

What is an occupational therapist?

Occupational therapists work with people of all ages with a variety of conditions caused by injury or illness, psychological or emotional difficulties, developmental delay or the effects of aging. Their goal is to assist individuals to improve their everyday functional abilities and enable independence, well being and quality of life. Occupational therapists help patients maximise function and enable participation in their own lives.

What does an occupational therapist do?

- conduct tests to assess functional, emotional, psychological, developmental and physical capabilities
- plan and direct specific therapeutic programs for individuals using vocational (jobs or careers), recreational, remedial, social and educational activities
- select and design a variety of activities that assist in affected movement or function and help individuals to regain personal care skills, such as eating and dressing
- monitor the progress of individuals and assist with the coordination of an effective health team
- assist children with disabilities to integrate into education programs and schools
- assess the ability of injured workers to return to their usual employment or to perform alternative duties
- design and modify the environment of clients to allow for better access and independence
- advise on the use of specialist equipment, such as home modifications, adapted kitchen utensils, wheelchairs and other assistive technologies, which help people within their environment
- assess the need for, develop and run health education programs
- undertake research or teach in academic institutions
- assist in policy development for health and other related areas.

'I love that OT can really help people live their lives to the full. I wanted the opportunity to be creative in my work every day, and to work in different fields. My career in OT definitely gives me that!' Belinda Kipping, Occupational therapist

Is this you?

- patient, initiative, flexible attitude
- practical, innovative and observant
- able to solve problems
- good interpersonal and communication skills
- able to work as part of a team and independently.



Where can occupational therapists work in Queensland Health?

Occupational therapists are employed in a wide range of areas including hospitals, community health centres, occupational health centres, home care services, aged care facilities, schools, tertiary institutions and private practice. Occupational therapists work with people throughout the life span: infants and children, adolescents, adults and the elderly.

Occupational Therapists can work in the areas of rehabilitation, paediatrics, pain management, mental health, and in various branches of medicine and surgery such as aged care, cardiology, arthritis, hand surgery, neurology and neurosurgery and orthopaedics. Occupational therapists within Queensland Health are employed in innovative programs such as:

- Community Rehabilitation Programmes
- Transitional Care Programmes
- Community Stroke Rehabilitation
- State-wide Paediatric Rehabilitation Team
- Spinal Outreach Team
- Acquired Brain Injury Outreach Service
- Mobile Rehabilitation initiatives.

Can an occupational therapist specialise?

There are many areas in which occupational therapists can specialise, including:

- paediatrics
- mental Health
- hand therapy
- rehabilitation
- work rehabilitation.

How do you become an occupational therapist?

To become an occupational therapist you usually have to study occupational therapy at university. Prerequisite subjects, or assumed knowledge, in one or more of English, biological science, chemistry and physics are normally required. The various universities have different prerequisites and some have flexible entry requirements. Contact the universities you are interested in for more information as requirements may change.

Degree courses

James Cook University – Townsville Campus:

- Bachelor of Occupational Therapy, four years full time or seven years part time.

Southern Cross University – Tweed Heads Campus:

- Bachelor of Occupational Therapy.

University of Queensland – St Lucia Campus:

- Bachelor of Occupational Therapy, four years full time
- Graduate Entry Masters, two years full time.

University of the Sunshine Coast:

- Bachelor of Occupational Therapy.

Registration

In order to practise as an occupational therapist, graduates are required to be registered with Allied Health Practitioner Registration Agency.

What scholarships are available?

There are a variety of scholarships and financial assistance available. Check out the respective tertiary institutes' website for details. Also available is the Queensland Health Rural Scholarships Scheme.

Interested in other allied health careers?

Visit the Queensland Health Work For Us website www.health.qld.gov.au/workforus for more **Careers in health** fact sheets – Allied health series:

- Dietitian
- Radiographer
- Physiotherapist
- Psychologist
- Pharmacist
- Social worker
- Speech pathologist
- Podiatrist.

Where can I find out more info?

James Cook University
Faculty of Medicine, Health and Molecular Science
(Townsville)

Phone: (07) 4781 4409

Email: himstudents@jcu.edu.au

Website: www.jcu.edu.au

The University of Queensland
School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences (Brisbane)

Phone: (07) 3365 4506

Email: studentenquiries@shrs.uq.edu.au

Website: www.uq.edu.au

University of the Sunshine Coast
Faculty of Science, Health and Education

Phone: (07) 5430 2869

Email: SHEinfo@usc.edu.au

Website: www.usc.edu.au/University/AcademicFaculties/Science

Australian Association of Occupational Therapists (Qld)

Phone: (07) 3397 6744

Email: info@otqld.org.au

Website: www.otqld.org.au

Allied Health Practitioner Regulation Agency

Phone: 1300 419 495

Website: www.ahpra.gov.au

Occupational Therapy Board of Australia:
Website: www.occupationaltherapyboard.gov.au

Occupational Therapy Council:
Website: www.cotrb.com.au

The QTAC website has a list of universities and tertiary institutions with links to universities and courses offered. Go to www.qtac.edu.au and select Institutions.

To find out more about the exciting career opportunities Queensland Health can offer you go to www.health.qld.gov.au/workforus

Do great things every day

