

What is Fieldwork?

Fieldwork is a term used by the occupational therapy profession to describe coursework that takes place within the professional work environment. Hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, school systems, and community agencies may be utilized to help develop a student's professional skills. Fieldwork allows students an opportunity to apply the course work to a practical setting. Within the curriculum at Northwood Technical College, students enroll in Fieldwork I third semester and Fieldwork IIA and Fieldwork IIB fourth semester.

Level I Fieldwork

Fieldwork I is offered in the third semester (fall) of the OTA program. Students meet before the start of Level I Fieldwork for mandatory orientation and then the last week of the semester for a mandatory reflection/follow-up session. Fieldwork I consists of work in psychosocial, nontraditional, and emerging practice areas. Please refer to the fieldwork I schedule for the time dedicated to each practice area. All of Fieldwork I is instructor-led with individual and small group work.

Within the psychosocial fieldwork experience, students will explore how psychological and social factors influence engagement in occupation. Psychosocial experiences are a requirement of ACOTE (C.1.3.).

Nontraditional fieldwork allows students to apply the skills learned throughout the OTA curriculum to a role outside the OT field. These additional experiences reflect the curricular threads of the OTA program.

The final focus of Level I fieldwork emphasizes emerging areas of occupational therapy practice. This rotation centers on community-based and wellness-focused education, as well as addressing cultural awareness and social responsibility.

The use of comprehensive simulation case studies will be incorporated into this course to provide students with an opportunity to interact in a variety of client scenarios. Students will be required to problem-solve and demonstrate clinical reasoning to move through the experiences.

According to The American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), the fieldwork experience is designed to "enrich didactic course work for the purpose of directed observation and participation in selected fieldwork settings." The goal of the experience is to develop observation and interviewing skills and enhance the understanding of the developmental stages, tasks, and roles of individuals throughout the lifespan and in different practice settings. Also, this rotation is meant to improve the technical skills of students and the soft skills necessary for them to be successful in fieldwork II and their future careers.

Level II Fieldwork

Fieldwork IIA and IIB take place during the fourth semester. Each course is worth 5 credits and involves an 8-week, full-time placement. During these rotations, students gain hands-on experience working under the supervision of a licensed occupational therapy practitioner. Students gain skills and competency in evaluation, intervention, communication, and professional behavior. Expectations are for the student to be entry-level in the practice area after each rotation. Placement will be in two different treatment settings, representing a range of diagnoses, ages, and treatment models. The student will implement academic knowledge into the clinical setting. **Placements may be anywhere, and no local placements are guaranteed.**

A minimum of 16 weeks of full-time Level II fieldwork is required. If a student or facility requests, Level II fieldwork may be completed on a part-time basis. This is possible if both parties (student and facility) agree and if the fieldwork is at least 50% of a Full-time Equivalent (FTE) at that site. For one rotation, this option requires more than 8 weeks to meet the requirements, as the full-time equivalent needs to be met. This option would be planned and confirmed when fieldwork placements are given to the student.