

Qualitative Research Methodologies for Occupational Science and Therapy

Renee Leuschke is a Master of Science in Occupational Therapy Registered & Licensed with over 10 years of experience working in hospitals and outpatient clinicals. She obtained a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from Southeast Missouri State University and a Master of Science in Occupational Therapy from the University of Illinois at Chicago. She currently works with clients with neuro-related diagnoses such as stroke, traumatic brain injury, spinal cord injury, and multiple sclerosis.

Shannon Lee has been a freelance writer, editor, and novelist for over 25 years. Her work has appeared on Fox Business, Forbes, MSN, Bob Vila, Modernize, Nashville Scene, MoneyGeek, MVP Parent, and many other outlets; her writing on home improvement led to an editorial position with The Spruce in 2021. She's written extensively on higher education, relationships, and the intersection of technology, health, and medicine. When she's not freelancing, Shannon also writes fiction novels.

Occupational therapists are essential to the healthcare field. Working with patients who have injuries or disabilities, OTs help people get their lives back on track through targeted recovery plans. They use therapeutic techniques to improve and maintain their patient's ability to perform everyday tasks.

In May 2020, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reported that occupational therapists earned a median yearly salary of \$86,280. The top 10% earned \$122,670. According to the BLS, occupational therapy jobs are expected to see a 16% growth in job openings, a rate considered to be much faster than average.

Due to the advanced nature of occupational therapy work, these professionals must hold master's degrees at minimum. While occupational therapy is a very hands-on career, online master's in occupational therapy programs do exist for students who want to complete their coursework remotely. Online programs still require a set amount of in-person, clinical hours for graduation.

You have a lot of options when it comes to earning your occupational therapy master's degree online. We've compiled and ranked some of the top schools. See who made our list in 2023.

The Best Occupational Therapy Master's Programs Online

Not all online occupational therapy programs are created equal. But the best program for one person may not be the best school for someone else. With that in mind, we analyzed universities from across the country to create a list of what we believe are the best overall online OT master's programs currently available based on their strong combination of affordability, study flexibility, and quality. Use our 2023 school ranking list as a starting point to see which accredited online occupational therapy master's program is right for you.

2-year Schools 4-year Schools or Select a State IN KS KY MD MO PA UT VA # School Name Type Cost Online Programs More Details School Information Online Students Academic Counseling Career Placement Students w/Institutional Aid Median

P

Earnings 10yrs After Entry Accreditation 1 Towson University Towson, MD Public
\$\$ 2 Towson University's occupational therapy doctoral (OTD) program gives students the chance to participate in advanced clinical coursework and have experiences in several key focus areas. Students complete the program on a part-time basis, allowing currently practicing students the ability to simultaneously study and work full time. To apply, students must be licensed occupational therapists and have a master's degree. Within the curriculum, students will participate in a two-course individualized capstone research project. Students interested in the full-time, year-round, entry-level occupational therapy program will participate in a curriculum with limited hybrid and online components. Program Highlights: Occupational Therapy Doctorate - Post Professional Credits: 33

Cost: \$642/credit (resident), \$1,158/credit (non-resident)

Length: 6 semesters

Mode: online Occupational Therapy Doctorate - Entry-Level Credits: 97

Total Cost: \$60,749 (resident), \$108,685 (non-resident)

Length: 3 years

Mode: on-campus, some hybrid and online components Academic

Counseling Yes Career

Placement Yes Student/

Faculty Ratio 16/1 Accreditation MSCHE 2 University of Missouri-Columbia Columbia, MO Public \$\$ 1 The Doctor of Occupational Therapy (OTD) (post-professional) from the University of Missouri-Columbia is specifically for practicing

210.0015555556

occupational therapists who want to advance their formal education without giving up needed time to work. The length of the program and the number of required credits are determined by whether the applying student has a bachelor's or a master's degree. Earning this degree could lead to potential positions as a clinical instructor, assistant professor, or manager/director of therapy services. Though all classes are available online, students must attend an on-campus summit once a year. Coursework will cover topics in population health, professional leadership and development, advanced evidence-based practice, and instructional design and application. Program Highlights: Doctor of Occupational Therapy Credits: 36-51

Cost: \$27,026-\$38,286

Length: 3-5 years

Mode: online Academic

Counseling Yes Career

Placement Yes Student/

Faculty Ratio 18/1 Accreditation HLC 3 University of Utah Salt Lake City, UT Public \$\$ 1 The University of Utah has a 100% online professional occupational therapy program that incorporates specific pathways for students who hold an entry-level occupational therapy degree at the undergraduate or graduate level. To be admitted, students must be certified by the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT) and have at least two years of practice as an OT. The University of Utah's doctoral OT program is focused on providing clinicians with a stronger, more up-to-date theoretical base, advancing their leadership skills, and providing them with knowledge and skills in the evidence-based research related to their chosen area of emphasis. Online courses combine both asynchronous and synchronous learning elements. Program Highlights: Post Professional Doctorate in Occupational Therapy Credits: 36-60

Cost: \$10,081/semester (resident), \$19,385/semester (non-resident)

Length: 2-3 years

Mode: online Academic

Counseling Yes Career

Placement Yes Student/

Faculty Ratio 17/1 Accreditation NWCCU 4 Indiana University-Purdue University-Indianapolis Indianapolis, IN Public \$\$
1 The School of Health and Human Sciences at IUPUI offers students a post-professional Doctor of Occupational Therapy (OTD) program that helps practicing therapists improve their clinical and research knowledge while continuing to work. The curriculum is focused on changes in the healthcare field and helping professionals enhance their current skills while learning about emerging areas of occupational therapy practice. The three-semester program can be followed completely online with students taking 10 credits a semester. To apply, students must have an accredited entry-level master's degree in occupational therapy from an Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy (ACOTE) program. If the entry-level degree is not at the master's level, a separate master's degree in any subject is also required. Program Highlights: Post-professional Doctorate in Occupational Therapy Credits: 30

Cost: \$423/credit (resident), \$642/credit (non-resident)

Length: 3 semesters

Mode: online Academic

Counseling Yes Career

Placement Yes Student/

Faculty Ratio 14/1 Accreditation HLC 5 University of Kansas Lawrence, KS Public \$\$\$ 1 The Doctor of Occupational Therapy (OTD) program at the University of Kansas is directed at practicing therapists who wish to upgrade their education to meet the increasing demands of complex practice issues. The focus of the program is on leadership and specialization. Online classes have both synchronous and asynchronous components to it, and students typically take one or two classes per semester. Courses in the program include quantitative evidence, professional development,

theory and practice, and a capstone project. Qualitative, leadership, general, and teaching electives are also part of the curriculum. Program Highlights: Doctor of Occupational Therapy Credits: 36

Total Cost: \$23,138

Length: 3-4 years

Mode: online Academic

Counseling Yes Career

Placement Yes Student/

Faculty Ratio 17/1 Accreditation HLC 6 Eastern Kentucky University Richmond, KY Public \$\$ 1 Academic

Counseling Yes Career

Placement Yes Student/

Faculty Ratio 15/1 Accreditation SACSCOC 7 Radford University Radford, VA Public \$\$ 1 Academic

Counseling Yes Career

Placement Yes Student/

Faculty Ratio 14/1 Accreditation SACSCOC 8 Temple University Philadelphia, PA Public \$\$\$\$ 1 Academic

Counseling Yes Career

Placement Yes Student/

Faculty Ratio 13/1 Accreditation MSCHE 9 University of Pittsburgh-Pittsburgh Campus Pittsburgh, PA Public \$\$\$\$ 1
Academic

Counseling Yes Career

Placement Yes Student/

Faculty Ratio 14/1 Accreditation MSCHE

Profiling the Online Master's in Occupational Therapy

During your search for an accredited online occupational therapy program, it's crucial to understand all of the details. School profiles like the one we've provided below can give you a great preview of what earning your OT master's online will look like, including what portion can be completed fully-online, how long it will take to finish, where you'll perform your fieldwork requirements, and other important components of the degree program.

University of St. Augustine At the University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences, students get to choose from a wide selection of health related programs, including the Master of Occupational Therapy. In addition to its traditional full-time program, which can be completed in two years, the University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences offers the Flex distance program. This online hybrid program allows students to complete all 93 credit hours both online and in-person, leading to their master's degree in just three years. Graduates are ready to sit for the NBCOT Certification Examination. The occupational therapy program is run on a trimester system, each consisting of around nine to 12 credit hours. This curriculum will cover a wide range of subjects, including: Wellness and Health Promotion

Human Movement for Occupational Performance

Occupational Engagement and Theories of Practice

Patient/Client Care Management

Wellness and Health Promotion

OT Methods I: Assistive Technology

OT Methods II: Orthotics, Prosthetics and Modalities

Fieldwork IIA and IIB Toward the end of the program, students obtain hands-on training through two fieldwork courses, each lasting 12 weeks. To provide maximum flexibility, students can choose to attend the University of St. Augustine for Health Science's campus of their choice; they are located in Austin, Texas, St. Augustine, Florida, and Miami, Florida.

Earning Your Occupational Therapy Degree Online

Earning an occupational therapy degree online can have numerous advantages over the traditional on-campus program. While online learning isn't perfect for everyone, it has benefits that are pretty hard to beat for some.

Convenience The ability to take OT courses on your own schedule is a major benefit of attending an online program. Even blended programs that have in-person curriculum requirement make obtaining a master's degree in occupational therapy so much easier when the bulk of the curriculum is available online. When completing these in-person requirements, many online programs still keep things convenient by allowing you to find a nearby location where you can complete the field requirements. Since this hands-on training takes place near the end of the program, you'll already have the knowledge and skills to hit the ground running. **Cost** Online OT programs can often be less expensive than their on-campus counterparts, even at the same university. And even if the tuition isn't cheaper, you may not have to pay certain fees as an online student, lowering your total out-of-pocket costs. Still, you'll want to make sure you understand all of the costs involved and have a plan to finance your OT program before you enroll. As an online student, you're eligible for the same type of financial aid as traditional students aside from a few scholarship opportunities that may only be offered to students attending classes on campus. The key to securing financial aid is to start early. You can learn more about financial aid opportunities that can help pay for your online OT degree by reading our comprehensive guide to financial aid and browsing our list of scholarships for OT students. **Developing persistence** When you're working as an occupational therapist, persistence is the name of the game. Many patients will need guidance for quite some time; their advances might seem so incremental that it becomes frustrating for everyone involved. And some patients might not be willing or ready to receive your help, which means you must be even more persistent when convincing them, from one session to another, to stick with what they need to

do. Having the discipline to remain persistent in helping a patient or finding alternative treatments is essential. Completing an online degree requires persistence, too. The self-directed nature of the program means you must have firm self-discipline to complete assignments on your own, often by creating a personal schedule that requires you to stick to the program. Honing of multitasking skills Online programs provide maximum flexibility, which is why they typically attract those with other obligations, such as work or family. As a result, online students quickly become masters of multi-tasking. Those multi-tasking skills can carry over to practice as an occupational therapist. It's common for occupational therapists to juggle several things at once, such as keeping track of how many times a patient does a particular action, anticipating what activity the patient will choose to do next and figuring out how to apply that as a treatment. Then, while the occupational therapist is typing up notes following the treatment, they are planning what activities to suggest when working with the next patient. Of course, there are also some challenges to choosing an online program. Here are some of the issues you might face: More time until graduation Depending on the program, online students may take the same amount of time to graduate as traditional, on-campus students. However, in many cases the online degree path for an occupational therapy master's degree takes longer, sometimes up to a whole year. This added time in school can mean more money spent in tuition and a delay in when the first paycheck as an occupational therapist will arrive. Finding a fieldwork location Practically all occupational therapy online programs have a real-world component. These fieldwork courses usually take place in the final year of the program. How an online student completes these fieldwork requirements will depend on the specific program; many of them have predetermined locations where students can take their fieldwork courses. But these facilities don't work for all online students. Therefore, sometimes students must work with their program officials to find a facility that can more easily accommodate the student's needs with scheduling or geographic location. This can take some serious communication and coordination, potentially leading to extra time and frustration.

Now that you've seen the pros and cons, let's take a look at how online programs for occupational therapy work. The vast majority of online occupational therapy programs are in a hybrid format, with both online courses and in-person requirements. The ratio between online and in-person requirements will vary among online programs. At the very least, an online program will require you to complete roughly a semester's worth of fieldwork credits to complete their degree and be eligible to sit for the national licensing exam.

Where you obtain the field experience will also depend on the specific program you choose to attend. Most programs will have established arrangements with certain facilities or will allow students to choose an "outside" facility as long as it meets certain requirements.

When looking for an online occupational therapy program, there are options at several degree levels. Master's programs are the most popular if you're seeking initial OT licensure, but OTD and PhD doctoral programs are also available online to advance even further in the field. Or, if you need to start at a more basic level, occupational therapy assistant programs can be taken online, as well.

Inside the Online Master's in Occupational Therapy The master's degree is the minimum required to become a licensed occupational therapist. Most programs last between two and three years, and a growing number of programs provide a bulk of their curriculums online. There are currently no fully online master's degrees in occupational therapy, thanks to the mandate that graduates have a certain amount of hands-on experience. However, outside of these fieldwork curriculum requirements, many online programs offer the majority of their instruction through virtual means.

In Detail: the OT Master's Curriculum

Each occupational therapist curriculum is unique; however, there are certain points that each one hits to ensure students are fully prepared for the expectations of the career. Broad subjects include anatomy, neuroscience, health and wellness and assistive technology. This covers a wide range of theory and practice in patient care, all of which will come in quite handy when it's time to use those knowledge and skills in the clinical setting. Let's take a look at some courses you're likely to encounter while pursuing your master's degree.

1 Patient/Client Care Management The basics of patient care, beneficial communication and professional communication skills are addressed in this class.

2 Evidence-Informed Practice Students learn how to apply what they know to patient care through the use of problem solving, as well as logical and critical thinking.

3 Anatomy for Occupational Therapy The basics of human anatomy are taught within the occupational therapy context. Special attention will be given to understanding how physical problems relate to physical performance.

4 Occupational Therapy with Children Effective means of providing occupational therapy to children are explained in this course. Subject matter will focus on individuals from birth to adolescence and include theory, practice methods, research data and regulatory considerations.

5 Occupational Therapy with Older Adults As patients get older, their therapy needs change. Students will learn how illnesses, injuries and disabilities change with age and how current occupational therapies can be applied to meet the special needs of older patients.

6 Professional Development Provides an overview of the occupational therapy profession, including a discussion of professional organizations, ethical considerations, professional roles and how societal views can affect treatment.

7 Leadership and Management With the use of self-assessment tools and interactions with others, students discover how to effectively lead in a professional environment, including learning about marketing, budgeting and program evaluation.

8 Community-Based Fieldwork and Seminar This class teaches students the basic theory and practical skills to safely and effectively manage and lead when treating a broader community.

9 Neurological Conditions and Occupational Performance This course aims to teach students about neurological conditions, including how to evaluate and treat neurological issues patients may face.

10 Capstone Project Students will choose a topic to research, then collect and analyze data and learn how to apply their finding to the practice of occupational therapy.

How Long Does It Take to Graduate?

The amount of time it takes to complete an occupational therapy master's program depends on several factors, such as number of credits required to graduate, course load (full-time versus part-time) and program format. Most students in an online program can expect to take about three years to graduate. The timeline below provides a rough outline to help visualize the process of earning an online master's degree in occupational therapy.

Year 1, Fall Semester Introductory topics relating to occupational therapy will be covered during the first semester. Courses will cover topics such as an overview of the profession and basic theories of practice. Year 1, Spring Semester More advanced occupational therapy professional topics are addressed now, including foundational concepts relating to the human body, research methodologies and providing patient care. First Summer Students will take only

one or two courses during the summer period. Year 2, Fall Semester Now courses get into the more substantial subject matter that will actually apply to occupational therapy practice. Introductions to research methods and techniques are usually used extensively during the final year. Year 2, Spring Semester The shift to advanced coursework continues and will include other related, advanced subjects such as clinical research, advanced treatment and evaluation techniques. Second

Summer Students will continue their academic training through hands-on and real world instruction. Year 3, Fall Semester The third year consists of advanced level courses and hands-on instruction. There is a strong emphasis on fieldwork and clinical experience. Year 3, Spring Semester Depending on the program, there may not be a second semester during the third year. If there is, students can expect to continue their hands-on training and may have to complete a capstone project.

Admissions & Required Materials

Most occupational therapy programs evaluate prospective students based on their prior academic performance and what they can offer to the school in terms of student body enrichment. This means good grades are very important, although their overall importance will depend on the prestige and rigor of the program. Some programs look for certain types of students and thus may have additional admissions requirements, such as a certain amount of experience working as an occupational therapist aide or assistant. Let's take a closer look at the core admissions and application requirements for these advanced educational programs:

Master's program application Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university. A minimum cumulative undergraduate GPA, often a 3.0 or higher on a 4.0 scale. Completion of the following prerequisite courses with a minimum grade (C+ or B-, depending on the school and course) in: Human anatomy and physiology I (with lab)

Human anatomy and physiology II (with lab)

Statistics

Introduction to psychology

Introduction to sociology or introduction to anthropology Two or more letters of recommendation, with at least one coming from a licensed occupational therapist Personal essay Copies of undergraduate transcripts Admissions interview Learn how you can ace your occupational therapy program admissions interview.

Some schools may also require: At least one year of experience working as a full-time and fully credential occupational therapist aide or assistant. Completion of additional prerequisites with a minimum grade (C+ or B, depending on the school and course) in: Abnormal psychology

Scientific writing

Communication

Human growth and development.

Core OT Master's Knowledge & Skills

The specific skills and knowledge an occupational therapist must know to treat patients will be conveyed through a reputable program. The level of familiarity with certain skills and information will grow as you get more advanced training. Regardless of which degree you're earning, you can expect to learn the following skills, all of which will be useful in the occupational therapy setting.

Communication skills Occupational therapists must be able to communicate effectively with patients, family members of patients and colleagues. The ability to communicate with all parties involved with a patient's treatment is critical because some patients may not be able to communicate on their own. Additionally, consulting with fellow occupational therapists may be required in situations where a team approach to treating a patient is useful. Critical thinking Critical thinking is a bit of a buzzword these days, but that doesn't diminish its importance. Occupational therapists should expect to deeply review research data, medical files and other relevant patient records to not only establish treatment models, but identify any unknown issues that must be also be addressed. Empathy The ability to understand and feel what the patient is going through helps create a rapport. This is important not just to establish good communication, but also to build credibility, respect and trust with the patient. An occupational therapist will be far less effective when a patient is constantly second guessing the value or motivation of the assistance offered.

Patience Patience is another must for occupational therapists. It might be nice to quickly treat and assist a patient, but often injuries, illnesses and certain medical conditions are simply so severe or complex that they cannot be easily treated. Therefore, occupational therapists must ensure they take the necessary time to deliver quality treatment while keeping the patient comfortable and at ease. Flexibility Every patient is unique, and even though they may have a "textbook" health issue, that doesn't always mean a therapist can utilize a textbook treatment approach. And in some cases, a patient may present unique challenges that require the occupational therapist to devise some clever or unconventional treatments.

Accreditation and Licensing

The occupational therapy profession is highly regulated, and part of that regulation requires that students graduate from an accredited program. This accreditation allows students to receive financial aid and become licensed by the relevant statute licensing authorities. The accrediting authority for occupational therapy programs is the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE).

The ACOTE is the accrediting body of the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA). AOTA is the leading professional association representing occupational therapists and occupational therapy students in training. AOTA works to promote the professional and academic interests of those in the occupational therapy field. ACOTE is recognized by both the US Department of Education as well as the Council for Higher Education (CHEA). It accredits more than 400 programs in the United States and its territories. ACOTE ensures that graduates of accredited programs have the necessary level of knowledge and training to treat patients as effectively, safely and ethically as possible. When accrediting a program, ACOTE will look for a variety of factors at the school, such as inclusion of both classroom and fieldwork training, acquisition of foundational knowledge in scientific subjects and principles, familiarity with diversity issues, awareness of various forms of treatment models, the ability to develop treatment models to address many different types of patient issues and possession of effective interpersonal skills to communicate with patients and colleagues.

Reference

[Engagement in Medical Research Discourse: A Multisemiotic Approach to Dialogic Positioning \(Routledge Studies in Multimodality\)](#)

[Measurement Theory and Applications for the Social Sciences \(Methodology in the Social Sciences\)](#)