

Central Piedmont Community College

Introduction to the OTA Fieldwork Program

Fieldwork is an essential component of occupational therapy education. During clinical fieldwork the student has the opportunity to observe and interact with practitioners and clients of varying ages and conditions, in multiple environments, including non-traditional settings. The occupational therapy assistant program integrates fieldwork experiences throughout the curriculum to facilitate student learning and competence. Material presented didactically through lecture and laboratory classes is reinforced and becomes more authentic and meaningful to the student. Supervised clinical experiences allow the student opportunities to refine new skills in a safe and protected environment.

Level I fieldwork experiences occur in the second, third, fourth, and fifth semesters of the program, and Level II fieldwork comprises the last semester of the OTA program, which reflects the course sequence in the program curriculum.

During the second and third semester of the program, students complete their first Level I fieldwork. They have completed three introductory courses – Fundamentals of OT (OTA 110), OT Media I (OTA 120), and Professional Skills I (OTA 140). During the third semester, students concurrently take Assessment Skills (OTA 130), Kinesiology (OTA 135) and Physical Conditions (OTA 170). Content in this Level I course focuses on exposure to populations across the lifespan. Students will be exposed to children (2nd semester – OTA 161AB) and adults (3rd semester – OTA 161BB) of various ages, abilities, cultures, and socioeconomic status. Students will be responsible for developing and assisting facility/program staff with implementation of activities that address physical and psychosocial needs of their participants.

In the fourth semester, students complete the second Level I fieldwork experience (OTA 162) while enrolled in Pediatric Concepts and Interventions (OTA 150), Psychosocial Conditions (OTA 180) and Adult Concepts and Interventions (OTA 250). Since the students are developing more specialized knowledge at this point in the curriculum, the Level I fieldwork is designed to expose students to more specialized areas of practice. Roughly 1/3 of their fieldwork experience will be divided between a pediatric setting, a community or psychosocial setting, and a physical disabilities setting.

The students' final Level I fieldwork occurs during their fifth semester. They concurrently take OT Media II (OTA 220) during this semester. They will complete a one week, full time Level I experience in any setting with a full-time OT practitioner. In this experience, students will begin to practice entry-level practitioner skills in their assigned setting by designing at least one intervention that addresses physical and psychosocial needs of a client or consumer.

Two eight-week, full time Level II experiences occur in the final (sixth) semester of the program. These will be in two different settings to ensure that the student has a variety of fieldwork experiences. In both settings, the student will address occupational needs of clients from both physical and psychosocial perspectives, and the student's level of competence is expected to be at entry-level by the end of each 8-week rotation.

Fieldwork opportunities offered in a variety of environments will allow students to observe the occupational performance of healthy individuals as well as those with deficits in abilities due to a health condition and/or contextual barriers and a lack of resources. The clinical experience is crucial in providing the student a learning environment that provides exposure to a mixture of "real-life" patient problems that cannot be experienced or duplicated in the college classroom or laboratory. This model of fieldwork follows the curriculum design focus on PEOP and the program curricular threads of diversity and occupation.

FIELDWORK POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

I. Assignment of Fieldwork Sites

A. Student Qualification for Fieldwork

A student is deemed qualified to begin a fieldwork course by:

1. Being in good standing with CPCC and the CPCC OTA department.
2. Passing all required general education and OTA courses with a C or above.
3. Passing all competencies in OTA courses completed prior to the fieldwork placement.

B. Assignment of Students to Fieldwork Rotations

A primary objective of fieldwork assignments is to ensure that each student is exposed to a variety of clinical settings/environments. Different types of clinical environments include acute hospital settings, private clinics, the public school system, nursing homes, home health care agencies, and rehabilitation hospitals. The experiences are designed to provide the student with directed learning in an assortment of professional and clinical settings.

Students are assigned to clinical sites by the Academic Fieldwork Coordinator (AFWC) with input from the student, faculty, and the fieldwork educator and/or coordinator at the site. Students may not change their clinical assignments on their own or trade with another student. Special situations may be brought to the attention of the Academic Fieldwork Coordinator.

Coordination of clinical sites for students is a labor intensive task. Negotiations for and maintenance of clinical training spaces in the Charlotte area are very competitive among OT and OTA programs. Best efforts are made to locate sites within 60 miles of the CPMC Central Campus. The student will need to furnish his/her own transportation.

C. Location of Fieldwork Sites

Students may NOT contact facilities as a potential fieldwork site. This is a job function of the Academic Fieldwork Coordinator. If you have a facility in mind, please notify the AFWC and fill out the [New FW Site Request Form](#). This is necessary to ensure that proper development of the placement site occurs and also to prevent miscommunication.

Fieldwork sites are chosen by the Academic Fieldwork Coordinator of the Occupational Therapy Assistant Program. When assigning a student to a placement, the student's place of residence and preference will be taken into consideration but it may not always be possible to accommodate all requests. Students are responsible for their own transportation and related expenses (meals, parking, etc.). The student who expects to complete the Program must be able to meet this financial obligation.

The distance to some Level II Fieldwork sites may make temporary relocation advisable. Students wishing to secure temporary housing closer to a facility will be responsible for their own room and board in most cases (some facilities may be able to offer housing and meals at a nominal cost to the student).

D. Fieldwork in Other States

Students may wish to complete one Level II Fieldwork in another state. However, this placement may not be guaranteed. Financial arrangements and housing options are factors that should be considered by the student prior to requesting out of state Level II Fieldwork opportunities. Completing a fieldwork placement in other geographic regions of the U.S. provides a good opportunity to share ideas with professionals in other regions of the country.

E. Conflict of Interest

As a general policy, the Fieldwork Coordinator will not assign a student to a fieldwork site where he/she:

- Has been previously employed and/or has volunteered extensively. Such a placement could put the clinical educator in a difficult situation during evaluation of the student's performance. The level of familiarity may also provide the student with an unfair advantage, and may restrict that student's opportunity to gain experience from a number of different settings.
- Has completed a week-long Level I Fieldwork experience (i.e. as part of the Level 1 FW III class). Fieldwork should reflect a variety of settings, populations and age groups; completing two experiences at the same setting will limit the student's opportunity to meet this goal.
- Has an agreement for employment after graduation. Such a placement could create an unfair situation and may restrict the student's opportunity to gain experience.
- Has a family member working in, or collaborating with, a particular site. Such a placement could put the clinical educator in a difficult situation and/or provide the student with an unfair advantage.

It is the student's responsibility to keep the FW Coordinator informed of the above. If this is not done and a student has been placed at a site where they have been or will be affiliated, the student's FW experience will be terminated and the student will be placed at another site for eight more weeks, delaying graduation. Under special circumstances, the Fieldwork Coordinator will consider waiving the above.

F. Changes or Cancellations of Fieldwork Placement

Occasionally a Fieldwork reservation is cancelled or changed due to unpredictable circumstances (i.e., unexpected staff shortage). When this occurs, the Academic Fieldwork Coordinator will make every effort to reschedule the student quickly in a fieldwork setting that meets the student's educational needs. The Academic Fieldwork Coordinator will attempt to honor Fieldwork cancellations or changes made at the request of the student if documentation justifying the change is presented. Student requests may result in a delay before beginning fieldwork.

If a student is unable to complete a fieldwork for personal or health reasons, there will be one opportunity per fieldwork to make-up the course. This make-up fieldwork must be completed during a CPCC existing short-session, and at the discretion of the OTA program chair and AFWC.

G. Fieldwork Completion/Part-time Fieldwork

Each Level II fieldwork placement will be for 8 weeks on a full-time basis. Student must complete a minimum of 16 weeks of Level II fieldwork to graduate and sit for

the NBCOT examination. Under certain circumstances a student may be permitted to complete Level II Fieldwork on a part-time basis. Requests for part-time status must be submitted in writing to the Academic Fieldwork Coordinator prior to the assignment of fieldwork sites. The need for part-time hours may affect the number and type of fieldwork sites available to the student. Part-time Level II Fieldwork must be a minimum of 20 hours per week. (Or 50% of the fulltime equivalent at the facility) Schedule and total hours will be pre-arranged according to the attendance policies listed in section II-B. ***All clinical fieldwork must be successfully completed within 18 months of the completion of academic coursework. Please note that graduation will be delayed by completing fieldwork on a part-time basis.***

II. STUDENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

A. RESPONSIBILITIES of the STUDENT

As an adult learner and emerging entry-level occupational therapy assistant, the student shares the responsibility for his/her success and education while participating in fieldwork education. Responsibilities demonstrating a commitment to fieldwork education include but, are not limited to:

- Adhering to the facility's policies and procedures, including work hours and dress code.
- Students are informed that they must adhere to the fieldwork facility's schedule regarding days worked, including holidays and weekends.
- If a college holiday conflicts with the facility schedule, the student must notify the AFWC and arrange for a faculty member to be on call. If no faculty members are available, the student may not attend fieldwork for that holiday.
- Weekend fieldwork hours, whether regular or make-up, must be approved by the AFWC. It is the student's responsibility to know which faculty member is on call when at fieldwork outside of normal business hours (Monday-Friday).
- Adhering to the CPOCC OTA Program policies and procedures regarding fieldwork education.
- Maintaining professional behaviors during all interactions with staff and patients.
- Demonstrating awareness and compliance with patient confidentiality and patient rights.
- Demonstrating awareness and compliance with all safety and infection control guidelines.
- Maintaining an appropriate level of communication with the Fieldwork Educator and/or assigned Fieldwork Faculty Advisor.

- Encouraging feedback from the Fieldwork Educator and monitoring performance accordingly.
- Following the OT Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice.
- Assuming personal responsibility for professional growth and development.
- Attending scheduled meetings, including staff/departmental meetings, rounds, care conferences, and in-services.
- Completing all departmental documentation in a timely manner.
- Personally planning a daily schedule, after consultation with the Fieldwork Educator, that includes schedule changes and communication with other staff members.
- Participating in goal setting with the Fieldwork Educator.
- Following the facility's **AND** the OTA program's policies and procedures regarding absences and tardiness
- Informing the Academic Fieldwork Coordinator of any issues that arise that are not addressed by the Fieldwork Educator.
- Completing an evaluation of the facility and reviewing it with the Fieldwork Educator prior to their last day of fieldwork.
- Maintaining an accurate timesheet while participating in fieldwork.

B. ABSENCES & TARDINESS

Students are to be in the clinic as assigned. Absences or tardiness require that students notify their Fieldwork Educator and Academic Fieldwork Coordinator prior to or during the first morning hour of clinic.

All Level I fieldwork absences are to be made up. A student who is absent or tardy in excess of 10% of the assigned clinical contact hours may be withdrawn from the fieldwork course and the OTA program. All make-up days must be scheduled with the OTA program academic fieldwork coordinator and fieldwork educator at the facility.

Students are allowed two (2) excused absences for Level II fieldwork placements. Excused absences are those in which notice is given prior to start time, and approved by BOTH the AFWC and the FWE. The notice should be given as early as possible to prevent disruption in patient or client care. Up to two (2) excused absences will result in a deduction in professional behavior points but if the student meets minimum hours listed below, the hours will not need to be made up. Absences in excess of two days do need to be made up, preferably within the time frame of the 8 week period for the student to avoid an incomplete "I". All unexcused absences must be made up.

Fieldwork Schedule will be arranged prior to the students' start date. The student is expected to attend or make-up every scheduled day for each eight (8) week, full-time Level II fieldwork experience. Total pre-arranged hours per Level II placement must fall in the range of 240-320. Any total outside of this range must be approved

by the Academic Fieldwork Coordinator. Attaining the minimum hours prior to scheduled end of fieldwork is NOT an acceptable reason for ending fieldwork early. Students should bear in mind that additional experiences in fieldwork yield increased confidence, competent, and pass rate on the NBCOT exam.

1. Notification Procedures

The student is required to notify the fieldwork educator and the academic fieldwork coordinator if he/she is going to be absent. **Failure to follow correct notification procedures may result in the absence being considered as two (2) absences instead of one (1). These absences will be considered part of the 10% rule.**

Extended illnesses, pregnancies, and other unusual situations that occur while a student is in the program will be handled on an individual basis, depending upon the student's ability to keep up with the curriculum. Patient and student safety are prime considerations.

2. Tardiness

A student is considered tardy after the assigned starting time. Arrival more than two hours late is considered an absence. The first two (2) times a student is tardy he/she will be allowed to make up the time. Tardiness in excess of two (2) times will be treated as an absence and make-up time will be assigned according to the absence policy.

3. Early Release

A student is considered released early if leaving before the assigned completion time for reasons other than facility closure or low census. Completing less than 50% of the day is considered an absence. The first two (2) times a student is released early he/she will be allowed to make up the time. Early release in excess of two (2) times will be treated as an absence and make-up time will be assigned according to the absence policy.

C. Professional Behavior Expectations

1. Dress Code

During clinical affiliations students should dress in the manner of the staff at the facility. This may mean purchasing and wearing scrubs or a lab coat. If no uniform is required, students should wear clothing that is comfortable, modest, and appropriate for the setting.

- Suggested attire is solid color polo-type shirt; Dockers style pants in khaki, navy, or black; and closed toe shoes.
- Students should wear their CPCC name tag at all times. If the facility issues a name badge, you may wear that instead.
- Jewelry should be kept to a minimum, and be modest. Loose necklaces, jangling bracelets, and dangling earrings are distracting to clients and can be hazardous.

- Facility policies at the fieldwork site may address tattoos, facial and ear piercings, and must be observed while in the facility.
- Fingernails should not extend beyond the tip of the finger, and should be clean and free of colored polish. Acrylic nails are prohibited in hospital settings.
- Hair should be clean and worn away from the face. Hats are not to be worn. Religious head coverings are permitted.

2. No Smoking:

Many healthcare facilities have adopted smoke-free or tobacco-free regulations. Students are required to observe all facility policies while on fieldwork, and may therefore be prohibited from smoking or using tobacco. Refusal to comply with facility regulations could result in a student's Fieldwork being terminated.

III. EVALUATION METHODS / GRADING SCALE

The CPMC Academic Fieldwork Coordinator assigns your final letter grade for Level I FW with input from the Level I FW Performance Evaluation and the student's assignments. A grade of C is required in order to pass any class in the curriculum. All grades will be posted to the Blackboard grade book. Lack of weekly participation in the online class will lower your final grade (see syllabus for specific information).

Level II FW is primarily based on **the Fieldwork Performance Evaluation (FWPE)**.

Secondary factors include:

- Quality of student assignments
- Quality of student communication with the Fieldwork Coordinator and Fieldwork Faculty Advisor
- Completion of student evaluation of the fieldwork site

The FWPE is a pass/fail instrument. In order to pass, a student must earn 3s or above in "Fundamentals of Practice" and earn a minimum of 70 points or more overall on the FWPE items.

A. Fieldwork Evaluation and Progression

Fieldwork rotation requirements must be satisfactorily completed as outlined in the syllabus and the ACOTE Fieldwork Performance Evaluation for the Occupational Therapy Assistant.

Students who demonstrate poor performance on any critical element within the ACOTE Fieldwork Performance Evaluation for the Occupational Therapy Assistant or who require clinical remediation may:

1. Be counseled and receive a written evaluation of the behavior that requires corrective measures in consultation from the fieldwork educator, faculty clinical liaison, and the academic fieldwork coordinator.
2. If necessary, additional or an extended clinical experience may be recommended to assure that the student is at the overall competence level. Overall determination will be based on the clinical evaluation tool, in consultation with the fieldwork

educator, faculty clinical liaison, the academic fieldwork coordinator and program director.

B. Extending or Failing Fieldwork

If a student's performance on Level II Fieldwork is unsatisfactory at mid-term, a meeting will be scheduled with the student, Fieldwork Educator, and Academic Fieldwork Coordinator. At the meeting, the factors related to unsatisfactory performance will be delineated and an Action Plan will be formulated. The Action Plan will describe specific performance expectations and time frame for achievement. Weekly feedback meetings for the student will be scheduled with the Fieldwork Educator, and communication will be forwarded to the Academic Fieldwork Coordinator. If necessary, and upon agreement of all parties involved, the fieldwork experience may be extended to provide greater opportunity for successful completion. At the end of the Fieldwork, if the student's performance continues to be unsatisfactory, the student will receive a failing grade and will need to repeat the Fieldwork at a different site.

If it is determined that the student has no chance of passing the Fieldwork, the student may withdraw and receive a grade of W. After withdrawal, the student will need to complete another Fieldwork experience. There may be limited options available at that point for sites, and the student is not guaranteed another placement in the same type setting. Make-up fieldwork experiences must take place during an existing short session on the CPCA academic calendar.

If a student's performance or behavior put clients or staff at risk or in danger, the fieldwork may be terminated immediately by the facility.

Students who fail or withdraw from a Level II Fieldwork experience will have **one opportunity only** to repeat the Fieldwork. A second failure or withdrawal will result in dismissal from the program.

IV. STUDENT RIGHTS

A. SAFETY

The student has a right to safety from physical or psychological harm during fieldwork. The student has a right to request an orientation to safety procedures at each fieldwork facility. The student also has a right to voice any concerns about safety to the AFWC and to facility personnel.

Should the student be asked to perform tasks outside of their scope, competency, or skill level, this can pose a safety risk to the student as well as the client(s) the student serves. Students have the right to request appropriate training and to decline to perform tasks in which competency has not been established.

B. PRIVACY

The student has a right to privacy of confidential information. The student is covered under the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Please refer to the [CPC's FERPA policies](#).

V. INFORMATION FOR FIELDWORK EDUCATORS

A. RESPONSIBILITIES of the FIELDWORK EDUCATOR

The Fieldwork Educator is responsible for the daily on-site supervision of the OTA student. The Fieldwork Educator is also responsible for ensuring that each student achieves his/her educational objectives during the course of fieldwork experience. Responsibilities demonstrating a commitment to providing the best education-based fieldwork experience for the OTA student include but, are not limited to:

- Reviewing the Fieldwork Manual
- Providing an orientation of the facility, reviewing the facility's policies and procedures, and introducing the student to facility staff
- Defining, with the student's input, site-specific goals and/or objectives
- Recognizing the inevitable learning curve and providing appropriate guidance for each level of the learning curve
- Maximizing the learning experiences available and determining additional experiences for the student within the facility (e.g., direct patient care, a varied caseload, participation in team meetings/departmental meetings, community outings, in-services, exposure to diagnostic/surgical procedures, and challenging fieldwork assignments)
- Providing daily on-site supervision and immediate feedback to students (documentation of supervisory meetings is highly encouraged. Sample documentation templates are provided in the Appendix section of this manual)
- Ensuring adherence to national and state guidelines regarding supervision of the OTA student
- Meeting with the student on a weekly basis (as a minimum) to review progress of goals
- Providing patient care at a level that meets the needs of the facility and also maintains the integrity of the student fieldwork experience
- Reviewing and co-signing all documentation completed by the student
- Coordinating site visits with the Academic Fieldwork Coordinator, as needed
- Notifying the Academic Fieldwork Coordinator if there are any concerns regarding the student's fieldwork experience
- Preparing and presenting a timely and formal mid-term and final evaluation (using the FWPE – the OTA student is required to give this to the Fieldwork Educator the first day of fieldwork)

- Forwarding the completed original FWPE to the Academic Fieldwork Coordinator within 3 days of fieldwork completion

B. Fieldwork Supervision Policy and Procedures

CPCC OTA students will receive supervision during each fieldwork placement that allows for consistent feedback, assessment, and mentoring of professional skills. This supervision will ensure students are aware of their progress towards fieldwork objectives and assignments.

1. Supervision of Fieldwork Students:

To ensure students receive appropriate supervision, the CPCC OTA program expects that fieldwork educators provide the following:

- Supervision that is initially direct, and decreases to less direct supervision as appropriate for the setting, the severity of the client's condition, and the ability of the student.
- Supervision that always provides protection of consumers
- Opportunities for appropriate role modeling of ethical occupational therapy practice
- An environment that fosters thinking outside of the box, not discouraging students when they try new things.
- Should promote clinical reasoning through learning activities appropriate to the role of the OTA.

2. Level I Fieldwork:

Students will be placed in facilities individually, or in groups depending on the setting. When placed in groups, the fieldwork educator to student ratio will not exceed 1:6.

3. Level II Fieldwork:

The ratio for fieldwork educators to students in Level II fieldwork is strongly recommended to be a 1:1 experience. Each facility must designate a primary supervisor in documentation to the AFWC prior to the student's arrival for the fieldwork experience.

If a student must be supervised by more than one fieldwork educator, the AFWC will coordinate with the fieldwork educators prior to the fieldwork start date to ensure that student objectives and expectations are outlined and clear for all parties involved.

The CPCC OTA program does encourage collaboration with OT and OTA students in fieldwork settings when possible. A fieldwork educator to student ratio of 1:2 will be considered if the FWE is an Occupational Therapist and the students are an OT student and OTA student. Two OTA students will not be assigned to one FWE.