![Samuel Merritt University logo]

Department of

Occupational Therapy

DOCTOR OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PROGRAM

MASTER OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PROGRAM

STUDENT HANDBOOK

2024 - 2025

Approved by AAPC

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WELCOME

Welcome to Samuel Merritt University's Occupational Therapy Program! Whether you're embarking on the Doctor of Occupational Therapy (OTD) or Master of Occupational Therapy (MOT) track, you're about to dive into a profession that offers a unique perspective on enhancing individuals' lives and communities.

Our programs are designed not only to impart the essential skills of occupational therapy practice but also to ignite your passions, encourage holistic approaches, and empower you to advocate for those you serve. This handbook is designed to guide you through both the academic and professional aspects of your journey, complementing the information provided in the Samuel Merritt University Catalog and Student Handbook.

Occupational therapy is a dynamic and transformative field, offering endless opportunities for personal and professional growth. We are thrilled to have you join us and look forward to seeing the incredible impact you will make. Congratulations on choosing a career that truly makes a difference!

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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 the 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

Our Programs value education that promotes understanding, critical thinking, and respect for diversity in all forms, while also emphasizing the importance of interprofessional collaboration and scientific inquiry in advancing healthcare practices for all individuals, groups, and

populations. Our Philosophy, outlined here, emphasizes occupational therapy's holistic approach to health and well-being, focusing on the therapeutic use of everyday activities or occupations, to enable individuals to participate meaningfully in their lives. Here are the key points from our philosophy:

Definition and Purpose: Occupational therapy is defined as using everyday life occupations to enhance participation. The goal is to enable individuals to achieve optimal health, well-being, and participation in activities that are personally meaningful.

Holistic View: Everyone is viewed as a "biopsychosocial" being, meaning they are considered as a unified whole, influenced by biological, psychological, and social factors. This holistic perspective guides therapy to address all aspects of a person's life.

Environmental Context: The environment, which includes physical, psychosocial, cultural, and spiritual realms, plays a crucial role in a person's engagement in meaningful occupations. Occupational therapy aims to facilitate participation within these contexts.

Education and Professional Values: Professional education in occupational therapy emphasizes a balanced study of natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities. This broad education fosters critical thinking, respect for diversity, and a comprehensive understanding of individuals and communities.

Learning Environment: Occupational therapy education values students as adult learners who benefit from cooperative learning environments that stimulate inquiry, critical thinking, and personal and professional development. Teaching methods are diverse to accommodate different learning styles and potentials.

Interprofessional Collaboration: The future of occupational therapy lies in collaboration within interprofessional teams in the healthcare system. This approach ensures higher productivity and effective intervention.

Foundational Framework: The Mind-Body Model underpins occupational therapy practice, viewing the mind and body as interconnected. This model is supported by research in neuroscience, health psychology, and psychoneuroimmunology, providing a scientific basis for the therapeutic value of occupation.

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 committed to address and discuss 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

Our curriculum integrates both scientific rigor and holistic principles, particularly emphasizing the Mind-Body Model. This approach recognizes the interconnectedness of physical, psycho-social, cultural, and spiritual aspects in understanding individuals. While rooted in rigorous scientific training, our programs emphasize the broader context in which occupational therapy interventions occur, going beyond mere physical treatment to encompass the client's unique occupations and their environmental influences. This holistic perspective is crucial in occupational therapy, as it acknowledges that effective treatment involves understanding and addressing all facets of a person's life and well-being (AOTA, 2020).

Curriculum Threads

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 et al., 1996, p. 71).

The Department of Occupational Therapy believes in educating students on the essentials of evidence-based practice, which includes 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 throughout the curriculum 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.

For OTD students, an additional advanced research course is required that aims to develop students' clinical research knowledge and skills through active participation in analysis and interpretation of quantitative and qualitative data. Both programs require a final course in research inquiry that affords students a rigorous acquisition of research skills and concepts (applied in occupational therapy relevant contexts), which culminate with a collaborative systematic review of research literature.

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. Students in the OTD program complete their capstone experience and project in the final semester of their program. This culminating experience requires students to synthesize the skills of 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 Frame*work (AOTA, 2020) introduces 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.

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 taught 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 the use of clinical reasoning skills. By the second year, students must apply clinical reasoning in all three community participant laboratories during faculty-supervised evaluation, intervention planning, and 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: *ACOTE Accreditation Standards for*

our entry-level Doctoral and Master's Programs (Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE), 2023); and *Occupational Therapy Practice Framework: Domain and Process, 4th Edition* (AOTA, 2020). These documents provide the guideposts to ensure the OTD and MOT Programs are well-founded and aligned with established standards and current and best practices in occupational therapy.

MOT CURRICULUM (updated July 2024)

Year One	
Fall Semester (14.5 Units)	
OT 601	Integrative Seminar in Occupational Therapy Practices I(1); Cultural Humility and Inclusive Practices within the OTPF-4 Framework
OT 610/610L	Anatomical and Physiological Basis for Human Occupation (4.5)
OT 611	Foundations of Occupational Therapy (3)
OT 612	Theories of Inquiry and Research Methodology (3)
OT 619	Human Occupation Throughout the Life Span (3)
Spring Semester (12 units)	
OT 613	Introduction to Psychopathology (1)
OT 616/616L	Therapeutic Media, Materials and Processes (2)
OT 617/617L	Interpersonal and Interprofessional Communication (2)
OT 618	Functional Neuroscience (3)
OT 627/627L	Kinesiology and Biomechanics (4)
Summer Semester (10.5 Units)	
OT 602	Integrative Seminar in Occupational Therapy Practices II (.5)
OT 609	Introduction to Professional Documentation (1)
OT 615	Scholarly Writing (1)
OT 621	Introduction to Fieldwork I (3)
OT 628	Administration and Management (3)
OT 633	Health Promotion and Wellness (2)
Year Two	
Fall Semester (13.5 Units)	
OT 603	Integrative Seminar in Occupational therapy Practices III (.5)
OT 624	Conditions of Human Dysfunction (3)
OT 626/626L	Theory and Practice in Psychosocial Dysfunction (4)
OT 632/632L	Advanced Clinical Practice (pediatrics) (4)
OT 652/652L	Advanced Leadership (2)
Spring Semester (12 Units)	
OT 604	Integrative Seminar in Occupational Therapy Practices IV (1)
OT 631/631L	Occupational Adaptations and Introduction to Modalities (3)
OT 636/636L	Advanced Clinical Practice (Adults) (4)
OT629/629L	Theory and Practice in Physical Dysfunction (4)

Summer Semester (6 units)	
OT 640	Fieldwork Level IIA (6)
Year Three	
Fall Semester (6 units)	
OT 641	Fieldwork Level IIB (6)
Total MOT Units = 74.5	

OTD CURRICULUM

Year One	
Fall Semester (14.5 Units)	
OT 701	Integrative Seminar in Occupational Therapy Practices I(1); Cultural Humility and Inclusive Practices within the OTPF-4 Framework
OT 710/710L	Anatomical and Physiological Basis for Human Occupation (4.5)
OT 711	Foundations of Occupational Therapy (3)
OT 712	Theories of Inquiry and Research Methodology (3)
OT 719	Human Occupation Throughout the Life Span (3)
Spring Semester (14 units)	
OT 713	Introduction to Psychopathology (1)
OT 716/716L	Therapeutic Media, Materials and Processes (2)
OT 717/717L	Interpersonal and Interprofessional Communication (2)
OT 718	Functional Neuroscience (3)
OT 720/720L	Theories of Inquiry and Research II (2)
OT 727/727L	Kinesiology and Biomechanics (4)
Summer Semester (10.5 Units)	
OT 702	Integrative Seminar in Occupational Therapy Practices II (.5)
OT 709	Introduction to Professional Documentation (1)
OT 715	Scholarly Writing (1)
OT 721	Introduction to Fieldwork I (3)
OT 728	Administration and Management (3)
OT 733	Health Promotion and Wellness (2)
Year Two	
Fall Semester (15.5 Units)	
OT 703	Integrative Seminar in Occupational therapy Practices III (.5)
OT 723	Capstone Project Exploration (2)
OT 724	Conditions of Human Dysfunction (3)
OT 726/726L	Theory and Practice in Psychosocial Dysfunction (4)
OT 732/732L	Advanced Clinical Practice (pediatrics) (4)
OT 752/752L	Advanced Leadership (2)
Spring Semester (14 Units)	
OT 704	Integrative Seminar in Occupational Therapy Practices IV (1)

OT 731/731L	Occupational Adaptations and Introduction to Modalities (3)
OT 736/736L	Advanced Clinical Practice (Adults) (4)
OT 729/729L	Theory and Practice in Physical Dysfunction (4)
OT 735/735L	Capstone Planning (2)
Summer Semester (6 units)	
OT 740	Fieldwork Level IIA (6)
Year Three	
Fall Semester (6 units)	
OT 741	Fieldwork Level IIB (6)
Spring Semester (9)	
OT 754	Capstone Implementation (6)
OT 755	Capstone Report (3)
Total OTD Units = 89.5	

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.

In March 2024, the OTD Program was granted re-accreditation by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE), located at 7501 Wisconsin Avenue, Suite 510E Bethesda, MD, 20814. The phone number for AOTA is (301) 652-6611. The email is: accred@aota.org. Our next on-site visit will occur during the 2028/2029 academic year. . The MOT Program was re-accredited in 2017. Our next on-site visit will occur during the 2027/2028 academic year.

Graduates of the MOT or OTD Program 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.

Students are **only eligible** to take the exam when they have successfully completed all aspects of the programs. For MOT students this includes all didactic courses and Level I and II Fieldwork experiences. For OTD students this includes all didactic courses, Level I and II Fieldwork experiences, and their Capstone Experience and Project. To register for the exam, you need to submit your official transcript. Official transcripts are available 3-4 weeks after grades are submitted to the Registrar. Therefore, NBCOT accepts a Degree Verification Form for you to complete and submit.   To obtain the DVF, go to NBCOT's website, nbcot.org, and submit it within the NBCOT Portal. The Department Chair and the University Registrar will need to verify your completion of the program and complete the form. Therefore, please allow for 2-4 weeks for the DVF to be completed. For more details about the NBCOT exam, make certain to review the [Certification Exam Handbook](#).

The United States Department of Education recognizes ACOTE as the accrediting agency for professional programs in the field of occupational therapy. To comply with accreditation, educational programs in occupational therapy must meet or exceed the minimum standards outlined in the 2023 Standards for an Accredited Educational Program for the Occupational Therapist. 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

- Gertrudes Anderson, Clinical Administrative Assistant
- Alondra Ammon, PhD, MOT, OTR/L
- Marci Baptista, OTD, MOTR/L, CHT, CEAS; Academic Fieldwork Coordinator
- Jena Bischel, Administrative Assistant
- Nancy Chee OTD, OTR/L CHT
- Elizabeth Ching, OTD, M.Ed, BSOT, OTR/L
- Nandini Dasguta, PhD
- Domenique Embrey OTD, OTR/L
- Leila Gabriel EdD, OTR/L
- Kirsten Gershoni, MS, OTR/L
- Ginny Gibson OTD, OTR/L, CHT
- Gordon Giles PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA
- Goli Hashemi MPH, OTR/L
- Kate Hayner EdD, OTR/L
- Morgan Inouye, OTR/L
- Rhea Kimpo, Ph.D.
- Jack Kleine OTD, OTR/L
- Karissa Legleiter, MA, BS
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- Yvette Meré-Cook, EdD, OTR/L, Department Chair
- Linda Monroe MPT, OCS
- Jessica Richman, OTD, OTR/L, Capstone Coordinator
- Darlyn San Jose, MOT, OTR/L
- Chi-Kwan Shea PhD, OTR/L
- Jennifer Tobin, OTD, OTR/L
- Diane Tom, OTD, OTR/L
- Nichole Velasquez, OTD, OTR/L
- Robyn Wu OTD, OTR/L

ACADEMIC ADVISING

Advisor-Advisee Meetings

Advisement plays a crucial role in guiding students through their educational journey by providing guidance on course and program requirements, addressing academic progress, and discussing professional development and behaviors. Regular engagement in advising sessions is required and takes place one time each semester, at minimum. Advisors and advisees may choose to meet more often. Students are encouraged to contact their advisors when educational and personal issues impact engagement and progression in the program.

Each student will be assigned to an academic advisor. In most cases, this faculty member will remain the student's advisor throughout the didactic part of the program. The Academic Fieldwork Coordinator is advisor to all students when engaged in Level II Fieldwork. For OTD students, their Faculty Capstone Mentor is their advisor for the rest of their program.

Student Success Monitoring

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 department meetings to discuss concerns about students' performance while maintaining confidentiality regarding personal aspects of students' life. 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 support 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 course passing grade only when minimal course expectations are met. Students with identified challenges must take full responsibility for ensuring their academic success by promptly responding to recommendations and additional support provided by the faculty.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The information below complements the University-wide Academic Integrity policy available within the SMU Catalog and Student Handbook. Every student is responsible to review and familiarize themselves with these policies.
https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog/academic-personal-professional-integrity

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is unacceptable and may result in many 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 review the information on Avoiding Plagiarism within Academic Writing Resources on the SMU Library Website. AOTA also has a useful tool on the AOTA Ethics website that provides tips to Avoiding Plagiarism in Today's World.

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 a record of prior counsel regarding plagiarism, the second occurrence will be sent to the Department Chair for determination of consequences. Or, if plagiarism is deemed so egregious on the first occurrence, the faculty member may inform the Department Chair for further actions. The Department Chair will make a decision after consulting with two uninvolved faculty members. The determination will consider 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 Department 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.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

The use of AI technology involves ethical considerations, academic integrity, and integration of tools (Thacker, Mason, & Weir, 2024). Guided by Samuel Merritt University's Center for Academic and Instructional Innovation, courses will have their own policies regarding student use of AI for course assignments. Students are encouraged to request clarification for accepted and unaccepted uses of AI in specific courses. Students are expected to follow the University's Academic Integrity Policies as well as appropriately cite and reference AI tools used in any work.

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 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. If the professional behavior concerns impact a student's trajectory to successfully complete the program, including fieldwork, the faculty advisor may speak with the Professional Behaviors and Student Conduct Committee to discuss additional resources and support for the student.

All students must always behave professionally with the SMU learning environment (face-to-face or online) following the policies of Academic Integrity, Code of Conduct, and the Code of Ethics (https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog/academic-personal-professional-integrity)

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 professional 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

- Entering in and out of class during lectures and/or student and professor presentations

- Eating in class, without prior discussion with professor

- 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

Faculty will monitor students' professional behaviors and will address unprofessional behaviors with the student directly. If three incidences of unprofessional behavior occur, the student will be required to meet with the Department Chair, their Faculty Advisor, and possibly with the Professional Behaviors and Student Conduct Committee, depending on the nature and the impact of the unprofessional behavior. One possible outcome to address unprofessional behavior is the creation of a Professional Behaviors Remediation Plan and/or a record of unprofessional conduct that could be placed in the student's file and/or noted on their official transcript.

Concepts of professionalism are introduced at the beginning (during orientation to the program) and throughout our graduate programs. The department promptly addresses concerns about professional behavior and assists students in developing in this area. Students 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 experience.

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 behave 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 Department Chair of Occupational Therapy. The student may be subject to further disciplinary action.

PROMOTING FACULTY-STUDENT MENTORSHIP and COMMUNICATIONS

Academic 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. We also model our own wellness and work-life balance. Therefore, please review our faculty commitment to respond to student emails in a predictable timeline:

- Part-time, Full-time, and Adjunct Faculty responses to electronic communications from students will be within 2 days of the initial posting on weekdays (weekends and holidays not counted in this 2-day period).
- If faculty are away from their departmental and teaching duties for an extended time, an automated response will be generated to inform students. Students are welcome to contact the Department Chair if their needs or concerns are time-sensitive.

Student Response to Faculty and Staff E-mail: Our Faculty and Staff hold the same expectations for students in responding to emails and require students to reply within 2 days of the initial posting on weekdays (weekends and holidays not counted in this 2-day period).

COLLABORATIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING TO ADDRESS CONFLICTS

Addressing Conflicts with Peers

Step One: Respectful Inquiry: Collaborative relationships, such as working closely with others, may involve disagreements with peers. We encourage students to initiate attempts to solve conflicts through Respectful Inquiry, defined as a leadership approach that involves asking questions and actively listening to understand a person's motivations, perspectives, and values (Van Quaquebeke & Felps 2018).

Step Two: Collaborative Conversations: If students need additional mentorship or mediation, we welcome students to contact a faculty member and/or the Department Chair and schedule a conversation with all involved parties.

Step Three: Professional Behaviors and Student Conduct Committee: If the situation is part of a pattern that impacts students' learning and participation within the program, conflict resolution may need to occur with assistance from our Professional Behaviors and Student Conduct Committee.

In cases of harassment, bullying, or discrimination, students should access the University resources detailed in the Academic, Personal, and Professional Integrity section of the University Catalog and Student Handbook.https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog/academic-personal-professional-integrity

Step 1: Respectful Inquiry

Arrange a meeting with the person with whom you have the disagreement

Step 2: Collaborative Conversations

Both parties should engage in a mediated discussion with Faculty and Department Chair

Step 3: Professional Behaviors and Student Conduct Committee

Professional Behaviors and Student Conduct Committee will review situations where a Professional Behavior Development Plan or other forms of remediation may need to be implemented.

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 (Respectful Inquiry). 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

The information below complements the University-wide Academic Integrity policy available within the SMU Catalog and Student Handbook. Every student is responsible to review and familiarize themselves with these policies.
https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/student-catalog-and-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 Policies and Expectations

The OT Department Attendance Expectations are designed to complement the University Attendance Policies outlined in the 2024-2025 University Catalog's Academic Policies. Students should review both the University policies and the department's specific attendance and punctuality expectations. https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog/academic-policies

ATTENDANCE:

Attendance is a crucial component of professional development in our Occupational Therapy programs. As such, attendance in all classes is mandatory and is closely linked to the demonstration of professional behaviors.

Students are permitted a maximum of two absences per semester without penalty. These absences are provided to accommodate unforeseen circumstances while emphasizing the importance of consistent attendance.

It is the student's responsibility to communicate with their instructor regarding absences. Students are expected to notify their instructor in advance via email of any anticipated absences. If prior notification is not feasible, students must inform their instructor as soon as possible after the absence occurs.

If a student fails to provide notification for absences or anticipates having more than two, they must schedule a meeting with their academic advisor and/or instructor. In this meeting, the students will have the opportunity to discuss their attendance issues, explore available University resources, and review expectations for professional behavior. The advisor and/or instructor will document the next steps and create an action plan to help the student re-engage with the course.

We encourage students facing extenuating circumstances to reach out to their advisor for support and guidance. (compiled in part with OpenAI, 2023)

PUNCTUALITY:

In our Occupational Therapy Programs, punctuality is crucial for fostering a professional and effective learning environment. It is also a key professional behavior necessary for successful participation in future fieldwork placements.

Students are expected to be on time for all scheduled classes. Arrival after the start of class is considered tardy. If a student is late, they should promptly inform the instructor and take steps to catch up on any missed material.

Students who accumulate more than two instances of tardiness will be required to schedule a meeting with their academic advisor. This meeting will involve discussing the reasons for the

tardiness, exploring potential solutions, and reviewing the program's expectations regarding punctuality and professional conduct.

The advisor will document the discussion and outline an action plan to help the student improve their punctuality and overall engagement in the program.

We encourage students to address any challenges impacting their punctuality proactively and to seek guidance from their advisor if they are facing difficulties. (compiled in part with OpenAI, 2023).

Award of Academic Credit

Refer to the section on Award of Academic Credit in the Samuel Merritt University Catalog.
https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/catalog

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.   If students need to repeat a course based on their academic standing (i.e. receiving a D grade, they will need to follow an alternative schedule to progress with their program. Please look at Decelerated Plans below). 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

Decelerated Plans

Decelerated Plans in the MOT and OTD programs serve as a structured approach to support students facing challenges that impact their ability to progress through their studies at the standard pace. It provides a framework for academic and financial planning, ensuring students can successfully complete their program requirements while accommodating their individual circumstances.

By extending the program's total duration by at least a year, the plan ensures that students can fulfill all academic requirements in a manageable manner.

The plan is formulated through collaboration between all interested parties:

- **Student**: Provides input regarding their circumstances and academic needs.
- **Department Chair**: Offers guidance and ensures the plan aligns with program requirements.
- **Faculty Advisor**: Provides academic counseling and ensures the plan supports the student's educational and professional goals.

Students may opt for or be placed on a Decelerated Plan due to various reasons, including:

- Earning a grade of D in a course, necessitating a retake.
- Needing to reduce the number of classes taken each semester due to workload or personal circumstances.
- Taking a Leave of Absence for personal reasons, temporarily interrupting their academic progress.

Tuition for students on a Decelerated Plan is typically based on the number of units they are enrolled in. It's important to note:

- Tuition rates may increase annually, and students extending their program length will pay tuition at the current rates for each year.
- Understanding these financial implications is crucial when planning to follow a Decelerated Plan.

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 MOT and OTD Programs, if a student drops a course during the add/drop period, that student will require a Decelerated Plan and consequently will be subject to a change in tuition and restrictions in progressing to full-time 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

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 must maintain current CPR certification, provide evidence of successful completion of a tutorial on blood-borne pathogens, and maintain updated required immunizations and TB tests before 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

Starting with the Fall 2024 cohort, both Master of Occupational Therapy (MOT) and Doctor of Occupational Therapy (OTD) students will participate in the May commencement ceremony that follows the completion of the OTD students' final semester. This change allows the entire cohort to graduate together and have a unified graduation celebration.

For MOT students who began their program before Fall 2024, there will be an option to request participation in the December ceremony, provided they have successfully completed all aspects of the program, including their last Level II Fieldwork experience prior to the December commencement.

LEADERSHIP and MEMBERSHIP
WITHIN SMU OT STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

Students develop additional leadership and collaborative skills by serving as a leader and active member within Student Organizations within the OT Department and within the University. These are done on a voluntary basis through election processes. (Students with a documented conduct issue with a current notation within their student file or transcript, are not eligible to serve in leadership roles within the OT Department).

Student Cohort Representatives

Each cohort shall have two representatives who will serve as a communication liaison between the cohort and the faculty. Students may only serve as a representative for one year.

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 representatives). This meeting is normally scheduled for the first and third Thursday of the month.
- Conducting their responsibilities in an unbiased and professional manner.

Elections for Student Representative
Timing:

- Second Week: Student Candidates will submit a brief statement (25-50 words) to the Department's Administrative Assistant
- Third Week: Students vote for their candidates through electronic and anonymous balloting. The two candidates who receive the most votes will be appointed the class representatives for their cohort.
- Beginning of Forth Week: Election results will be announced by the Department's Administrative Assistant.

If students or faculty have concerns about the class representatives being unable to fulfill their responsibilities, they should contact the Department Chair and the Professional Behaviors and Student Conduct Committee for guidance.

Student Occupational Therapy Association (SOTA)

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 fundraising, and acclimates the student with the profession's organizational structure and decision-making process. Students elect their own officers and send representatives to local chapter meetings. Students are encouraged to play active roles in SOTA. Please visit the SMUSOTA Instagram to stay informed about upcoming events and resources.

Coalition of Occupational Therapy Advocates for Diversity (COTAD)

COTAD is an international network of OT practitioners that aim 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. They envision "a future in which occupational therapy is accessible, inclusive, and effective for all".

The COTAD Chapter at SMU is a student-run organization with two (2) student Co-Chairs and one Faculty Sponsor. Students are encouraged to play active roles in COTAD. Please visit the SMU COTAD Instagram to stay informed about upcoming events and resources.

PROFESSIONAL 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.otaconline.org

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