses are usually based on the results of the NBCOT Certification Examination.

Students must complete 24 weeks of Level II fieldwork within 12 months following completion of the didactic portion of the program. Note that a felony conviction may affect a graduate's ability to sit for the NBCOT certification examination or attain state licensure.

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS

Occupational therapy students must possess a variety of motor and physical capacities required to perform in a wide variety of settings. Students must be able to:

- Assume and maintain posture and positions including: sitting and standing for up to 3 hours continuously, including sufficient endurance to continue performing a variety of exertional activities for up to 8-10 hours in-person, daily, with occasional rest breaks.
- Move in the following ways: walking, bending, squatting, kneeling, ascending and descending stairs, reaching forward, to the ground, and overhead, turning and rotating the trunk and neck in all directions. In addition, attain positions on the floor via squatting, kneeling, ½ kneeling) and return to standing quickly, crawling, creeping, rolling, running, in order to be able to potentially catch clients, especially children, who might be moving quickly, climbing step stools and ladders to hang equipment, traversing distances required by a site/facility, lean over from standing, to assist a smaller client/child sitting in front
- Lift and handle materials and clients of various sizes and weights including: lifting and transferring patients, guarding patients during functional mobility training on level surfaces/uneven surfaces/ramps/stairs, pushing and pulling to provide resistance and to assist in maneuvering patients, safely lift up to 50 lbs. independently when transferring and or performing manual patient handling, safely lift up to 50 lbs. independently when handling materials, safely lift up to 200 lbs. with assistance, safely push and pull up to 200 lbs, safely lower clients to the ground
- Use the hands and arms to: grasp and hold items, objects, and body parts during patient care activities, to perform therapeutic activities, transfers and to manipulate testing instruments/equipment/ writing instruments/computers, as well as manually palpate various body structures during examination and intervention procedures. Manipulate objects of various sizes, shapes, and textures (e.g. dials, knobs, testing instruments, therapy balls, scissors, clamps, kitchen equipment, bathroom equipment, foods, etc.).
- Maintain adequate postural control and balance to keep oneself upright and to and provide support and balance to patients on a variety of surfaces including level and uneven ground, ramps, curbs, and stairs.
- Respond to emergencies by lifting/pushing/pulling patients, performing CPR, and/or transporting patients.
- Possess physical and emotional endurance to tolerate taxing workloads and to function effectively under time constraints.

Occupational therapy students must possess a variety of cognitive abilities. Students must be able to:

- Be alert and attentive in-person and/or virtually to complete required coursework and experiential learning activities including weekly pre-class preparation.
- Recall and retain information.
- Measure, calculate, analyze, process, reason, integrate, synthesize, apply, retain, and understand complex relationships among and between facts, data, concepts, and theories within a reasonable timeframe as necessary for practice.

- Understand, calculate, and interpret basic statistics for tests and measures and evidence based practice.
- Identify, organize, synthesize, and integrate material across courses, content areas, resources (textbooks, research articles, health records, interviews, observations, etc.), and settings.
- Apply research, theory, and clinical reasoning to address client goals and needs and provide a rationale for selected intervention.
- Differentiate between relevant and irrelevant information.
- Identify problems and implement solutions with flexibility, in a timely manner.
- Evaluate outcomes.
- Contribute to academic and clinical activities by appropriately and professionally sharing opinions, perspectives, insight, and experiences.
- Utilize effective time management and organizational skills to meet deadlines. Organize and prioritize multiple tasks (projects/assignments, clinical activities).
- Identify errors or mistakes and take appropriate steps to address these errors.
- Observe in order to gather relevant data/information from multiple sources, analyze the information, and report on the information, in a manner appropriate to the target audience.
- Engage in effective use of computers for documentation, presentations, and other program requirements.
- Reflect on performance, consider feedback without defensiveness, and accurately assess areas of strengths and difficulties to develop a plan with strategies for growth and development. Acknowledge limitations and obtain appropriate assistance to provide safe client care.
- Gather, critique, and apply relevant literature to clinical situations.
- Exercise judgment and adhere to all safety precautions consistently.
- Maintain confidentiality of client/patient information.
- Apply academic learning to clinical situations.
- Use a computer sufficiently for obtaining professional literature, engaging in academic activities and completing clinical documentation.

Occupational therapy students must use a variety of sensory functions required to perform in a wide variety of settings. Students must be able to:

- Use their vision to: observe patients and settings for the purposes of eliciting information; performance on assessments of motor and sensory-motor skills, accurately describing current client physical and emotional wellbeing (e.g. body language, facial expression, bruising, rashes, facial droop, autonomic changes, changes elicited by medication, etc.) or changes in facial expression, mood, activity, and posture; perceiving nonverbal communication, observe and interpret patient/client safety, movement, or occupational performance, equipment that monitors patient/client functions (e.g. BP, HR, respiration, pulse Ox monitors), changes in soft tissue with the application of thermal and electrical modalities (e.g. orthoses, E-stim, iontophoresis, ultrasound, hot packs, cold packs etc.), read books, articles, assessment manuals, word or PDF documents, electronic medical records, graphics, email, view videos, faculty and peer demonstrations in the classroom, read and score assessment forms, observe client responses to environmental changes to ensure therapist safety (e.g., aggression, frustration, anxiety etc.), observe client behavior to ensure client safety (client aggression to self, escapism, falling), prevent unsafe situations and demonstrate situational awareness, assess wound and skin integrity.

- Use their hearing to: appropriately react to alarms, timers, cries for help, phones, pagers, overhead pages or emergency signals, engage in conversation, hear heart rate and blood pressure.
- Use their sense of smell to: identify the presence of infection, assess client hygiene and continence, recognize safety issues including, but not limited to, food preparation (e.g. burning food, rotting food, etc.).
- Use their sense of touch to: provide appropriate manual pressure when touching clients, Perceive information adequately (palpation, MMT, sensory testing, mobilization, facilitation, orthoses, tone, temperature, depth, etc.), perceive gradients of temperature for safe application of client applications with orthoses, bathing, and cooking activities.
- Use their sense of balance to: monitor position to maintain balance and posture, tolerate changes in head position during intervention.
- Use combined sensory perception to: tolerate the use of a driving simulator, demonstrate movement skills to clients, tolerate movement such as swinging, sliding, rolling, spinning, and rapid in-line movement on level or incline surfaces (i.e. scooter boards), tolerate changes in elevation such elevators, escalators, climbing step stools, tolerate and implement infection control measures including the wearing of PPE for 8 hours per day, tolerate exposure to hot and cold temperatures, be able to work at different heights, tolerate exposure to vibration, work in confined spaces, tolerate exposure to noise, dust, fumes, smoke, gases, acids, chemicals, detergents, solvents, body odors.

Occupational therapy students must be able to interact with others to provide client care and to complete the curriculum. To do so effectively, students must be able to:

- Communicate effectively both verbally and in writing in English.
- Perform in stressful or rapidly changing environments.
- Manage stress associated with completing exams, being observed by others, and presenting in front of audiences of various sizes.
- Proactively make use of resources to help maintain both physical and mental health.
- Maintain composure with others even in the face of intense academic or clinical situations, which may involve pain, grief, death, stress, communicable diseases, blood and body fluids, and or toxic substances.
- Self-reflect and accept suggestions and feedback, and respond by modifying behavior.
- Interact fairly and effectively with individuals, families, and groups from diverse social, emotional, cultural, and intellectual backgrounds in a variety of settings.
- Demonstrate compassion, empathy, altruism, integrity, honesty, caring, fairness, responsibility, concern for others, accountability, interest, tolerance, and motivation.
- Maintain general good health, self-care, and hygiene in order not to jeopardize the health and safety of self and others.
- Recognize and respond effectively to the emotional communications of others such as sadness, worry, agitation, pain.
- Identify client's or other's lack of comprehension of the therapist's communication and alter communication to gain understanding.
- Produce and interpret both verbal and written communication, such as policies and procedures, safety precautions, home programs, and clinical documentation.
- Use therapeutic communication, such as attending, clarifying, coaching, facilitating, and

touching.

- Advocate for one's role and collaborate within an interprofessional team.
- Delegate responsibilities when appropriate.
- Listen attentively and actively in order to receive and interpret oral communication.

Occupational therapy professionals must adhere to a code of ethics and engage in behaviors expected of a working professional. Therefore students must:

- Comply with all university and program policies and procedures as described in the student manual and the graduate catalog, as well as other official University documents.
- Adhere to the American Occupational Therapy Association's Code of Ethics.
- Comply with all local, state, and national legislation governing practice.
- Accept responsibility for their actions and take initiative to learn from and respond to challenges in a mature and responsible manner.
- Represent the university, the program, the profession and oneself in a professional manner as demonstrated through appropriate dress, respectful communication/interaction, proper etiquette/netiquette during all learning activities.
- Manage their own transportation to and from campus, community, and clinical education sites.
- Manage their time so that they are on time and fully prepared for all academic, community, and fieldwork/experiential activities.
- Demonstrate respect, courtesy, maturity, honesty, and integrity in all academic, fieldwork, community, and experiential activities;
- Exhibit a positive and compassionate attitude during academic, community, and fieldwork/experiential experiences
- Demonstrate composure and respect during activities that require exposure of body parts and palpation of body structures.
- Evaluate the impact of their actions on others.
- Take initiative to direct their own learning in all environments including completion of responsibilities without waiting for direction or reminders from others.
- Prioritize and organize multiple requirements to complete assigned tasks and responsibilities by their deadlines.
- Be flexible in adapting to change.
- Manage the emotional demands associated with pain, grief, death, stress, encountering communicable diseases, blood and body fluids, and toxic substances and when experiencing heavy course/workloads, fast paced environments; and/or unexpected or changing demands.
- Exercise judgment and attend to safety in all environments.
- Work cooperatively and collaboratively with others.
- Demonstrate regular attendance/punctuality.
- Communicate in a professional, appropriate, and timely way both verbally and in writing.
- Refrain from making threats or derogatory statements of any kind.
- Exhibit active and equal participation in group work.
- Refrain from placing excessive demands on faculty and staff.

Students with Disabilities and Essential Functions

Students with disabilities (as defined by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act) may be qualified to study occupational therapy with the use of reasonable accommodations. A student requesting accommodations will be required to provide documentation of the need for the accommodation. This documentation may include in the results of testing and/or information provided by doctors or medical professionals. After reviewing that documentation, the university may require the student to submit to our own testing and/or medical evaluations.

To be qualified for the study of occupational therapy students must be able to meet our academic standards and essential functions, with or without reasonable accommodation.

The university policy regarding the provision of accommodations is provided [here](#) and the [Center for Academic Success and Accessibility website](#) provides information about how to request and receive accommodations as well as faculty requirements for providing accommodations.

Accommodation is viewed as a means of assisting students with disabilities to meet essential standards by providing them with an equal opportunity to participate in all aspects of each course or clinical experience. (Reasonable accommodation is not intended to guarantee that students will be successful in meeting the requirements of a course or clinical education.)

Qualified students with disabilities, who are provided with reasonable accommodations, may use an auxiliary aid. These accommodations are designed to help the student meet learning outcomes without eliminating essential program elements or fundamentally altering the OT curriculum.

Please note that no disability can be reasonably accommodated with an aid that provides cognitive support or substitutes for essential clinical skills, or supplements clinical and ethical judgment. Thus, accommodations cannot eliminate essential program elements or fundamentally alter the OT curriculum.

The program is unable to make accommodations that present a threat to the health or safety of the individual or others, or fundamentally alter the nature of the curriculum.

Essential Functions Documentation

Upon admission to the program students must sign a form acknowledging that they have read and understand the essential functions described above and believe that they are capable of meeting these functions.

Students must demonstrate the ability to perform, or learn to perform, the essential functions. If they feel that they require reasonable accommodations for didactic and/or clinical components of the program, they must contact CASAS as described above before any accommodations will be made.

Students with a change in status during their matriculation in the program requiring accommodation must begin this process at the time of the status change. Due to the time it takes to properly evaluate and implement reasonable accommodations, it is recommended that students request accommodations as early as possible. When possible, make a request for accommodations at least 30 days before the start of a course or clinical education experience, except in the event of an unexpected occurrence.

Essential Functions Compliance Statement for the Occupational Therapy Student at Southern Connecticut State University

All students entering the program are expected to meet the minimum requirements identified in the essential functions section above. These essential functions are necessary for participation in academic, fieldwork, community, and experiential activities throughout the program. Your signature below indicates your acknowledgement that you meet these minimum standards.

I, _____ (printed name), hereby certify and acknowledge that I have fully read and understand the provided list of essential functions. My signature indicates that, to the best of my knowledge, I am able to meet these essential functions, with or without reasonable accommodations. In addition, I understand that should I require reasonable accommodations due to a disability, it is my responsibility to provide required documentation to the university. I understand that reasonable accommodations are determined on a case-by-case basis and are intended to provide students with an opportunity for fair and equitable participation without compromising the academic integrity of the university, the educational program curriculum, or impair the rights or opportunities of other students. I also acknowledge that fieldwork and experiential sites may have additional or different essential functions that must be met for participation at those sites.

I am aware that disclosure of a disability to the program or a fieldwork/experiential site is my responsibility. In the event that I disclose a disability, I will work with the Academic Fieldwork Coordinator to determine appropriate reasonable accommodations to meet the site-specific essential functions. I understand that the university will make every attempt to establish reasonable accommodations to meet my needs; however, I also understand that the university may not be able to assure accommodations are available, as each site's essential functions are unique to that site.

The program is unable to make accommodations that present a threat to the health or safety of the individual or others, or fundamentally alter the nature of the curriculum.

Student Signature

Date: _____

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