

## Mercy University Graduate **Occupational Therapy Program:** Overview of the **Application and Admission Process**

### OVERVIEW

The Mercy Graduate Program in Occupational Therapy is a full time, 60 credit program that typically meets every other weekend during the 15 week Fall and Spring trimesters and every weekend in May-July in the first Summer trimester. It occurs year-round on trimesters, with the academic portion of the program completed in 5 trimesters, followed by two trimesters of full-time clinical fieldwork which will usually occur during the work week. Total time for the program, provided a student remains on course, is approximately 28 months. Mercy's program differs from other programs in that its teaching schedule is very condensed. For this reason, it does not contain many of the foundational courses that are usually part of more traditional occupational therapy programs; rather, these foundational courses are offered as Mercy Specific prerequisites - and must be taken at Mercy\* prior to entering the program. The usual pathway for a student who is interested in Mercy's Occupational Therapy Program is:

1. Students completes general prerequisites at any institution, Mercy included.
2. After general prerequisites are completed, students usually choose one of two pathways:
  - a) Students begin to take Mercy-specific pre-requisites as a "special matriculate" before they apply, in order to strengthen their application, *OR*,
  - b) Students apply to the program with only general prerequisites completed.
3. If they are provisionally *accepted*, the student completes Mercy-specific prerequisites during the year before graduate work is begun.
4. Students begin Mercy graduate occupational therapy coursework, during the fall semester, one year after applying, providing they have maintained good academic standing (see below in Step 5).
5. *If students are not provisionally accepted*, they will be in one of two categories:
  - a. Invited to be on a waitlist for possible entrance into the program should *openings* occur
  - b. Not accepted for admission.

For example, if students were interested in starting the graduate program in the fall of 2025, they must apply during the Spring application window in 2024. Then, provided they are *provisionally accepted* into the program, students would take Mercy Specific Prerequisites during the 2024-2025 school year in the fall, spring and summer terms. Provided they complete all required coursework in good academic standing, they would begin graduate occupational therapy coursework in the fall of 2025.

A more detailed description of both the general and Mercy-specific prerequisites - along with specific directions for applicants - continues below.

### Pre-Requisite Information

The first level of prerequisites — General Prerequisites - can be taken as part of other undergraduate coursework and can be taken at any institution. The second level - Mercy-specific Prerequisites — are required to be taken at Mercy. Although transfer courses might be accepted, prospective students must demonstrate competency, usually through testing methods. Given these two levels, admission to Mercy's program is a multi-layered process.

### The First Step — Completion of General Prerequisite Coursework

Students must have one of the following in order to apply:

- An undergraduate degree (Mercy University HLSC OT track candidate, should apply in their junior year), *and* completion of the first level of General Prerequisites with a minimum grade of "C" (exception: a "B" or better in Anatomy and Physiology I & II as a prerequisite for Mercy's HLSC 303/303A, Human Anatomy with Cadaver). No more than seven credits of the General Prerequisite courses can be in progress during the summer of the application year. Summer courses in progress must be completed in August of the application year. Any in progress courses should be indicated on the required Prerequisite Completion form indicating completion date. A cumulative prerequisite grade point average of 3.0 is required; however, the higher your grades in both the General Prerequisites and your Cumulative GPA, the stronger your application portfolio will be, and the more likely it will receive a full review.

- At least 90 credits toward an undergraduate degree (which must be completed before graduate courses can be taken), *and* completion of the first level of prerequisites, as described in the above bullet.

**Making an appointment – either in person or through email – with our graduate advisors is strongly recommended. They can ensure that your General Prerequisite coursework fulfills Mercy’s requirements. The first level of prerequisites are listed in the chart below.**

Please see the note following this chart for instructions regarding transfer credits for these courses\*

Course Name/Content	Credits	Special Requirements	Mercy University Equivalent
Anatomy/Physiology I & II <i>(Must have at least one campus-based lab with vertebrae dissection)</i>	8	Grade of “B” or higher to enter Mercy 303/303A Anatomy with Cadaver and have taken within last 5 years. If less than “B” or over 5 years, a Faculty Review is required.	BIOL 130/130A BIOL 131/131A
Abnormal Psychology	3	Online is acceptable	PSYN 312
Developmental Psychology	3	Must cover the entire lifespan; online is Acceptable	PSYN 233
Statistics for Social & Behavioral Sciences	3	Statistics course <i>must be</i> at the 200 level or above; online is acceptable	BHSC 370
Social & Behavioral Sciences	3	Introduction to Sociology, Anthropology, or Cultural Diversity; online is acceptable	

•*Credit for the above courses is determined by the Graduate Occupational Therapy Program only and may be different than what may be accepted for a regular undergraduate degree at Mercy. There are specific requirements for course content. Our graduate advisors can help you figure out what is needed in order to move forward to the next step in the application process.*

### The Second Step – Take Mercy Specific Pre-Requisites and/or Preparing to Apply to the Program

Once you have completed The First Step, you are ready to apply to the program. However, there are two pathways to consider before you fill out your application.

- Pathway 1: Because Mercy specific prerequisites must also be completed, some students choose to begin taking Mercy-specific prerequisites before they actually apply to the program. This is possible by registering as a “special matriculate.” This allows you to take mercy-specific prerequisites without having to declare a major.
- Pathway 2: Students who do not chose Pathway 1 may apply to the program after completing all of the general prerequisites, and before completing any Mercy-specific prerequisites. Provisional accepted students would then need to complete the Mercy-specific prerequisites courses in the evening and/or weekends in the year between provisional acceptance and beginning the Graduate OT Program.

*\*With either pathway, you will need to apply to the graduate program one full year before you would like to begin your graduate coursework. During that year, you will be required to complete all of your Mercy-specific prerequisite course, as described in the overview above.*

### The Third Step – Completing Application Materials

- Students should apply for the Graduate OT Program during an open admission window, one year in advance through the Mercy University’s webpage selecting the Graduate Occupational Therapy Program. Applications for graduate school typically have a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher. Applicants with a lower average may be considered for admission with special parameters based on professional experience. Some exceptions might be made given professional work experience. Once

that application is submitted, you will be prompted as to how to upload required application materials.

- Required Application Materials:
  - *Prerequisite Table completed with the following:*
    - *General prerequisites: Identify the institution and term each course was completed, along with final grade*
    - *Mercy-specific prerequisites: Identify dates for completion OR anticipated dates for completion for each course, along with final grades, as applicable.*
  - *A short paper (2 pages) in which the applicant describes and discusses his/her understanding of occupational therapy, and connection to the profession. Cite three current and relevant references. Please use one-inch margins, double spacing, and Times New Roman 12 font. Failure to do so may result in an incomplete review of the applicant's portfolio.*
  - *Two references (this is completed electronically using the Program's standard reference form. During the application process, applicants indicate the names and emails of their references. The University will send the reference an email with a link to complete the required reference form online. No paper reference or letters will be accepted.*
  - *Official transcripts (unofficial is acceptable only if student has a course in progress)*
  - *Updated résumé*
  - *Incomplete application may not be considered for admission to the program, as all materials must be present in order for an accurate and fair review to occur.*

*Interviews.* Once you have submitted your application, during the application window, your application will be processed and evaluated. Once all portfolios have been evaluated, select students will be invited for an on-campus interview and an onsite writing sample. After interviews are completed, a student is either provisionally invited into the program, placed on a waitlist, or is not invited for an interview. Students will be informed of the Admission Committee's decision by the end of August.

#### The Fourth Step: Completing Mercy Specific Prerequisite Coursework

There are at least three categories of students who are taking Mercy Specific occupational therapy prerequisites:

- 1) Special Matriculates: These are students who are strengthening their application and/or chances of being accepted into the program. Some students have applied before and were waitlisted, and some are taking Mercy coursework for the first time.
- 2) Provisionally Accepted Students: These are students who must complete their prerequisites before beginning classes with the fall cohort. These students enroll as special matriculates during this time.
- 3) Undergraduate Students: These are Mercy students who are completing prerequisites as part of an occupational therapy emphasis in a Health Science Bachelor's degree.

These **Mercy-specific** courses are completed during the year preceding actual graduate work. A plan for the timely completion of these prerequisites must *be submitted* as part of the application process. A list of Mercy Specific Prerequisites, along with specific notes for each course, can be found in the table below.

Course Name	Credits	Special Considerations
HLSC 205: Safety Precautions for the Healthcare Professional	1	Grades must be a "C" or higher
HLSC 210: Overview of Occupational Therapy	1	OTA's are exempt from this course. Grades must be a "C" or higher
HLSC 225: Introduction to Accessing and Reading Scholarly Literature	1	This is a course on navigating the Mercy University library. Students with a minimum of a Bachelor degree and a GPA of 3.5 or higher may be exempt from taking the course but will be held responsible for the content. Grades must be a "C" or higher
HLSC 402: Scientific Writing	2	This course addresses the reading, analysis and synthesis of scientific literature. Students with a minimum of a Bachelor degree and a GPA of 3.5 or higher may be exempt from taking the course, but will be held responsible for the content. Grades must be a "C" or higher
HLSC 344: Group Process for Health Professionals	3	Students must receive a "B-" or higher in this course.
HLSC 302: Pathology for Rehabilitation	3	Grades must be a "C" or higher
BIOL 303 and BIOL 303A (lab) Human Anatomy with Cadaver	3 & 1	<i>Prerequisite: bleed "B" or better: in A &amp; P I and II.</i> Grades for lecture and lab courses must be a "C" or higher; grades for lecture and lab are separate and will not be averaged.
HLSC 314: Clinical Kinesiology and Applied Physics	4	Grades must be a "C" or higher
HLSC 410: Applied Neuroscience for the Rehabilitation Professional	4	Grades must be a "C" or higher
HLSC 420: Introduction to Occupational Therapy	3	Grades must be a "C" or higher

*Please note:* though a grade of "C" or higher in Mercy-specific prerequisites (exception: HLSC 344 requires "B-" or higher) is required, a "B" or higher is strongly recommended. If Mercy-specific courses are repeated for a better grade, all grades for the course are averaged for the admissions portfolio, e.g., grades of a "C" and "A" for a course will result in a "B" entered into the application portfolio for that course.

#### The Fifth Step: Entering the Occupational Therapy Program

If an invited student has an earned bachelor's degree and completes *the Mercy Specific* prerequisites in *good academic standing* by the end of the summer term, they will be permitted to enroll in and begin graduate occupational therapy courses in the fall term. "*Good academic standing*" means that students must maintain a 3.0 cumulative GPA and attain no less than a "C" in any prerequisite course (exception HLSC 344 requires a minimum of a "B-").