General Fieldwork Information

What is “Fieldwork?”
The term fieldwork refers to required clinical experiences that students must complete in order to graduate from the MOT program. UTMB requires successful completion of 4 separate clinical, or fieldwork, courses, 2 of which are “Level I Fieldwork” courses and 2 are “Level II Fieldwork” courses.

What is Level I Fieldwork?
Level I fieldwork experiences are imbedded in the academic curriculum. One clinical rotation of a full week of 40 hours is required in each of the Integrated Fieldwork courses – OT 6111 and OT 6112. Students complete these courses in the fall and spring of their second year in the MOT program. During each rotation, students go to one occupational therapy site to experience and practice various aspects of the OT process. They also participate in seminar discussions of their experiences.

What is Level II Fieldwork?
Level II fieldwork is similar to a full-time internship. After students successfully complete the academic portion of the MOT curriculum, they must complete two 3-month fieldwork rotations, or clinical courses. During each of these 2 clinical courses, students work full-time at an occupational therapy site for 12 weeks. By the end of each clinical rotation, students must demonstrate entry-level competency in that area of occupational therapy practice. Students must successfully pass each rotation in order to graduate.

What types of clinical experience must students acquire in fieldwork courses?
Clinical experiences are organized into 3 types of rotations: pediatric (or developmental) health, mental health, and physical health. We strive to give students variety in the types of clinical experiences that they receive in our program. Across the 4 fieldwork rotations, students will typically complete at least one physical health, one mental health, and one pediatric health rotation. If a student is interested in a specific type of experience, such as hand therapy, community-based mental health, or return-to-work rehab program, we may be able to arrange a fieldwork rotation in such a site.

For Level II fieldwork, students must complete one rotation in physical health and the other in either pediatric or mental health. This is a requirement of ACOTE, the regulatory body for occupational therapy education in the U.S.

Am I able to select my Level I fieldwork sites?
Generally, Level I fieldwork sites are selected by the Academic Fieldwork Coordinator. However, she may be able to consider students’ individual situations while making fieldwork assignments. For example, if a student lives in west Houston, that student may be placed at a site close to his or her home. Or, if a student wishes to experience a specific type of OT facility, such as a hand therapy clinic, the coordinator may be able to arrange this. Typically, the fieldwork coordinator will survey the students about their living situations and special requests prior to making Level I reservations and assignments.

Am I able to select my Level II fieldwork sites?
Students submit their top 3 preferences for each Level II rotation. They rank these choices, which are then entered into the database of fieldwork reservations for matching. The students are required to meet with the academic fieldwork coordinator to discuss/review their choices to ensure the best match. When more than one student choosing the same placement, the following process will be used to select the most suitable student—1) the student with the best match, 2) faculty and/or advisor’s input, 3) interview with the clinical supervisor(s), 4) Drawing. We strive to match each student to his/her choices but we cannot guarantee that students will get their selected sites. If a
student does not receive any of their chosen sites, the student will work with the fieldwork coordinator to choose a site from what is left open after the selection process.

**What types of facilities are available for Level I and Level II Fieldwork?**

We have contracts with more than 100 occupational therapy facilities across Texas, and surrounding states, and we are getting more contracts all the time. These sites are typically labeled as offering either pediatric (developmental) health, physical health, or mental health rotations. We offer rotations in a wide variety of occupational therapy programs, such as:

- Hospitals
- Outpatient clinics
- Skilled Nursing Programs
- Private Practices
- Residential Programs
- Schools
- Early Childhood Intervention Programs
- Home health services
- Other

**Where, geographically, can students complete Level I fieldwork?**

We encourage students to go home or outside Clear Lake, Galveston areas for their Level I fieldwork to receive wide range of clinical settings.

**Where, geographically, can students complete Level II fieldwork?**

The vast majority of Level II rotations are completed in Texas. A list of sites with which the UTMB Department of Occupational Therapy currently holds fieldwork agreements will be provided to the students for selection. Students may be able to complete Level II fieldwork rotations at other sites, if the site meets our requirements for fieldwork education and if we are able to establish a contract with that site. Because this process generally takes few months to a year, students who have a sincere interest in completing Level II fieldwork at a new site must initiate this process early. The Academic Fieldwork Coordinator is the contact person for this process.

**Can I complete Level II Fieldwork in another state?**

It may be possible to complete a Level II rotation in another state if we are able to establish an agreement with a site in a timely manner. Again, students who have a sincere interest in completing Level II fieldwork at a new out-of-state site must initiate this process early because it may take well over a year to successfully establish a fieldwork agreement. The Academic Fieldwork Coordinator is the contact person for this process.

**Where can I learn more about the sites in which I might complete fieldwork?**

We have fieldwork information notebooks for most of our active fieldwork sites in the main OT office on the 3rd floor. These notebooks contain the “Fieldwork Data Form” on which information such as type of rotation, types of patients or clients seen (e.g. diagnoses, age ranges), types of evaluations and interventions learned in the setting, dress code, etc is recorded. The notebooks also house feedback from students who previously completed their fieldwork rotations at these sites. Students are free to read these notebooks in the OT office. The notebooks may not be checked out or removed from the OT office.

**What if I want to complete my Level II fieldwork in another country?**

We do not offer Level II clinical rotations outside of the United States.
How many hours are Level II rotations?

Each rotation is 9 credit hours, which means that our MOT students are full-time students who are eligible for financial aid. The rotations are 12 weeks long. Students are required to hold the working hours that their supervisor requires (often 8 – 5 or 7 – 4). Students may need to work evening or weekend hours.

Where do I live during Level II rotations?
Some students may have to complete their Level II rotations in locations other than the town in which they live. Students are responsible for obtaining and paying for housing during these rotations.

Do I have to complete both Level II rotations in the same site?
No. In fact, students are not allowed to complete both rotations in 1 site. They must complete each rotation in a unique facility.

Can I complete my Level II rotation in a facility in which I previously volunteered or worked?
No. This situation presents a conflict of interest. Further, we want students to experience a wide breadth of OT practice. Therefore, we do not allow students to complete fieldwork in such a site, even if they worked in a different department of the facility.

Can I complete my Level II rotation in a facility in which a family member or close friend works?
No. This situation presents a conflict of interest. Therefore, we do not allow students to complete fieldwork in such a site.

Will I have to buy new clothes for Level II Fieldwork?
Many students will need to obtain a short white lab coat or scrubs that meet UTMB-OT dress code for at least 1 rotation. The lab coat or scrubs may be required for practice after graduation as well. Some facilities may have specific dress codes for which students will need to purchase new clothes. This may include, for example, purchasing scrubs or certain professional attire such as khaki slacks and facility T-shirts. Some sites have specific requirements related to covering large tattoos, limited body piercing display, and so on. Students are responsible for knowing the dress codes and being prepared to adhere to them prior to the start of any Level I or II rotation.

What if I want to plan an event, such as my wedding or a family vacation, during Level II fieldwork?
According to ACOTE standards, students must complete 12 weeks, or 480 hours, of clinical time. In addition to work, students will need to study most evenings after work; therefore, personal time may be quite limited during this exciting learning time. Students are NOT entitled to any time off during their fieldwork rotations. Students must avoid planning events such as weddings or long vacations during Level II fieldwork.

Will I be able to hold a part-time job during Level II fieldwork? How do I pay for living during fieldwork?
We strongly discourage students from planning to work outside of their Level II rotation. As described above, students are in the OT setting for at least 40 hours per week, plus they must study and complete paperwork after hours. Historically, students who have attempted to work during these clinical courses have experienced a great deal of difficulty. Students are strongly encouraged to plan ahead to be able to live, work, and focus solely on Level II fieldwork without needing to work part-time or be overly concerned about finances.
What if something happens and I can't go on my fieldwork rotation?

While we aim to have all students complete their fieldwork rotations on schedule, sometimes we must reschedule fieldwork rotations. This may occur for a wide variety of reasons, some of which are due to changes at the facility and some of which are due to personal situations of students. The Academic Fieldwork Coordinator will work with students to reschedule their rotations at other sites and/or times, as the situation requires. We cannot guarantee that all students will be able to complete fieldwork in time to graduate with their class. In rare situations students will need to wait to begin or finish fieldwork, which may prevent graduation as scheduled.