

**Columbia University  
Programs in Occupational Therapy  
Office of Admission**

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

Dear Applicant,

As you prepare your application for admission to Columbia University's entry level Master of Science Programs in Occupational Therapy, you may have questions about the requirements as well as the application process. Our staff is available Monday through Friday to answer your questions, by telephone and email.

In the meantime, you may have a question that has been asked of us in the past. The following answers these *frequently asked questions* about our application process.

Sincerely,



Janet Falk-Kessler, Ed.D., OTR, FAOTA  
Director, Programs in Occupational Therapy

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

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# FAQs

This document answers questions about:

- **The Application Process**
- **What's Required**
- **About References**
- **Prerequisites**
- **Dual Programs**
- **Financial Aid Application**
- **International Students**
- **Appendix (acceptable minimal scores on advanced placement tests)**

## ABOUT THE PROCESS

### ***How do I apply?***

The application is submitted electronically through the ApplyYourself website: [www.applyyourself.com](http://www.applyyourself.com) . We do not participate in the Occupational Therapy common application system.

### ***When is the application due?***

Part 1 of the application is due on December 1, 2017. Part 1 consists of the application form, available on the **Hobsons / Applyyourself** website, the essays, your resume, all reference letters (submitted electronically), and the application fee. We will not review any application if Part 1 is not submitted by December 1. Part 2 is due by January 31. This includes all transcripts. Transcripts can be sent in any time prior to January 31, and whenever possible, electronically by your college.

### ***What if my grades are not available by January 31?***

Let the admissions office know when we might expect them. We understand that some colleges have not completed their process in time to send in the transcript, and we will not penalize any applicant for this delay.

### ***Can I mail in my application?***

No. Our application is available on line, and must be submitted online. It is wise to prepare the essays, resume, etc. in a word processing program, then copy/paste it onto the web-based application.

***If my address changes after I submit my application, what do I do?***

If any of your contact information has changed, this includes email address, postal address, and telephone number, please contact our office with the new information.

***Do you have a rolling admission process?***

Not really. We seek to bring in a class whose membership spans different backgrounds and experiences. To do this, we need to wait until all applications are submitted. However, it is best *not* to wait until the last minute to apply. Our admissions committee starts their review early in the fall, even though final decisions are not made at that time.

***When will I be notified of a decision?***

Once our program has received all components of an application (transcripts, letters of references, etc), the application packet is forwarded to the Admissions Committee for review. As we do not use a “rolling admission” procedure, we want to be sure that every applicant is given equal consideration before a “class” is admitted. This process takes time. Applicants may begin to hear from us from late-winter to spring. Please do not contact our office for a decision, or for an update on our timetable.

**WHAT’S REQUIRED**

***Where should my undergraduate degree be from?***

All applicants must demonstrate that they have a baccalaureate degree, or expect to have a baccalaureate degree, prior to matriculation. This degree, and any other coursework taken previously, or as part of the prerequisite coursework, must be from a college or university that is accredited by a United States Department of Education (USDE) Regional Accreditation Agency. These agencies are:

- Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools
- New England Association of Schools and Colleges
- North Central Association of Colleges and Schools
- Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities
- Western Association of Schools and Colleges
- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

If you have a degree from an institution outside of the United States, you are required to have it reviewed as part of the admissions process by World Education Services: International Credential Evaluation website (<https://www.wes.org>). Please see page 9 for more information about submitting the review.

Please note: International Students are required to submit scores earned on either the TOEFL or the ITELTS. For the TOEFL, we require a minimum iBT score of 100. For the IELTS, we require a minimum score of 8.

***Are GREs required?***

Our program does not require, nor do we use, GREs in our admissions process.

***Is physics required?***

No. While a physics course will help prepare you for several of our courses, we teach what you need to know.

***What GPA does the admissions committee expect?***

The admissions committee considers many factors when reviewing an application. Overall GPA and prerequisite GPA are just two of a series of variables that are reviewed. Generally, the committee expects a minimum of a 3.0 GPA in order for the application to be considered.

***What else does the committee consider?***

The admissions committee reviews very carefully all aspects of your application packet. This includes your essays, resume, and letters of reference. Your experiences are as important to your success as are your grades.

***The application asks us to identify any course in which we received a W or earned a grade of C- or below. I withdrew from a course, but took it again the next semester. Do I need to list this course since I received a grade the next semester?***

Yes. All grades of C- and below and all courses listed with W must be identified even if you took the course again. There is space on the application for you to add an explanation, or to indicate that you retook the course.

***How many hours of volunteer experience should I have?***

We do not require any set number of hours. We do expect that you have sufficiently explored the field to be reasonably assured that this is an appropriate career path for you. Knowledge about occupational therapy, and experience with any population that may be served by an occupational therapist, is expected.

***When is proof of CPR certification due?***

It is expected that the requirement for certification in CPR (cardio pulmonary resuscitation) is met by the time one enrolls in our program. We do not use this as part of the application process.

## **ABOUT REFERENCES**

***Are letters of reference also sent in electronically?***

Our application system is set up to receive electronic submissions of reference letters. This system expedites this process, and assures confidentiality. Don't forget to indicate when filling out information on your referees if you are waiving your right to see the reference.

***Can I submit more than three letters of reference?***

No. Submitting more than three letters of reference will not give you any advantage in the process. We suggest that you choose your referees carefully, limit your referees to three, and choose those writing the reference who can speak to your strengths.

***I have references that were collected when I was in college. Can these be sent in by mail?***

No. All references must be current and submitted electronically as indicated in the application.

***Does at least one reference need to be written by an occupational therapist?***

While this is a good idea, it is not required. Again, the committee uses the references to evaluate your strengths as related to graduate study and your future as an occupational therapist. Any professional who knows you can address these areas.

***Can I choose a referee who is a friend of the family, or a family member, who knows me well?***

No. We will not accept references from family members or from friends.

***Can I choose a patient, or parent of a child I worked with as a referee? If they do not have a computer, can they send the reference in by mail?***

As long as he/she can evaluate your strengths as related to graduate study and your future as an occupational therapist. Keep in mind that all references must be submitted electronically as indicated in the application.

***What if I need to change a referee after I submit my application, or want to have a reminder sent to a referee?***

You can go into your portal and remove the name of a recommender who has not yet responded, and add a new one. To do this, simply click the red X button to remove the unwanted recommender, and then click the blue button to a new recommender. You can also have a reminder sent to a recommender who had not submitted.

If at any time you run into technical difficulties, or your recommender does, use the "Online Support" link on the application website for assistance. Do not contact our office for technical help.

## **ABOUT PREREQUISITIES**

***Do I need to have all prerequisites completed by the time I apply?***

In order to make an informed decision, the admissions office needs to consider a range of completed prerequisites. For applications being submitted for a September 2018 matriculation, a minimum of four prerequisites must be completed in order for your application to be reviewed. Of the four, at least one Anatomy, physiology, or A&P combination course must be completed (or another science course we can use as a

placeholder); one psychology course must be completed; and two distribution courses must be completed.

Applicants are expected to indicate when they will be fulfilling the remaining prerequisites.

***What happens if I am accepted to your program, and still have prerequisites to complete?***

Applicants may receive a pending acceptance prior to the completion of all prerequisites. In this case, it is expected that the outstanding courses will be completed prior to matriculation, each with an earned grade of “B”.

***I took some prerequisites on a pass / fail basis. Is that OK?***

No. Letter grades are required for all prerequisites. You can have your registrar or course instructor provide a grade equivalency. If a grade equivalency is not submitted, the lowest passing grade, typically a D, will be used. In this case, it is in the applicant’s best interest to repeat the course.

***Where can I take prerequisites?***

You have the freedom to choose any regionally accredited college or university that offers the course needed. You may take your prerequisites at a local community college if that is convenient for you.

***Can I take prerequisites through an online course?***

Yes, as long as the college or university that is offering the course is accredited by a regional accrediting agency recognized by the USDE.

***I took an English composition course, but it was called something else. Is that OK?***

Probably. The admissions committee will want to see the catalogue’s course description, or the course syllabus in order to make a determination.

***I never took an English composition course, but my college required all students to take a writing intensive course. Can I use this instead of English composition?***

Yes, writing intensive courses can substitute for English composition. A writing intensive course is determined, and stated as such, by your college. An applicant cannot pick a course that isn’t officially designated and deem it writing intensive. Most colleges designate a writing intensive course on the transcript. If your college does not do this, you will need to forward to us a course catalogue description of the course, or the syllabus from the course.

***I never took an English composition course, but I wrote an Honor's Thesis. Can I use this instead of English composition?***

Maybe. Please contact our office as we may require you to submit your thesis to us for review.

***Some of my courses are more than 10 years old. Can I still use these to satisfy my prerequisites?***

Yes. Courses in the distribution section can be over ten years old. However, the **psychology, life span development, and anatomy and physiology courses must be less than ten years.** Please contact our office if you have questions.

***If my anatomy course included a lab, is that enough to satisfy the lab requirement?***

Yes. However, if neither anatomy nor physiology had a lab component, please identify another science course that did.

***How will I know if a particular course will satisfy a prerequisite requirement?***

Follow the instructions related to what is acceptable as a prerequisite. Do not try to use a course that does not meet the requirement. If we do not accept a course, you will receive a notice and you may be asked to submit a copy of that course's syllabus for our review. However, because we receive many hundreds of applications, this notice can arrive quite some time after you submit your application. If you wish to have us review a course syllabus prior to your application, we are happy to do that.

***I never took a life span developmental psychology or human development course, but I took several developmental courses, each one focusing on a different part of the life cycle. Will the combination of these courses work for the requirement?***

Absolutely. If a course is used in fulfillment of the lifespan requirement, however, it cannot be used to fulfill other psychology prerequisite courses.

***I received AP (advanced placement) credit for courses taken in high school. Will you accept those?***

Maybe. Every college makes its own decision on what AP score is accepted towards a degree. Even if your college accepted an AP score, we might not. Our policy is to use the scores deemed appropriate by Columbia College and Barnard College, which are the undergraduate schools of Columbia University. In addition, if your AP test was taken more than ten years ago, we may not accept it regardless of the score.

Generally, AP credit is considered if the score is at least a 4 or 5. Please refer to the appendix of this document for the courses and the scores we will accept in fulfillment of a prerequisite. Please note: there are no exceptions.



***What about other types of advanced placement credit, such as International Baccalaureate Credit or British Advanced Level Exams?***

Just like AP courses, we will accept a score if it meets the standard set by Columbia College and Barnard College. These scores are listed in the appendix of this document.

***I received CLEP credit towards my undergraduate degree. Will you accept this as fulfillment of prerequisites?***

We do not accept CLEP (College Level Exam Program) credit in fulfillment of any prerequisite course requirement. We do, however, consider the baccalaureate degree requirement as satisfied if CLEP was used for that purpose.

## **DUAL PROGRAMS**

***The application asks about a dual degree program with the Mailman School of Public Health. What is that?***

The dual degree program allows accepted students to receive an MS and an MPH during a three year time period. These two degrees taken separately takes four years. Any student interested in this option needs to apply to both schools separately, meeting each school's independent admissions criteria. Acceptance to one school does not imply acceptance to both. Once accepted, however, the education for both degrees is streamlined.

***The application asks about a 3-2 program. What is that?***

Columbia University has agreements with several colleges that allow applicants to apply to our program during their junior year of college. These agreements do not guarantee acceptance to our program, as any 3-2 applicant is considered in the regular application pool.

## **FINANCIAL AID APPLICATION**

***What type of financial aid is available, and when do I apply for this?***

Columbia University's Programs in Occupational Therapy uses a "need blind" admission process. This means that an applicant's ability to cover tuition costs is not considered in the admission's process. After one is admitted to the program, financial aid applications are distributed, and every student who meets the eligibility criteria receives scholarship assistance in the form of grants and loans. Please contact the **Office of Student Financial Planning (212.305.4100)** if you have questions about this process or about eligibility.

## **INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS**

***I am an international student. Do I have any additional requirements?***

Yes. If you attended college outside of the United States (other than Canada), you will need to have an evaluation of your transcript completed. Please see the next question for specifics.



If you attended a Canadian school, you do not have to have your transcript externally evaluated.

***How do I get my transcript evaluated?***

If you were educated outside of the United States, you will be required to submit to our office a WES evaluation of your transcript. Submission can be done either electronically or by mail. Please go to the World Education Services: International Credential Evaluation website (<https://www.wes.org>) to make the arrangements. The evaluation should be sent by mail to:

Columbia University  
Programs in Occupational Therapy - Admissions  
710 West 168th Street  
New York, NY 10032

If WES is submitting the evaluation electronically, it can be emailed to [mh15@cumc.columbia.edu](mailto:mh15@cumc.columbia.edu).

***Do I need to take the TOEFL exam or the IELTS?***

If you are an international student whose native language is not English, you will need to take and submit your results from either the TOEFL or the IELTS. For the TOEFL, we require a minimum iBT score of 100. For the IELTS, we require a minimum score of 8.

***Do international students pay extra fees?***

The application fees and all academic fees (tuition, etc.) are identical for all students.

## APPENDIX

### ACCEPTABLE ADVANCED PLACEMENT SCORES

Subject	AP Score
Biology	5
Chemistry	4
Computer Science A	4
Computer Science AB	4
Economics	4
English Language and Composition	5
English Literature and Composition	5
French Language	4
French Literature	4
German Language	4
Government and Politics: United States	5
Government and Politics: Comparative	5
History: European	5
History: United States	5
Latin: Vergil	4
Latin: Literature	4
Mathematics: Calculus AB	4
Mathematics:	4
Mathematics: Calculus BC	5
Music: Theory	4
Physics B	4
Physics C/MECH	4
Physics C/E&M	4
Spanish: Language	4
Spanish: Literature	4
Statistics	5

## ACCEPTABLE HIGHER LEVEL INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE SCORES

Subject	IB Score
Biology	5
Chemistry	5
Computer Science	5
Economics	5
English	5
Environmental Science	5
Foreign Language	6
History	6
Mathematics	6
Psychology	5
Theatre Arts	5

## BRITISH ADVANCED LEVEL EXAMINATIONS

Examinations taken in disciplines that match our prerequisite courses must have an earned grade of A or B.