

Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy Assistant

The Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy Assistant Program at Eastern College - Halifax Campus has been accredited by the Occupational Therapist Assistant and Physiotherapist Assistant Education Accreditation Program (OTA & PTA EAP) in collaboration with Physiotherapy Education Accreditation Canada (PEAC) and the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT). The status of Accreditation was granted to the program on April 30, 2020 for the period until April 30, 2026.

OUR MISSION

We pledge:

To offer a program of study that prepares the student for ethical practice and rigorous employment standards to meet workforce demand in the field of Occupational or Physiotherapy according to the national guidelines of practice set forth by the CPA and CAOT.

To develop partnerships with agencies, businesses and associations in the healthcare industry to facilitate clinical training, lifelong learning and social responsibility of faculty and students.

To participate in ongoing assessment of program outcomes, faculty effectiveness, student satisfaction and industry feedback to initiate improvement and strive for our goal of excellence in Occupational Therapy education.

To provide our students with the knowledge and skills necessary to become gainfully employed as OTA/PTAs who effectively function under the supervision of a licensed therapist, and who are responsible, productive members of the health care community.

To instill value for lifelong learning and contemporary practice to maintain expertise in the OTA and PTA fields.

To provide a positive, non-discriminatory and supportive learning environment.

To support the faculty's commitment to being effective, ethical and caring educators and to further develop their expertise.

OTPA PROGRAM MISSION

We pledge:

To improve Nova Scotia's ability to meet its health human resources needs by preparing students for entry-level positions as physiotherapist and occupational therapist assistants in a variety of healthcare settings. The program is designed to provide students with the knowledge, practical skills and professionalism required to assist physiotherapists and occupational therapists in the safe, effective and efficient delivery of evidence-informed rehabilitation services.

OTPA PROGRAM VISION

Improving the health and wellness of Nova Scotian's through excellent PTA and OTA education.

PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

The Eastern College OTPA program believes in creating a stimulating, respectful, participatory learning environment that allows each student to use his or her unique skills and attributes to develop into a competent, caring and responsible healthcare professional. Eastern College faculty and staff are committed to providing students with an educational experience that promotes the core values of compassion and responsibility, that emphasizes professional skills and attitudes, and that equips students with the skills needed to become lifelong learners.

PROGRAM GOALS

The Eastern College OTPA program will provide rehabilitation employers with the well-trained support personnel required to address their human resource needs.

Graduates of the Eastern College OTPA program will have the knowledge and skills necessary to assist physiotherapists and occupational therapists in the safe, effective and efficient delivery of evidence-informed rehabilitation services.

Graduates of the Eastern College OTPA program will be able to secure available entry-level OTA/PTA positions, or related positions in the healthcare or fitness fields, that suit their unique interests and abilities.

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Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy Assistant

The Eastern College OTPA program will meet the standards established by the Occupational Therapist Assistant & Physiotherapist Assistant Education Accreditation Program.

Graduates of the Eastern College OTPA program will have the skills and attitudes required to engage in lifelong learning and continuous professional development.

Graduates of the Eastern College OTPA program will be able to educate others about their role, scope of practice and value as members of the healthcare team.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

This program is designed to prepare students to enter the health care industry working in various settings as an occupational therapy assistant, a physiotherapy assistant or to perform elements of both roles under the supervision of a licensed Occupational Therapist, Physiotherapist, or both. Graduates may work in acute care, long-term care or community care venues in either public or private settings.

PREREQUISITES

1. Student has Grade 12 or equivalent, OR can pass a qualifying test.
2. The approved qualifying test for this program is the Wonderlic test. A passing score for this program is 14.
3. Student must provide proof of completion of Grade 12 level English and a science course (Biology, Chemistry or Physics).
4. Student must provide a clear Vulnerable Sector Check.
5. Student must provide a clear Criminal Record Check.
6. Student must provide a completed Eastern College's OTPA Health and Fitness Waiver Form.
7. Student must provide proof of exposure to the PT and OT field through one of the following:
 - I. Written or recorded interviews with both an OT and a PT
 - II. A research paper outlining and understanding of both professions and reasons for choosing the OTA/PTA career.

Student must provide a negative Tuberculin Skin Test (2 step) prior to the start of the program.

Fieldwork Placement Requirement:

1. Student must provide a current Immunization Record (based on Nova Scotia Health Authority standards).

These immunizations are for the protection of the student as well as the clients they will be serving. Failure to obtain the required immunizations and submit the immunization form by the stipulated date may affect the student's ability to find a fieldwork placement, which in turn will impact the student's ability to complete program requirements for successful graduation.

Out of Town Field Placements: You may be required to go out of town for your field placement. You may incur additional costs associated with these field placements (i.e. travel, accommodations, etc.). At this time, field placements occur only in Canada.

Please note: Eastern College reserves the right to deny admission into this program based on an unpardoned criminal record that would bear relevance to the field placement requirements of the program. In addition, employers will be given a copy of the student's Clear Conduct Certificate on file prior to accepting students into the field placement situation.

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

A student must obtain an overall grade, in each module of at least 70% in order to graduate and receive a diploma. A student must complete all requirements of the Student Success Strategies, Career Planning and Preparation modules, the Field Placement requirements, as well as meeting the attendance requirements as outlined by the Department of Labour and Advanced Education throughout the duration of the program.

The Field Placement for Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy Assistant is the last module you will complete in your program before graduating. This module is 18 weeks in length and a minimum of 35 hours must be completed each week. We highly recommend that you treat this module as a job and complete as many hours as possible with your Host Site.

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Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy Assistant

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Course	Hours
Student Success Strategies	20
Career Planning & Preparation - Level I	20
Digital Literacy for Professionals	40
Professional Skills for Health Care	80
Professional Writing for Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy Assistants	40
Current Social Issues for Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy Assistant	40
Introduction to Rehabilitation and Interpersonal Skills	40
Human Anatomy, Physiology, Diseases/Disorders	120
Introduction to Occupational Therapy	40
PTA/OTA Administration and Program Support	20
Data Collection for Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy Assistants	20
Basic Patient Care, Functional Movement and Rehabilitation	80
Personal Fitness	40
PTA Therapeutic Techniques I – Musculoskeletal	60
PTA Therapeutic Techniques II – Modalities & Physical Agents	40
PTA Therapeutic Techniques III – Cardiac, Neurological, Respiratory and Specialty Areas	60
Physiotherapy in Mental Health	20
Advanced Interpersonal and Communication Skills	40
Group Intervention in Occupational Therapy	40
OTA Therapeutic Techniques for Older Adults	80
OTA Therapeutic Techniques for Children	60
OTA Therapeutic Techniques in Mental Health	40
Communication Disorders	20
Developmental Psychology and Functional Development across the Lifespan	40
PTA/OTA Integration and Advanced Practice	40
St. John Ambulance Standard First Aid/CPR Level	20
Career Planning & Preparation - Level II	20
Professional Integration (Discussion Board)*	
Field Placement – Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy Assistant**	18 weeks
TOTAL WEEKS	77

* Runs concurrently with Field Placement

**Work terms/internships are scheduled for a minimum of 20 hours per week, but the total number of hours worked and the timing of hours scheduled are at the discretion of the employer/host to a maximum of 40 hours per week.

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Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy Assistant

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Student Success Strategies

Instructor Led

In this orientation module, emphasis is placed on thinking about achieving success from Day One. This module stresses the importance of developing non-technical skills to enhance personal, academic, and career success. This includes understanding learning styles and honing practical study skills, such as memory, reading, note-and test-taking techniques. Personal exercises will focus on teamwork, decision making and problem solving skills, setting SMART goals and maintaining a positive attitude; techniques for managing change, stress and conflict will also be explored.

Career Planning and Preparation Level I

Instructor Led

This module introduces tools for planning and preparing for a successful job search, so that students can maintain a career-focused approach throughout their education program. Students will learn about the "Hidden" Job Market and ways to access it in their upcoming job search, how to research opportunities and network for industry contacts, and use appropriate etiquette when communicating with prospective employers. Students will identify their personal skills, values and preferences for the workplace, begin preparation of a professional resume and references, and organize proof documents for their career portfolio. Class discussions on various self-management topics introduced in Student Success Strategies will round out this module, which is a pre-requisite for Career Planning and Preparation - Level II.

An introduction to Occupational Health and Safety will also be discussed, specifically the definition of occupational health and safety; an individual's safety rights; responsibilities under Nova Scotia law; hazard identification and control; WHMIS, First Aid and fire safety requirements. Students will be evaluated through a variety of assignments, projects, and quizzes in addition to their participation throughout the course.

Digital Literacy for Professionals

Online Facilitated

This course has four units that introduces you to the fundamental concepts and principles of learning and working in a digital environment. The first unit introduces you to using devices and handling information with topics on operating systems (Windows, MAC, and Linux), computer organization (folder management and naming conventions), cloud storage (including Microsoft OneDrive), types of web browsers including Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, and Apple Safari), and fundamental troubleshooting. In the second unit, you will become familiar with creating and editing information through learning about file formats (pdf, mp4, docx), productivity (including iWork and Microsoft Office Suite) and creativity (Adobe, Canva, iMovie) platforms, and basic introduction to Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint. The third unit on communicating and collaborating will introduce you to web conferencing applications (Slack, Zoom, Microsoft Teams), mail applications (including Microsoft Outlook and Gmail), project management tools (Trello, Asana), and time management tools (including Todoist, Outlook Calendar, and iCal), and building rapport virtually. In the final unit, you will gain an understanding on netiquette, cybersecurity, and digital wellness. After completing this course, you will have enhanced digital literacy skills as a professional in the working and learning environment. Students will be evaluated through a variety of assignments, projects, quizzes and exams in addition to their participation throughout the course.

Professional Skills for the Health Care

Instructor Led

This module is designed to equip students with the skills necessary for success in today's health care environment. Topics covered include: why jobs require professionalism, definitions and key elements of professionalism, why professionalism is important to all involved in the health care environment, making a commitment to the job, how to contribute to the specialised workplace, working with others, working in teams, and ensuring success in field placement and career.

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Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy Assistant

Professional Writing for Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy Assistants

Instructor Led

“The illusion of communication is that it has happened.”- George Bernard Shaw. Writing serves as the backbone of communication. This course prepares the OTPA student for professional written communication in the healthcare field, including communicating with patients and their families, healthcare professionals, community stakeholders, vendors, and the public. Students practice communicating with groups and individuals through assignments, class discussions, role-plays, and case studies. By the end of the course, students will be able to use the everyday writing skills most suited to the occupational therapy and physiotherapy fields.

Current Social Issues for Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy Assistant

Instructor Led

In this course, a variety of current social issues, such as gender topics, cultural differences, race issues, poverty, etc. are examined from a sociological perspective. Students are encouraged to recognize a variety of perspectives on each issue addressed. Focus is on seeking understanding of both the larger sociological issues and the individual experience of each topic. Emphasis will be placed on enhancing students’ critical thinking and writing skills.

Introduction to Rehabilitation and Interpersonal Skills

Instructor Led

This course introduces the student to the field of physiotherapy within the Canadian and provincial healthcare systems. The course examines the role of the PT and the PTA within the healthcare team, discusses ethical and legal issues in physiotherapy, and examines the principles of cultural competence. The course also introduces students to effective verbal, nonverbal and written communication strategies. Several topics discussed in this course apply to OTA practice such as ethics, communication skills, cultural competence and professionalism.

Human Anatomy, Physiology and Diseases/Disorders

Instructor Led

This course is designed to introduce the student to the structures and functions of the human body, with emphasis on the musculoskeletal, neurological, cardiovascular and respiratory systems, as they pertain to human movement, functional kinesiology, and rehabilitation. Disorders of the musculoskeletal, neurological, cardiovascular and respiratory systems encountered in physiotherapy and occupational therapy are discussed. The course also provides an overview of the other systems of the body. Correct anatomical, medical and scientific terminology are taught throughout the course.

Introduction to Occupational Therapy

Instructor Led

This course introduces the student to the field of occupational therapy, with a focus on the role of the OT and OTA within clinical practice. Client-centred principles are explained and the Canadian Model of Occupational Performance and Engagement is applied to daily activities. The code of ethics and standards that guide occupational therapy practice in the province are also examined. An overview of assessment and intervention as it applies to occupational therapy for cognitive and physical dysfunction is presented.

PTA/OTA Administration and Program Support

Instructor Led

The main purposes of this course are to prepare students to a) manage administrative activities that support effective service delivery, b) support the supervising therapist in applying an evidence-informed approach in their services, and c) engage in self-directed life long learning through the development of a specific learning plan. Students will practice administrative tasks such as scheduling and billing clients, documenting workload statistics, facilitating the use of equipment, supplies and inventory records, and searching for evidence regarding a clinical question. They will also have the opportunity to reflect on their own learning needs and develop a specific learning plan. In addition, in the context of effective client reception and scheduling, students will practice using a variety of strategies to prevent and resolve conflict.

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Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy Assistant

Data Collection for Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy Assistants

Instructor Led

This course introduces students to data collection in physiotherapy and occupational therapy. Students will learn to safely and effectively apply a range of tests and outcome measures and will learn to accurately interpret, record and report results.

Basic Patient Care Techniques, Functional Movement and Rehabilitation

Instructor Led

This course provides students with the basic knowledge and skills required to safely, effectively and efficiently implement interventions assigned by the physiotherapist or occupational therapist. The course begins with a review of the role of the PTA/OTA, an overview of basic medical terminology, and an introduction to reflective practice. This is followed by training in infection control, goniometry, and manual muscle testing. The rest of the course focuses on fundamental client care techniques including: posture and body mechanics, positioning and draping, basic bed mobility skills and transfer techniques, safe and effective use of gait aids, and therapeutic exercise.

Personal Fitness

Instructor Led

This course will prepare students to develop personal fitness programs for low risk clients. Students will learn how to determine exercise risk and gather information on current fitness level. They will use this information to incorporate cardiovascular exercise, resistance training, and stretching into a safe and effective exercise program.

PTA Therapeutic Techniques 1: Musculoskeletal

Instructor Led

This course prepares students to safely, effectively and efficiently implement interventions assigned by the physiotherapist to treat common musculoskeletal disorders. Students build on previous coursework to develop a deeper understanding of musculoskeletal pathologies and the use of therapeutic exercise and other interventions to support clients' function and mobility. In addition, through daily lab work and a challenging case study assignment, students integrate and apply the knowledge and skills developed in previous coursework such as those related to communication skills, teamwork, client-centered care and evidence-informed practice..

PTA Therapeutic Techniques 2: Modalities and Physical Agents

Instructor Led

This course prepares students to safely, effectively and efficiently apply modalities and physical agents. Students learn to ensure client safety by screening for contraindications and precautions and by participating in the maintenance and care of equipment. In addition, through daily lab work and a case study assignment, students integrate and apply the knowledge and skills developed in previous coursework, such as those related to communication skills and inter-professional collaboration.

PTA Therapeutic Techniques 3: Cardiac, Neurological and Respiratory Management and Specialty Areas

Instructor Led

This course prepares students to safely, effectively and efficiently implement interventions assigned by the physiotherapist to improve the mobility, health and well-being of clients with neurological, cardiac or respiratory conditions. The course emphasizes work with adults, but also addresses common pediatric conditions such as cerebral palsy, spina bifida and cystic fibrosis. In addition, the course provides students with the basic knowledge and skills needed to work in speciality areas such as burns and vestibular rehabilitation.

Physiotherapy in Mental Health

Instructor Led

This course provides an overview of physiotherapy practice in mental health. Students will become familiar with major mental health disorders and the role of physiotherapy in the management of these illnesses. Through role play activities, students will practice strategies to interact effectively and sensitively with clients with mental health concerns, including

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Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy Assistant

responding appropriately to mental health emergencies. In addition, through group presentations, students will discuss the appropriate use of relaxation exercises in physiotherapy and practice administering these techniques.

Advanced Interpersonal and Communication Skills

Instructor Led

This course is designed to give students the opportunity to practice the interpersonal and communication skills required to work effectively in a health care team. Through an experiential learning approach, students practice the following skills: leading teamwork, establishing team norms, setting team goals, resolving conflicts, building group cohesion, problem solving, and evaluating team performance. Engagement in and facilitation of effective verbal and nonverbal communication is explored.

Group Intervention in Occupational Therapy

Instructor Led

This course prepares students to assist in the design and delivery of group treatment programs in occupational therapy. Through interactive labs, students apply the principles of group intervention directly to their own experience, learn how to lead an occupational therapy group, and realize the potential benefits and challenges of group intervention. The stages of group development as well as various frames of reference related to group intervention are examined. Students also have the opportunity to write a group protocol for a client population of their choosing.

OTA Therapeutic Techniques for Older Adults

Instructor Led

This course prepares students to enable engagement in occupation with older adults. Topics covered include health promotion, age related disease processes, cultural diversity, splinting, seating systems, wheelchair mobility, and working with caregivers. Students develop skills to address physical and cognitive challenges that impact daily function in older adults. The role of the OTA in safely and efficiently implementing assigned service components within the occupational therapy process is examined. Students also apply evidence-informed research to occupational therapy intervention.

OTA Therapeutic Techniques for Children

Instructor Led

This course prepares students to enable engagement in meaningful activities of daily living with children and adolescents. Topics covered include typical and atypical development, developmental theories, diagnoses related to pediatrics, assessment tools, and interventions for children and adolescents regarding self-care, productivity and leisure. The concept of family-centred care is applied to the occupational therapy process. The role of the OTA in understanding and contributing to the occupational therapy plan, and in supporting the OT in service delivery is explored.

OTA Therapeutic Techniques in Mental Health

Instructor Led

In this course, students build on previous coursework by focusing on therapeutic use of self, activity and environment, as it applies to working with clients with psychiatric disorders. Topics covered include diagnoses and medication related to mental illness, and interventions with clients regarding performance of daily activities, education, work, leisure, and social participation. Students develop the skills needed to perform activity analysis, and to describe and respond to mental health symptoms.

Communication Disorders

Instructor Led

This course provides students with an overview of major speech and language problems that can impair the rehabilitation client's ability to communicate effectively. Students learn strategies to improve interactions with clients with communication disorders, and are introduced to common assistive communication devices. The course also provides students with a basic understanding of swallowing and swallowing disorders.

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Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy Assistant

Developmental Psychology and Functional Development across the Lifespan

Instructor Led

This course introduces students to human development from infancy to old age. The main purpose is to prepare students to work effectively with clients in different age groups and to provide developmentally appropriate care. Students will become familiar with the major physical, cognitive, social and emotional changes throughout the lifespan. Students will practice adapting an assigned physiotherapy or occupational therapy intervention for each major stage of development. In addition, this course will help students develop a more holistic view of the clients they will be working with, as well as gain insight into the developmental changes in their own lives.

PTA/OTA Integration and Advanced Practices

Instructor Led

In this course, students will consolidate the knowledge and skills they have developed throughout the program. Students will apply their problem solving, communication, inter-professional and practical skills in case studies, role plays and simulations. The course will provide students with the opportunity to enhance their existing clinical skills. In addition, advanced practical skills will be introduced.

St. John Ambulance Standard First Aid/CPR Level C

Instructor Led

The CPR component provides comprehensive CPR training to students. It includes the latest first aid and CPR guidelines and meets federal and provincial regulations for Standard First Aid and CPR. Topics include: preparing to respond; the EMS system; check, call, care; airway emergencies; breathing and circulation emergencies; first aid for respiratory and cardiac arrest; wound care; head and spine injuries; bone, muscle and joint injuries; sudden medical emergencies; environmental emergencies; and poisons. The WHMIS component teaches students the basic elements of WHMIS 2015 and the Global Harmonization System. This covers the safety measures and guidelines to be followed when exposed to or working with hazardous materials.

Career Planning and Preparation Level II

Instructor Led

This module continues to build on the concepts and skills introduced in Career Planning and Preparation - Level I. Students will learn how to conduct an effective job search and identify various methods of applying for work with today's technology. Students will create a personal list of "Top Employers" and target current industry opportunities, while finalizing their professional resume, portfolio and career correspondence. Students will learn to identify the different types and forms of interviews, practice responding to typical questions, and practice follow-up, evaluation and negotiation techniques they can use to ensure success. Self-management topics from Career Planning and Preparation - Level I will be reviewed, with a focus towards on-the-job success in both learner placements and post-graduate employment.

Field Placement

Internship

On successful completion of the classroom hours of this program, students will be placed on field placement. The objective is to give students the "hands-on" skills necessary to be employed as a Physiotherapy Assistant or an Occupational Therapy Assistant. Students gain knowledge relevant to the technical and clerical aspects of the professions including identifying and ordering equipment and supplies, ensuring personal and client safety in the performance of assigned tasks, educating clients effectively and performing administrative tasks to support service delivery, under the direction of the mentor.

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