Resources

- OTCAS hub for resources: http://www.aota.org/education-careers/find-school/otcas.aspx

- OTCAS Instruction Guide - Your first stop for detailed answers to OTCAS esoterica.
  - https://portal.otcas.org/otcasHelpPages/instructions/index.html

- OTCAS Program Manual
  - http://www.aota.org/-/media/Corporate/Files/EducationCareers/OTCAS/Resources-for-Programs_1/OTCAS-Manual-2014-15.pdf

- CPHA Questions Box - We're here to help and we check this every day
  - questions@prehealth.wisc.edu

- OTCAS Student Help Line - Have your OTCAS ID ready! Staffed by people who've seen it all!
  - **617–612–2860** available 9-5 EST Monday through Friday, or
  - Email: **otcasinfo@otcas.org**

Let us introduce you to…

AOTA or The American Occupational Therapy Association is the professional organization that you will have consistent interaction with on your path in becoming an OT, as it was established to improve the services for both prospective students and practicing OTs. The website is a complete resource to use as you fill out your OTCAS application, and for professional information about the NBCOT Certification Exam which you will need to pass once you graduate from an accredited OT program and successfully complete your fieldwork.

OTCAS- Occupational Therapy Centralized Application Services is the application that you will use to apply to most OT schools. Not all OT schools use OTCAS so you will need to check each school.

Components of the OTCAS: 2017 OTCAS opens July 2016

1. My Profile
   a. Legal name, email address, username/password, security question/answer

2. Personal Information
   a. Biographical info, contact info, citizenship info, race/ethnicity, other info (military status, **felony/institutional infraction***, previously attended OT school)
      i. *Check with Office of Dean of Students (608 263-5700; http://www.wisc.edu/students/conduct.htm) to see if you have any reportable offenses to include under "institutional infraction."

3. Academic History
   a. You will list your high school, and any college/universities you have ever attended

   b. Transcript entry: Applicants must arrange for OTCAS to receive a sealed official transcript directly from EVERY regionally accredited U.S. institution they have attended. OTCAS does not accept student-issued transcripts or faxed copies. OTCAS considers all application files "incomplete" and does not begin transcript verification until the correct fee and all expected U.S. transcripts are received.

c. Transcript Request Form: Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit the OTCAS transcript request form for every regionally accredited U.S. institution attended. The applicant's name, OTCAS ID number, and the name of the college/university attended automatically appear on the bar-coded form. This bar-coded form helps OTCAS to properly match the applicant's official transcripts to the appropriate OTCAS application. Applicants should advise the Registrar's Office to enclose the OTCAS Transcript Request Form with the official sealed transcript and mail it directly to OTCAS. OTCAS accepts transcripts that arrive without the form.

d. Transcripts and LORs are NOT required to submit BUT OTCAS will NOT begin to review your application until you have submitted and paid, and all your transcripts have been processed to your account, which will "complete" the application. Once complete, it will be placed in line for verification.

4. GPA calculation:
    a. In order to correctly and effectively calculate your OTCAS GPAs, you are required to enter all courses completed at an accredited U.S. or Canadian institution. This includes courses where credit was granted through completion of a course in high school (such as Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate), courses where credit was granted through the completion of placement exam (CLEP or a departmental exam), courses completed at a community college or courses completed during summer terms.

    Applicants are NOT able to report coursework taken at non-US/Foreign institutions.

    Applicants must use a personal copy of their **OFFICIAL** transcripts to properly enter ALL of their college coursework attempted and earned. Enter courses chronologically, beginning with the oldest transcript to most recent. Within each term, enter the courses in the order in which they appear on the transcript. **Enter each course once from the transcript where it was originally taken, even if the credits transferred to another institution.**

5. Standardized Tests: You must enter your Graduate Record Examination (GRE) and Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) test dates and scores on the OTCAS application, if required by any of your designated OT programs. If you receive your GRE scores after you submit your OTCAS, then you will send your scores directly to each school. We recommend that you take any standardized testing 6 weeks prior to the deadline of each school.
    i. If you have taken a test more than once, enter each one separately. Enter the date for every GRE and TOEFL test you have taken or plan to take during the 2015-16 admissions cycle.

6. Supporting Information:

Evaluations (Letters of Recommendation- LOR): Contact your OT programs to determine the number and types of complete evaluations required by each institution. OTCAS will NOT determine if you have met the reference requirements for a particular OT. With that said, we recommend that students prepare for 4 LORs: 1 letter from an OT, 2 from faculty- 1 science and 1 non-science, and 1 professional letter

Applicants are required to enter three (3) evaluator names on your OTCAS application and may list a maximum of 5. **You are required to list 3 individuals even if the programs to which you are applying only require 2.** If you want to send more than 5 LOR then check the school to see if this is allowed, and if yes then send the letters directly to each school

On average it will take 4-6 weeks for your OTCAS application to be verified. We recommend that you ask your letter writers to submit their letters as soon as possible but within 4 weeks of submission (if you submit your application on July 15 then ask your writers to have their letters in by Aug 15 the latest).

Observation Hours

Enter all of your paid or volunteer occupational therapy (OT) observation hours into the OTCAS application. If you have observed an occupational therapist in more than one setting, select the 'Add Observation Hours' button to enter each additional entry. Some OT programs may require OT observation hours or a signed verification form as part of the admissions process. Contact your individual OT program to determine their requirements. OTCAS will not determine if you met the minimum observation requirements for your designated OT programs.

You will need to include facility name, address, start/end date, hours/setting/population observed

Some programs will require you to verify your observation hours. You can upload signed documents to the "Documents" tab of supporting Info tab. OTCAS does not verify hours.

Experiences

There are 12 different topics in which you can include up to 12 different experiences/activities per topic. Areas include: employment, extra curric activities, healthcare experience, internships/clinicals, research, teaching experience, and volunteering. The character limit is 660 characters. Be direct and tell the reader what you did, what your role was and how you are different now than when you started.

- Logistics: name of facility, contact information, title, start/end dates, estimated hours
- You NEED a contact for every activity/experience
- Indicate "0" or "N/A" for estimated hours for study abroad, publications/presentations and awards/honors.
- You *can* include experiences that you will start after submission, but secondary essays may be a better place to discuss these. If you will continue with an experience, you can project these hours on the application
- Narrative statements are preferred, but if you have a lot of honors/awards, publications/presentations or shadowing experiences, you may opt for bullet point form.
- **Prepare statements in a Word document so it is easy to share and edit, but copy/paste this into a notepad/txt file to remove formatting before pasting into the application!**
- Experiences, achievements, licenses and certifications have separate sections. And activities cannot be repeated in sections!

Personal Statement (listed as "Documents")

You will have 7500 characters to write a personal essay that addresses *"why you selected OT as a career and how an Occupational Therapy degree relates to your immediate and long-term professional goals. Describe how your personal, educational, and professional background will help you achieve your goals. The personal essay is an important part of your application for admission and provides you with an opportunity for you to clearly and effectively express your ideas."*

Do NOT personalize your statement for a particular degree institution. You can NOT make any edits to your Personal Statement after you have e-submitted your completed application to OTCAS.

7. Selecting your OT programs

We recommend that students meet with the Center for Pre-Health advising to discuss their transcript in relation to school requirements and criteria in selecting schools.

You will need to add at least 1 school to your OTCAS to e-submit. Post submission, you may add schools but you are prohibited from removing schools from your application.

It costs $125 to submit your OTCAS application, and $45 for each additional school

8. Secondaries (Program Materials)

Some schools will ask you to attach secondaries in the *Program Materials* section of the application. Whether or not a school requests secondaries will vary per school, and so will the # of secondaries per institution.

9. Submitting the application (under Program Materials)
    a. Before submitting, print a copy of your application and review it before submitting. Save a PDF version for yourself.
    b. Your application cannot be processed until you have:
        i. Complete OTCAS application
        ii. Sealed official transcripts mailed directly from every accredited U.S. and Canadian post-secondary institution attended
        iii. OTCAS application fee
        iv. If required by programs may also require the following information:
            1. Complete OTCAS application
            2. Sealed official transcripts mailed directly from every accredited U.S. and Canadian post-secondary institution attended
            3. OTCAS application fee
            4. Supplemental fees and/or application materials such as supplemental applications, official GRE scores, and signed OT observation forms.
    c. Application verification: once you have completed your application then it may take 4 weeks for your app to become verified.
    d. IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to monitor the status of your application and notify OTCAS if a school has not received something.

DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE TO SUBMIT!!! If any of your schools have rolling admission then you will want to submit as close as you can to July. If they are non-rolling admission programs then submit at least 6 weeks prior to your earliest deadline.