



**Samuel Merritt
University**

Department of Occupational Therapy

**DOCTOR OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PROGRAM
MASTER OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PROGRAM
STUDENT HANDBOOK**

2023 - 2024

Revised August 24, 2023

(version pending approval of AAPC)

Table of Contents

Welcome	3
Samuel Merritt University Mission, Vision and Values	4
Department of Occupational Therapy Mission, Vision and Philosophy	5
Statement on Justice Equity Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI)	7
Curriculum Design	7
Curriculum	13
Accreditation Status	14
Faculty and Staff	15
Academic Progress	16
Academic Advising	17
Professional Behaviors	18
Academic Progress	19
Academic Clinical Expectations	20
Faculty and Student Communication	20
Promoting Faculty-Student Mentorship	20
Collaborative Problem-Solving for Addressing Conflicts	21
Academic Policies	21
Student- Faculty Representative	27
Professional Organizations	29
References	30

WELCOME

On behalf of the Department of Occupational Therapy, welcome to the entry-level Doctor of Occupational Therapy (OTD) or Master of Occupational Therapy (MOT) Programs at Samuel Merritt University (SMU). As you begin and progress through your professional and graduate education, you will discover that occupational therapists view the world through a unique lens. This perspective impacts individuals and communities. We strive that our programs not only teach the fundamentals of occupational therapy practice but introduce you to ways that the profession of occupational therapy can help you fuel your passions, create an impact through holistic approaches, and advocate for individuals and communities.

To help you effectively progress through the professional coursework, this *Occupational Therapy Program Student Handbook* has been compiled to present information and policies relevant to you as an OT student. This handbook is a companion to the *Samuel Merritt University Catalog and Student Handbook*. You are responsible for knowing and understanding the policies and procedures found in this handbook as well as the *Samuel Merritt University Catalog and Student Handbook*. Please do not hesitate to ask for clarification if you have any questions about the information presented in this handbook. We also welcome your suggestions for inclusion of additional information that would be helpful to you. The Department of Occupational Therapy reserves the right to revise policies and procedures found in this handbook at any time it is deemed necessary. We will notify you of any needed revisions or changes that occur.

Congratulations on your selection of occupational therapy as a career. It is a transformative, dynamic, and respected field with many opportunities for growth, advancement, and achievement. We look forward to partnering with you on your educational and professional journey. Welcome!

Yvette Meré-Cook, EdD, OTR/L
Associate Professor and Chair
Department of Occupational Therapy
ymerecook@samuelmerritt.edu



**Samuel Merritt
University**

SAMUEL MERRITT UNIVERSITY VISION, MISSION, AND VALUES

Mission

Samuel Merritt University educates students to become highly skilled and compassionate healthcare professionals who positively transform the experience of care in diverse communities.

Vision

Samuel Merritt University will become nationally recognized as a premier, multi-specialty health sciences institution. Expert faculty and staff will shape an inclusive learning environment where all students experience best teaching practices and state-of-the-art learning approaches. The University will select and support students who will flourish in the rigorous academic programs, learn to practice expertly, and pass licensure or certifications examinations on their first attempt.

Values

At Samuel Merritt University, we value...

- A learning environment where we challenge ourselves and our students to think critically, seek mastery, and act compassionately;
- A collegial environment where we are fair, respectful, and behave with integrity;
- A collaborative environment where we partner with one another and with others in the community;
- An innovative environment where we take reasoned risks and move nimbly;
- A results-oriented environment where we provide and expect exceptional performance and service.

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY GRADUATE PROGRAMS

VISION & MISSION

Vision

We will be an innovative graduate level program preparing students to provide exceptional, holistic occupational therapy to meet the evolving occupational needs of society.

Mission

To provide transformational professional education that prepares students to provide holistic, client-centered, and evidence-based occupational therapy to diverse communities in a continuously evolving healthcare environment.

Aims of Our Graduate Programs:

- Provide a creative and innovative graduate occupational therapy program that meets and exceeds professional standards of excellence;
- Educate students to meet the societal needs for occupational therapy services;
- Educate qualified students from diverse backgrounds to become competent, compassionate and contributing health care professionals;
- Offer curricula designed to prepare graduates who can think logically, critically and independently; who demonstrate competence in the application of knowledge and skills; and whose behavior is guided by professional, humanitarian and ethical values;
- Facilitate the participation of faculty, staff and students in community service, scholarship and professional activities;
- Engage in activities that contribute to the health and well-being of the community;
- Cultivate a caring atmosphere in which occupational therapy students, faculty, and community service providers work together to optimize their personal and professional development.

Philosophy

“Occupational therapy is defined as the therapeutic use of everyday life occupations with persons, groups, or populations (i.e., the client) for the purpose of enhancing or enabling participation” (AOTA, 2020, p.1). The Department of Occupational Therapy has built our philosophy on the premise that the process of "occupation" has a restorative or normalizing effect. The ultimate goal of occupational therapy is to enable individuals to assume an optimal level of health, well-

being, and participation in the activities that are personally meaningful to them.

Within the context of this philosophy, the faculty of the Department of Occupational Therapy believes each individual is unique and is best understood as a "biopsychosocial" human being. Each person is a unified whole who operates in a variety of roles and lives in continually developing, mutual relationships with others and with their environments. These environments consist of the aggregate of physical, psychosocial, cultural and spiritual realms within which persons and society interact and engage in purposeful occupations. The goal of occupational therapy practice is to assist individuals, groups, and populations to achieve health and meaningful occupational participation within the individual, situational and cultural realms.

The development of values, attitudes, knowledge, and skills necessary to competently serve diverse populations is required in professional education. The balanced study of the natural and social sciences and the humanities provides a foundation that promotes critical judgment, respect, and concern for individuals, communities, and society. A broad education in the liberal arts and sciences is requisite for the development of knowledge, skills, and inquiry essential for occupational therapy practice. Occupational therapy upholds and draws upon the tradition of scientific inquiry, contributing to the body of knowledge in health care.

The Department of Occupational Therapy strives to best serve each new generation of students by fostering an educational and social milieu that allows optimum learning. We recognize our students as adult learners who must cooperate with each other. Teaching and learning are shared processes that best occur in an environment that stimulates inquiry, promotes critical and independent thinking, and supports personal and professional development based on past experience, knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The faculty recognizes the uniqueness of the individual learner and implements a variety of teaching strategies to liberate the full range of individual potential. The changing health care delivery system of the future relies on the cooperation and interdependence of individuals in interprofessional teams for higher productivity and effective intervention.

The epistemological underpinnings of occupational therapy practice lie in the concept of addressing the whole person, rather than one segment of their being. The Mind-body Model views the mind and body as one entity and derives its scientific support from research in neuroscience, health psychology, and psychoneuroimmunology. These evolving scientific disciplines provide the foundation to understanding the therapeutic value of occupation as we apply it in our study of

occupational therapy.

STATEMENT ON JUSTICE, EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION

The Department of Occupational Therapy of SMU recognizes that the current practices of the occupational therapy profession do not adequately represent or consider the complexities of our diverse societies in the U.S. Our department is determined to rectify these deficits within the profession that marginalize under-represented and vulnerable individuals and populations. We must continuously improve our policies, procedures, and planning to advance equity and inclusion of all people. We will model inclusiveness. We will engage in our own lifelong learning as well as teach and mentor all students about how complex justice issues including racism, social and structural determinants, inequity, and disparity affect health. We aim to identify, create, and implement occupational therapy practices that ensure occupational justice and respect the values of all those we serve.

CURRICULUM DESIGN

The Mind-body Model is infused throughout the graduate curriculum. The science curriculum in our graduate programs is fully complemented by the holistic fundamentals that inculcate students to recognize the whole person in the context of their physical, psycho-social, cultural, and spiritual realm. The rigorous science curriculum is seamlessly woven with a Mind-body philosophy. Occupational therapy is strongly influenced by medicine, and functional impairments fall into the biomedicine model (treating physical injuries or symptoms of illnesses with specific intervention techniques); however, occupational therapy practice goes far beyond the realm of the physical body. The occupational therapy process addresses clients and their unique occupations as well as the context and environment in which those occupations are performed (AOTA, 2020).

The curricular design of our graduate programs is a progressive, evidence-based education of knowledge and skills, and application of both, using a Mind-body Model. The themes or threads of our graduate programs are: evidenced-based practice, foundational knowledge, critical analysis and problem solving, occupational therapy theoretical tenets, occupational therapy processes, professionalism, clinical reasoning, and scholarship. Within these themes, students develop understanding of and skills in program development and implementation, research processes, advocacy and leadership.

Evidence-based Practice

The curriculum emphasizes evidence-based practice, a cornerstone of occupational therapy practice. Evidence based practice has been defined as “the conscientious, explicit and judicious use of current best evidence in making decisions about the care of the individual patient. It means integrating individual clinical expertise with the best available external clinical evidence from systematic research” (Sackett, 1996, p. 71).

The Department of Occupational Therapy believes in educating students on the essentials of evidence-based practice, which include researching, identifying, and critically reviewing evidence relevant to interventions used by occupational therapy practitioners. Throughout the curriculum, students are frequently expected to locate and report on supporting evidence when completing scholarly papers and developing intervention plans. Students will develop clinical judgment by incorporating credible evidence along with client values and clinical expertise when making decisions about occupational therapy practice.

Foundational Knowledge

Early coursework aims to facilitate students’ understanding of human anatomy and physiology, neuroscience, kinesiology, and biomechanics. In addition, literature search, review and synthesis; professional writing; and oral communication prepare students to meet literary, scientific, academic, and practice expectations of the profession. For example, prior to delving into occupational therapy practices, students learn about common human conditions that affect a person’s occupational performance. Problem-based learning is introduced in the first semester to encourage students to apply knowledge and to develop skilled inquiry.

Critical Analysis and Problem Solving

The process of critical analysis begins in the first semester when students have the opportunity through the foundation course, the course on occupations across the lifespan, and the first integrative seminar course to explore, identify, and reflect on complex factors that enable human occupational performance. Students also acquire basic research and analytic skills from the introductory research course. As students have acquired these basic skills, case studies of

individuals with disabilities and occupational performance deficits are used to further develop critical analysis and problem-solving skills.

A course offered in the second semester, specifically to the OTD students, aims to develop students' clinical research knowledge and skills through active participation in analysis and interpretation of quantitative and qualitative data. The final semester series of research inquiry affords students a rigorous acquisition of research skills and concepts (applied in occupational therapy relevant contexts), which culminate with a systematic review of research.

The students' participation in guided clinical experiences, which include serving adults with psychosocial dysfunction, children with developmental delay or learning impairment, and adults with physical disability; and three additional sequential integrative seminars utilizing both problem-based learning and simulation, demands the synthesis of skills in research, critical analysis, and problem solving in order to address occupational performance issues that are facing real and simulated clients. During the final semester of the OTD program, students complete their capstone, which also requires synthesis of skills in research, critical analysis, and problem solving.

Occupational Therapy Theoretical Tenets

The fundamental occupational therapy theoretical concept of occupation in relationship to human development, health, life's purpose and meaning, and existence is presented in the first semester and reiterated and emphasized throughout the curriculum. Through knowledge and understanding of the history, philosophy, beliefs, principles, values, and ever-evolving theory and ideology of occupational therapy, students are expected to understand the intricacy of how human beings engage in occupations to define their lives. Students learn that occupation is a driving and organizing force in human life. Occupational therapy theories and frames of reference are introduced to students in the first semester and are further applied to clinical practices in clinical courses throughout the program. Theoretical tenets are also re-visited in courses offering a clinical laboratory or clinical application assignments, requiring students to critically select and apply appropriate occupational therapy theories, perspectives, and frames of reference as a foundation for clinical evaluation and intervention to case studies and real-life clients.

Occupational Therapy Processes

The *Occupational Therapy Practice Framework* (AOTA, 2020) is introduced to students at the start of the program. To ensure comprehension of this basic yet complex occupational therapy conceptual and practice framework as a fundamental tool for evaluation and intervention with individuals, groups, and populations with a wide range of needs. The Therapeutic Media, Materials and Processes course promotes the students' ability to self-analyze their occupations, skills, patterns, and contexts. The skills for activity/task analysis needed to understand occupation in relationship to the whole human being, mind, body, spirit, and context are constantly reinforced throughout the program. Additionally, students are guided to acquire the basic skills of relating to and understanding the wholeness of their clients through effective communication and analysis of client factors and performance skills.

Having acquired the concepts, knowledge, and skills needed to view human beings and their occupations through the lenses of a competent occupational therapy practitioner, students begin the journey of applying theories to practices while specific skills are learned and practiced throughout the last two semesters of coursework prior to Level II Fieldwork. Although occupational therapy practice for children with developmental or learning disorders, adults with physical disability, and adults with psychosocial dysfunction are explored in three separate courses, the learning experiences for students are consistent in order to establish a standard strategy, shown to be effective, for students' learning. The combination of didactic and hands-on learning bridges the gap between theory and practice. For each of these courses, the content emphasizes use of occupations, tasks, and activities to promote wellness and participation, while addressing the wholeness of a human being.

Consistent with the mission and philosophy of the Department of Occupational Therapy, a holistic approach is emphasized, thus in the first year of the program students are exposed to various complementary approaches to augment traditional occupational therapy services.

Professionalism

To fully embrace the holistic concepts stated in mission and philosophy of the Department of Occupational Therapy, students are introduced to the complex environment of health care in order to understand how our profession is situated within that environment. Students will explore the roles and responsibilities of occupational therapy practitioners in the sociocultural and healthcare environment, administration and management of the OT profession, and professional development.

Students will learn the importance of clinical competence and promotion of the profession. The professional roles that students will be progressively exposed to are intended to express the continuous development of a professional as well as the potential growth of the profession.

Concepts of professionalism are introduced at the beginning (during orientation to the program) and throughout our graduate programs. The department has a practice of promptly addressing concerns about professional behavior and assisting students with improving their professional behavior.

Students will have numerous opportunities to practice and demonstrate professionalism throughout the program and in various contexts including large and small group work, faculty interaction, and faculty supervised clinical practice. In the second semester, students will have opportunities to work with Doctor of Physical Therapy students in the communications course, allowing further practice in inter-professional communication. We expect professionalism during the fieldwork experiences and plan to further shape student skills by building confidence in leadership, advocacy and, for OTD students, the implementation of the capstone project.

Clinical Reasoning Skills

Assisting the student to develop sound clinical reasoning skills is an important goal for the curriculum design. Foundational knowledge and skills are first instructed to students, followed by evaluation of their comprehension of knowledge and ability to demonstrate skills. Throughout the didactic coursework, students are constantly challenged to apply learned knowledge in case studies and class discussions. We have developed four sequential problem-based courses that utilize our simulation center to allow students to apply their knowledge and to demonstrate use of clinical reasoning skills. By the second year, students must apply clinical reasoning in all three community participant laboratories during evaluation, intervention planning, and faculty-supervised provision of occupational therapy intervention for clients. Having students implement intervention strategies, analyze outcomes, and determine efficacy of applied interventions provides for continual practice of clinical reasoning.

Scholarship

Students develop their scholarship skills by engaging in information-seeking activities, critical analysis of found information, and synthesis of obtained information in clinical reasoning processes. In the first semester, students are introduced to types of research, critical analysis of

published research, and scholarly writing. Following this introductory course is a second research theory course that serves to develop advanced skills in statistical procedures, data analysis and data interpretation for OTD students. In the first summer semester, students culminate their research skills through a rigorous research process of systematic review to produce a scholarly paper and dissemination of the research process and findings.

Two important documents have informed our curriculum design: *Accreditation Standards for a Doctoral-Degree-Level Educational Program for the Occupational Therapist* (Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education, 2018); and *Occupational Therapy Practice Framework: Domain and Process, 4th Edition* (AOTA, 2020). These documents have provided the guide posts necessary to develop a viable entry-level doctoral program in occupational therapy.

CURRICULUM

Year One	
Fall Semester (15.5 Units)	
OT 601/701	Integrative Seminar in Occupational Therapy Practices I(1)
OT 605/705	Culture and Occupations (1 unit)
OT 610/710	Anatomical and Physiological Basis for Human Occupation (4.5)
OT611/711	Foundations of Occupational Therapy (3)
OT 612/712	Theories of Inquiry and Research Methodology (3)
OT 619/719	Human Occupation Throughout the Life Span (3)
Spring Semester (14 units)	
OT 613/713	Introduction to Psychopathology (1)
OT 616/716	Therapeutic Media, Materials and Processes (2)
OT 617/717	Interpersonal and Interprofessional Communication (2)
OT 618/718	Functional Neuroscience (3)
OT 720*	Theories of Inquiry and Research II (2)
OT 627/727	Kinesiology and Biomechanics (4)
Summer Semester (11 Units)	
OT 602/702	Integrative Seminar in Occupational Therapy Practices II (.5)
OT 609/709	Introduction to Professional Documentation (1) ONLINE
OT 615/715	Scholarly Writing (1)
OT 621/721	Introduction to Fieldwork I (3)
OT 628/728	Administration and Management (3)
OT 633/733	Health Promotion and Wellness (2)
Year Two	
Fall Semester (15.5 Units)	
OT 603/703	Integrative Seminar in Occupational therapy Practices III (.5)
OT 723*	Capstone Project Exploration (2)
OT 624/724	Conditions of Human Dysfunction (3)
OT 626/726	Theory and Practice in Psychosocial Dysfunction (4)
OT 632/732	Advanced Clinical Practice (pediatrics) (4)
OT 652/752	Advanced Leadership (2.5)
Spring Semester (14 Units)	
OT 604/704	Integrative Seminar in Occupational Therapy Practices IV (1)
OT 631/731	Occupational Adaptations and Introduction to Modalities (3)
OT 636/736	Advanced Clinical Practice (Adults) (4)
OT 629/729	Theory and Practice in Physical Dysfunction (4)
OT 735*	Capstone Planning (2)
Summer Semester (6 units)	
OT 640/740	Fieldwork Level IIA (6)
Year Three	
Fall Semester (6 units)	
OT 641/741	Fieldwork Level IIB (6)
Spring Semester (9)	
OT 754*	Capstone Implementation (6)
OT 755*	Capstone Report (3)
Total OTD Units = 91, Total MOT Units = 76	

*Courses are OTD only courses.

ACCREDITATION STATUS

The Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) is the regional accreditation agency responsible for the evaluation of the quality and effectiveness of institutions offering the baccalaureate degree and above in California, Hawaii, Guam and the Pacific Basin. Samuel Merritt University has been reaccredited until Spring 2031. The core purpose of WASC accreditation is to assure the educational community and general public that an institution meets the Standards of Accreditation, and the Core Commitments to Institutional Capacity and Education Effectiveness. Student learning is at the heart of the review process.

The OTD Program has been granted full accreditation until 2023-2024 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. The phone number for AOTA is [\(301\) 652-6611](tel:3016526611). The email is: <https://acoteonline.org/>

The Master of Occupational Therapy (MOT) at SMU was re-accredited for 8 years until July 1, 2027.

Graduates of the MOT or OTD Programs are eligible to take the national certification examination for the occupational therapist administered by the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT) (www.NBCOT.org). After successful completion of this exam, the individual will be an Occupational Therapist, Registered (OTR). The credential will qualify the individual for state licensure in the United States.

The United States Department of Education recognizes ACOTE as the accrediting agency for professional programs in the field of occupational therapy. To be in compliance with accreditation, educational programs in occupational therapy must meet or exceed the minimum standards outlined in the 2018 STANDARDS FOR AN ACCREDITED EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM FOR THE OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST OR OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSISTANT. The standards document describes the minimum standards of quality used in accrediting programs that prepare individuals to enter the occupational therapy profession. The extent to which a program complies with these standards determines its accreditation status.

FACULTY AND STAFF

- Alondra Ammon, MOT, OTR
- Marci Baptista, OTD, MOTR/L, CHT, CEAS
- Jena Bischel, Administrative Assistant
- Claire Bonde, MOT, OTR/L
- Nancy Chee OTD, OTR/L CHT
- Beth Ching OTD, MEd, BSOT, OTR/L
- Ciara Cox PhD, OT/L
- Nandini Dasguta, PhD
- Helena Downs, Administrative Assistant
- Dominique Embrey OTD, OTR/L
- Leila Gabriel EdD, OTR/L
- Jessalyn Gagui, OTD. OTR/L
- Ginny Gibson OTD, OTR/L, CHT
- Gordon Giles PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA
- Goli Hashemi MPH, OTR/L
- Kate Hayner EdD, OTR/L
- Daniel Jolles, OTD, OTR/L
- Jack Kleine OTD, OTR/L
- Karissa Legleiter, MA, BS
- Scarth Locke MOT, OTR/L
- Yvette Meré-Cook, EdD, OTR/L
- Linda Monroe MPT, OCS
- Barb Puder PhD
- Jessica Richman, OTD, OTR/L
- Darlyn San Jose, MOT, OTR/L
- Chi-Kwan Shea PhD, OTR/L
- Quiara Smith, MS, OTR/L
- Andrew Ward Smith, PhD
- Jennifer Tobin, OTD, OTR/L
- Diane Tom, OTD, OTR/L
- Robyn Wu OTD, OTR/L

ACADEMIC ADVISING

Each student will be assigned to an academic advisor. This faculty member will remain the student's advisor throughout the academic course work. When beginning Fieldwork II, the Academic Fieldwork Coordinator will assume the role of student advisor for all students. The academic advisor is responsible for consultation or guidance with respect to courses and program requirements as well as individual problems that impact students' educational endeavors. Students are encouraged to meet with the assigned advisor once a semester to review their progress through the program. For doctoral students, once they complete Fieldwork II and start capstone, the capstone internal faculty member is the student advisor.

The faculty recognize that student success is dependent on multiple factors and can change throughout the program as life circumstances may change. To support students, time is set aside during bi-monthly departmental meetings to discuss concerns about students' performance while maintaining confidentiality regarding personal aspects of students' life. This allows the faculty to identify individualized ways of supporting students such as identifying additional resources or strategies to optimize student success in the program. Whenever possible, based on departmental resources, the support will be provided to the students internally within the department, but at times students may be advised to seek support at the university level.

Examples of challenges faced by students may include identified learning differences; coping with life events such as illness, injuries, loss of a loved one; and difficulties in completing course and program expectations related to writing skills; and professional behaviors and accountability. Examples of recommendations include referring students to the university Disability Resource Center (DRC), the Student Health and Counseling Center (SHAC), peer tutoring, and additional meetings with program faculty and advisors.

Students achieve a passing grade in a course only when minimal course expectations as stated in the course syllabus are met. Students with identified challenges must take full responsibility for ensuring their academic success by promptly responding to recommendations and additional supports provided by the faculty.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

In addition to the content below, a university-wide Academic Integrity Policy is available in the Samuel Merritt University Catalog and Student Handbook. Every student is responsible to review, and become familiar with, the Academic Integrity Policy as presented in the Samuel Merritt University Catalog and Student Handbook. <https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog>
<https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog>

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is not acceptable and may result in a number of consequences. Most people understand plagiarism to be the action of copying someone else's work, words, or ideas without giving proper credit. Sometimes plagiarism is evident, and other times it is not as clear to students.

There are degrees of plagiarism, from outright copying written material without quotations or citation, to copying a small phrase or statistic without properly crediting the source. We assume all graduate students understand what plagiarism is and how to avoid it. If you do not feel you understand plagiarism, please seek out help. Many sources are available in the library and online.

Faculty recognizes plagiarism could be unintentional. Whether the student intended to plagiarize is considered, but the extent of the infraction will determine the outcome rather than the student's reported intent. If a faculty member believes plagiarism has occurred on an assignment in their course in the OTD or MOT program, the faculty member may do any of the following, depending on the extent of plagiarism:

- Offer the student additional guidance regarding the mechanics of properly crediting others' work.
- Counsel the student on plagiarism with a notice of this occurrence placed in the student's file.
- Give the student a failed grade on the assignment and require the student to complete the assignment again for the maximum possible passing points of 70%. A notice of this occurrence will go into the student's file.
- Fail the student's assignment without the option of redoing the assignment. A notice of this occurrence will be placed in the student's file.

If a student has record of prior counsel regarding plagiarism, the second occurrence will be sent to the Chair of the department for determination of consequences. Or, if the plagiarism is deemed to be so egregious on the first occurrence, the faculty member may inform the Chair of the department for possible further actions. The Chair will make a determination after counsel with two uninvolved faculty members. The determination will take into account the following:

- The quantity of plagiarism in an assignment
- The number of prior occurrences
- The student's feedback on the occurrence
- The assignment instructions that were given to students
- The involved faculty member's statement and suggested outcome
- The extent of plagiarism (from citing the wrong source or poor paraphrasing to copying a full paragraph or paper).

Possible actions recommended by the Chair include: counseling and remedial work, failing the assignment, receiving a D in the course, or failing the course and subsequent dismissal from the program.

PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIORS

Professional behaviors in occupational therapy practice are essential for establishing respectful relationships with clients, families, colleagues, and other professionals. Our communication, language, and appearance can greatly affect interactions, relationships and outcomes. The Department of Occupational Therapy utilizes a self-assessment process to support the development of students' professional behaviors. Students will complete this self-assessment during the fall semester of the first and second years of the program. Each student will meet with their respective faculty advisor to review the self-assessment and set goals for a professional development plan. Each student's unique plan will address the areas of growth and development based on their individual needs. Throughout the program, all faculty will provide students with feedback regarding professional behaviors observed in the classroom and other school-related activities. If there are professional behavior concerns regarding a specific student, the concerns may be directed to the faculty advisor, who may follow up with additional remediation support.

All students are expected to behave in a professional manner at all times with the SMU learning environment (whether face-to-face or online). Please refer to the *SMU Catalog and Student Handbook*.

Professional behaviors include, but are not limited to:

- Engaging in responsible and courteous communication
- Maintaining a respectful tone of voice in all communications (not yelling or speaking loudly over others)
- Listening to and acknowledging feedback from peers and faculty
- Adhering to dress codes for class and clinical activities as outlined in the individual syllabi
- Participating actively in course activities and maintaining attention in class
- Following directions during program activities including classroom and clinical settings

Examples of unprofessional behaviors include:

- Tardiness
- Side-talking in class
- Absence from class without notifying the professor prior to class
- Using computers and electronic media during class for non-class related activity
- Not responding to email communications
- Refusing to meet with a faculty member or the department Chair upon request of the faculty member or department Chair.

Faculty will track all unprofessional behaviors and will address these with the student as appropriate. If three occurrences of the same behavior occur, the student will be required to meet with the department Chair. A mutual plan of resolution will be determined and a record will be placed in the student's file.

ACADEMIC PROGRESS

Refer to the [SMU Catalog and Student Handbook](#) and the corresponding [Academic Policies](#). Under the "Progression & Graduation-Graduate Programs", information is provided about minimum grade point average and progression requirements for the Occupational Therapy programs.

ACADEMIC CLINICAL EXPECTATIONS

In the clinical setting, observations and fieldwork experiences are designed to complement and reinforce academic course work. The University expects students and faculty to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with federal and state law and ethical practice; and to observe and honor patients' rights, privacy, informed consent and dignity.

In the clinical setting, the fieldwork educator is authorized to dismiss a student for cause without notice. Situations in which this action is justifiable include but are not limited to behavior that seriously jeopardized the safety of others; substance abuse; refusal to follow a supervisor's instructions without providing any explanation; or violation of federal law, state law and ethical practice. Such dismissal from a clinical site is referred to the Academic Fieldwork Coordinator and the Chair of the Department of Occupational Therapy. The student may be subject to further disciplinary action.

PROMOTING FACULTY-STUDENT MENTORSHIP

Academic and Research Support

- Students are encouraged to take the lead and initiate communications with the faculty of record for a particular course to receive instructional clarification, additional academic support, potential tutoring, or to address other coursework related issues.
- Students are encouraged to take the lead and initiate communications with designated academic advisers to receive academic guidance and support as indicated.
- Students may contact other faculty members, who may not be the designated academic adviser or faculty of record, for potential collaborations and mentorship based on areas of practice and/or research interest

Faculty Response to Student E-mail: As a collective, we prioritize our responsiveness to students' inquiries, concerns, and needs. Please review our faculty commitment to respond to student emails in a predictable timeline:

- For part- and full-time faculty, response time to electronic communications from students will be within 48 hours of the initial posting on weekdays (weekends and holidays not counted in the 48-hour period).

- If faculty are away from their departmental and teaching duties for an extended period of time, an automated response will be generated to inform students. Students are welcome to reach out to the department chair if their needs or concerns are time sensitive.

COLLABORATIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING TO ADDRESS CONFLICTS

Addressing Conflicts with Peers

Collaborative relationships, such as working closely with others, may involve disagreements with peers. We encourage students to initiate attempts to solve minor conflicts. If students need additional mentorship or mediation, we welcome students to contact a faculty member and/or the department chair. If a situation rises to the level of harassment, bullying, or discrimination, please reach out to the department chair and access the university resources for students within the University and Student Handbook:

<https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog/academic-personal-professional-integrity>

Addressing Conflicts with faculty or staff

Our faculty shares the collective value of supporting and mentoring students. If conflicts or disagreements arise, we encourage students to speak directly to the faculty or staff members involved. We also welcome students, faculty, and/or staff to include the department Chair within these conversations. Additional student resources and supports are offered through Student Life and Student Services: <https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog/student-life-student-services>

ACADEMIC POLICIES

University-wide policies are fully addressed in the Samuel Merritt University Catalog. Every student is responsible to review, and become familiar with, the policies and procedures of Samuel Merritt University as presented in the Samuel Merritt University Catalog and Student Handbook.

Academic Advising

In addition to the departmental academic advising, also refer to the section on Academic Advising in the Samuel Merritt University Catalog.

<https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog>

Access to Records

Refer to the section on Academic records in the Samuel Merritt University Catalog.

<https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog/academic-policies>

Attendance

In addition to the information below, refer to the section on Attendance in the Samuel Merritt University Catalog.

<https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog/academic-policies>

Regular classroom attendance is expected and essential to successful academic achievement in the Doctor of Occupational Therapy program and Master of Occupational Therapy program. Students are responsible for all work missed due to absences and must make arrangements with their instructors to make-up work. Make-up work for unexcused absences, including missed examinations, is at the discretion of the faculty member. All classes will have sign-in sheets. It is the responsibility of each student to sign in. No student may sign in for another student.

Award of Academic Credit

Refer to the section on Award of Academic Credit in the Samuel Merritt University Catalog.

<https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog>

Advanced Standing Credit for Post-Professional Graduate Programs

Refer to the section on Advanced Standing Credit for Post-Professional Graduate Programs in the Samuel Merritt University Catalog.

<https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog/academic-policies>

Transfer Credit

Refer to the section on Transfer Credit in the Samuel Merritt University Catalog.

<https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog/academic-policies>

Challenge Credit

Refer to the section on Challenge Credit in the Samuel Merritt University Catalog.

<https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog/academic-policies>

Grading Policy

In addition to the information below, refer to the section on Grading in the Samuel Merritt University Catalog. <https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog/academic-policies>

Plus or minus grades will not be offered in the Occupational Therapy Program. Refer to each course syllabus for the grading criteria in each course.

Graduation and Credentialing Requirements

Refer to the section on graduation and credentialing in the Samuel Merritt University Catalog. <https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog/graduation-requirements>

Please review the requirements for either the MOT or OTD programs.

Audit

Refer to the section on Audit in the Samuel Merritt University Catalog.

<https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog/academic-policies>

Repeating a Course

Refer to the section on Repeating a Course in the Samuel Merritt University Catalog.

<https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog/academic-policies>

Pass Fail Grading

Refer to the section on Pass Fail Grading in the Samuel Merritt University Catalog.

<https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog>

In Progress Grades

Refer to the section on In Progress Grades in the Samuel Merritt University Catalog.

<https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog/academic-policies>

Withdrawal From a Course or Withdrawal From the University

In addition to the content below, refer to the section on Withdrawal From a Course or Withdrawal From the University in the Samuel Merritt University Catalog.

<https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog/academic-policies>

In the OTD or MOT program, if a student withdraws from a course, then the student may become a part-time student and consequently may be subject to a change in tuition. Additionally, the student may be restricted in progressing to full-time status in subsequent semesters.

Scheduling of Classes

Refer to the section on Scheduling of Classes in the Samuel Merritt University Catalog.

<https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog>

Registration

Refer to the section on Scheduling of Classes in the Samuel Merritt University Catalog.

<https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog/academic-policies>

Class Lists

Refer to the section on Class Lists in the Samuel Merritt University Catalog.

<https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog>

Disclosures

Refer to the section on Disclosures in the Samuel Merritt University Catalog.

<https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog>

Drop/Add

In addition to the content below, refer to the section on Drop/Add in the Samuel Merritt University

<https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog/academic-policies>

In the OTD or MOT Program, if a student drops a course during the add/drop period, that student will become a part-time student and consequently will be subject to a change in tuition and may be restricted in progressing to fulltime status in subsequent semesters.

Transcript Requests

Refer to the section on Transcript Requests in the Samuel Merritt University Catalog.

<https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog>

Clinical Policy

Refer to section on Clinical Policy in the Samuel Merritt University Catalog.

<https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog/clinical-policies>

Client/Patient Participation in Course-related Activities

Refer to the section on Client/Patient Participation in Course-related Activities

in the Samuel Merritt University Catalog.

<https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog/clinical-policies>

Participation in Course Activities

Refer to the section on Participation in Course Activities in the Samuel Merritt University Catalog.

<https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog>

Liability and Malpractice

In addition to the content below, refer to the section on Liability and Malpractice in the Samuel Merritt University Catalog.

<https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog/clinical-policies>

Safe and Professional Practice in Clinical Settings

Refer to the section on Safe and Professional Practice in Clinical Settings in the Samuel Merritt University Catalog.

<https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog/clinical-policies>

Licensure Requirements/Denial of License

Refer to the section on Licensure Requirements/Denial of License in the Samuel Merritt University Catalog.

<https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog/clinical-policies>

Evaluations

In addition to the content below, refer to the section on Evaluations in the Samuel Merritt University Catalog.

<https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog>

All instructors and courses are evaluated each semester. Students are encouraged to provide constructive feedback of the courses and faculty for continuous improvement of curriculum and teaching skills. The results of these evaluations will be anonymous. The intent of the course evaluation is to improve classroom and laboratory instruction. Comments of a personal nature concerning the instructor are not appropriate on professional evaluations. Students should seek out the instructor during the instructor's office hours to discuss concerns about the instructor's

teaching methods.

Finals Week

Refer to the section on Finals Week in the Samuel Merritt University Catalog.

<https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog/academic-policies>

Forms and Petitions

Refer to the section on Forms and Petitions in the Samuel Merritt University Catalog.

<https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog/academic-policies>

Independent Study

Refer to the section on Independent Study in the Samuel Merritt University Catalog.

<https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog/academic-policies>

Clinical Readiness

Refer to the section on Clinical Readiness in the Samuel Merritt University Catalog.

<https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog/academic-policies>

Leave of Absence

Refer to the section on Leave of Absence in the Samuel Merritt University Catalog.

<https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog/academic-policies>

Student Classification

Refer to the section on Student Classification in the Samuel Merritt University Catalog.

<https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog/academic-policies>

Student Research Degree Requirements

Refer to the section on Student Research Degree Requirements in the Samuel Merritt University Catalog.

<https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog>

Progression and Graduation – Graduate Programs

In addition to the content below, refer to the section on Graduate Progression and Graduation in the Samuel Merritt University Catalog.

<https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog/academic-policies>

Students are expected to maintain current CPR certification, provide evidence of successful completion of a tutorial on blood-borne pathogens, and maintain updated required immunizations and TB tests prior to progressing to fieldwork.

Graduate Probation and Dismissal

Refer to the section on Graduate Probation and Dismissal (found within the section, Progression and Graduation – Graduate Programs, scroll down to Master and Doctor in Occupational Therapy) in the Samuel Merritt University Catalog. <https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog/academic-policies>

Graduate Dismissal

Refer to the section on Graduate Dismissal (found within the section, Progression and Graduation – Graduate Programs) in the Samuel Merritt University Catalog.
<https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog/academic-policies>

Graduation Requirement

Refer to the section on Graduate Procedures in the Samuel Merritt University Catalog for MOT.
<https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog/graduation-requirements>

Refer to the section on Graduate Procedures in the Samuel Merritt University Catalog for OTD.
<https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog/graduation-requirements>

Dates of Degree Conferral (within Graduation Procedures)

Refer to the section on Dates of Degree Conferral in the Samuel Merritt University Catalog.
<https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog/academic-policies>

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

Each cohort shall have two representatives who will serve as a communication liaison between the cohort and the faculty. Responsibilities include:

- Gathering input from classmates about program-wide / cohort-wide issues and communicating them professionally to the faculty.
- Relaying information in a professional manner from the faculty to the cohort.

- Attending the bi-monthly OT departmental meeting (one or both of the representatives). This meeting is normally scheduled on the first and third Thursday of the month.
- Conducting their responsibilities in an unbiased and professional manner.

Students who are interested in serving as class representatives should submit their names to the department's administrative assistant along with a brief statement of between 25-50 words. Other students may encourage peers to run for election, but only the person interested in serving as a representative can submit their statement. After the candidates have submitted their statements, an election will be held with every student casting one vote. Elections shall be by secret ballot.

- The two candidates who receive the most votes will be appointed the class representatives for their cohort.
- The department administrative assistant will hold the election and announce the results to faculty and students.
- The representatives shall serve for one year.

The elections will occur at the start of the academic year, at the end of the second week of classes. At the end of the second year, if both representatives are MOT students then the OTD cohort will be asked to select a representative via a separate election managed by the administrative assistant.

If students or faculty have concerns about the class representatives being unable to fulfill their responsibilities, they should contact the Chair of the department for guidance.

PROFESSIONAL AND STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

American Occupational Therapy Association

The national organization for the occupational therapy profession is the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA). The Association is responsible for developing standards for education and practice, for promoting the profession in important political issues, and for marketing the profession to the public and to other professional organizations. Membership in AOTA is mandatory for students in the OTD or MOT program at Samuel Merritt University. Benefits include receiving *The American Journal of Occupational Therapy* and *OT Practice* (a monthly newsletter that includes employment notices). Additionally, membership with AOTA provides access to important information via online resources as needed for classes and discounted

continuing education opportunities. Website: www.aota.org

Occupational Therapy Association of California

Every state has a professional association for occupational therapy. In California, this association is called the Occupational Therapy Association of California (OTAC) and is one of the largest in the nation. The annual OTAC conference is well attended and takes place in either Northern or Southern California. Membership includes a newsletter and reduced rates for conferences and workshops. Membership in OTAC is mandatory for students in the OTD or MOT program at Samuel Merritt University. Website: www.otaonline.org

Student Occupational Therapy Association

The Student Occupational Therapy Association (SOTA) is the official organization for educational programs. The purpose of the SOTA is to promote greater unity and understanding among occupational therapy students and to present educational material that is of particular interest. The student association also serves as a community of support, is active in fund raising, and acclimates the student with the organizational structure and decision-making process of the profession. Students elect their own officers and send representatives to local chapter meetings.

Coalition of Occupational Therapy Advocates for Diversity (COTAD)

The COTAD chapter at SMU is a student-run organization with two (2) student Co-Chairs and one Faculty Sponsor.

The aim of COTAD is to empower occupational therapy leaders to engage in practices that increase justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI); anti-racism and anti-oppression for a transformative occupational therapy profession. Vision - A future in which occupational therapy is accessible, inclusive, and effective for all. Network – An international network of OT practitioners and OT/OTA students, www.cotad.org.

REFERENCES

- Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education. (2018). 2018 Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education [ACOTE] standards and interpretive guide. Retrieved August 14,2022 from <https://acoteonline.org/accreditation-explained/standards/>
- American Occupational Therapy Association. (2017). Vision 2025. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 71(3), 7103420010p1. <https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2017.713002>
- American Occupational Therapy Association. (2020). Occupational therapy practice framework: Domain and process (4th ed.). *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 74(Suppl. 1), 7412410010p1–7412410010p87. <https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2020.74S2001>
- Christiansen, C., Baum, M. C., & Bass-Haugen, J. (Eds.). (2005). *Occupational therapy: Performance, participation, and well-being*. Thorofare, NJ: Slack.
- Knowles, M. S. (1970). *The modern practice of adult education: Andragogy versus pedagogy*. New York: New York Association Press.
- Moyers, P. & Dale, L. (2007). *Guide to occupational therapy practice* (2nd ed.), Bethesda, MD: American Occupational Therapy Association.
- Sacket, D., Rosenberg, W. M. C., Gray, J.A.M., Hayes, R. B., & Richardson, W. S. (1996). Evidence based medicine: What it is and what it isn't. *British Medical Journal*, 312, 71. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.312.7023.71>