Pre-OT Quick Facts

Students prepare for a career as an Occupational Therapist by building credentials in scholarship, leadership, humanitarian/community service, and shadowing in the various settings of the profession. OT schools greatly value shadowing experience, and prefer for applicants to have a significant amount of shadowing experiences in a variety of OT settings. This helps to ensure that students have an appreciation for vast scope of the profession. There is no “best” major for pre-OT students. Instead, students are encouraged to pursue majors in which they are most interested and in which they believe they will excel.

- What is OT? How does it differ from PT?

The fields of occupational therapy and physical therapy are often confused. While both roles provide essential hands-on rehabilitative work to help clients perform everyday tasks as independently as possible, each field takes a distinct approach in helping people get back to their day to day lives. The main difference is that OT focuses on improving a client’s ability to perform activities of daily living (ADL), and PT focuses on improving a client’s ability to perform movement of the human body. OTs tend to have a more holistic perspective and focus on adapting the environment to fit the person.

OTCAS (Centralized Application Service)

To apply to most OT programs, students will utilize the OTCAS application service. Official transcripts, GRE scores, a personal statement, and letters of recommendation are all submitted to OTCAS. Two out of the three OT programs in Georgia use this application service; only Augusta University requires students apply directly through their institution.

OTCAS opens each year in July, but programs differ in terms of their application deadlines. Most deadlines are in the fall for a summer start; however, students are generally encouraged to apply well before the deadline since many institutions participate in rolling admissions.

Required Courses & GPA Expectations

DISCLAIMER: This is not a definitive list of the classes you will need for every school. Always check with the individual schools to see what their specific requirements may be. For example, Augusta University requires a semester of physics while Brenau University requires a semester of chemistry or physics.

- Do grade trends matter?

Students who wish to enter an OT program (MSOT or OTD) will require strong science and overall GPAs as admission is competitive. Admissions committees look not only at raw numbers, but also at grade trends on a student’s transcript—so all is not lost if a student stumbles in their first semester or two, but then shows substantial improvement each subsequent year. However, they will also notice negative trends such as if a student is consistently withdrawing from or performing poorly in hard sciences or is completing courses away from their home institution. While an instance or two is not a deal-breaker, a pattern of behavior should be avoided. Students must demonstrate the ability to handle difficult scientific content as this will translate directly to their ability to perform in an OT program.

Typical OT Pre-Requisites

- Anatomy and Physiology (CBIO2200/L & CBIO2210/L)
- Statistics (STAT2000)
- Psychology (PSYC1101 and PSYC3230)
- Lifespan Development (HDFS2200 or PSYC4220)
- Medical Terminology (CLAS1030)
- Anthropology or Sociology (ANTH1102 or SOCI1101)

Average Matriculant Numbers

- Overall GPA: 3.50
- Science GPA: 3.40
- GRE: ~300 combined score & ~4.0 writing (scores above the 50th percentile)

General Information

- Master’s or Doctoral Degree (Trending towards only being a doctoral degree.)
- Most programs are 2-3 years
- Three institutions in Georgia:
  - Augusta University
  - Brenau University
  - Georgia State University

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**GRE**

Most OT schools require that applicants take the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). The GRE consists of three sections: Quantitative, Verbal, and Essay section. There are no specific courses that students need to take prior to the GRE, but students should plan to dedicate roughly six to eight weeks to exam preparation. While students can opt for a commercial prep course for the GRE, self-study is often sufficient.

Students usually sit for the exam in their junior or senior year depending on their application timeline. Generally, it is recommended for a student to take the GRE January-May as they head into the application cycle. The GRE is offered via University Testing Services on a regular basis.

**Shadowing Experience**

Generally, OT schools require that applicants have experience observing or shadowing occupational therapists in action. Shadowing requirements for admissions can vary in a few aspects between schools including hours required, number of environments, and types of environments. While most programs require 50-60 hours minimum, more is certainly recommended. It is common for programs to suggest that students complete their shadowing in at least two different environments – inpatient and outpatient. However, it is possible for an individual program to require students to shadow in more or different types of environments. Variety in shadowing is always helpful, but is also important to try to get a well-rounded experience in each environment since shadowing is regularly discussed during admissions interviews.

**Volunteering**

Extracurricular activities, such as clubs and volunteering, are a large portion of the application that should not be neglected. OT schools are looking for students who not only demonstrate that they can manage rigorous courses while staying busy, but also those who are compassionate, enjoy working with people, and are dedicated to serving the community. Students should keep in mind that depth of commitment and leadership experience are also considered. As a result, it is best to focus on strong engagement in few activities rather than to spread oneself too thin.

In addition, OTs regularly work with individuals who are living with disabilities, so it is important that students demonstrate an active interest in working with this population either through sustained volunteering or life experiences. Extra Special People (ESP), Special Olympics, Butterfly Dreams Farm, Athens Inclusive Recreation and Sports (AIRS), and Camp Twin Lakes are a few local organizations at which students can consider volunteering.

**Letters of Evaluation**

Most OT schools require three letters of evaluation. Requirements can vary between schools, and it is the student’s responsibility to ensure that they have collected the correct letters for their program of interest. Generally, programs expect students to provide one letter from a licensed OT, one from a faculty member, and one other of the student’s choosing. This can come from another OT, a research mentor, volunteer coordinator, employer, etc. Students should select what they believe will be the most compelling letter.

**Georgia OT Program Application Dates**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Application Period</th>
<th>Matriculation Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Augusta University</td>
<td>July - October</td>
<td>May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GA State University</td>
<td>July - January</td>
<td>May</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brenau University</td>
<td>July - October</td>
<td>August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenau Hybrid Day*</td>
<td>July - October</td>
<td>May</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brenau Hybrid Weekend*</td>
<td>July - May</td>
<td>January</td>
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* Brenau University has three different cohorts for their MSOT program with different class schedules.

Pre-Health Advising Office