

Introduction as entry-level occupational therapists in a range



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Introduction This curriculum overview will give a brief look into the Master of Science program in Occupational Therapy (MSc (OT)) at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario.

The MSc (OT) program is part of the Faculty of Health Sciences in the School of Rehabilitation Science. Occupational therapists work with clients to ensure that they can safely do their jobs. The mission of the MSc (OT) program is to “prepare graduates with requisite knowledge, skills and professional behaviours to practice as entry-level occupational therapists in a range of institutional and community settings throughout Canada and the international community (see Appendix A for full mission and values statement) (Occupational Therapy Program Handbook, 2018). The program at McMaster began in 1990 and has had great success with its design and methodologies; however, the content is continually under revision to ensure the best education possible. Since 1990, the school has adopted a new curriculum design (2012) and a new framework (2014) after feedback from students, faculty members and colleagues from the Occupational Therapy community. The program continues to be evaluated and refined.

Purpose The purpose of the MSc (OT) curriculum is to prepare students with the knowledge, skills and professional behaviours to practice as entry-level occupational therapists internationally as well as in Canada (“Occupational Therapy”, 2018). The curriculum will help students to meet professional accreditation and practice standards (“Occupational Therapy”, 2018). Occupational Therapists are regulated health professionals in all Canadian provinces. Therefore, all candidates will need to pass the National Occupational Therapy Certification Examination (NOTCE) in order to become

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members of the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (“Occupational Therapy Exam”, 2016). In order to practice Occupational Therapy in Ontario, you must also be a member of the College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario (COTO), which also requires passing the NOTCE (“Regulation of Practice”, 2017). Target Audience This program is intended for people with a minimum of a 4-year Bachelor’s degree (or equivalent) who are interested in becoming Occupational Therapists. The program is marketed towards students who are interested in working with people to help them be able to participate in “occupations that give meaning and purpose to their lives” (“Occupational Therapy”, 2018).

The program is also geared towards students coming from Northwestern Ontario. McMaster MSc (OT) program has a specific Northern Studies Stream in order to address the shortage of Occupational and Physical Therapists in Northern Ontario. Approximately 50% of students in the Occupational and Physical Therapy programs will have the opportunity to participate in clinical education placements in Northern Ontario. Content and Structure Program

Overview The program is a full-time two year (5-term) course-based Master’s degree.

Year one of the program runs from September to July and Year two of the program runs from September to September of the following year. In their first year students can expect an introduction to the basics of Canadian occupational therapy practice and an overview of occupational therapy theories and processes. During year two, students will be given the opportunity to develop more complex skills and prepare to practice as conscious autonomous professionals. Throughout the program, students will

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gain experience with many client populations in multiple settings through 4 clinical education placements. These placements will be conducted in hospitals, private practices, etc. for 4 to 8 weeks at a time.

Structure Each year of the MSc (OT) program has a specific focus and is organized in a way that will integrate elements of inquiry, skills acquisition, professional preparation, small group and independent learning (for more details on the yearly breakdown see Appendix B). Figure 1. 2- Year MSc (OT) Curriculum Design (Occupational Therapy Program Handbook, 2018, p.

10). **Learning Resources** There are a variety of learning resources that are used throughout the duration of the program. The resources are categorized into three broad categories, health care problems (learning scenarios), people resources and reference resources. Health care problems, or, scenarios are typically used in small group tutorials as well as some large group sessions and are the principle source of learning.

The scenarios are intended to imitate the important health problems faced by individuals, groups and communities served by occupational therapists. The scenarios are reviewed and revised annually by a panel of experts in order to stay relevant. People are used as a resource in many ways. They can be used to simulate real life situations in the problem-based tutorials.

During these tutorials, people are trained to give feedback immediately, making people a very valuable resource. Community members are brought in regularly as guest speakers to pass on new knowledge or different ideas.

Reference resources include books, journals, government documents, photographs, films, Internet, specimens, models, videos etc.

Students are expected to explore and investigate topics for written papers as well as for building on their own knowledge. Assessment and Evaluation

The evaluation process incorporates both summative and formative assessments, this is done in order to relay valuable feedback to students, thus enhancing their learning. Students will be evaluated on many things using a variety of evaluation tools.

During the course work portion of the program students can expect to be evaluated on their tutorial performance, written exams, essays, direct observation and presentations. Students will also be evaluated during the clinical education portion of the program. The Competency Based Fieldwork Evaluation for Occupational Therapists (CBFE-OT) is used to evaluate student performance during a clinical education experiences (Bossers et al., 2007).