

# Occupational Therapy Course

## Inherent Requirements

## **Introduction**

Federation University, Institute of Health and Wellbeing, Discipline of Occupational Therapy strongly supports the rights of all people who wish to pursue an occupational therapy course to achieve their potential and career objectives. The Institute is committed to making reasonable adjustments to teaching and learning, assessment, clinical practice and other activities to address the impact of students' disabilities or health issues or caring responsibilities so that students are able to participate in their course. For the remainder of this document, the term 'you' will be used wherever possible to refer to your role as a student.

## **Definition**

Federation University defines Inherent Requirements for its purposes as the ability to work productively to achieve the core learning outcomes and required quality of the course while maintaining

- academic integrity,
- the ability to work in teams, and
- the capacity to work safely (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2021).

## **Inherent Requirements**

Federation University Australia is committed to ensuring equality of access to all courses and units and will provide reasonable adjustments to the learning environment to meet the needs of a diverse range of students, including you. For example, if you have a disability, or if you have caring responsibilities.

However, Federation University acknowledges that there are some situations where adjustment is not possible. In such cases, Federation University will provide information on these to enable you to make an informed decision about your course and options. This information will be in the form of Inherent Requirements.

Inherent Requirements refer to the fundamental attributes, skills and abilities that you must be able to achieve in order to demonstrate the essential learning outcomes of the degree. For example, such restrictions may include but are not limited to the following:

- Inability to secure a current Working with Children Check precluding you from being able to undertake mandatory placements.
- An inability to make reasonable adjustments in the education, clinical or workplace environment in relation to physical, psychological, cultural or sensory disabilities precluding you from being able to undertake mandatory placements.
- Disclosures on Police checks that may preclude you from being able to undertake mandatory placements.

Federation University also notes that successful completion of the occupational therapy qualification does not necessarily guarantee registration as an occupational therapist with the

Australian Health Practitioners Registration Authority (AHPRA). You are advised to seek information on any restrictions that might apply to you in the applicable registration process prior to making decisions on your course or study. For example, AHPRA registration for occupational therapy students.

To support your decision making, a series of inherent requirement statements have been developed. These statements specify the requirements of the entry level occupational therapy course for your admission and progression. The statements are clustered under eight domains consisting of Ethical Behaviour, Behavioural Stability, Legal Compliance, Communication Skills, Cognitive Skills, Sensory Abilities, Strength and Mobility and Sustainable Performance. Many of the activities associated with the professional practice of a registered occupational therapist are time sensitive, where the capacity to perform certain activities within specified time limits is required to reduce or avoid risks to client safety and wellbeing. The safety and wellbeing of you and others is always of paramount importance.

As a student, you are required to undertake learning activities in mixed gender environments, which reflect the Australian health care context.

The Inherent Requirements outlined below provide a guide for you and staff members when deciding if you meet these requirements and the type of reasonable adjustments that could be put in place to allow you to complete the occupational therapy course without compromising the academic integrity of the course.

### **How to read the inherent requirement statements**

If you are intending to enrol in the occupational therapy course at Federation University, you should look at these Inherent Requirements statements and think about whether you may experience challenges in meeting these requirements.

If you think you may experience challenges related to your disability, chronic health condition or any other reason, you should discuss your concerns with the occupational therapy discipline lead (Professor Carolyn Unsworth) or the Course Coordinator (Dr. Amanda Timmer). These staff can work collaboratively with you to determine reasonable adjustments to assist you to meet the Inherent Requirements. Where it is determined that Inherent Requirements cannot be met with reasonable adjustments, the University staff can provide guidance regarding other study options.

These Inherent Requirements should be read in conjunction with other Federation University Course information and publications such as the [Occupational Therapy Code of Conduct, Guidelines for Mandatory Notifications](#), and the [Australian Minimum Competency Standards for New Graduate Occupational Therapists](#), and the [Australian Competency Standards for Occupational Therapists in Mental Health](#).

Each inherent requirement is made up of the following five levels:

- The domain for the inherent requirement
- Inherent requirement statement/s
- Justification of the inherent requirement/s
- The nature of any adjustments that may be made to allow you to meet the requirement
- Examples of things you must be able to demonstrate to show you've met the requirement

## References

Australian Human Rights Commission. Inherent Requirements.  
<https://humanrights.gov.au/quick-guide/12052> retrieved 0609/2021.

## **Ethical Behaviour**

**Inherent Requirement Statements:**

Occupational therapy is a profession that is governed by [codes of conduct](#) and [standards](#), where occupational therapists are both accountable and responsible for ensuring safe and professional behaviour in all contexts.

You demonstrate knowledge of and engages in ethical behaviour in practice.

**Justification of Inherent Requirement:**

Compliance with the codes, guidelines and policies facilitates safe, competent interactions and relationships for you and/or the people you engage with. This ensures the physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of the individual is not placed at risk.

**Adjustments:** must not compromise codes and standards or result in unethical behaviour.

**Exemplars:**

Complying with academic and non-academic misconduct policies in both academic and clinical settings.

Complying with medico-legal requirements relating to informed consent, privacy and confidentiality with client information in academic and clinical settings.

## **Behavioural Stability**

**Inherent Requirement Statements:**

Behavioural stability is required to function and adapt effectively and sensitively in a demanding role.

You demonstrate behavioural stability to work constructively in a diverse and changing academic and clinical environment.

**Justification of Inherent Requirement:**

Behavioural stability is required to work individually and in teams in changing and unpredictable environments. As an occupational therapy student, you will be exposed to health care and disability contexts in which you will encounter human suffering and will be required to have behavioural stability to manage these situations in a professional manner.

**Adjustments:** must support stable, effective and professional behaviour in both academic and clinical settings.

**Exemplars:**

Being receptive and responding appropriately to constructive feedback.

Interacting with people from a wide range of backgrounds and cultures in a calm and composed manner in difficult situations.

Coping with own emotions and behaviour effectively when dealing with individuals in the clinical setting.

## **Legal Compliance**

**Inherent Requirement Statements:**

Occupational therapy practice is mandated by specific legal and regulatory requirements and standards to enable the safe delivery of care.

You demonstrate knowledge and compliance with Australian Law and professional regulatory requirements and standards, which dictates the scope of occupational therapy practice.

**Justification of Inherent Requirement:**

Knowledge, understanding and compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements and standards are necessary pre-requisites to clinical placements, to reduce the risk of harm to self and others.

Compliance with the Australian Law and professional regulatory requirements and standards ensures that you are both responsible and accountable for your practice.

**Adjustments:** must be consistent with legislative and regulatory requirements.

**Exemplars:**

Complying with the requirements for student registration with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA).

Complying with the policies of clinical facilities e.g. uniform requirements

## **Communication Skills**

The occupational therapy course requires effective, verbal, non-verbal and written communication skills.

### **Verbal Communication**

#### **Inherent Requirement Statements:**

Effective and efficient verbal communication, in English, is an essential requirement to provide safe delivery of care.

You demonstrate:

- The ability to understand and respond to verbal communication accurately, appropriately and in a timely manner
- The ability to provide clear instructions in the context of the situation
- Timely clear feedback and reporting

#### **Justification of Inherent Requirement:**

Communication may be restricted to verbal because of limitations of the individual (e.g. injury, disease or congenital conditions).

Speed and interactivity of communication may be critical for individual safety or treatment.

Timely, accurate and effective delivery of instructions is critical to individual safety, treatment and management.

**Adjustments:** for impaired verbal communication must address effectiveness, timeliness, clarity and accuracy issues to ensure safety.

#### **Exemplars:**

Communicating using the English language with accuracy, appropriateness and effectiveness.

Participating in tutorial discussions and practicing verbal communication skills during practical classes.

Establishing rapport with clients during occupational therapy management and responding appropriately to requests from clients, supervisors and other health professionals, in the clinical setting.

Giving clear instructions to clients, carers or team members within the clinical setting.



## Non-verbal Communication

**Inherent Requirement Statements:**

Effective non-verbal communication is fundamental to occupational therapy and needs to be respectful, clear, attentive, empathetic, honest and non-judgemental.

You demonstrate:

- The capacity to recognise, interpret and respond appropriately to behavioural cues
- Consistent and appropriate awareness of own behaviours
- Sensitivity to individual differences

**Justification of Inherent Requirement:**

The ability to observe and understand non-verbal cues assists with building rapport with people and gaining their trust and respect in academic and professional relationships.

Displaying consistent and appropriate facial expressions, eye contact, being mindful of space, time boundaries and body movements and gestures promotes trust in academic and professional relationships.

Being sensitive to individual differences displays respect and empathy to others and develops trusting relationships.

The ability to observe and understand non-verbal cues is essential for safe and effective observation of client symptoms and reactions to facilitate the assessment and treatment of clients.

**Adjustments:** must enable the recognition, initiation of or appropriate response to effective non-verbal communication in a timely and appropriate manner.

**Exemplars:**

Recognising and interpreting non-verbal cues of others and respond appropriately during activities related to the course, as well as in clinical environments.

Using appropriate facial expressions, eye contact, being mindful of personal space boundaries, and a range of body movements and gestures in both the university and clinical environments.

**Written Communication****Inherent Requirement Statements:**

Effective written communication is a fundamental occupational therapy responsibility with professional and legal ramifications.

You demonstrate the capacity to construct coherent written communication appropriate to the circumstances.

**Justification of Inherent Requirement:**

Construction of written text-based assessment tasks to reflect the required academic standards are necessary to convey knowledge and understanding of relevant subject matter for professional practice.

Accurate written communication, including record-keeping and client notes which meet legal requirements, is vital to provide consistent and safe client care.

**Adjustments:** must meet necessary standards of clarity, accuracy and accessibility to ensure effective recording and transmission of information in both academic and clinical environments.

**Exemplars:**

Constructing an essay to academic standards.

Constructing client notes, reports and information sheets in a timely manner that meets legal and professional standards.

## **Cognitive Skills**

This course requires knowledge of theory and the skills of cognition, literacy and numeracy

### **Knowledge and cognitive skills**

#### **Inherent Requirement Statements:**

Consistent and effective knowledge and cognitive skills must be demonstrated to provide safe, effective and timely occupational therapy management.

You demonstrate:

- Capacity to locate appropriate and relevant information.
- Ability to process information relevant to practice.
- Ability to integrate and implement knowledge into practice in a timely manner.

#### **Justification of Inherent Requirement:**

Safe and effective delivery of occupational therapy management is based on comprehensive knowledge that must be sourced, understood and applied appropriately.

**Adjustments:** must ensure that a clear demonstration of knowledge and cognitive skills is not compromised or impeded.

#### **Exemplars:**

Conceptualising and using appropriate knowledge in response to academic assessment tasks.

Appropriately applying knowledge of theory, research evidence, policies and procedures in set timeframes in the clinical setting.

**Literacy (language) Skills****Inherent Requirement Statements:**

Competent literacy skills are essential to provide safe, effective and timely occupational therapy management.

You demonstrate:

- The ability to accurately acquire information and convey appropriate, effective messages
- Ability to read and comprehend a range of literature and information
- The capacity to understand and implement academic conventions to construct written text in a scholarly manner

**Justification of inherent requirement:**

The ability to acquire information and to accurately convey messages is fundamental to ensure safe and effective assessment, treatment and delivery of care.

The ability to read, decode, interpret and comprehend multiple sources of information is fundamental for safe and effective delivery of care.

**Adjustments** to address literacy issues must demonstrate a capacity to effectively acquire, comprehend, apply and communicate accurate information.

**Exemplars:**

- Conveying a spoken message accurately and effectively in a clinical setting.
- Paraphrasing, summarising and referencing in accordance with appropriate academic conventions in written assignments.
- Producing accurate, concise and clear occupational therapy documentation which meets legal requirements.

## Numeracy Skills

**Inherent Requirement Statements:**

Competent and accurate numeracy skills are essential to provide safe, effective and timely occupational therapy management.

You interpret and correctly apply data, measurements and numerical criteria

**Justification of Inherent Requirement:**

Competent application of numeracy skills is essential in occupational therapy to facilitate the safe and effective delivery of occupational therapy care.

**Adjustments:** must demonstrate a capacity to interpret and apply concepts and processes appropriately in a timely, accurate and effective manner.

**Exemplars:**

- Demonstrating application of basic mathematics knowledge and skills when reading scientific information and equipment
- Recording accurate measurements in client notes.
- Prescribing adaptive equipment that correctly meets client measurement requirements e.g. wheelchair prescription.

## **Sensory Abilities**

This course requires adequate visual, auditory and tactile abilities.

### **Visual sensory ability**

**Inherent Requirement Statements:**

Adequate visual acuity is required to provide safe, effective and timely occupational therapy management.

You demonstrate sufficient visual acuity to perform a range of skills.

**Justification of Inherent Requirement:**

Sufficient visual acuity to demonstrate the required range of skills, tasks and assessments to maintain consistent, accurate and safe care to self and others.

Visual observations, examinations and assessment are fundamental to safe and effective occupational therapy practice.

**Adjustments:** must address the need to perform the full range of tasks involved in clinical practice. Any strategies to address the effects of vision impairment must be effective, consistent and not compromise treatment or safety.

**Exemplars:**

Observing and detecting subtle changes in posture, movement and the ability to perform functional activities during assessment and treatment.

Safely operating electronic equipment e.g. splinting equipment - heat guns and splinting pans.

**Auditory sensory ability****Inherent Requirement Statements:**

Adequate auditory ability is required to provide safe, effective and timely occupational therapy management.

You demonstrate sufficient aural function to undertake the required range of skills.

**Justification of Inherent Requirement:**

Sufficient auditory ability is necessary to monitor, assess and manage individual health needs consistently and accurately.

Auditory assessments and observations are fundamental to safe, effective and timely occupational therapy practice.

**Adjustments:** must address the need to perform the range of tasks involved in clinical practice. Any strategies to address the effects of hearing impairment must be effective, consistent and not compromise treatment of safety.

**Exemplars:**

Detecting care requests by calls for help or activation of a call bell.

Engaging appropriately to a client's responses during an assessment.

**Tactile sensory ability****Inherent Requirement Statements:**

Sufficient tactile ability is required to perform provide safe, effective and timely occupational therapy management.

You demonstrate sufficient tactile function to undertake a range of skills and assessments.

**Justification of Inherent Requirement:**

Sufficient tactile ability is necessary to monitor, assess and detect clients' physical characteristics and act on any abnormalities detected to provide appropriate occupational therapy management.

Tactile assessments and observations are fundamental to competent, safe, effective and timely occupational therapy management.

**Adjustments:** must have the capacity to make effective assessments of physical characteristics and abnormalities within safe time frames.

**Exemplars:**

Detecting changes in circulation, e.g. temperature.

Palpating joints, muscles, and soft tissues, and detecting anatomical or movement abnormalities.



## **Strength and Mobility**

This course requires strength and mobility involving fine and gross motor skills.

### **Gross motor skills**

**Inherent Requirement Statements:**

Occupational therapy involves physical demands and requires gross motor function.

You demonstrate the ability to perform gross motor skills to function within the scope of practice.

**Justification of Inherent Requirement:**

Sufficient gross motor skills are necessary to perform, coordinate and prioritise care. Tasks that involve gross motor skills include lifting, carrying, pushing, pulling, standing, twisting and bending. You must be able to demonstrate and perform these tasks consistently and safely to reduce the risk of harm to self and others.

**Adjustments:** must facilitate functional effectiveness, safety of self and others and a capacity to provide appropriate care.

**Exemplars:**

Maintaining own and client's balance, while providing client support, when transferring and mobilising individuals in a safe manner.

Evaluating clients, in a safe and effective manner, who have varying physical capacity, who are positioned on plinths and hospital beds, on mats on the floor, on chairs and when standing.

**Fine motor skills****Inherent Requirement Statements:**

Occupational therapy is a profession that requires manual dexterity and fine motor skills.

You demonstrate ability to use fine motor skills to function within scope of practice.

**Justification of Inherent Requirement:**

Sufficient fine motor skills are necessary to coordinate and prioritise care. Tasks that involve fine motor skills include being able to grasp, press, push, turn, squeeze and manipulate various objects and individuals. You must be able to demonstrate and perform these tasks consistently and safely to reduce the risk of harm to self and others.

**Adjustments:** must facilitate functional effectiveness, safety to self and others and a capacity to provide appropriate care.

**Exemplars:**

Performing assessment techniques, e.g. evaluation of hand sensation and joint movement.

Performing treatment techniques, e.g. fabricating splints, demonstrating use of adaptive equipment, demonstrating fine motor tasks during activities of daily living.

## Sustainable Performance

### **Inherent Requirement Statements:**

Occupational therapy practice requires both physical and mental performance at a consistent and sustained level to meet individual needs over time.

You demonstrate:

- Consistent and sustained level of physical energy to complete a specific task in a timely manner and over time.
- The ability to perform repetitive activities with a level of concentration that ensures a capacity to focus on the activity until it is completed appropriately.
- The capacity to maintain consistency and quality of performance throughout the designated period of duty.

### **Justification of Inherent Requirement:**

Sufficient physical and mental endurance is an essential requirement needed to perform multiple tasks in an assigned period to provide safe, effective and timely care.

**Adjustments:** must ensure that performance is consistent and sustained over a given period.

### **Exemplars:**

- Participating in tutorials and lectures throughout the day, with adequate, sustained levels of physical energy and concentration.
- Providing consistent occupational therapy management over a negotiated time frame while on clinical placement.

Developed from: Johnson, A., Allan, T., Phillips, K., Azzopardi, T., Dickson, C., Goldsmith, M & Hengstberger-Sims, C. (2011). Inherent Requirements of Nursing Education (IRONE), Western Sydney University School of Nursing & Midwifery and Student Equity & Disability Services.



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