The Occupational Therapy Assistant program at Wallace State Community College is a three semester course of study once admitted to the program. All general education prerequisites must be completed before being eligible to apply to the Occupational Therapy Assistant Program. Once accepted into the OTA program, classes would begin in the fall semester and continue for 3 consecutive semesters. These classes include technical and fieldwork experience in a variety of health-care settings.

The Frequently Asked Questions have been organized into the following categories. Click on the link to see the questions in that area.

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What do OTA’s do?

The occupational therapy assistant (OTA) is a skilled technical health care worker who, under the supervision of an occupational therapist, assists in patient treatment. The occupational therapy assistant, following the plan of care developed by the supervising occupational therapist, delivers care to the patient using established procedures. Occupational therapy assistants are employed in general hospitals, rehabilitation centers, skilled nursing facilities, home health-care agencies, school systems, private practices, and other specialized health-care settings.

If accepted to the OTA program, what type of class schedule can I expect in a typical week?

The OTA student should prepare for classes that meet at least 3 days a week, with one day devoted to online classes and selected Fridays for fieldwork in the fall. The OTA Program is not a part-time program and requires an intensive amount of studying when not in class. However, the program is currently utilizing a class schedule that reduces the total number of days a student comes to campus. For example, fall 2013 classes met on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 8:00 am – 4:00 pm. However, during fieldwork education assignments students will be required to stay at their assigned facility during normal business hours which may run 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. and may include time on Saturday and Sunday. Hours will vary depending on the facility. Level II Fieldwork typically is five (5) days per week, 8 hours per day.

When does Fieldwork (FW) begin and where does it take place?

Typically, Level IA Fieldwork begins October, with Level IB the first two weeks of December. The Level II Fieldwork A & B are full-time eight (8) week rotations from March-May and June to August respectively. The program has an extensive FW network and students are placed based on educational needs and site availability. All
FW travel expenses are the responsibility of the student. The OTA program considers 1 hour and 15 minutes drive time from home a reasonable travel distance for fieldwork placement.

**Are students able to work during the program?**

The OTA program is full-time and very demanding. Much off-campus study and assignment completion will be required. Students should contact the Office of Financial Aid at 256-352-8137 to discuss financial aid options.

**Are all of the OTA courses held on the campus at Wallace State Community College in Hanceville?**

All of the academic course work is held at the Hanceville campus. Most courses do have an online component, but still require on campus visits due to the nature of the program content.

**Is the OTA program fully accredited?**

Yes. The OTA Program at Wallace State Community is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) [http://www.aota.org/Education-Careers/Accreditation.aspx](http://www.aota.org/Education-Careers/Accreditation.aspx). In 2012, the program was awarded the maximum 10 year renewal allowed.

**Will I be able to get a job after completing the OTA program?**

Graduates are eligible to sit for the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT) [http://www.nbcot.org/](http://www.nbcot.org/), which is required in order to then apply for state licensure. Nationally, the job market for the OTA is very good, with the US Department of Labor projecting a 43% growth in jobs from 2010-2020. The 2010 median salary was $47,490 with the highest 10% earning more than $70,790 (Source: [http://www.bls.gov/ooh/](http://www.bls.gov/ooh/)).

**I have heard that there were changes made to the OTA curriculum/program. What changes can I expect?**

The OTA Program is constantly changing and improving to meet the demands of a dynamic marketplace and advancements in the field. However, when changes occur in admissions standards, prerequisites or program classes, the changes are first communicated through the WSCC and OTA Program websites. It will also be published in the next WSCC catalog release. Visit this website often for the most up-to-date information and the earliest possible notification of changes should they occur.

**Do I need to meet with an OTA program advisor at WSCC?**

We strongly encourage those who plan to apply to the program schedule an appointment to meet with our program staff prior to applying.

Program advisors are also available by email or phone, see [Department Directory](#) for information. Advisors are happy to provide program information and individualized recommendations to help you successfully pursue your goal of becoming an OTA. It is strongly recommended that you correspond with a WSCC Program Advisor at least once to develop a semester-by-semester plan of classes. This is particularly true if you are attending another institution and planning to transfer in classes. Having a student copy of your transcripts available during your advisory session will allow us to make the most of your session and offer more individual program advice.

**If accepted into the OTA program, what is the expected financial cost the program?**

A breakdown of estimated program expenses is available on the OTA website. Generally, an in-state student should anticipate a tuition/fees cost of $7,000, a book cost of $1,100, and approximately $1,200 in miscellaneous expenses. This does not include any expenses related to clinical classes. Tuition and fees for out of state students are approximately $14,000. This is an estimate and subject to change. Tuition costs are published each semester when the schedule is released – please see the WSCC website to view the current schedule.

**What is the length of the program?**
The OTA program is a 5 semester program. Typically, a full-time student can complete the general required courses (prerequisites) in two semesters. Once you have applied and been admitted into the OTA program it will take you 3 consecutive semesters to complete the major required courses in order to graduate from the program. OTA classes begin in the fall of each year and you will graduate one year later at the end of the summer term.

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Can the OTA program be completed online?

The OTA program is NOT an online program. However, most classes have an online component, but due to the nature of the curriculum, students are required to attend on campus classes Tuesday thru Thursday.

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Where can I obtain information about the program?

You can make an appointment with a Health Program advisor through the ACTION (advising) Center at 256-352-8040. Students may also call 256-352-8333 or 256-352-8341 and speak with an OTA advisor Monday through Friday from 7:45-3:15 to set up advisory sessions, turn in applications, or register for classes. If an advisor is unavailable you may leave a message on their voice mail with a phone number where you can be contacted.

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What prerequisite courses are required for admission into the program?

Students are required to complete the following courses with a “C” or above in each: ORI-Orientation (a WSCC requirement. You are exempt from the Orientation (ORI) requirement if you transfer in at least 12 credit hours from another institution), ENG 101-English Composition I, Humanities Elective, SPH 106 or 107-Fundamentals of Oral Communication, MTH 116-Mathematical Applications, BIO 201-Human Anatomy and Physiology I (prerequisite is Biology 103), HIT 110-Medical Terminology, CIS 146-Microcomputer Applications, PSY 200-General Psychology. A full list of up-to-date courses and their credit hours can be found in the current WSCC catalog or on the OTA website. It is important that any prerequisite transfer course taken must include the same number of credits as those shown in the current WSCC catalog.

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Are there any exceptions to these prerequisite classes?

Students who transfer in at least 12 credit hours from another regionally accredited institution are exempt from the Orientation (ORI) requirement. Although WSCC requires BIO 103 as a prerequisite to BIO 201, other institutions may not have this same requirement. If you are attending one of those institutions and plan to transfer in BIO 201, the OTA program does not expect nor require you to complete BIO 103. Humanities courses include art (ART), music (MUS), theatre (THR), religion (REL), philosophy (PHL), humanities (HUM), or foreign languages. Also, any higher math course can be substituted for MTH 116. Please note that MTH 098, MTH 131, and MTH 132 are NOT higher math courses and will not substitute for MTH 116.

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Do I have to complete the prerequisites in one year?

No. You may take as long as you need in order to complete the requirements for admission into the program. However, once accepted into the program, the final year of OTA Program classes must be completed within the specified 3 semester sequence. The 3 consecutive semesters begin in the fall of each year.

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Can the prerequisite courses be taken at any other colleges?

Yes. Wallace State Community College in Hanceville has linkage programs with many other colleges in the state. This linkage relationship guarantees the transfer of certain specified prerequisite classes. For more information on the Linkage Program, follow the link on the OTA Program website. Even if your college is not part of our linkage program or may be out of state, courses are still transferable as long as they are equivalent to our prerequisites. Information on course equivalency may be obtained by contacting the WSCC Admissions office at 256-352-8128. A course description from your college catalog may be required. The list below includes common course substitutions from our linkage partners.

- BIO 120 Medical Terminology will transfer in for the HIT 110 Medical Terminology OTA requirement. (AL Southern, Calhoun, Central AL, Enterprise-Ozark, Gadsden State, Jeff State, Lawson State, Northeast AL, Snead State, Shelton State, Southern Union, Wallace-Selma)
- OAD 211 Medical Terminology will transfer in for the HIT 110 Medical Terminology OTA requirement. (Bevill State, Northwest Shoals)
- HPS 105 Medical Terminology will transfer in for the HIT 110 Medical Terminology OTA requirement. (Faulkner)
- OAD 204 Medical Terminology will transfer in for the HIT 110 Medical Terminology OTA requirement. (Jefferson Davis)
- The OTA program also regularly substitutes SPH 107 Fundamentals of Public Speaking for the SPH 106 Fundamentals of Oral Communication requirement.

Can I substitute other courses for any of the prerequisites?

Ultimately the easiest way to determine equivalent course transfer is to contact a WSCC OTA advisor or the WSCC Department of Admissions.

Am I required to retake the COMPASS Placement Test if I am transferring in from another school and have had the English and Math requirements?

No, if you are transferring in from another school and have had the English and Math requirements you do not need to retake the COMPASS placement test. If you have just graduated high school and are entering WSCC for the first time a COMPASS placement test is required prior to registering for English or Math classes. Placement testing is at your convenience in our computer lab. Students must score 20 or above within the past three years on the ACT english and math tests to be exempt from all academic assessments. Any student scoring 470 or above on the SAT writing and math may also be exempt. Any student who wishes to be exempt must provide official copies of the ACT or SAT scores current within three years directly to the Admissions Office.

Can I be admitted if I still have prerequisite courses to be completed?

All prerequisite classes must be completed prior to the application deadline. Currently the program is receiving more applications from individuals that have completed all prerequisite classes than we have space available. At this time it is highly unlikely that you will be considered for admission without having completed all prerequisites.

When can I apply for the program?

Following the completion of the first year of general required courses (prerequisites) you should submit an application for the OTA program between April 1 and June 1 of the year in which you would like to start the OTA program classes. OTA Program classes begin in the fall of each year. Please note – a new application is required each time you apply. Keep copies of everything submitted as items from previous applications will not be released and are destroyed immediately after the application period closes. Observation hours do not expire and can be used for future applications.

What information is required to complete an application?

The following information is required to be submitted directly to the Admissions Office: WSCC application, official transcripts from each college attended and an ACT score of 18 or higher. The following information should be submitted directly to the OTA Program: completed OTA program application, documentation of occupational therapy volunteer/observation experience, copies of front and back of your AHA approved Healthcare Provider CPR card as well as student copies of all transcripts and your ACT score. See application packet for additional details and checklist on the OTA program website.

Is it necessary to get letters of recommendation in order to better my chances of being accepted into the program?

No. Letters of recommendation are not required and will not better anyone’s chances of being accepted into the program. Any letters submitted will not factor into the admission decision.

How many students apply to the program and how many are accepted each year?

The number of applications submitted varies from year to year. For example, in 2013 more than 95 individuals submitted applications to the OTA Program, of which 82 had completed all admission requirements. There is not a
waiting list and every qualified applicant is considered. Applications are not returned nor is any information released from application packets. Currently, the program accepts 38 students each year in the fall using a process that considers prerequisite GPA and ACT scores.

**Are physical examinations, background checks, drug testing or any other medical testing required in order to complete an application?**

No. The required physical exam, drug testing, and background screening are completed after beginning the program so that each will be current and valid throughout the clinical rotations. Do not complete any of the items until formally accepted into the program and instructed to do so by the program director.

**What is the timeline for the admissions process?**

The OTA program begins accepting applications on April 1 of each year. The final deadline by which all applications must be received is June 1. (If June 1 falls on a weekend, the last Friday in May will be the deadline.) Each applicant will receive a reply by mail within approximately 4 – 6 weeks, (usually around July 1) regardless of the decision made.

**What is the minimum GPA required for program admission?**

A minimum 2.5 grade point average on a 4.0 scale is required. The GPA is one of two factors considered for admission, thus the higher the score the better your chances for admission. Keep in mind that this is a minimal requirement – currently those being admitted have a significantly higher average GPA than this score.

**How is the prerequisite GPA determined for program admission and what if some of the prerequisite courses have been retaken, earning higher grades?**

The prerequisite GPA considers only the grades achieved in each of the prerequisite courses. The OTA Program no longer uses a cumulative GPA. During the application process the highest grade achieved in each prerequisite class (regardless of the order in which those classes are taken) is used to determine the applicant’s prerequisite GPA. To calculate your prerequisite GPA visit this website (http://gpa.wallacestate.edu/gpa/myapp) and input only your prerequisite grades (ENG 101, Humanities elective, SPH 106, Mathematical Applications (or higher math course), BIO 201, PSY 200, CIS 146 and HIT 110 – Do not include orientation or BIO 103 grades). A prerequisite GPA can be improved by retaking any prerequisite course in which you achieved less than an “A”. Every prerequisite class in which you score an “A” puts you that much closer to a 4.0 prerequisite GPA and thus the highest possible score in this category.

**How do I improve my GPA?**

OTA program admission is based on your prerequisite GPA and ACT score, with the prerequisite GPA being the most important of these numbers. This score is calculated using the highest grade made in each of these classes:

- ENG 101 English Composition
- SPH 106 Fundamentals of Oral Communications (or SPH 107)
- HUM Humanities Elective
- MTH 116 Mathematical Applications (or higher math course)
- BIO 201 Human Anatomy and Physiology I
- PSY 200 General Psychology
- CIS 146 Microcomputer Applications
- HIT 110 Medical Terminology

A prerequisite GPA is much easier to improve than a cumulative GPA. Each prerequisite class that you retake and improve your final grade will have an immediate impact on your prerequisite GPA. Because of the highly competitive nature of the OTA program application process it is strongly recommended that you retake any prerequisite class that you made a “C” in and possibly even some of your “B” prerequisite classes.

**Do you require the ACT or any other special entrance exams in order to be admitted into the program?**

Yes. A minimum score of 18 on the ACT is required in order for a student to be qualified for acceptance into the OTA Program, regardless of previous education or experiences. Individuals who have completed higher degrees are not exempt from this expectation. The ACT score is one of two factors considered for admission, thus
the higher the score the better your chances of being admitted. Generally, ACT scores improve when taken after college level work, especially math and science courses. If you are planning to retake the ACT, you might consider the ACT Residual Exam offered at WSCC. This exam is the same as the national exam but is offered on-campus, allowing for a quicker release of scores. However, a residual ACT score will not transfer to another institution.

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But I already have a bachelor’s degree (or masters, etc.) – do I need to go back and take a basic college entrance exam like the ACT?

Yes – the ACT is one of two scores that are considered for program admission. Without an ACT score your application will not be considered. However, the good news is that if you already have a degree (or even if you’ve already taken your prerequisites) and you should be “over” prepared for the ACT. Generally, ACT scores improve when taken after college level work.

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How much volunteer/observation experience is required?

You must have 24 hours of observation in a minimum of 2 different facilities under the supervision of an occupational therapist or occupational therapy assistant. (We define “two different facilities” to be two entirely separate business entities. The in-patient hospital and the outpatient clinic of that same hospital would be considered to be one location, even if they have different physical addresses.)

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Where can I go to get the required observation hours?

Contact a local occupational therapy department or clinic to arrange volunteer/observation hours to be done under the supervision of a Licensed OT or OTA only. The OTA Program does not have a list of those facilities nor do we assist with arranging observational experiences. Check the yellow pages or Internet for occupational therapy clinics near you. Ask for the occupational therapy department when you call. Some facilities are extremely flexible, allowing you to observe at your convenience. However, other clinics may be much more formal, often requiring you to complete an orientation before beginning or only permitting observation on certain days and times. Check with your local OT clinic or department for details.

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What if my hours are on a different form?

Wallace State – Hanceville will accept observation hours documented on forms from other schools provided that those hours are signed/verified by an OT or OTA and include facility contact information.

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Does the program require observation hours to be completed in certain types of facilities (hospital, out-patient clinic, pediatric, etc)?

The OTA program only requires that you have 24 hours, divided between 2 completely separate occupational therapy clinics. We do not look at the type of clinic, the variety of experiences, or the number of hours spent in each. However, we do recommend that you try to experience a variety of occupational therapy options. The purpose of observation hours is to help confirm that occupational therapy is the right career choice for you. Thus, more variety in your experiences will give you a better idea of what occupational therapy is all about. Also, it is important to realize that pediatric therapy is very different from geriatric therapy, that out-patient has different challenges from in-patient (hospital). A variety of observational experiences can open your eyes to the much bigger picture of what occupational therapy really involves.

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