

Occupational

Therapy Assistant

Program

Revised 2024

David Kresse, MS, OTR/L 610-396-6425

OTA Program Director dck12@psu.edu

Penn State Berks ● Tulpehocken Road ● P.O. Box 7009 ● Reading, Pa. 19610-6009

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

Occupational Therapy is a dynamic health care field with employment opportunities in assisted living and skilled nursing facilities, rehabilitation centers, schools, hospitals as well as community and wellness settings.

Occupational therapy personnel work with people of all ages who encounter health, learning, and accessibility challenges resulting from physical, cognitive, psychological, social and/or environmental factors. Common conditions that occupational therapy practitioners work with include stroke, dementia (Alzheimer’s), joint replacements, congestive heart failure, developmental delays, autism, learning disabilities, intellectual disability, anxiety disorders, mood disorders such as depression, and substance abuse.

Penn State Berks offers an associate degree in occupational therapy which prepares students for jobs as Occupational Therapy Assistants (OTA). OTA’s work under the supervision of occupational therapists to enable people of all ages to function as independently as possible in their daily lives. OTA’s assist occupational therapists in evaluating, planning, and providing services to clients. Intervention can focus on helping clients care for their personal needs, be productive in their home, workplace or school, and engage in valued leisure activities.

According to the [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/occupational-therapy-assistants-and-aides.htm) “overall employment of occupational therapy assistants and aides is projected to grow 25 percent from 2021 to 2031, much faster than the average for all occupations”. Occupational therapy will continue to be an important part of treatment for people with various illnesses and disabilities.

**Career Possibilities**

A graduate with an associate degree in occupational therapy may find employment in the following settings:

1. skilled and intermediate care facilities
2. rehabilitation hospitals and centers
3. public and private schools
4. general, psychiatric, and pediatric hospitals
5. hand centers
6. community living programs and shelters
7. day treatment centers
8. ergonomic and work safety programs
9. hospices and home health agencies
10. wellness and accessibility programs
11. work hardening and vocational programs
12. early intervention programs and preschools
13. assistive technology centers

**Admission Requirements**

An applicant must have four secondary-school units of English, two units of mathematics, two units of science, and five units of arts, humanities, social studies, and/or foreign languages. A high school diploma or equivalent is also required. Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT/SAT1) scores are not currently required. Application forms are available from high schools, any Penn State campus, or on the web at [http://berks.psu.edu/admission](http://berks.psu.edu/admission%20)

**Accreditation**

Penn State’s Occupational Therapy Assistant program isaccredited by the [Accreditation Council of Occupational Therapy Education](https://acoteonline.org/) (ACOTE) of the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA).

**Certification Exam and Licensure**

Upon graduation, graduates sit for the certification examination administered by the [National Board for Certification of Occupational Therapy](https://www.nbcot.org/) (NBCOT). After successfully completing this examination, the graduate will receive the credential: Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant (COTA). The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (as well as other states) requires a license to practice as a COTA. A license is granted based on successful graduation from a accredited OTA program such PSU Berks and passing the NBCOT certification examination. Specific licensure requirements are dictated by the state licensure board. **A felony conviction on your record may affect your ability to sit for the certification examination administered by NBCOT after you graduate. This can subsequently affect your ability to attain state licensure**.  Before applying for the OTA program, you can contact NBCOT for information on their early determination program to assess examination eligibility.  See NBCOT’s [Early Determination Review](https://www.nbcot.org/exam/edr) for additional information.

**Required Courses**

Students enrolled in the PSU Berks Occupational Therapy Assistant associate degree program complete 71 credits of course work.

**General Education Courses**

\*Bio 161 Anatomy and Physiology I (3 credits)

\*Bio 162 Anatomy and Physiology I Lab (1 credit)

\*Bio 163 Anatomy and Physiology II (3 credit)

\*Bio 164 Anatomy and Physiology II Lab (1 credit)

\*Eng 15 Rhetoric and Composition (3 credits)

GA Arts Elective (3 credits)

GH Humanities Elective (3 credits)

\*HDFS 129 Introduction to Human Development and Family Studies

*or* Psych 212 Introduction to Developmental Psychology (3 credits)

\*GQ Math Elective – Ex. Math 21 College Algebra, Math 17 Finite Math, Math 34 Math of Money, *or* STAT 100 (3 credits)

\*Psychology 100 Introduction to Psychology (3 credits)

\* Students must earn a grade of a C or better in these courses

**Occupational Therapy Courses**

\*OT 100S Structural Foundations of Occupational Therapy (1 credit)

\*OT 101 Conceptual Foundations of Occupational Therapy Practice (2 credits)

\*OT 103 Occupational Performance Across the Lifespan (3 credits)

\*OT 205 Group Process Across the Lifespan (3 credits)

\*OT 207 Assistive Technologies and Methods of Adaptation (3 credits)

\*OT 209 Management, Leadership and Ethics in Occupational Therapy (3 credits)

\*OT 195E Fieldwork Level I Experience in Occupational Therapy (1 credit)

\*OT 210W Clinical Reasoning and Documentation in Occupational Therapy (3 credits)

\*OT 212 Occupational Therapy for Child & Adolescent Health (4 credits)

\*OT 214 Occupational Therapy for Psychosocial and Behavioral Health (4 credits)

\*OT 216 Occupational Therapy for Physical Health and Rehabilitation (4 credits)

\*OT 295E Fieldwork Level I Experience in Occupational Therapy (2 credits)

\*OT 395A Fieldwork Level II Experience in Occupational Therapy I (6 credits)

\*OT 395B Fieldwork Level II Experience in Occupational Therapy II (6 credits)

\* Students must earn a grade of a C or better in these courses

**Course Descriptions**

**Biology 161/162/163/164 (Anatomy and Physiology I and II - Lecture and Lab)** – This two-semester sequence introduces human anatomy and physiology, which is the branch of biology that focuses on the structure and function of the human body.

**English 15 (Rhetoric and Composition)** - This is generally considered a freshman writing course. Depending on your freshman testing scores, you may be asked to take an additional, pre-writing course before completing this course.

**General Arts (GA) Elective** - This needs to be a hands-on, active arts course. (Do **not** take an art history or music appreciation course.) Potential GA courses include: drawing, photography, pottery, etc. It may also include a theater course, some creative writing courses, and some music courses.

**General Humanities (GH) Elective** - This course is considered an elective course, which means you have many options. The only requirement is that it is general humanities course. This typically means courses like history, philosophy, some literature courses, and world religions.

**Human Development and Family Studies (HDFS 129)** - This is a basic human development course. This class covers human development from birth to death (not just child and adolescent development) (Psych 212 may be substituted for this class).

**GQ/Math -** Math/quantification classes that meet this requirement include Math 17, 18, 21, 30, 33, 34, 35, 36 and Stat 100.

**Psychology 100** - This is a general psychology course that introduces principles of human and animal thinking and behavior. The course covers a wide range of topics from cognitive, social, developmental, clinical, personality, and biological psychology.

[**O T 100**](http://bulletins.psu.edu/bulletins/bluebook/university_course_descriptions.cfm?letter=O&courselong=O_T|100|200304S1)**S Structural Foundations of Occupational Therapy** - An overview of the structural foundations of the occupational therapy profession.

[**O T 101**](http://bulletins.psu.edu/bulletins/bluebook/university_course_descriptions.cfm?letter=O&courselong=O_T|101|200405SP) **Conceptual Foundations of Occupational Therapy Practice** - An overview of the conceptual foundations of occupational therapy practice. This course includes observation of therapists in treatment settings.

[**O T 103**](http://bulletins.psu.edu/bulletins/bluebook/university_course_descriptions.cfm?letter=O&courselong=O_T|103|200405SP) **(US) Occupational Performance Across the Life Span** - Analysis of occupations from birth to death including descriptions of factors which influence occupational performance.

[**OT**](http://bulletins.psu.edu/bulletins/bluebook/university_course_descriptions.cfm?letter=O&courselong=O_T|105W|200607SP) **205 Group Process Across the Lifespan** - The course addresses concepts & theories related to group processes and dynamics within the OT therapeutic context.

[**O T 207**](http://bulletins.psu.edu/bulletins/bluebook/university_course_descriptions.cfm?letter=O&courselong=O_T|107|199900SP) **Assistive Technologies and Methods of Adaptation** - Addresses a variety of assistive technology and assistive devices people use to assist them in completing daily and life occupations

**O T 209** **Management, Leadership and Ethics in Occupational Therapy** - Focus on management, leadership and ethics in occupational therapy practice. 

**OT 195E Level I Fieldwork Experience** **in Occupational Therapy** - This is the first fieldwork level I experience. It involves observation and engagement with individuals and/or groups to develop a better understanding of occupational performance, challenges and occupation-based interventions.

**O T 210W** **Clinical Reasoning and Documentation in Occupational Therapy** - This course entails a broad scope experience in clinical reasoning strategies, proficient writing and documentation skills required by the occupational therapy assistant across a wide variety of practice settings

[**O T 212**](http://bulletins.psu.edu/bulletins/bluebook/university_course_descriptions.cfm?letter=O&courselong=O_T|202|199900SP) **Occupational Therapy for Child & Adolescent Health** - Students will utilize clinical reasoning to facilitate occupation-based interventions that address client factors as related to conditions associated with children and adolescents.

[**O T 214**](http://bulletins.psu.edu/bulletins/bluebook/university_course_descriptions.cfm?letter=O&courselong=O_T|204|199900SP) **Occupational Therapy for Psychosocial and Behavioral Health** - Students will utilize clinical reasoning to facilitate occupation-based interventions that address client factors as related to psychosocial and behavioral health.

[**O T 216**](http://bulletins.psu.edu/bulletins/bluebook/university_course_descriptions.cfm?letter=O&courselong=O_T|206|199900SP) **Occupational Therapy for Physical Health and Rehabilitation** - Students will utilize clinical reasoning to facilitate occupation-based interventions that address client factors as related to physical health and rehabilitation.

**OT 295E Level I Fieldwork Experience in Occupational Therapy** - This is the second fieldwork level I experience taken alongside of coursework during the 4th semester. It involves observation and engagement with individuals and/or groups to develop a better understanding of occupational performance, challenges and occupation-based interventions.

[**O T 395A**](http://bulletins.psu.edu/bulletins/bluebook/university_course_descriptions.cfm?letter=O&courselong=O_T|295A|199900SP) **Field Experience in Occupational Therapy I** - This is the first 8-week supervised fieldwork experience in a community or clinical based setting.

[**O T 395B**](http://bulletins.psu.edu/bulletins/bluebook/university_course_descriptions.cfm?letter=O&courselong=O_T|295B|199900SP) **Field Experience in Occupational Therapy II** - This is the second 8-week supervised fieldwork experience in a community or clinical based setting.

**Program Sequence**

The associate degree program in occupational therapy at Penn State University, Berks campus, is designed to be completed in five semesters. While gen ed courses can be transferred from other colleges, there is NO possibility of completing the program in less than five semesters, regardless of how many college credits or degrees you enter the OTA program with. Related information can be found [online](https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/colleges/berks/occupational-therapy-as/#suggestedacademicplantext) at Please note the following guidelines:

1. To remain a full-time student for financial aid and health insurance coverage, you need to carry at least 12 credits per semester. There is no requirement to be full time to be in the OTA program (this applies primarily to transfer students) except for the fourth semester.
2. Financial aid requirements for the summer may be different than the spring and fall semesters. Check with the financial aid office for regulations and financial aid coverage for the summer semesters.
3. The OT courses must be taken in the semesters outlined and all OT courses offered in the semester must be taken during the same semester.
4. Courses are not offered every semester. Summer course offerings are limited and may change from year to year. In most summers, the following courses are usually offered at Penn State Berks: Math, English, A&P, and a humanities course.
5. Gen ed classes may be taken at the PSU Berks campus, other Penn State University campuses, as well as other institutions of higher education. Consult your OTA program advisor.
6. All colleges and universities have different names and numbers for their general education courses. You need to check the course descriptions in order to find which course meets the PSU course description. Consult your OTA program advisor and the PSU [online transfer tool](https://admissions.psu.edu/info/future/transfer/credit/).
7. It is best to get pre-approval for courses taken at other institutions in order to guarantee that they will be accepted at PSU. Speak to your OTA advisor for details.
8. In order for any course to be transferred and accepted from another educational institution, you must earn a grade of C or better.

The suggested two and half year, five semester plan for completing the OTA program is as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Fall (Semester One)** | **Spring (Semester Two)** |
| **OT100S\* 1**  **OT101\* 2**  BIOL 161\* 3  BIOL 162\* 1  ENG 015 (GWS)\* 3  PSYCH 100 (GS)\* 3  **13 credits** | **OT103\* + 3**  HDFS 129 or PSYCH212 3  BIOL 163 \* 3  BIOL 164 \* 1  Math (GQ)\* 3  **13 credits** |
| **Fall (Semester Three)** | **Spring (Semester Four)** |
| **OT205\* 3**  **OT207\* 3**  **OT209\* 3**  **OT195E\* 1**  Humanities Elective (GH)3  Art Elective (GA) 3  **16 credits** | **OT210W\* 3**  **OT212\* 4**  **OT214\* 4**  **OT216\* 4**  **OT295E\* 2**    **17 credits** |
| **Summer / Fall (Semester Five)** | **KEY FOR COURSES** |
| OT395 A\* 6  OT395 B\* 6  **12 credits**  ***FW Level II typically is two different***  ***8 week full-time placements.*** | \* Students must earn a grade of C or better in this course.  + OT 103 meets the intercultural requirement and is designated US. |

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

* Students **must** complete these courses prior to enrolling in the 200 level OT courses:

ENG 15, PSYC 100, BIOL 161, 162, 163, 164, and HDFS 129.

* OT courses in **bold** **print** may only be taken in the designated semester/order.
* Courses meeting GQ, GH, GA requirements may be taken during semesters 1-4.
* Some general education courses are able to shift from semester-to-semester. Consult with advisor for best individual academic plan.
* All didactic degree requirements must be completed prior to enrolling in OT 395 A/B.
* FW Level II dates will be set by the Fieldwork Coordinator. Academic advising is required to establish FW II placements.
* OT 395A/B must be completed within 18 months of completing the didactic requirement.

**Options for Continuing Education**

While there is no requirement to get any other degree beyond the associate’s degree in occupational therapy offered at Penn State Berks, there are a number of options for students wishing to continue their education. Below are a number of options:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Continue education by earning a Baccalaureate degree at PSU Berks  *Possible degrees include:*  -Psychology  -Kinesiology  -Business  -Engineering  See <http://www.bk.psu.edu/> for more information. | Continue education by earning a Baccalaureate degree at Mont Alto:  -Occupational Science  <https://montalto.psu.edu/academics/bachelors/occupational-science>  or at Penn State University, State College  *Possible degrees include:*  -Psychology  -Vocational Rehabilitation  -Kinesiology  -Education  -Human Development  See <http://www.psu.edu/> for more information | Continue education by earning a Master’s degree in Occupational Therapy  *Local institutions include:*  -Alvernia College  -Misericordia University  -Elizabethtown College  -Saint Joseph’s University  -Temple University  -Thomas Jefferson University  A listing of all graduate schools is available at <http://www.aota.org> |
| NOTE: After completing a baccalaureate degree in a related field, students may continue their education to become an occupational therapist by completing a Masters degree in Occupational Therapy. | | |

**Additional Information**

For more information on occupational therapy, certification, and accreditation:

**The American Occupational Therapy Association, Inc.  (AOTA)**   
 6116 Executive Boulevard, Suite 200

North Bethesda, MD 20852-4929  
Phone: 301-652-2682   
<http://www.aota.org/>

**Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE)**

7501 Wisconsin Avenue, Suite 510E

Bethesda, MD 20814

301-652-AOTA  
<http://www.acoteonline.org/>

**National Board for the Certification of Occupational Therapy, Inc. (NBCOT)**   
One Bank Street – Suite 300   
Gaithersburg, MD 20878  
Phone: 301-990-7979   
Fax: 301-869-8492   
<http://www.nbcot.org/>

**Contact Information**

If you have any questions about the PSU Berks OTA Program, please see our web site:

<https://berks.psu.edu/associate-occupational-therapy>

**Or contact:**

David Kresse, MS, OTR/L  
OTA Program Director  
Penn State University - Berks Campus  
P.O. Box 7009  
Reading, PA 19610-6009  
610-396-6425 (office)

dck12@psu.edu

The Pennsylvania State University is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to programs, facilities, admission, and employment without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by University policy or by state or federal authorities. The Pennsylvania State University does not discriminate against any person because of age, ancestry, color, disability or handicap, national origin, race, religious creed, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status. Direct all inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policy to the Affirmative Action Director, The Pennsylvania State University, 201 Willard Building, University Park, PA 16802-2801; tel (814) 863-4700/V, (814) 865-1150/ TTY.