

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY– CAREER SNAPSHOT

Occupational Therapists assist people to overcome challenges caused by injury or illness, psycho-emotional difficulties, developmental delay, aging, environmental and contextual issues. Occupational therapists work with people across the lifespan and aim to promote health and wellbeing, prevent injury and build or restore independence through participation in meaningful occupation.

The World Federation of Occupational Therapists state “*in occupational therapy, occupations refer to the everyday activities that people do as individuals, in families and with communities to occupy time and bring meaning and purpose to life. Occupations include things people need to, want to and are expected to do.*”

Occupational Therapy is a client-centred and holistic health profession. Working as an occupational therapist offers enormous satisfaction as you help to promote participation in meaningful occupation and, subsequently, health and wellbeing for people throughout their life. Over the past 5 years the number of OT jobs has grown strongly and strong growth is expected in the future.*

Employment Settings

Occupational Therapy graduates are employed in the following types of settings:

- Public and private hospitals
- Acute and community rehabilitation units
- Hand therapy services
- Community health centres
- Aged care facilities
- Acute and community mental health services
- Palliative care
- Schools and other education settings
- Independent living centres

- Private practice/general practices
- Research and evaluation



BOOST YOUR PROSPECTS



Explore your options, clarify your career goals



Build your networks



Gain course relevant experience



Fine tune your job application skills



Show initiative, engage in extra-curricular activities and stand out

Source: [Career Planning for Success](#)

JCU Course Highlights

The Occupational Therapy program at JCU combines the study of health science, health promotion and occupational therapy professional practice. *There is a special focus on occupational therapy in rural and remote settings.* Students gain experience working with clients in a range of rural and urban locations, totalling at least 1,000 hours of placements.

Registration

All Occupational Therapists working in Australia are required to be registered to practice. This registration process is the legislative responsibility of the Australian Health Practitioners Regulation Agency (AHPRA) and is operated through the Occupational Therapy Board of Australia (OTBA).

The AHPRA website contains a directory of all registered occupational therapists in Australia. The JCU Occupational Therapy course is accredited by the Occupational Therapy Council (Australia and New Zealand) Ltd.

Fast Facts



\$1,247

Weekly Pay ?



17,500 workers

Employment Size ?



Strong

Future Growth ?



Very high skill

Skill level rating ?



Lower unemployment

Unemployment ?

Source: [Job Outlook, May 2019](#)

Professional Associations

Professional Associations and peak bodies represent different professions and industries and assist with maintaining a professionalism through accreditation, professional development opportunities, networking, advocacy and representation to government and other sectors.

Join [Occupational Therapy Australia](#) for access to newsletters, advertised jobs, conferences and networking events, etc. Undergraduate students join for free*.

Volunteering

Volunteering can give you more exposure to areas of professional interest, such as working with children, refugees, return to work services, defence personnel, educational settings, etc.

It's also an opportunity to give to the community, grow your professional and community networks and demonstrate extra commitment to future employers and clients.

Hospital systems

- [Townsville Hospital Foundation](#)
- [Mater Health Services](#)

Community

- [Volunteering North Queensland](#)
- [Townsville Community Directory](#)

Overseas volunteering

Projects can be found by googling "allied health volunteering overseas". Many of these will be via companies that will organise your experience for a fee. Be aware that ethical issues surround some (but not all) so-called voluntourism projects.

To choose wisely, consider:

- What will be the outcome of my volunteering adventure?
- Am I doing it for the right reasons?
- What skills can I offer developing countries to empower their next generation to be self-sufficient?

If not, your participation might be exploitative. More info can be found in [this post](#) by Save the Children.

For more ideas, see our [volunteering page](#).

Employability

Your course provides a safe environment to develop your **clinical knowledge and skills** specific to being an OT.

It also teaches you the **transferrable skills** required to be effective, such as working in multidisciplinary teams; high level communication skills like teaching/demonstrating, coaching and building rapport; accurate report writing; time management; and developing good working relationships with patients' families, amongst other things.

A combination of technical and transferable [skills demonstrated through part time jobs](#) and **extra-curricular experiences** and workplace-related experiences within your course make you more employable in the eyes of employers.

Track your experience

As an OT, you'll need to track and reflect on your professional development for registration purposes, so it's a good habit to get into right now and it will help you write better job applications. Health services will often list values on their websites. They can be a useful guide for categorising experience to prove your suitability to their roles. For example, Townsville Hospitals' values* are: integrity; compassion; accountability; respect; and engagement. You might tag State Emergency Service volunteering with these values where you can demonstrate you've applied them in dealing with the public during disaster relief.

Enterprise and innovation

Health care is the fastest growing industry in Australia and innovation can improve service delivery as well as develop new assistive technologies for patients. To read more about future trends in healthcare, see [The Medical Futurist](#) and [Careers with Health](#) online magazine.

JCU offers a range of free online courses on entrepreneurship, for example: [Developing an Enterprising Mindset](#) or [Lynda.com](#): e.g. Guy Kawasaki on Entrepreneurship; Small Business Secrets; Entrepreneurship Foundations; Become an Entrepreneur inside a Company etc.

[Student challenges and competitions](#) are a good way to develop your innovation skills while working in a multidisciplinary team.

Identifying Opportunities

A range of websites list job opportunities for OTs:

- [Queensland Health](#)
- [Queensland Govt Grad Portal](#)
- [Hays Healthcare](#)

- [Medijobs](#)
- [Medical Jobs Australia](#)
- [Medacs Health Care](#)
- [Health Care People](#)
- [Your World Healthcare](#)
- [Seek](#)
- [Glassdoor](#)

For part-time, course relevant and graduate job listings go to JCU's online job board [CareerHub](#).

Job opportunities are often posted on employer websites, for example

- [Kinnect](#),
- [Allied Connect](#),
- [North and West Regional Health](#),

along with their LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter feeds.

Use your Networks

Keeping in touch with placement supervisors and staff will ensure you're informed of job openings when they occur, or sometimes before they are advertised.

Use LinkedIn

Investigate [JCU Alumni LinkedIn](#) profiles to identify career pathways and current and past employers of JCU OT graduates.

Follow hashtags to have content relevant to OT in your newsfeed, eg assistive technology, home modifications, independent living.

Follow established OTs in Townsville or other places you would like to work. This is a great way to benefit from their posts without being connected. This is a great option if you haven't met in real life, or if you aren't yet confident enough to send a connection request.

Follow employers of choice and **industry bodies** to ensure you don't miss their updates and job listings, e.g. Queensland Health, Autism Queensland, Queensland Department of Education and Training, AHPRA, OT Australia.

*Correct at time of publishing