Occupational Therapy
A degree, a career, a passport to the world

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Occupational Therapy – what is it?

Occupational therapy is a health profession concerned with promoting health and wellbeing through occupation. Occupation refers to everything that people do during the course of their life. (CAOT, 2003)

Occupational therapists work:

> in schools with children and disabilities
> with people who have had a head injury
> in the community with people with mental health concerns
> in hospitals with older people enabling their return to home
> enabling people to cope with life changes
> in rehabilitation settings e.g. after a stroke
> in the workplace to adapt the physical environment
> in community settings assisting people to develop life skills
> in the field of primary health e.g. falls prevention.
Students graduating from this programme are able to apply for registration as an occupational therapist in New Zealand and are able to work in many countries throughout the world. Workplaces in New Zealand are eager to employ our graduates after completion of the programme. New Zealand occupational therapists have been able to gain employment in the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and the United States of America.

Occupational therapists can be found working not only with people of all ages with different needs, but in different roles within organisations; they may be team leaders, managers, educators, consultants or researchers. They can be an employee of a government organisation (e.g. hospitals or schools) or a non-government organisation (e.g. community support and education groups), and an increasing number work in private practice.

Graduands can continue their studies by enrolling in:
> Bachelor of Occupational Therapy (Honours)

The Otago Polytechnic School of Occupational Therapy also offers the following:
> Postgraduate Diploma in Occupational Therapy Practice
> Master of Occupational Therapy.

* See diagram on page 25.
A degree, a career and a passport to the world
Studying in Dunedin

Dunedin is a city that is vibrant, full of energy and opportunities with 20% of its population being students.

Dunedin gives students the opportunity to be involved in a wide range of cultural, sporting and social activities.

Otago Polytechnic is based within the hub of student education facilities, activities and accommodation. It is situated in North Dunedin just five minutes walk from the city centre.

Studying in Hamilton

The Waikato Institute of Technology has three main campuses in Hamilton – a main city site which sits on the hill overlooking the city centre, Rotokauri on the northern outskirts of the city, and a horticultural campus at Hamilton Gardens.

The Rotokauri campus, where the School of Occupational Therapy is situated, is on the outskirts of the city near the fast growing residential and industrial areas of Pukete and Te Rapa.
Student stories

These stories from our graduates demonstrate some of the non-traditional areas and emerging roles that occupational therapists work in.

According to statistics from the Occupational Therapy Board of New Zealand approximately 50% of occupational therapists are still working in the more traditional areas such as hospitals, schools and communities.
I really enjoy working with children at a time when they are so eager to learn.

Anna

I work in a private community-based practice called RATA South Ltd and am involved with a variety of people including children, youth and adults. The Head Start programme focuses on preschool children from six weeks to five years of age, and their parents/caregivers. The goal is to develop the children's physical, cognitive and social skills needed for future formal learning. This play-based programme uses music, movement and games to engage the children.

A typical day at Head Start begins by reviewing the goals for a session and setting up the equipment circuit and activities to enable the group goals to be met.

After welcoming the group, I use my skills as an occupational therapist to facilitate the children's active movements by selecting and modifying songs, dances and games to provide an achievable challenge for the group.

I also spend time working one-to-one with children and their parents/caregivers. I teach the parent about their child's learning and to show them how to modify a game or task to the level their child can achieve. I really enjoy working with children at a time when they are so eager to learn. I love watching the dynamics between children and their parent/caregiver as a child attempts or achieves a task for the first time.
The importance of “doing” – that’s what got me hooked on occupational therapy. Using occupation as a therapy just makes so much sense to me, I am amazed I did not discover it as a career sooner.

I have led an adventurous life of various occupations and this has taught me the importance of “doing activities”. I have a deep empathy for people who are, for whatever reason, unable to enjoy those daily activities in life that hold meaning for them. I am also passionate about helping, motivating and enabling people to be the best that they can be, to “give it a go”.

Being bicultural and identifying as Māori of Ngaiterangi descent has enhanced my cultural awareness and my learning has led to employment with Kaupapa Māori organisations. The holistic paradigms of occupational therapy work perfectly to aid in the recovery of Māori with mental health issues. I currently work as part of Te Aka Kura – Specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health and Addiction Community Mental Health Team. I enjoy the multi-disciplinary team environment of diverse members, who bring a range of skills and knowledge to the context of Māori tikanga.

As a “mature student”, prior life skills, roles and knowledge can enhance your learning and therefore your job opportunities. During fieldwork placements I put theory into practice, tried different settings and discovered that my passion is working with adolescents with mental health issues. The range of settings that one can work in is as vast as the occupations of life itself, so I knew I would not get bored in my career.

It is inclusive and empowering to walk alongside our whānau and enable them on their journey in life. Occupational therapy offers so much. I encourage you to give it a go, because you won’t be disappointed.
I am employed as an occupational therapist at a school that provides education and therapy to students aged from five to 21 who have complex needs. The main focus for occupational therapy is development of skills allowing for as independent a future as possible. My job also includes assessment and provision of communication systems, assistive technology, wheelchairs, seating and appropriate classroom furniture.

This means helping the student become who they want to be. We do this in a variety of ways, such as from developing independent self-care skills using assistive technology. The most exciting example of this is a student with a severe head injury who learnt to use technology to communicate and control his environment. He actively participated in DJ-ing at a barn dance, digital photography and cooking using only the movement of his eyebrow.

Now that opportunities are open to him, we get to see his true teenage behaviour - it’s fantastic.

“This means helping the student become who they want to be.”

Dave
I fell in love with using outdoor adventures as a therapeutic tool when I got involved with disabled skiing while completing a Bachelor of Science. Investigating other New Zealand organisations, I quickly discovered that there were limited New Zealand opportunities in the outdoors for people with disabilities. So, as you do, I decided to create my own organisation. The first step was gaining theory behind my experience, so I trained as an occupational therapist.

After qualifying, I travelled to the United Kingdom and worked for a charity providing outdoor adventure for people with spinal cord injuries, to assist with rehabilitation and reintegration back into life. After two humbling years, I brought the concept back to New Zealand.

I now work with Back-Up, New Zealand, a national charity, which offers the opportunities, no matter what your ability, to get out there amongst it in the outdoors. We organise courses with a combination of adventures (tramping, canoeing, kayaking, abseiling, climbing, sailing, scuba diving, paragliding, Blo-karting, quad biking, camping, water and snow skiing. Phew!). The courses challenge and encourage individuals to step outside their comfort zones and in the process the participants build confidence and self-esteem. The idea is, if you can get to the top of the mountain, or paddle down a river, then going on holiday as a family, or joining a club or getting a job, won’t be as scary.

I use my occupational therapy skills every day in individual and group settings. We are client centred, goal orientated and we have highly developed lateral-thinking skills!

“If you can get to the top of the mountain, or paddle down a river, then going on holiday as a family, or joining a club or getting a job, won’t be as scary.”

Jane
In my final year, I went on an overseas placement to rural Australia and after I graduated was offered the job of running the hospital department where my placement had been. This included a small outpatient hand therapy clinic. One day – in the true Kiwi spirit and style that “If you do not try you will never know” – I put my résumé into a local mine and asked the Safety Manager why they did not have an occupational therapist on site. The Safety Manager did not know what an occupational therapist was so this gave me the opportunity to promote our profession. Time passed then out the blue I received a call asking me if I still wanted a job at the mine.

Now my predominant area of practice is mining where I have finally found my niche. Since that day, I have worked my way up from officer to health superintendent level with a global mining company. A typical day for an occupational therapist on a mine site will include rehabilitation and return-to-work of injured miners, ergonomic assessments of workshops and machinery, physical functional testing activities and task analysis matching a miner to position duties. It also involves health promotion education including fatigue management, sleep hygiene, thermal stress, vibration, hazardous substances and manual handling.

True miners say mining gets in your blood and they are exactly right. I get to work outdoors in amazing environments with machinery and skilled people from various professions. I was nominated for a professional excellence award and only have my Otago Polytechnic lecturers to thank for where I am today. Due to their world-class teaching and placements opportunities, the sky’s the limit!
I am working for the Canterbury District Health Board within the Regional Forensic Psychiatric Service. Since graduating from Otago in 1994, I have specialised in working within the mental health field both here in New Zealand and also for 10 years in the UK.

For the past 13 years I have been working in the forensic mental health field which is basically the practice area between mental health services and the criminal justice system.

A ‘typical’ day comprises of facilitating morning communications meetings with service users (clients) followed by facilitating various groups. Groups cover areas such as social skills development, assertiveness and confidence building, anger management, development of domestic skills such as budgeting and cooking, pre-vocational skills training, education (literacy and numeracy), healthy living and exercise. Graded community exposure and risk assessment also make up significant aspects of my current role.

I thoroughly enjoy the complexity of this role and the variety. No day is ever the same and the challenge of working in a locked, secure service is providing service users with a safe and meaningful day.
Since 2005, I have worked as an occupational therapist in the Rehabilitation Services Unit for the Saudi Arabian Oil Company (Saudi Aramco). Saudi Aramco is the world’s largest oil corporation with many operations worldwide. One of its important areas of operation is Saudi Aramco Medical Services Organization (SAMSO), which provides medical care to all its employees and their families – around 370,000 individuals. SAMSO comprises one tertiary hospital in Dhahran and four health care centres located in adjacent cities in Saudi Arabia. The Dhahran Health Centre has approximately 380 beds, and a large out-patient service that includes the Rehabilitation Service Unit.

My role is based in the occupational therapy out-patient setting, where I specialise in hand therapy. Patients are referred to the service after surgery, hand trauma and elective surgery, or from orthopaedic consultants, plastic surgeons, rheumatologists and general practitioners. A typical day involves conducting assessment and treatment programmes to patients of all ages with upper extremity injury, specifically from the elbow to the finger tip. The injuries and conditions we manage include fractures, tendon and nerve repairs following trauma, acquired hand conditions (osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, de Quervain’s and carpal tunnel syndrome), burns and elective procedures. Patients are encouraged to carry out home treatment programmes and to be responsible for their rehabilitation. The aim is to allow people to return to optimum function within their life roles.

I absolutely love the hand therapy component of my job! My clinical caseload is challenging and requires the application of both evidence-based practice and client-centred principles. Every day, I have the opportunity to practise the art and science of rehabilitating the upper extremity, and make a real difference in people’s ability to use their hands in their daily lives.
The Bachelor of Occupational Therapy programme

The Bachelor of Occupational Therapy is a three year degree programme that is recognised by the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT).

This programme involves students in a stimulating array of courses.

Year 1
The programme students focus on three key components of occupational therapy: people, environments and occupation. They are introduced to the disciplines that inform occupational therapy – kinesiology, psychology, humanities and social anthropology as well as specific occupational therapy knowledge.

Year 2
The knowledge and the skills gained from Year 1 are applied to specific people, environments and occupations.

Year 3
Students analyse theoretical and practical knowledge refining their professional reasoning.

The Bachelor of Occupational Therapy programme is delivered to students from two campuses – Otago Polytechnic in Dunedin, and Wintec Rotokauri in Hamilton, using the same learning methods.

Students enrol in the campus of their choice, knowing that they will experience the same learning/teaching methods.

The programme is taught through “blended learning”. Students accessing learning resources online (as directed), as well as engaging in on-campus face-to-face learning activities which can include real-life scenarios, personal research, interaction groups and community experiences.

Fieldwork comprises approximately one third of the Bachelor’s programme. Students are placed throughout New Zealand during their fieldwork where they are supervised by occupational therapists to develop their occupational therapy practice skills.
Entry requirements

Entry criteria
To meet the academic requirements for this programme, applicants must have successfully achieved at least one of the following:

**Criterion 1**

for 2014 Applicants
42 credits at Level 3 or higher, including:
> 14 credits at Level 3 in each of two approved subjects (as determined in the NZQA list of approved subjects),
AND
> 8 credits at Level 2 or higher in English or Te Reo Māori; 4 credits must be in Reading, and 4 credits must be in Writing;
AND
> 14 credits at Level 1 or higher in Mathematics or Pāngarau

for 2015 Applicants*
60 credits at Level 3 or higher including:
> 14 credits at Level 3 or higher in each of three approved subjects (as determined in the NZQA list of approved subjects),
AND
> 10 credits at Level 2 or higher in English or Te Reo Māori; 5 credits must be in Reading, and 5 credits must be in Writing
AND
> 10 credits at level 1 or higher in Mathematics or Pāngarau

**Criterion 2**
A Level 4 qualification equalling at least 60 credits completed in one year.

**Criterion 3**
Successful completion of university courses/units equalling at least to 50 per cent of first-year student workload completed within one year.

* subject to final approval.
Provisional entry

An applicant who does not meet all of the entry criteria may be given provisional entry to Year 1 at the discretion of the Head of School.

Other criteria

- A knowledge of occupational therapy as a profession (in New Zealand) through observation or contact with occupational therapists in practice, and/or attending a seminar(s) or open days, and/or reading about occupational therapy. Applicants understanding of this will be assessed through a one-page written summary.

- A satisfactory level of physical and emotional health is required, as confirmed by a GP.

- Suitability for admission into the programme must be confirmed by two nominated referees (confidential).

- If English is not your first language, you must demonstrate English language skills equivalent to an IELTS overall band score (academic) of 7.0 with no band score less than 6.5.

Enrolling students will be required to produce evidence that they hold a current First Aid Certificate. Students will also be required to complete annual police checks and provide evidence of the their immunization status.

Fifteen percent of places are reserved for both those who identify as Māori, and males, for preferred entry.
Fieldwork placements

Fieldwork placements give you the chance to experience the real-world of occupational therapy practice directly. It is one of the most enriching and challenging aspects of the occupational therapy degree.

Fieldwork placements are organised by the fieldwork team; Fieldwork Coordinator, Fieldwork Associate and Fieldwork Administrator.

A member of this team meets regularly with the Placement Action Committee (PAC) which provides student representation from all three years with regard to fieldwork issues.

Fieldwork schedule

Over the three years of the programme the school will send you on fieldwork placements throughout New Zealand. Students are required to complete a minimum of 1000 hours of supervised fieldwork to meet WFOT regulations. With a minimum number of hours required to be spent in each fieldwork placement per week. These are:

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<thead>
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<th>Placement No.</th>
<th>Hours per week</th>
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<th>Total</th>
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* Includes four hours per week of self-directed learning hours.
* Final week 30.5 hours.

Using these figures, a six-week placement averages $2160. For placement expenses please see page 20.
Otago Polytechnic’s School of Occupational Therapy attempts to ensure students have clinical experience in a wide range of settings. These may include hospital, community, education, voluntary and justice. Other criteria include a mix between rural and urban placements, acute and long term settings, and a variety of different age groups, from preschool to elderly.

It is the responsibility of the Otago Polytechnic School of Occupational Therapy to set-up and negotiate the timing of student placements. On no account should students contact fieldwork placements directly before a placement is confirmed.

**Travel**

The Dunedin and Hamilton areas cannot offer the required clinical settings for all fieldwork placements. As approximately two-thirds of the population live in the North Island and approximately two-thirds of the practising occupational therapists work in the North Island, potentially two thirds of a student’s placements will be in the North Island.

All students will therefore be **required to complete a minimum of three placements outside the Dunedin and Hamilton areas**. Also, students cannot expect to carry out more than three placements in any one city or location. Students need to budget for these placements. Expenses that are the responsibility of the student are:

> Travel to and from the placement (either by plane, car or public transport)
> Accommodation while on placement (plus all meals, and transport to and from placement)
> Students may also be paying for accommodation in Dunedin or Hamilton while on placement.

The Placement Action Committee surveyed students, who went to the Wellington area over two placements. This was chosen as an average of all placements (which can be anywhere from Kaitaia to Invercargill). From the information gathered, we have come up with an average cost for a placement. Your own expenses could be a lot greater or a lot less than this, dependent on whether the placement is in your home town or not.
### Transport to placement:
Dunedin (or own home) to Wellington, return to Dunedin | Average cost per week | Average cost per 6 weeks placement
--- | --- | ---
$380

### Accommodation:
Per week, including food, phone and power, ranged from $175 (hostel including food) to $20 (parents’ home) | $150 | $900

### Transport while on placement:
Hostel accommodation is sometimes on the same site as placement | $40 | $240

### Other sundry costs:
Could include laundry, medical, entertainment, lunches, etc | $60 | $360

### Other expenses for placement

Remember you may also have to pay rent for your accommodation in Dunedin or Hamilton, and you may not be able to earn any extra money while on placement.

Placements are usually allocated six weeks before their scheduled start date. Early booking of travel and travel insurance is recommended to decrease costs, as allocated placements can be unexpectedly changed after arrangements are made.

A uniform is required for some fieldwork settings. The approximate cost of the uniform is $75. Further details about uniforms will be provided in the first week of Year 1.

### Driver licence

On some fieldwork placements and for future employment as an occupational therapist a driver licence is important.

### Overseas placements

Students can complete fieldwork placements overseas provided that they are supervised by a World Federation of Occupational Therapists-registered occupational therapist, and the student has been successful in previous placements and in academic courses. Overseas placements are only offered for the first placement in Year 3. Expenses of overseas placements including flights, accommodation, personal liability insurance and visas, will be covered by the students.
# Fieldwork pattern of placements in sample calendar

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<th>Week No.</th>
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**Key:**
- Fieldwork
- Teaching Weeks
- Orientation/Induction
- Study & Assessment
- Transition
- Holiday
- Fieldwork Preparation
- Fieldwork Reflection

Please note this is a sample calendar and is subject to change.
Whether you choose to study in Dunedin or Hamilton, the learning experience is the same. Students at both campuses are engaged in the same programme, with the same classes and with the same expectations. Blended learning means that you will continue to attend classes but for parts of some courses, learning resources (including lecturers) are online.

You will have access to all your learning material online and so you will be able to view this prior to attending classes, and refer to them at a later stage when you are revising. The online material is varied and may include; a lecture, a reading or quiz to facilitate and consolidate your learning. You will need to access this information on a computer and work your way through it.

Blended learning enables you to arrange your learning when it suits you. Managing your learning, identifying and using opportunities both inside and outside the classroom environments is a skill of registered occupational therapists.
How can you prepare for being a self-directed learner?

To ensure you are prepared for managing your own learning there are some key strategies. When you start the programme we will help you think about these and give you ways to use them in your everyday learning. However it will be easier if you have already thought some of this through.

Points to consider:

**How do you learn best?**

For example, are you an oral learner or a reader/writer? What strategies do you use to enhance your learning style?

**Time management**

You will be expected to manage your own time and complete tasks/activities prior to attending class as this will integrate and consolidate your in class learning.

**What strategies do you use to do this effectively?**

It is recommended you plan out your study using a diary.

A laptop, and broadband is recommended. You will have access to computer suites at the Dunedin and Hamilton campuses, but ideally you should have access to your own computer. You need to have some familiarity with computers, however support staff are available to assist. If it has been some time since you have used a computer, then do please consider attending introductory computing courses.

Below are the computer requirements and programs you will need. You are responsible for updating these regularly!

**Computer Requirements – PC**

You will require a minimum of:

- Pentium III 500 MHz processor
- 128 MB RAM
- 20 MB free disk space
- Soundcard with speakers and microphone or headset
- Internet connection – preferably Broadband (A dial-up connection can be used if broadband is unavailable in your area – but it will be slower)
- Internet browser: Explorer 6.0 or above e.g. Firefox 2+ or Safari
- A word processing programme e.g. Windows 98/ME/2000/XP; open office or google docs
- An email programme (e.g. Outlook or Thunderbird)
- Media player software (e.g. Windows media player, iTunes, Quick Time, VLC media player) or plug-ins to your internet browser (e.g. Flash)
- Adobe Acrobat Reader (version 7 or above).

**Computer Requirements – Mac**

You will require a minimum of:

- Mac OS 9.1/9.2, Mac OS X 10.1, 10.2 and 10.3
- G3 233 MHz
- 64 MB RAM (OS 9.x), 128 RAM (OS X)
- 20 MB free disk space.
Registration as an occupational therapist

On completion of your degree, you are required to apply to the Occupational Therapy Board of New Zealand (OTBNZ) for Registration for Practice as an occupational therapist in New Zealand. We bring your attention to the following requirement for students for whom English is a second language (includes international, permanent residents, and New Zealanders for whom English is a second language).

It is a requirement of OTBNZ for occupational therapists to practise in New Zealand, to have an excellent command of the English language to enable them to communicate effectively with clients and other health professionals.

If English is not your first language, you must demonstrate English language skills equivalent to an IELTS overall band score (academic) of 7.0 with no band score less than 6.5.

For further information please visit their website at www.otboard.org.nz
Structure of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes

NZQA Levels

10  600

PhD

9  500

Master of OT

6  400

Bachelor of OT (Honours)  Postgraduate Diploma in OT Practice  Postgraduate Certificate in OT Practice

Eligibility for Registration

7  300

Bachelor of Occupational Therapy

6  200

5  100

Bachelor of Occupational Therapy