



# Occupational Therapy Assistant Program

## STUDENT HANDBOOK

### 2021-2022



**OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSISTANT PROGRAM**  
**River Valley Community College**  
**Student Handbook**  
**REVIEWED: 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020**  
**REVISED: 2021**

**Table of Contents**

<b>Content</b>	<b>Page Number</b>
Welcome to the RVCC OTA Program	3
Academic Advising and Faculty Office Hours	3
OTA Lab and Other Instructional Space Access	3
Mail Files and Cell Phone Use	3
OTA Club and OTA Student Faculty Meetings	3
Dual Degree	4
Fieldwork Pre-requisite and Requirements	4
Student Supportive Services	5
OTA Program Mission	5
OTA Program Philosophy	5
Curriculum Design	5
Curriculum Design Position Statement	6
Educational Goals/Student Learning Outcomes	8
Additional Consideration in Curriculum Design/Philosophy	9
Student Outcomes Upon Completion of the Program	11
Essential Functions of the OTA	12
Attendance Policy, Leave of Absence and Dress Code Policy	13
Cell Phone Usage and Professional Behavior Development	15
Alcohol, Controlled Substances and Illegal Drugs	15
CBD and Prescription Medications	15
Drug Testing and Criminal Background Check Policy	16
Grading Policy	17
Failed Grade Policy for the OTA and PTA Programs	17
Infectious Disease	19
Potential Hazards in the Profession: PTA/OTA	19
Medical Care	20
General Safety Information and General Environmental Safety	21
Safety in the Laboratory	22
Lab Equipment: Maintenance of Supplies and Safety	22
Students Participating as a Mock Patient	23
Non-students Participating as a Mock Patient	23
Multimedia Recordings	23

## **Welcome to the RVCC Occupational Therapy Assistant Program**

We share your excitement as you begin the preparation for your new career. Your success in this program will be a process of mutual participation: yours and ours. This Program Handbook has been developed to introduce you to the policies and requirements of our program and reviewed with you upon admission to the program. A separate handbook including information regarding Fieldwork will be provided to you by the Academic Fieldwork Coordination (AFWC) within the beginning of the Fall term. Please read the information carefully.

### **Academic Advising**

Your Academic Advisor and Program Director is Professor Jen Saylor, M.Ed., OT/L. Assistant Professor Kelly F. Clark, B.S. OTR/L, is assigned as your Academic Fieldwork Coordinator (AFWC). Advisor changes may be made upon request. Upon interview and/or in the first several weeks of the semester, the student and the Director will develop a curriculum plan that suits each student's personal, academic and professional needs. Each semester the student will meet with the Director to review the academic plan. Changes in the academic plan will occur on an as needed basis. Our goal is to meet each student's needs through individualized attention to self and academic progression.

### **Faculty Office Hours**

Office Hours will be for each faculty member are by appointment and upon request. These meetings can be held face to face, via the phone, or virtually via Zoom. Please contact the faculty directly for a meeting.

### **OTA Lab and Other Instructional Space Access**

The OT Lab (214), the Observation Room (214A) and room 126 are available for your study, eating, or meetings when classes or meetings are not scheduled. There are sign-up sheets available for each space outside the door of each location. Kitchen facilities in the OTA Lab (214) may be used for personal use at your discretion. All food placed in the refrigerator must be marked with name and date and removed on Fridays. Please leave it clean and neat when you leave as you would any professional clinic space. The refrigerator is cleaned every Friday and unmarked items are discarded. Do not enter the lab to obtain food from the refrigerator if class is in session unless permission is granted by the faculty. Please maintain a clean and useful environment meaning, return items to their primary location after use. There is more information on this topic located on page:

### **Mail Files**

Mail files for each OTA student are in the OTA Lab (214). Although most information for students is distributed electronically however sometimes, there are hard copies of important information placed in your mailbox in the OTA Lab. Please check daily for notices, class papers, and other mail. You may leave communications for other students in their mail files. Please respect the privacy of others as you search for your own mail.

### **Cell Phone Use**

Office phones are for college business and college personnel only, except in the case of emergency. All cell phones should be turned off during lecture and lab times. Please inform the faculty if your cell phone must stay on for emergency purposes.

### **OTA Club and OTA Student/Faculty Meetings**

OTA Club and OTA student/faculty meeting times are important. Our meeting times will provide students with an opportunity to get to know each other, plan study activities, send students to workshops and conferences throughout the year, and bring in guest speakers. All students are

members and are encouraged to participate at whatever level you can, helping the club to serve all. Meetings are scheduled by the OTA faculty in consideration of student availability.

## Dual Degree

Those interested in information on the Dual Degree (OTA/OTA double Associates) option should speak with the Program Director. Planning is critical for scheduling of classes. Students will need to plan a three-year program if they do not have general education courses already taken. This option is manageable for academically strong students.

## Fieldwork Pre-requisites and Requirements:

The practice of Occupational Therapy requires active participation of its practitioners and clients. Therefore, the program incorporates the "doing" of selected activities along with the cognitive learning process. An integral part of the program accomplishes this beyond the traditional classroom setting through a variety of "community", "clinical" and "fieldwork" assignments these experiences provide the student opportunities to observe functional and dysfunctional behavior in order to enhance their didactic learning. All of these assigned experiences contribute to meeting the required Educational Standards set forth by ACOTE and are an integral part of the occupational therapy learning process.

**Examples** of some of the requirements to participate in clinical experiences include:

- A recent physical and the results of a tuberculin test (PPD)
- Health insurance
- Tetanus booster within the past 10 years
- A recent COVID test and/or COVID-19 vaccine
- Proof of immunization for measles, mumps and rubella.
- Group liability insurance (included in your College tuition statement).
- Criminal records check (may be at the expense of the student)

Some facilities may also require the following and are the financial responsibility of the student where applicable:

- A volunteer application
- References and an Interview
- Fingerprinting and background check.
- Drug testing
- First aid course and/or CPR certification.
- The right to require additional proof and/or attest to that the student exhibits the ability to perform the essential function for practice in fieldwork

Students who have completed required testing and certifications for prior reasons *may* be able to use existing documentation. A student who chooses to complete a clinical assignment at a facility with additional requirements assumes the responsibility for completing stated requirements in the time frame established by the agency and for any added expenses involved.

**Please note:** (1) the physical and PPD may need to be updated for the second year of the program; (2) some facilities may require that the results of the tuberculin test be within 3 months of beginning the fieldwork experience; and (3) professional liability insurance will be billed to you upon the beginning of the second semester in the first year.

## **Student Supportive Services**

As students move through the academic rigor of our program they can be assured that support is available. Our ACT Center (Advising, Career and Transfer Center) has tutoring services and fosters and academic support atmosphere available to all student. The OTA Faculty hold a policy and remain available to support students in all academic planning and academic needs. Please also refer to the college website for more information: <https://www.rivervalley.edu/student-support/advising-career-and-transfer-center-act/>

## **Occupational Therapy Assistant Program Mission**

The Occupational Therapy Assistant Program at river valley community college is committed to and shall prepare post-secondary students to assist in the practice of occupational therapy under the supervision of an occupational therapist and/or related fields. Provide baseline orientation in both scientific and cultural foundations of a liberal arts education in order that they become productive and contributing members of the community. Facilitate the growth and development of the student to continue as lifelong learners for professional and personal development.

Revised: 2021 (jjs/kfc)

## **Occupational Therapy Assistant Program Philosophy**

Our philosophy is laid with the groundwork of four guiding principles; the individual in society, health, wellness, human development, and human occupation as it relates to disability and OT practice. We believe that students should be given opportunities to learn skills enabling them to become life-long learners. Professional and personal growth is fostered through a variety of learning methods. Citizenship is fostered through community partnerships and service learning to assist the student in seeing the gestalt of professional and personal commitment and its impact on society. The role of the OT practitioner is emphasized through instruction on technical skills and theoretical principles. An understanding of the developing person is emphasized across the curriculum so a greater understanding of the human condition can be obtained, integrated, and understood in practice.

Reviewed: 2021 (jjs/kfc)

## **Curriculum Design**

The conceptual model chosen by the Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) Program at River Valley Community College is foundationally designed considering and implementing Kielhofner's Model of Human Occupation (MOHO) and Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning Domains (Cognitive, Affective and Psychomotor) and the hierarchical levels of learning within each domain, guides decisions related to both course sequence as well as the presentation of content within a course. As examples, the course "Introduction to Physical Therapy & Occupational Therapy" precedes "Fundamentals of Occupational Therapy" and within the course "Activities of Daily Living", basic movement principles and adaptive techniques are reviewed prior to students learning about treatment planning as outlined in 'Therapeutic Principles' course. Using Keilhofner's *Model of Human Occupation*- the matriculation and academic journey of the OTA Student at RVCC is guided by the following:

Volitional system – Prior to entering the OTA program, applicants have demonstrated an interest in the field and the motivation to complete the pre-admission requirements. In the first year of their curriculum, students are challenged to further identify and clarify their own personal value system, beliefs and causation through experiential learning activities. Students are also given an opportunity to identify their interests in selection of Level II fieldwork placements.

Habituation system – Many of the OTA students have returned to school as adult learners. As such, the role of student may be less familiar to them than for a student entering the college directly

from high school. It is often necessary for new habits to be developed and strengthened, particularly as related to study skills and time management. As the student progresses through the program they begin to shed their “student” role and internalize the role of a “professional occupational therapy assistant”.

Performance system – Multiple skills are demanded of the developing OTA. They include communication and social interaction skills, process skills, and motor skills. This is accomplished in the OTA program through didactic and group instruction and interactions; lab practicum’s and fieldwork experiences.

Each graduate can be considered in terms of the “student as an open system” whereby input (knowledge), throughput (learning process), output (behaviors) and feedback (from academic and clinical instructors) contribute to the changes required to achieve the capacity of a new occupational behavior: that of an entry-level occupational therapy assistant.

Reference: Taylor, R.R. (2017). *Kielhofner’s Model of Human Occupation*. (5<sup>th</sup> Ed.) Wolters Kluwer. The Netherlands.

(Reviewed: 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021)

## **Curriculum Design Position Statement**

The curriculum is designed to educate occupational therapy assistants to have competence in the identified program goals and performance outcomes. The graduate, within the scope of practice does and will:

1. Identify the characteristics of human beings which make them unique individuals that come from different cultural or socioeconomic backgrounds who are part and product of their environments.
2. Demonstrate knowledge, skills and attitudes to effectively assist in the occupational therapy process.
3. Collect pertinent data regarding the client’s occupational performance in sensorimotor, sensory integrative, cognitive, psychosocial skills and psychological components.
4. Develop therapy plans relevant to client’s occupational performance needs and rehabilitation goals.
5. Implement therapy programs.
6. Monitor and modify treatment plans as needed.
7. Assures continuity of treatment through discharge planning.
8. Assists in the management of occupational therapy services.
9. Demonstrate values, attitudes, and behaviors congruent with the American Occupational Therapy Association Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics
10. Accurately and respectfully uses written, verbal, and non-verbal communication skills to ensure understanding in the delivery of occupational therapy services.

The curriculum content is developed within a framework of four major themes reflecting the scope and philosophy of the program and, ultimately, the profession. These areas are:

1. The individual in society
2. Health and human development
3. Human occupation as it relates to disability
4. Occupational therapy practice

Performance areas, performance components and performance contexts are addressed within the program outcomes, competencies and in all aspects of the curriculum within the framework of these four themes.

The curriculum sequence, program outcomes, competencies and individual course competencies show an interrelationship between and building upon the four major themes. Each theme is further defined as follows:

1. The individual in society is crucial as both the consumer and the provider of occupational therapy. Self-actualization, in response to both intrinsic and extrinsic factors, is encouraged to meet his or her developing and changing needs as a part of a larger social structure and as a part of a healthy life balancing. Society is the supporting network of which the individual is part and product. It provides the framework for life tasks according to the individual's development, ability, personal values and needs.
2. Health and human development reflects the individual's state of homeostasis, wellness, optimal adjustment and adaptation to meet basic human physiological and psychological needs and potential.

The developmental process is identified as the building of elements, foundations and skills in all areas of occupational performance throughout the life cycle. Examined are the maturation and aging processes from conception through senescence as they vary among diverse human cultures and among individuals and as they impact upon day to day activities and life tasks in human occupation.

3. Human occupation as it relates to disability focuses on patterns of response to atypical development, illness, disease, trauma, deprivation and other internal and external factors. Human occupation is defined by Kielhofner as "an essential unity of mind and body and the integrated and balanced nature of the organism which maintains itself through acting in the world." Performance areas, components and contexts are studied within this focus.
4. Occupational Therapy practice reflects a composite framework and utilizes the therapeutic process as a teaching format. Goal-directed, purposeful, developmentally relevant is the therapeutic foundation upon which therapy stands.

Within the curriculum, the three general practice areas addressed are: Physical disabilities, Developmental Disabilities and Psychosocial Disabilities. Within these areas, the life span, cultural diversities, treatment models, and varying approaches are presented and explored, to provide for a broad exposure to philosophy, theory and practice within the therapeutic process.

Team approaches are experienced throughout the curriculum, with equal emphasis placed upon multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary styles. The program shares a mutual respect with other health and human service professions through combined course work. At the same time, the unique identity of occupational therapy is nurtured and promoted through specific program courses and activities.

Values representing professional behavior, skilled therapeutic interaction and appreciation of diversity are promoted throughout the curriculum. An expectation for each student to reach and strive for quality in learning and practice permeates our academic culture, reflected in academic rigor and high level outcome performance.

The faculty role moves within the curriculum from one of more traditional instruction toward one of a facilitator and mentor as the student acquires higher levels of critical thinking and problem solving. The faculty instruct within areas of practice experience and expertise, modeling team collaboration and shared goal setting. Where appropriate, interdisciplinary faculty teams share course instruction.

The courses progress developmentally:

- \* Concrete information precedes abstract conceptual information
- \* Normal human function and performance precedes atypical performance.
- \* General theory and practice precede specific and complex levels of integration and application.

The faculty believe that the education for the occupational therapy assistant must be an organized, progressive and sequential method of study. The building of foundation theory is continually woven into the fabric of therapeutic application, with ongoing clinical experience every semester of the program. The following courses have incorporated field experiences into their requirements:

Semester 3	OCTA 190	Fieldwork Level I
Semester 5	OCAT 290 & 291	Fieldwork IIA, Fieldwork IIB

The underlying educational process is designed to foster a building of skills in critical thinking and integration beyond memory. Because many COTAs in rural New England must work in isolation with primarily general supervision, our students must be competent in a range of basic skills and professional behaviors to practice effectively. We therefore attempt to prepare them for increased independent thinking.

## Curriculum Design

Please follow this link to the curriculum design:

<https://www.rivervalley.edu/program/occupational-therapy-assistant/>

## Educational Goals/Student Learning Outcomes

The educational and behavioral goals of the OTA students reflect both the Model of Human Occupation and the shared mission themes.

Upon graduation the student will:

- Establish occupational identity and behaviors that supports work with diverse populations in the evolving healthcare environment
- Demonstrate occupational competence as evidenced by provision of competent, quality patient care with the highest degree of professionalism and ethical behavior, including adherence to supervision guidelines.
- Employ strategies of occupational adaptation to promote health, wellness, and participation for individuals and their caregivers through purposeful activity, occupations, technology, within the framework of “best practice”.
- Demonstrate effective intrapersonal and interpersonal communication skills to support productive relationships with consumers, caregivers, coworkers,
- Utilize critical thinking and clinical reasoning strategies to address therapeutic problems as presented in the clinical environment.
- Value and instill lifelong learning skills to support service competence, community service, and personal growth and development.

Additional consideration in the design and philosophy of the curriculum was given to the following documents:

**AMERICAN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSOCIATION**  
Philosophy of Occupational Therapy Education

Occupational therapy education is grounded in the belief that humans are complex beings engaged in a dynamic process of interaction with the physical, social, temporal, cultural, psychological, spiritual, and virtual environments. Through active engagement within the internal and external environments, humans evolve, change, and adapt. Occupational therapy educators advocate the use of occupation to facilitate health promoting growth, change, and/or adaptation with the goal of participation in meaningful occupation that supports survival, self-actualization, occupational balance, and quality of life.

The profession of occupational therapy is unique and dynamic, grounded in core principles of occupation, and is influenced by emerging knowledge and technologies. Thus, the education of future occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants must consistently reinforce the development of new knowledge supporting the use of occupation, the application of clinical reasoning based on evidence, the necessity for lifelong learning, and the improvement of professional knowledge and skills.

Occupational therapy education promotes competence through educational experiences that foster the occupational therapists' and occupational therapy assistants' practice potential and scholarship development. Occupational therapy educators use active learning that engages the learner in a collaborative process that builds on prior knowledge and experience and integrates professional academic knowledge, experiential learning, clinical reasoning, and self-reflection. Occupational therapy education promotes integration of philosophical and theoretical knowledge, values, beliefs, ethics, and technical skills for broad application to practice in order to improve human participation and quality of life for those individuals with and without impairments and limitations.

The occupational therapy education process emphasizes continuing critical inquiry in order that occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants be well prepared to function and thrive in the dynamic environments of a diverse and multicultural society, using the power of occupation as the primary method of evaluation, intervention, and health promotion.

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*Adopted by the Representative Assembly 2007C9*

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**American Occupational Therapy Association**  
**THE PHILOSOPHICAL BASE OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY**

Man is an active being whose development is influenced by the use of purposeful activity. Using their capacity for intrinsic motivation, human beings are able to influence their physical and mental health and their social and physical environment through purposeful activity. Human life includes a process of continuous adaptation. Adaptation is a change in function that promotes survival and self-actualization. Biological, psychological, and environmental factors may interrupt the adaptation process at any time throughout the life cycle. Dysfunction may occur when adaptation is impaired. Purposeful activity facilitates the adaptive process.

Occupational therapy is based on the belief that purposeful activity (occupation), including its interpersonal and environmental components, may be used to prevent and mediate dysfunction, and to elicit maximum adaptation. Activity as used by the Occupational Therapist includes both an intrinsic and a therapeutic purpose.

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This statement was adopted by the April 1979 Representative Assembly of the American Occupational Therapy Association, Inc. as Resolution C #531-79. The text can be found as noted below:

American Occupational Therapy Association (1979).

The philosophical base of occupational therapy. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 33, 785.

American Occupational Therapy Association (1979). Policy 1.11.

The philosophical base of occupational therapy. In *Policy Manual of The American Occupational Therapy Association, Inc.* Rockville, MD: Author.

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**River Valley Community College**  
**Occupational Therapy Assistant Program**  
**Student Outcomes upon Completion of the Program**  
**(Adapted from the Curriculum Design Position Statement)**

The curriculum is designed to educate occupational therapy assistants to have competence in the identified program goals and performance outcomes. Upon completion of the program the graduate, within the scope of practice will:

1. Identifies the characteristics of human beings which make them unique individuals that came from different cultural or socioeconomic backgrounds who are part and product of their environments.
2. Demonstrates knowledge, skills and attitudes to effectively assist in the occupational therapy treatment process.
3. Collects pertinent data regarding the client's occupational performance in sensorimotor, cognitive integrative, cognitive, psychosocial skills and psychological components.
4. Develops therapy plans relevant to client's occupational performance needs and rehabilitation goals.
5. Implements therapy programs.
6. Monitors and modifies treatment plan as needed.
7. Assures continuity of treatment through discharge planning.
8. Assists in the management of occupational therapy services.
9. Demonstrates values, attitudes and behaviors congruent with the  
*American Occupational Therapy Association Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics*
10. Accurately and respectfully uses written, verbal and non-verbal communication skills to insure understanding in the delivery of occupational therapy services.
11. Incorporate oneself into the role of "citizen" through active involvement in community based partnerships and clinical practice.
12. Pass the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT) national competency examination at a 90% or higher level for first-time test takers.

Revised May 2016,  
Reviewed 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021

**River Valley Community College**  
**Occupational Therapy Assistant Program**  
**Essential Functions of the OTA (revised 2015) (reviewed 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021) \*Provided additionally in admission packet**

Becoming an occupational therapy assistant requires the completion of an education program that is both intellectually and physically challenging. The student will be expected to acquire knowledge, motor skills, and behavior and attitudes that are necessary to provide ethical, safe, effective, compassionate patient care. The purpose of this document is to inform students in the Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) program of the demands that they can reasonably be expected to meet, with or without reasonable accommodation, while participating in the program. These standards reflect reasonable expectations of the OTA student for the performance of common Occupational Therapy functions encountered in the program. They are also reasonable expectations of employers; however, employers may have different standards. The ability to meet these standards with or without accommodations does not guarantee employment upon graduation.

**Each candidate OTA degree program should possess the following abilities and skills:**

Motor: The candidate should have sufficient gross and fine motor capabilities to execute the movements and skills required to provide safe and effective occupational therapy treatment. This includes, but is not limited to:

1. Sufficient coordination, speed, strength and agility to assist and guard (protect) patients who are walking, exercising or performing other activities.
2. Ability to adjust, move and position patients and equipment which involves bending, twisting, pushing and pulling, and reaching in order to guide, transfer and lift equipment and individuals.
3. Ability to guide, resist, and assist patients, and to provide emergency care, which involves activities including standing, kneeling, sitting, walking and crawling.
4. Ability and dexterity to fabricate, apply and monitor adaptive equipment, perform and demonstrate functional activities and administer components of sensory, motor and Activities of Daily Living Skills (ADL) assessments.
5. Sufficient endurance to move about a classroom or clinical environment steadily throughout the day, including movement across distances, movement from one floor to another, and negotiation of small spaces.

Sensory: Candidate should have sufficient sensory abilities to assess and monitor patients, observe physical movement, participate in physical measures, and recognize and respond to patient needs and unsafe situations. Candidate should have the ability to obtain information in classroom, laboratory or clinical settings through observation, auscultation, palpation and other measures, and requires abilities including, but not limited to:

1. Visual ability (corrected as necessary) to recognize and interpret facial expressions and body language, to observe patient performance in therapy, to read or set parameters on occupational therapy equipment, and to interpret and assess the environment.
2. Auditory ability (corrected as necessary) to recognize and respond to verbal directions and requests, to be aware of safety mechanisms in the environment, and for effective communication between patients/families/co-workers.
3. Tactile ability to palpate muscle contractions, to discriminate hot and cold modalities, to exert the necessary pressure to fabricate splints, and to identify joint articulations

## Attendance Policy (Reviewed 2021)

The OTA program has in place additional guidelines for all OTA students which will be clearly outlined in the course syllabus. Instructors will take attendance at the start of each scheduled class/lab. Students are responsible for making up any missed material due to absence and are expected to talk with classmates to gain access to missing class notes.

The following policies relate to professional courses in the OTA and OTA programs (identified with AHLT, OTA and OTA prefixes) and will be included in each course syllabus:

Attendance (lecture and lab attendance are combined for one course):

- 3 points deducted for every absence from class or lab
- 1 point deducted for every occasion of arriving late or leaving early

Students missing more than 20% of the course is grounds for withdrawal from the course, with an AF issued by the instructor. See the college Student Handbook. Extenuating circumstances may be discussed with the instructor.

Attendance in OTA Fieldwork Experience courses: Students are expected to adhere to specific attendance policies for these courses as dictated by the Fieldwork Manual. The student is directed to the program's **Fieldwork Manual for further questions on this topic.**

## Leave of Absence

If a student experiences a serious medical event that requires they stop attending school for a period of time, the program follows the RVCC Leave of Absence Policy:

<https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/medical-leave-policy-michelles-law> . Upon return, the student will meet with the program director to plan how the course work will be made up and how the leave may impact progression through the program.

## Dress Code Policy

Students will be introduced to the program dress code for the OTA and PTA programs during the first fall semester, program courses (AHLT, PTAC, and OCTA course prefixes). Students are given a one-month grace period in which they will not be docked professionalism points in courses. This grace period is established to help refine expectations of professional dress. By the end of September of the first year of professional courses, all PTA students will abide by this dress code below. If the PTA and OTA faculty change this date, you will be alerted. This policy is in effect for all asynchronous lecture courses as well as face to face courses. Lab courses will have their own dress code requirements as outlined in the individual course syllabus.

The program faculty endeavor to put forth a professional image and to help students learn and model what a professional image looks like for the typical therapy clinician.

Therefore, it is required that PTA and OTA students appear in **business casual dress** for all professional course classroom/lecture activities, whether guests are present or not.

The business casual wardrobe is the accepted form of dress in most clinical sites used for clinical education experiences/fieldwork experiences within the program.

Business casual dress includes:

Khakis or dress pants  
Collared shirts: long/short-sleeved, \*small discrete logos  
Blouses  
T-shirt: small discrete logos  
Enclosed heel and toe shoes  
Sleeveless shirts: not tank tops or camisoles□  
Skirt/dress (knee length)  
Sweatshirt, without a hood, \*small discrete logos□  
Wrist watch required for all lectures and lab

Other considerations:

1. Fingernails: natural nails not extending beyond the fingertips; intact nail polish (no chips, not grown out) is acceptable. No nail enhancements.
2. Facial hair: groomed and neat
3. Hair: during practical exams, hair that hangs past the collar should be pulled back. Long bangs that you attempt to tuck behind the ear should be fastened back.
4. Piercings: no more two per ear and a small nose stud.
5. Boots: Boots may only be ankle high. Boots should not be winter boots or rain boots.
6. Earrings: No dangling earrings, no more than two piercings in each ear, gauged earrings must be plugged
7. Scarves: No scarves
8. Other considerations: there should be no visible cleavage or underwear, there should be no visible midriff

Policies at each clinic will vary related to tattoos, jewelry and piercings; you are expected to follow those policies during clinical rotations and employment. Please also keep in mind that visible tattoos and piercings may prohibit a clinical placement or hiring.

You are all studying to become health care professionals and should convey yourselves as such. Professionalism goes beyond your clinical interaction with the patient. Professionalism includes how one conveys thoughts to others either in writing or in spoken language. It is also how we present ourselves non-verbally and in presentation including how one is dressed. Questions about this policy can be directed to the PTA/OTA faculty.

**Consequences of failure to comply with this dress code policy will result in points being deducted from the professionalism portion of the final grade in each course.**

Revised July 2018, Revised August 31, 2018, Revised May 16, 2019, Reviewed 2021

## **Cell Phone Usage**

Students must have cell phones and other electronic devices turned off or in silent mode during all scheduled class and laboratory periods, and during practicum/fieldwork hours. Students will receive a verbal warning for the first offense, and a written warning for the second offense. Third offenses will result in sanctions determined by the instructor. All electronic devices will be turned off and stored in backpacks during all testing. Emergency situations where you might need to be available via cell phone should be discussed with your faculty member.

## **Professional Behavior Development**

The institution has policies and procedures related to the performance and conduct of students, which include, but are not limited to: attendance, classroom behavior, sexual harassment, drugs and alcohol, and computer usage. As students preparing for a career in the allied health field, you are expected to behave in a responsible and professional manner in the classroom as well as in the clinic, using the college's Student Handbook as the guide. Students in the program shall be governed by these rights and responsibilities. Please refer to the RVCC Student Handbook and/or the RVCC College Catalog for details. <https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/student-handbook>

In addition to the rights and responsibilities identified by the institution, students in the OTA program shall also be governed by the following professional behavior guidelines: The American Occupational Therapy Association's Standards of Ethical Conduct for the Occupational Therapy Assistant (identifies basic expected ethical behaviors) and reviewed in the course AHLT 104R – Introduction to OT/PT

## **Alcohol, Controlled Substances and Illegal Drugs**

*Substance Abuse in Classroom/Laboratory Settings:*

The program follows the RVCC Drug Free Workplace policy outlined in the Student Handbook: <https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/drug-free-workplace-drug-free-schools-and-communities> If impaired behaviors are observed in the classroom setting, the procedures of the college policy related to student conduct are followed. In the event a student is intoxicated or under the influence of illegal substances during the Fieldwork Experience, policies are in place outlining the responsibilities of the college and the clinical facility (see contracts, riders and the Fieldwork Handbook)

### **CBD:**

While CBD is not the same as marijuana, some CBD products do have small amounts of THC (the psychoactive component of marijuana) and CBD can legally be sold even with these small amounts of THC in them. Even these small amounts of TCH may cause a student to test positive on a drug test. Students need to be aware that drug tests can not differentiate between TCH in their system as a result of CBD cross-contamination or as a result of marijuana use.

### **Prescription Medications:**

In instances where a student may have a legal prescription for drugs that will show up on a drug test (pain medication or certain seizure medications), it is important to discuss this with the Academic Fieldwork Coordinator as early as possible to ensure that correct process is followed prior to clinical placements. This may require students to provide proof of medication needs from their physicians and proof of a prescription ***prior*** to drug testing.

## **Drug Testing:**

Students must be aware that clinical sites may drug test employees (and will require some of students at the clinical site, though they are not employees). Students who have a positive drug test will be denied a clinical rotation until the next time that specific Clinical Practicum course is offered, provided they can pass a drug test at that time. They may also be referred to the Judicial Committee of the college.

### *Additional Information Related to Substance Abuse:*

OTA students shall be aware of the following:

1. The college's Drug Free Workplace and Drug Free Schools and Communities statement (see college Student Handbook).
2. The legal use of medications or drugs prescribed by a licensed practitioner is permitted provided that such use does not adversely affect the student's performance or endanger the health and/or safety of others.
3. The school will maintain the confidentiality of all records and information related to the student's suspected abuse.
4. The OTA faculty will assist students desiring to address a substance abuse problem.
5. A student who refuses to comply with substance abuse policy/procedure will be subject to dismissal from the OTA Program.

## **Criminal Background Check Policy**

Background check and drug testing are required by many facilities prior to Work Based Learning (WBL) experiences. Failure to undergo a background check/drug testing prior to an assigned work-based learning experience may result in inability to progress in a program. Should an agency refuse to place a student based on the outcome of the background check, the college/program shall have no responsibility for arranging an alternate clinical/ fieldwork or practicum placement. Students may appeal the decision and will be given the opportunity to present information to dispute the background check. Students must agree that all results will be available to the program and the sites associated with the program. The background/drug check may be required several times during a two-year program and may be required for employment and/or licensure and/or certification. Cost for the background/drug check will be the responsibility of the student. Students should work with their Program Directors or the AFWC for assistance. Note: some agencies require a state and federal background check

## Grading Policy

The college's Student Handbook <https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/student-handbook> has information regarding college grading policies under the tab titled "Grading." In this section, students can find information on grading systems, the grade appeal process and academic standards. Additionally, this section outlines further detail regarding "in good standing", "probation", "suspension" and "dismissal". Students in the OTA program are subject to that policy.

OTA students are subject to additional grading and academic probation policies set forth by the program to ensure the highest quality of graduates. Grades within the OTA program are obtained through quizzes, exams, laboratory exercises, homework assignments, practical tests of technical performance, and clinical educational experiences, in addition to attendance, participation, and professional behavior. Course syllabi outline specific policies for each course. The core liberal arts and program specific courses within the program are graded on the traditional ten-point scale

## Failed Grade Policy for OTA and PTA Programs

1. The OTA and OTA programs use a 10-point scale when assigning grades in all professional courses in the OTA or OTA programs. These courses are identified with an AHLC, OTAC or OCTA prefix. The 10-point scale used:

A 93 – 100	B- 80 – 82	D+ 67 – 69
A- 90 – 92	C+ 77 – 79	D 63 – 66
B+ 87 – 89	C 73 – 76	D- 60 – 62
B 83 – 86	C- 70 – 72	F Below 60

2. To remain in good standing in the college, the student must not be on academic probation or academic suspension. The Student Handbook explains the college's academic standards.
3. There are further expectations of students in the OTA or OTA program. To remain in good standing in the OTA or OTA program, students must demonstrate success in all coursework as defined by the following criteria:
  - a. Students who earn less than a "B-" grade for any professional course must repeat that course. Students who repeat the course for the second time and earn less than a "B-" grade will be suspended from the program for one semester.
  - b. Students who earn less than a "C" grade for any liberal arts course must repeat that course. Students who repeat the course for a second time and earn less than a "C" grade should refer to the Student Handbook policy. **See information below regarding reinstatement.**
  - c. Students who earn less than a "C" for any two courses during the same semester will be suspended from the program for one semester. **See information below regarding reinstatement.**
  - d. Within the professional courses, students may be required to complete hands-on practical examinations to demonstrate

competencies. Students must pass each practical exam as defined by the instructor. Students who fail a practical examination must practice, come back and re-test. Failure of a practical examination includes any grade less than 80%.

When the student repeats a practical the exam and successfully completes it, the recorded grade will be an average of the failed and successfully completed practicals.

If the student is unable to successfully complete a practical exam after 2 attempts, the student will need to complete a 1:1 review with the instructor. The amount of review time will be determined by the instructor, not to exceed two hours.

A student who is unable to successfully complete a practical exam after 3 attempts will earn a 69 (= F) for the course and will need to repeat the course.

An OTA student who is not successful on the third re-test of the comprehensive practical exam will receive a 69 (= F) grade for the applicable course (OCTA214R), and will have to retake the course the next time it is offered. The student will not progress, nor be able to register for OCTA290R, OCTA291R or OCTA220R.

A OTA student who is not successful on the third attempt of a comprehensive practical will receive a 69 (= F) grade for the applicable course (OTAC122R or OTAC211R), and will have to retake the course the next time it is offered. The student will not progress, nor be able to register for OTAC190R or OTAC292R.

4. **Reinstatement:** Students suspended from the PTA or OTA program:
- a. may continue to take non-OTA or OTA professional courses outside of the program, as non-matriculated students.
  - b. must show evidence of having successfully completed 2 three-credit courses with a "C" or better grade before reapplying for matriculation into the OTA or OTA program.
  - c. As per the college Student Handbook, suspended students can re-apply to the OTA or OTA program after 1 semester. Reinstatement is not automatic and is based on space availability. The applications from suspended students will be managed by the same deadline and/or selection process as all applicants to the OTA or OTA program.
  - d. The re-testing of competencies is required after a leave of absence. Students matriculated back into the OTA or OTA program will be required to repeat all practical tests from successfully completed professional courses (designated with AHLT, and OCTA or OCTA prefixes) before registering for other professional courses.
  - e. A student who withdraws or is suspended/dismissed from the program may request reinstatement only once. A student

suspended/dismissed from the program or withdrew for academic reasons a second time, may not return to the program.

- f. Students will be dismissed from the OTA or OTA program if the student has been found in violation of the Student Code of Conduct. Students dismissed from the program for these behaviors may not re-apply to the program.
- g. The policy for reinstatement to the OTA or OTA program will include conditions for reinstatement that will be determined by program faculty at the time a student is dismissed from the program. The student will receive a letter from the Program Director outlining the conditions and procedures for reinstatement to the program. The student will be required to sign a statement of understanding of the conditions. Prior to reinstatement, the program director will determine if the conditions for reinstatement were met. Students satisfying the conditions for reinstatement will be allowed to return to the program if or when space is available. If the conditions are not satisfied, the student may not be permitted to return.

(revised June 2017 for implementation Fall 2017) (revised January 2018 for implementation in Spring 2018) (revised January 2019 for implementation in Spring 2019) (Reviewed 2020)

### **Infectious Disease Policy: PTA/OTA**

Students in the OTA and OTA programs will adhere to Universal Precautions, CDC guidelines and facility policy on infectious diseases when out on clinical fieldwork experiences. Instruction in these topics will be covered in the program. Additional instruction may occur as part of orientation to clinical practicum sites. As future healthcare workers, students understand that exposure to infectious disease is possible in their clinical fieldwork experiences.

### **Potential Hazards in the Profession: PTA/OTA**

As you begin your training for this profession, we also want to draw your attention to potential risks and hazards of the occupation. As a OTA you will be on your feet all day, and may be involved in moving or lifting patients. There is a risk of injury to you during these activities. Learning appropriate body mechanics and using assistive devices can help, but we cannot guarantee your safety. Please use good judgement in deciding whether to participate.

While it will be the fieldwork education site's responsibility to assure adequate policies and plans are in effect to protect you, our job is to begin educating you on ways to avoid these hazards.

Students in the OTA program must also recognize that PTAs and OTAs working in a physical therapy clinic are at risk for exposure to blood and other body fluids or a work environment that could lead to injury (e.g. slips, falls).

OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) recognizes that PTAs and OTAs may be exposed to these potential hazards in the workplace:

- Exposure to hazardous chemicals.
- Exposure to blood borne pathogens such as HIV, Hepatitis B, and C
- Exposure of eyes or body to injurious corrosive materials
- Exposure to wet surfaces and potential slips and falls.
- The potential for the lack of Personal Protective Equipment.

All students will be introduced to OSHA blood and body fluids safety standards. In addition, any clinical site will orient the student to specific policies and procedures regarding workplace safety. The student is also referred to the following website for more information: [http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/hospital/expert/ex\\_pt.html](http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/hospital/expert/ex_pt.html)

### **Medical Care**

Though there is no formal health system within the college, there are many resources available in the area. Costs and eligibility requirements vary, so you are urged to call for this information in advance, if possible. Students are responsible for any costs incurred for medical transportation or medical services.

The College is located approximately one mile from a medical facility, Valley Regional Hospital. This facility is utilized for any emergency medical problems during the day or evening hours. The College is not responsible for the physical welfare of the student off-campus except as outlined in the Fieldwork Education Manual

## General Safety Information

The college's Student Handbook covers general safety topics listed below. Students are responsible for reading this information and abiding by the information.

- Parking & Traffic Regulations: <https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/parking-traffic-regulations>
- Campus Security: <https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/campus-security>
- Incident Reports: <https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/incident-reports>
- Clery Act: <https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/clery-act-crime-statistics-reporting-a-crime-or-incident-on-campus>
- Drug Free Workplace: <https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/drug-free-workplace-drug-free-schools-and-communities>
- Codes of Conduct, Including Harassment: <https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/student-code-of-conduct>
- Safety and Fire Regulations (including fire drills): <https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/safety-and-fire-regulations>
- Unattended Children: <https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/unattended-children-on-campus-policy>

## General Environment Safety

- Walking areas will be uncluttered. Book bags, backpacks, etc. should be stored out of the travel areas.
- Treatment tables, chairs and equipment will be returned to their positions at the end of class/lab.
- Floors will be dry, and will be maintained with a non-skid wax.
- Emergency/evacuation plans will be posted by doors leading to hallways.
- All cleaning solutions will be appropriately labeled, including:  
Name, Concentration, Date of Expiration, if applicable  
Manufacturer (if commercially purchased)
- First Aid Kit: A first aid kit is located in the OTA lab (room 205) on wall near the hand washing sink. The kit is inspected and restocked by a vendor company every three months. If additional supplies are needed, please go to the front office.

## **Safety in the Laboratory**

OTA students in the program will have the opportunity to perform interventions on fellow classmates. In fact, to facilitate effective healthcare education, this practice is a necessity in order to fully grasp most didactic concepts. At all times during such interactions, students shall conduct themselves in a professional and safe manner. All students shall receive proper education from faculty or staff prior to use of laboratory equipment. This education shall come in the form of a general orientation and via specific orientation to equipment that pertains to didactic topics.

Healthcare education is enhanced by the active participation of all students in the classroom and laboratory. It is expected that all students will volunteer to participate in both the OTA role and the mock patient role. If religious or ethical beliefs or medical conditions preclude a student from doing so, that student must inform a member of the OTA program faculty.

When performed improperly, interventions (such as manual therapies, modalities, etc.) may cause harm to one's health. OTA students should not perform any intervention without proper faculty instruction and supervision in the classroom and laboratory settings.

Students shall always act in a safe, responsible manner and immediately alert a faculty member if an injury or unsafe situation arises.

## **Lab Equipment: Maintenance of Supplies and Safety**

MSDS forms for commonly used substances within OTA program are available on the college's RVCC 100% Online MSDS desktop information link:

<https://msdsmanagement.msdonline.com/ebinder/?SearchTerm=W&UserSearchSuggestID=0&DocumentSourceTypeID=0&DocumentApprovalTypeID=0&ArchivedStatus=A&LocationLevel=0&LocationID=0&LocationStatus=0&GroupID=0&IndexedDataTypeID=0&IndexedDataID=0&QuickFilterTypeID=0&ReturnNarrowResults=false&SmartSearchTermID=0&PageSize=100&PageNumber=1&SortFieldID=0&SortHow=desc&CustomSearchTerm>. The Maintenance department and program faculty can obtain other substances MSDS forms via [www.MSDSONline.com](http://www.MSDSONline.com). or [www.ilpi.com](http://www.ilpi.com).

- Linens will be folded neatly and stored in the store room.
- Soiled linens will be placed in the laundry hamper.
- All surfaces will be cleaned as directed by the faculty
- All electrical treatment equipment will be maintained in safe operating condition, and tested annually for safety.
- Any faulty electrical equipment will be set aside, a note placed on it stating "Do Not Use", and will be repaired as soon as possible.
- Electrical equipment will be unplugged when not in use.
- Equipment manuals will be available for use in the OTA lab file drawer labeled "Modality Manuals".
- The hot pack machine will be emptied and cleaned each summer (more often as needed).
- All equipment parts, lead wires, electrodes, etc. will be stored neatly near the machines.
- Extension cords will not be allowed for patient-related interventions.
- Food and drinks will not be allowed on any equipment
- All containers of lotions, oils, gels will be checked for integrity and be without cracks/breaks.

### **Students Participating as a Mock Patient**

Students who are participating as mock patients during laboratory and clinical experiences are to be treated with the utmost respect and dignity. If medical conditions preclude a student from participating as a mock patient, that student must inform a member of the OTA program faculty. Regardless of setting, subjects and evaluators must never jeopardize the safety of themselves or others. All laboratory and clinical site rules must be adhered to. All OTA program students shall be made aware of this policy.

### **Non-students Participating as a Mock Patient**

Non-students who are participating as mock patient during laboratory and clinical experiences are to be treated with the utmost respect and dignity. Regardless of setting, subjects and evaluators must never jeopardize the safety of themselves or others. It shall be the policy of the program that non-students sign a waiver outlining their rights and responsibilities as a mock patient.

### **Multimedia Recordings**

At times in healthcare education it is necessary to videotape, audiotape, photograph and/or otherwise image individuals for instructional purposes. Any product of these practices is to be used only for the purposes of healthcare education. They may not be sold, copied or otherwise distributed including uploaded to media sharing sites or social media sites. Students will give their permission if their likeness will be used for any purpose.