The Master of Occupational Therapy (MOT) program is the entry to practice program for the profession of occupational therapy. As participants in an intense, demanding, and highly participatory program, student occupational therapists are expected to demonstrate high levels of academic and professional integrity akin to practicing occupational therapists. Such integrity is demonstrated in part by a commitment to and attendance at all academic classes and fieldwork. It is important that student occupational therapists understand and value the efforts of all who contribute to their learning (e.g., instructors, fieldwork educators, administrators, peers, and staff).

Regular attendance and punctuality are professional commitments and essential to success in becoming an occupational therapist. Absenteeism and tardiness have a negative impact on the breadth and depth of student occupational therapists’ professional learning as well as on the relationships established with others in the program.

For all academic courses, if you are absent for extenuating medical or compassionate circumstances, a registered disability with Student Accessibility Services, religious observance, or university committee representation, your absences will be excused. You are, however, responsible for contacting your instructor as soon as possible to notify her/him of your absence. In addition, you are fully accountable for all the learning experiences and content you missed and for completing the learning accommodations that your instructor assigns (e.g., additional reading or make-up assignments). If you are absent for any other reason (e.g., work, vacation, job interview, etc.), this will not be an excused absence and your instructors are not under any obligation to accommodate your learning. Note that excused or unexcused absences cannot exceed 15% of class time in any course (e.g., 6 contact hours of a 45-hour course; 9 contact hours of a 60-hour course; 13 contact hours of a 90-hour course). Please see p. 2 of this document for fieldwork requirements.

Attendance rosters that allow for student input are used to record attendance in classes and students are requested to initial the roster on their own behalf in each class. Class rosters provide a documentation of student attendance and provide data that can be referred to should an attendance issue arise. If necessary, course coordinators may initiate alternative methods of documenting attendance should the need arise (e.g., a student who is in attendance refuses to or forgets to sign the roster).
Be sure that you fully understand the attendance requirements and processes for all courses, including academic and fieldwork.

Attend class regularly and contribute to a respectful and supportive learning environment: Regular attendance and respectful contributions to your class learning community are expected. In practice, this means arriving on time to each class, signing the attendance roster, staying in class for the full duration of the class, and actively participating in all learning experiences. It also means restricting your use of digital devices (e.g., cellular phones, laptops) during classes to learning activities that are a part of the course as facilitated by your instructor.

Professional protocol: Regardless of the nature of your absence, you are expected to follow professional protocol when you need to miss any time from an academic or fieldwork course. This protocol aligns with the expectations of occupational therapists when reporting absences from work.

If you miss a class in an academic course: Advise your course coordinator, instructor(s) and program advisor as early as possible that you will be absent and provide the reason for your absence. Instructors will not penalize you for excused absences, but you are responsible for any parts of the course you miss and you may be assigned make-up work. Note: Some courses will require that you forward your work to your group so that it can be used in your absence (e.g., OT 7560 & OT 7760).

If you miss more than 10% and less than 15% of contact hours in an academic course: Inform your course coordinator, instructor(s), program advisor and the Department Head. You may be required to provide documentation to verify your medical or compassionate circumstance. You will need to communicate with your instructor(s) to arrange learning accommodations for you. Upon returning to the program, you must speak directly to each instructor about make-up work.

If you miss 15% or more contact hours in an academic course: Contact your course coordinator, instructor(s), program advisor and the Department Head for direction, decision, and program planning moving forward. You will be required to meet with the Department Head. Missing 15% or more of course time, excused or unexcused, is considered excessive and normally beyond instructors’ abilities to accommodate in ways that maintain the academic integrity of the course. This level of absenteeism may require a student occupational therapist to withdraw from a course(s), the program for the term, or may constitute grounds for debarment from the program.

If you arrive late or leave early, missed time can accumulate into hours absent.

The Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists mandates the number of hours that student occupational therapists are required to fulfill for their fieldwork. Attendance for the total number of hours is required, and therefore, any absences during fieldwork, excused or unexcused, are recorded on Summative Evaluations. Make up time is at the discretion of the fieldwork site and occurs in consultation with the Academic Fieldwork Coordinator, fieldwork educator, program advisor and/or Department Head. You may not miss academic classes to attend fieldwork.
MOT Student Attendance

If you are going to miss part or all of a fieldwork day as an excused or unexcused absence:
All absences of any duration (whether a few hours, half or full day) must be reported to the Academic Fieldwork Coordinator immediately. Failure to do so may result in debarment from the fieldwork course. Any planned excused absences should be discussed a minimum of 3 weeks prior to the start of the fieldwork placement, so a plan can be developed to make up fieldwork time if required.

Advise your Fieldwork Educator, Academic Fieldwork Coordinator and program advisor as soon as you can, but no later than 8:00 a.m. on any day that you will be absent, and provide the reason for your absence.

Additionally, you must follow any other aspects of your fieldwork placement’s protocol for reporting absences. Missed fieldwork hours beyond those outlined in Fieldwork Policy #8 may need to be made up in consultation with your fieldwork educator, Academic Fieldwork Coordinator, program advisor and/or Department Head. See the current MOT Fieldwork Policy for additional information related to absences from fieldwork and requirements for punctuality.

If you are absent more than five fieldwork days over all fieldwork placements, all subsequent time missed from fieldwork will be required to be made up to ensure that you meet the minimum requirement of 1,000 hours and may result in delayed graduation.

Course Coordinator/Instructor’s Responsibilities

Providing learning accommodations: Student occupational therapists are not to be penalized for missing a class because of extenuating medical or compassionate circumstances, a registered disability with SAS, religious observance, or university committee representation. Use your discretion to provide reasonable learning accommodations which will allow the student occupational therapist to satisfy missed coursework, even if it is not exactly the same as the work completed in class by other students. Instructors should check that make-up work is completed satisfactorily and returned, but are not obliged to mark it.

Documenting and consulting: Bring the attendance rosters to class and monitor student occupational therapists’ attendance in your course. If you become aware that a student occupational therapist has missed more than 10% and less than 15% of contact hours in your course, contact the student occupational therapist by email, and copy the program advisor and Department Head, expressing your concern. When you become aware that a student occupational therapist has missed more than 15% of the contact hours in your course, contact the student occupational therapist by email, and copy the program advisor and Department Head, expressing your concern and directing the student to contact the Department Head to set up a meeting. In the case of excessive absences from fieldwork, the Academic Fieldwork Coordinator will consult with the Department Head.
MOT Student Attendance

Monitoring and Consulting: If you become aware that one of your MOT Program student advisees has missed more than 10% and less than 15% of contact hours across 2 or more courses, contact the student occupational therapist by email, and copy the Department Head, expressing your concern. When you become aware that a student occupational therapist has missed more than 15% of contact hours across 2 or more courses, contact the student occupational therapist by email, and copy the Department Head, expressing your concern and directing the student to contact the Department Head to set up a meeting.

FAQs

What if I have a really good reason for being absent?

All reasons are good reasons. However, excused absences are for medical or compassionate circumstances, a registered disability with SAS, religious observance, or university committee representation. All other reasons will be considered unexcused absences.

What if I feel I have to be absent and it is not excusable? If at some point during your program you feel you must be absent because of bad weather, for example or you choose to be absent because you want to work or attend a family wedding, you must take responsibility for that absence.

The procedure to follow is this:
- before the absence or immediately after, contact your instructor(s) and program advisor by phone or e-mail;
- if you accumulated 4 to 6 contact hours of missed academic classes over the term (less than 15%), contact your course coordinator, instructor(s), program advisor, and Department Head;
- if you accumulated 15% or more of missed time in any academic course, you will be required to meet with the Department Head and may be asked to withdraw from the program;
- if your absence includes fieldwork, contact your Fieldwork Educator, Academic Fieldwork Coordinator, and program advisor; and
- if you accumulate missed days beyond what is outlined in the current MOT Fieldwork Policies, this may result in failure to complete the fieldwork course and/or delayed graduation.

Instructors, administrators, program advisors, and fieldwork educators are usually understanding and flexible. Nevertheless, none of them is under any obligation to plan learning accommodations for you, and you must be prepared for the fact that almost any absence (other than for excusable reasons) may be perceived as a lack of commitment on your part.

What if the weather is bad and I live outside the city? Should the weather suddenly turn bad, highways close, and travel is not recommended, your safety comes first. Your absence will be excused and accommodated on compassionate grounds. Missed fieldwork days for snow closure also have to be made up. Additional information is available in the current MOT Fieldwork Policies.
What if I have to go to a medical appointment? When scheduling any personal appointments, including routine medical, dental, or eye care, student occupational therapists are expected to make arrangements that do not conflict with scheduled classes or fieldwork hours. Excused absences for non-routine appointments for yourself or your children can be negotiated and accommodated.

What if I am arriving late for the start of classes in August, January, March or after a long weekend? You will be informed well in advance of the start date for your academic year and your weekly schedule of program days, classes, and fieldwork. Plan to be on time for the start of academic terms, as well as on days before and after long weekends and holidays. If you must miss, follow the procedures outlined above: get in touch with your instructors.

What if my family surprised me with a vacation or I have a destination wedding? Your commitment to your program must outweigh an opportunity for vacation or any other form of elective travel. Make sure your family and friends know your schedule well ahead of time and do not plan travel without your input. Plan your vacations during your scheduled holiday time, as do practicing occupational therapists.

What if my fieldwork site or a community resource for a group project asks me to meet during class hours? It can sometimes be difficult to find a time to meet with others when you have full days with classes. There are breaks built into most weeks to allow for times to meet for these purposes.

What if I have an interview for a job? Job interviews, including those for occupational therapy positions, are not an excused absence. You cannot miss classes or fieldwork hours for job interviews.

What if I don’t have child care? It is expected that you will arrange ongoing, dependable child care providers so that you can attend your classes as scheduled. In exceptional circumstances, we recognize that you may be unable to attend a class because of an unavoidable family responsibility, and if so, it will be excused and accommodated on compassionate grounds.

In the end, the decision about whether or not to miss classes on any occasion is yours. You remain responsible for all the work and class activities you miss. You must weigh the importance of your reason for being absent against the potential for negative fall-out for you.