

MS in Occupational Therapy at Southern

Admission requires a baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution. In addition, applicants must have completed all prerequisite coursework prior to matriculation.

All qualified applicants will be considered regardless of race, color, creed, gender, age, sexual orientation, marital status, national or ethnic origin, or ability, as long as the applicant is able to complete the essential functions of an occupational therapist (see below). A cohort of forty (40) students will be admitted to begin classes in the summer semester.

Students do not need to have earned their bachelor's degree from one of the four Connecticut State Universities (CSU, Eastern, Western, Central, Southern), however, we have a commitment to those who have graduated from the CSUs. A minimum of 20 seats will be available for CSU graduates who meet admission criteria. If less than 20 students from the CSUs are accepted within the application cycle, the seats will be open to other applicants.

Application Process

- Complete the [graduate application](#) to Southern CT State University (SCSU). For more information about the graduate school application process please see [their admissions page](#). You will be required to provide all official transcripts and a resume/CV.
- Complete the CASPER assessment. Casper is an online, open-response situational judgment test (SJT). It asks what you would do in a tough situation, and more importantly, why. This helps determine behavioral tendencies of applicants pursuing people-centered professions. Candidates can justify their reasoning, express their values, and share their individual perspectives and experiences. Applicants are scored on traits and skills such as collaboration, problem-solving, ethics, empathy, and self-awareness." For more information about CASPER please see <https://acuityinsights.app/faq/>.
- Request that your CASPER score be sent to the SCSU occupational therapy program.
- You may then be invited to participate in an interview process called the multiple mini interview (described below).

Required Prerequisites

- The required prerequisites include
 - Human Anatomy and Physiology I and II with lab (8 cr)
 - Abnormal Psychology (3cr)
 - Lifespan or Human Development courses that cover the lifespan (3-9cr)
 - Sociology or Social psychology (3cr)
 - Research methods / Introductory Statistics (3cr)

SCSU students see [this document](#) for course names and numbers that will meet these prerequisites)

- Performance on Prerequisites
 - All prerequisite course grades B- or better, however, prerequisite combined GPA must be a 3.0.
 - Any single prerequisite course may have been retaken, but only once.
 - Prerequisites have no expiration date.

- Recommended Undergraduate Courses
 - Courses related to social justice/ social bias/ gender, sexuality, social determinants of health, cultural humility, or racial bias
 - Kinesiology
 - Foreign language / spanish for healthcare

What we do not require

The MS degree program in Occupational Therapy (OT) at SCSU does not require letters of recommendation or personal statements as these methods have been documented to have the potential to be biased, to have minimal additional predictive validity for your success, and with the growth of AI, authenticity is difficult to determine (Chapman et al., 2020; Dalal et al., 2022; Johnstone 2023; Newkirk-Turner, & Hudson, 2022; Niessan & Newman, 2022; Woo et al., 20203; Zhao et al., 2023).

How will your application be reviewed?

Your application to the Occupational Therapy (OT) MS degree program at SCSU will be considered using a process of holistic review.

What is a holistic review?

Holistic review may be defined as “a flexible, individualized way of assessing an applicant’s capabilities by which balanced consideration is given to experiences, attributes, and academic metrics” (Addams, Bletzing, Sondheimer, White, & Johnson, 2010, p.10). This definition and model was first developed by the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) but it has now been widely adopted by a variety of other health professions.

A holistic admissions process is mission-driven (Addams et al., 2010) as a foundational tenet. The AAMC, in 2011, stated that “selection criteria are broad-based, clearly linked to school-specific mission and goals, and promote diversity as an essential element to achieving institutional excellence” (p. 43). For holistic admissions, both the mission of the program and of

the university must reflect diversity as an important characteristic. SCSU is quite clear in its commitment to diversity (see <https://www.southernct.edu/dei>) and prides itself as an institution that supports the upward mobility of its students (see our rank on <https://www.socialmobilityindex.org/>).

We chose a holistic admissions process based on the evidence regarding the relationship of grades and GPA to social class and the impact of traditional admissions processes on class makeup (Sternberg, 2010). Our committee review will focus on how an applicant is able to contribute to the SCSU OT program and the profession of occupational therapy after graduation. Holistic review in our program uses the Experience, Attribute, Metric Model (E-A-M).

What is the E-A-M model?

E= experience, A = attributes and M = Metrics

Experience refers to the applicant's lived events that perhaps resulted in growth, knowledge or wisdom. Experiences provide important data in holistic review and may include community service, mission work, travel, healthcare experience, or leadership. Any type of difficult experience that might demonstrate "grit" or perseverance is typically considered. Overcoming difficulties in work-life balance may similarly demonstrate resilience. For our program, experiences will be explored during multiple mini interview stations (see information about this below).

An attribute may refer to a quality, characteristic, ability or skill of a person or population. For our program attributes will be measured during multiple mini interview stations. The CASPER test also measures attributes, but in turn produces a score that becomes a metric.

Metrics are the measurements of academic achievement or testing that most people associate with traditional college admissions (such as GPA). The CASPER test score will be a second metric for our admissions process.

What will make a competitive application for our program?

We believe that excellent occupational therapists are creative in their problem solving and interventions, hopeful in their expectations of the possibility of positive growth and change in their clients, powerful in their ability to be a champion for others, and open-minded and humble enough to be accepting and non-judgmental of others who are different from themselves. Occupational therapists must be curious about others and eager to work with others. Working in healthcare can be demanding and we also seek individuals who can demonstrate resilience and perseverance. Other attributes commonly needed by occupational therapists are skills such as

critical thinking, problem-solving, and leadership. Occupational therapists must also value life-long learning.

We will be asking applicants to show us these qualities through a variety of means:

- Our interviews will be conducted as multiple mini-interviews (Wagner, Maddox, Glazer, & Hittle, 2020). We require an interview, in part, because oral communication skills are the most frequently employer-requested 21st century skill (Rios et al., 2020). However, we run them as multiple mini-interviews because of the evidence that finds them to be less biased than traditional interviews and to be predictive of outcomes for healthcare students (Ali et al, 2022; Wildermuth, 2022).
- We will be asking you to show us your creativity, curiosity, problem solving, ethics, and other 21st century skills such as collaboration, communication, and critical thinking (Rios et al., 2020). Measures such as these have been shown to be less biased than traditional tests used for college admissions and predictive of college success (Almlund et al., 2011; Sternberg, 2010). The CASPER test is one such measure. We will use others during the multiple mini interview experience.
- In your interview stations, you will be asked about life experiences that will help you perform as an occupational therapist and support the mission of the program and the university such as:
 - exposure to other cultures (semester abroad or mission work for example)
 - fluency in a language other than English
 - prior or current full-time or part-time employment
 - healthcare experience
 - leadership experiences
 - community service
 - prior exposure to occupational therapy
 - involvement in a variety of personally meaningful occupations
 - experiences that showcase determination, perseverance

Our metrics establish a baseline “floor” and they have been selected based on data to assist the program in determining that an applicant who is admitted and enters the program will be able to complete the program and pass the required national certification exam. However, these are just one portion of the application review. Our metrics include:

- Undergraduate cumulative GPA
- Prerequisite GPA
- CASPER score

These are examined with a weighting formula for the initial screening to determine who will be invited for an interview.

Requirements for International Students

Students who are not native speakers of the English language must document language proficiency. Please contact the graduate admissions office with questions and see their [web information](#) regarding acceptable documentation.

Requirements for Licensure as an Occupational Therapist

[SCSU welcomes undocumented students](#). However, prospective students must be aware that while you will be allowed to sit for the national certification exam (NBCOT), all 50 states of the United States require licensure for practice as an occupational therapist. In the state of Connecticut, licensure requires a social security number. Other states may allow undocumented graduates to apply for licensure but this can not be guaranteed.

Policies for Transfer Students and Transfer Credits

Because of the integrated nature of our curriculum, our program does not accept transfer students or transfer credits for any required courses. Accepted students must complete all required occupational therapy courses.

Policies for Advanced Placement

The university provides [advanced placement credit](#) for undergraduate coursework. However, AP credit may not be used in place of any of the occupational therapy prerequisites.

Credit for prior experience

We do not provide credit for prior academic studies or professional experience.

PLEASE NOTE

Current tuition and fee rates are provided [here](#). University policies regarding [tuition and fees](#) and [refunds](#) are provided as well. Students wishing to defer their admission, must email gradadmissions@southernct.edu by 3pm on the first day of classes for the term in which they were originally admitted. A deferral request may be made for a maximum of one year. Students who have registered and must withdraw will [do so through the university](#).

All applicants should note that [the University requires](#) a minimum cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.0 to earn a graduate degree.

ACCREDITATION

The entry-level occupational therapy master's degree program has applied for accreditation by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) of the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), located at 6116 Executive Boulevard, Suite 200, North Bethesda, MD 20852-4929. ACOTE's telephone number c/o AOTA is (301) 652-AOTA and its web address is www.acoteonline.org.

The program must be granted Candidacy Status, have a preaccreditation review, complete an on-site evaluation, and be granted Accreditation Status before its graduates will be eligible to sit for the national certification examination for the occupational therapist administered by the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT). After successful completion of this exam, the individual will be an Occupational Therapist, Registered (OTR). In addition, all states require licensure in order to practice; however, state licenses are usually based on the results of the NBCOT Certification Examination.

Note that a felony conviction may affect a graduate's ability to sit for the NBCOT certification examination or attain state licensure.

Students must complete 24 weeks of Level II fieldwork within 18 months following completion of the didactic portion of the program.

References

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