

University of MN OTD Capstone Frequently Asked Questions

Background Information

About the Profession:

Occupational therapists specialize in helping individuals, groups and populations participate in meaningful activities (aka “occupations”) and desired roles by problem solving barriers that arise in the complex interplay between the person, their environments and the activities in which they engage. The occupational therapy process is client centered and focused on facilitating action and doing.

About the UMN Program

The Occupational Therapy Doctorate is a 3-year clinical degree. After completion of didactics, students engage in 24 weeks of occupational therapy practice in supervised settings before moving on to the culminating portion of the curriculum, the Doctoral Capstone Experience and Project. Capstone is a student driven experience designed to provide opportunities to advance skills in inter-professional communication, leadership and evidence-based program planning.

Q: How is a capstone different than an internship or a fieldwork?

The focus of internships and fieldwork is to provide students heavily supervised and structured practice in order to achieve entry level competence engaging in the full OT process with individuals and groups. In contrast, the focus of capstone extends and refines knowledge and skills acquired in the curriculum to develop advanced skills (those beyond a generalist level) in an in-depth, customized experience specific to the needs of both the capstone site and the learning objectives of the student.

Q: What is the benefit to a site that does not have OT to taking a capstone student?

- OT capstone students bring a different perspective to organizations with the goal of supporting the mission and activities of an organization
- Capstone students will do a needs assessment with you prior to starting their capstone in order to collaborate with you and your team to determine a project that is beneficial to both your site and the student’s learning goals.
- Capstone students spend 14 full time weeks with you working on their experience and project and leave you with their end product (e.g., a new program, protocol, data, etc.)
- Capstone students can help move initiatives and ideas your team may have that you just don’t have time to accomplish.
- Capstone students carry out their projects under the advisement of a UMN OT faculty member so that the final product is robust and useful to your site.
- Capstone students do not require the same amount of effort or energy from your staff as interns. Though we do require an onsite mentor, Capstone is a more self-directed experience that puts the responsibility on the student rather than the mentor to develop advanced skills in their area of interest.

Q: So what is the role of the onsite mentor?

The onsite mentor is a person (or two) who possesses the knowledge and experience about the clients, the organization and its internal processes such that they can be a resource for the student as they engage with your organization. An onsite mentor should be in a position in the organization that they can connect the student to stakeholders, provide knowledge about resources, and help shape the student's capstone project (in collaboration with the student's faculty mentor). The onsite mentor is the go-to person for the student when questions arise related to the activities of the organization. Onsite mentors will participate in the student's defense of their capstone proposal, complete an evaluation of the student's participation onsite at the end of the experience, and will also participate in the student's final defense of their project at the end of the 14 weeks.

Q: What does the student do all day when they are on site?

Students are expected to spend at least 80% of the 14 full time weeks onsite. This means they will join work groups and participate in the existing day to day activities of the site as directed by their mentor. They will also engage in additional learning and continuing education opportunities that align with their objectives for the experience; carry out their project; analyze the data and present it to the organization. The onsite mentor is NOT responsible for tracking a capstone student's every minute onsite. Students are expected to collaborate with their mentor to identify appropriate opportunities and experiences onsite, but ultimately it is the student's responsibility to ensure they are using their time appropriately.

Q: Is there any cost to taking a capstone student?

No. Capstone students come to you with liability insurance provided by the University of Minnesota.

Q: What is the timeline of activities associated with taking a capstone student?

Preparation for capstone is spread out over the course of the year preceding the start of the experience.

- Spring 2021: Find a site and a potential mentor
- Summer (May) or early Fall (Sept.) Conduct a needs assessment of the site
- Fall (Nov.) or Spring 22: Collaborate with the onsite mentor to propose a project and plan for the experience
- Summer (May) 2022: Start the 14 week capstone

Q: Who do we contact if we want more information about taking an OTD capstone student from the University of Minnesota?

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