Occupational Therapy

About this area of study

An occupational therapist (OT) helps people of all ages who have physical, mental health or social problems to adapt to any aspect of their life with more independence, confidence and control. Problems may result from birth, an accident, an operation, illness, negative behaviour patterns or ageing.

Considering the patient's own views carefully, OTs assess their abilities to perform activities and design treatment programmes to increase their capability to tackle difficulties. Treatment programmes vary greatly according to individual needs and often involve environmental modifications. OTs then evaluate progress and suggest any necessary changes to the treatment programme.

It is a small occupation with good employment prospects. Employment opportunities are influenced mainly by the level of government funding and government policy on the care of people with disabilities. For example, recent trends towards integrating people with disabilities into the community rather than placing them in institutions, has increased demand for occupational therapists.

Personal requirements:

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

Training and registration

Entry into the Occupational Therapy field requires a degree course in Occupational Therapy. Currently there is no registration board in Victoria for Occupational Therapists but if planning on working in Queensland, Northern Territory, South Australia or Western Australia, you first need to register with the governing body.

Courses offered by Deakin University include

- Bachelor of Occupational Therapy

Labour market information

Grads online has information regarding graduate salaries and where graduates go after completing their course www.gradsonline.com.au

Job Outlook has information about the labour market outlook http://joboutlook.gov.au

Related occupations

Speech and Language Therapist

Speech and language therapists (SLTs) work closely with infants, children and adults who have various levels of speech, communication or swallowing difficulties. A speech and language therapist usually works as part of a multidisciplinary team.

Physiotherapist

Physiotherapists treat a range of physical problems resulting from illness, injury, disability or ageing. They devise and review treatment programmes, comprising manual therapy, movement, exercise and the application of technological equipment, e.g. ultrasound.

Social Worker

Social workers often work with people experiencing crisis or people who are socially excluded. Their aim is to provide support to enable service users to help themselves.

An industry career profile, salary and other employment information can be obtained from the My Future website www.myfuture.edu.au

Descriptions of occupations can be found at The Job Guide www.jobguide.thegoodguides.com.au

Employers

Worksafe www.worksafe.vic.gov.au

Private Hospitals www.health.vic.gov.au/privatehospitals

Victorian Education Department www.education.vic.gov.au

Department of Human Services www.dhs.vic.gov.au

CRS Australia www.crsaustralia.gov.au

Ors Group www.orsgroup.com.au

Rehab Management www.rehabmanagement.com.au

Crosslinks www.xlinks.com.au

Vision Australia www.visionaustralia.org.au

For specific employment opportunities

Deakin University Jobshop www.deakin.edu.au/jobshop

Health and community jobs www.hacjobs.com.au

Victorian Government Health Jobs www.health.vic.gov.au/jobs

Graduate Opportunities www.graduateopportunities.com

CareerJet www.careerjet.com.au

Seek www.seek.com.au

My Career www.mycareer.com.au

Professional associations

Australian Association of Occupational Therapists www.ausot.com.au

Council of Occupational Therapy Registration Board (COTRB) www.cotrb.com.au