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Supporting and Informing OT Students with Disabilities in Fieldwork: A Communication Policy

Authors	Raina Hoffman
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**Supporting and Informing OT Students with Disabilities in Fieldwork: A Communication
Policy**

by

Raina Hoffman

A Capstone Project Presented to the
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Requirements for the Degree
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Raina Hoffman

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Abstract

Background: Formal discussion with academic fieldwork coordinators and the literature indicates that accommodating students with disabilities in clinical rotations is often difficult due to poor communication and its complicated nature (Ozelie, et al. 2022; Dhillon et al. 2023; Hughes, et al. 2020; Komblau, 1995). Without a policy in place, students with disabilities face more barriers in their clinical rotations than their nondisabled peers (Ozelie, et al. 2022; Dhillon et al. 2023). The development of a fieldwork accommodations policy for Georgia State University's (GSU) OT graduate doctorate program was proposed to address the gap.

Objective: The purpose of this capstone project is to create a communication policy to be added to the GSU Clinical Fieldwork Student Handbook on fieldwork accommodations for students with disabilities.

ACOTE Area: Advocacy (Primary) & Policy Development (Secondary)

Protocol: A SWOT analysis was conducted on GSU's OT program to examine the resources that are available for use. Seven weeks dedicated to developing the policy, evaluation instrument, and education materials. The fieldwork accommodations policy's readability was tested via a survey with 7 Likert scale questions and 3 short answer questions. Fourteen participants were recruited from the GSU OT program to take part in the survey and were all current GSU OTD students. Statistical analysis was run on the survey by finding the mean and standard deviation of the Likert scale questions and categorizing the short answer questions.

Results: The readability survey found that the lowest score was given on the word choice with a mean of 3.71 and SD of 1.138. The highest scores were given to information being correct, confidence in understanding the material, and recommending use of the chapter to guide students with a mean of 4.14. The most common answers to the short answer portion were to change the format/ organization (6) and reduce the number of words (3). Revisions to the fieldwork accommodations policy were made by following the suggestions from the readability survey.

Conclusion: This policy will help students with disabilities at GSU's OT program make more informed choices on accommodation in fieldwork and support students in making their decision. The policy, evaluation instruments, and education materials benefit GSU's OT program by providing consistent evaluation tools and readily available resources. The policy will increase GSU's OT program's value by supporting a population that brings a valuable view to occupational therapy and providing a clearer process for students.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

People with disabilities make up 13.4% of the United States population and are the largest minority in the US workforce (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024; Swenor, 2021; Teborg, et al. 2024). While employment for individuals with disabilities increased, individuals with disabilities are still three times less likely to be employed versus their nondisabled peers (Miller, 2024). Healthcare is an option for people with disabilities to be employed, but healthcare professions typically have a clinical component that presents different challenges in comparison to the classroom (Ozelie, et al. 2022). Occupational therapy is a profession that requires clinical placements and is a complex that does not have enough research (AOTA, 2024; Ozelie, et al. 2022). The purpose of this Doctoral Capstone Experience is to create a communication policy to be added to the Georgia State University Clinical Fieldwork Student Handbook on fieldwork accommodations for students with disabilities.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The Largest Minority

An individual with a disability is defined as an individual with a physical and/or mental impairment that limits one or more major life activities, has a record of the impairment(s), and is recognized as having the impairments(s) by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (Ozelie, et al. 2022; LaPlante, 1991). Although a recent nationwide survey estimates 13.4% (~44 million) of the US population is living with a disability and half of the people with disabilities are within the working age of 16 to 64 years, yet they are the largest minority group in the workforce (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024; United States Department of Labor; Swenor, 2021; Teborg, et al. 2024). Therefore, there exists a significant gap of understanding as to why the unemployment rate is so high within the disability population (Swenor, 2021; Teborg, et al. 2024). One of the possible reasons would be whether there are barriers for the disabled population to become employment-ready in terms of education, training, and skills. Along with this argument, the next step would be to explore the accessibility barriers for this population to have the education, training and skill. To address the issue, a comprehensive literature review is urgently needed to explore the accessibility to education and/or employment. Below is a brief review of the relevant literature.

Disability, Employment, and Barriers

Employment among individuals with disabilities increased during the COVID-19 pandemic 22.5% as reported by the US bureau of labor statistics (Miller, 2024). The employment rate for nondisabled workers is 65.8% meaning that individuals without disabilities are three times more likely to be employed than their peers with disabilities (Miller, 2024). Furthermore, workers with

disabilities have a higher employment rate in non-trade professionals at 74.9% to the 25.1% in trade professionals (Employment of People With Disabilities in Skilled Trade Professions, 2023). Broken down further, the two highest groups of employment for working people with disabilities are Management, professional, and related occupations at 37.4% and Professional and related occupations at 21% (United States Department of Labor 2024). The significant difference in employment between disabled and nondisabled is due to barriers in environmental, barriers to participation, and personal factors (Morwane, et al. 2021). These barriers often have to do with access to education, vocational training, workplaces, and opportunity which leads to disadvantages socially and economically (Morwane, et al. 2021). Another barrier is getting workplace accommodations such as flexible schedules, work modifications, accessibility to the building, and many others (Morwane, et al. 2021; Sundar, 2017). Americans with disabilities reported the biggest barriers faced when working was getting less pay, negative attitudes from supervisors, and negative attitudes from coworkers (Sundar, 2017). Despite the persistent barriers, people with disabilities actively prepare for job searches and negotiate accommodations when working, overcoming the numerous barriers unique to people with disabilities (Sundar, 2017).

Access to Healthcare Education

The barriers to employment for individuals with disabilities have been highly studied but less attention has been given in healthcare professions (Edelist, et al. 2024). The lack of research could be due to biases and stigma against students with disabilities and could also be that only 4.3% of people with disabilities are employed as healthcare professionals (United States Department of Labor, 2024). Healthcare professions have a clinical component that creates different challenges from classroom education when accommodating and supporting individuals

with disabilities (Ozelie, et al. 2022). While the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act prohibits discrimination of individuals with disabilities and requires reasonable accommodations be provided, there remains a gap when accommodating students in clinicals (Ozelie, et al. 2022). Furthermore, people with disabilities provide a unique experience and empathy with their patients that people without disabilities do not have (Swenor, 2021). People with disabilities have a diverse view that is needed to improve healthcare professions which includes positions as clinicians, researchers, educators, and other roles (Swenor, 2021). Even so individuals with disabilities express feelings of being viewed in an ableist way by teachers, coworkers and professionals and this is done by diminishing difficulties and doubting their abilities to perform at the same level as their peers (Feldner, et al. 2022; Bevan 2014). Students and clinicians with disabilities recommend a partnership with peers so that the healthcare environment can be more open to diverse voices and promote collaboration and mutual respect between peers (Feldner, et al. 2022; Bevan 2014). The struggle to accommodate students with disabilities and shift from an ableist view is becoming more necessary considering that there has been a consistent increase of students reporting that they have a disability in higher education (Sonn, et al. 2024; Phillion, et al. 2021).

Accommodating Students with Disabilities in Clinicals

Clinicals are a complex component in healthcare education that allows students to gain hands-on experience preparing them for future employment (Ozelie, et al. 2022). Students with disabilities face difficulties in the process of getting accommodations due to its complicated nature. One reason that clinicals are difficult to accommodate is that there is high variation in settings causing accommodations to be highly variable to properly fit the student with a disability

(Ozelie, et al. 2022; Dhillon et al. 2023). Another large complication is that students must choose whether to disclose their disability to receive accommodations (Ozelie et al. 2019; Hughes, et al. 2020). Students with disabilities had the most success in clinicals when there was an open communication between the student, the instructor, and the school at all times, leaving less room for clinicians and students to feel surprised or unsupported (Dhillon, et al. 2023; Hughes, et al. 2020). A high percentage of students choose to not disclose their disability status due to fear of stigma or not believing that disclosure would be beneficial, but students with disabilities that disclosed their disability and planned for accommodations before clinicals had better outcomes than students that chose not to disclose or disclosed after their clinical started (Hughes, et al. 2020; Ozelie, et al. 2019; Dhillon, et al. 2023; Komblau, 1995). Students with disabilities, clinical instructors, and clinical coordinators that had open and clear communication had more positive interactions and better opinions about each other (Dhillon, et al. 2023; Hughes, et al. 2020; Komblau, 1995).

Chapter 3: Needs Assessment

Methods:

Purpose and Research Design:

The purpose of this needs assessment is to assess if there is a gap within the process of accommodating students in occupational therapy fieldwork. This project will consist of a needs assessment, involving semi-structured expert interviews, an in depth literature review, and first-hand investigator reflection. Key informant interviews will be conducted with occupational therapy academic fieldwork coordinators to gain expert opinion on the process.

Literature Review

A literature review was conducted to review articles on disability statistics in employment for a better understanding of this population's barriers. Research was also focused on accommodating students with disabilities in higher education. It was narrowed into accommodating students in clinical settings in healthcare professions. The last topic was looking at occupational therapy students with disabilities acquiring accommodations in their fieldwork. The literature was important to understand the current barriers for students with disabilities in the clinical setting and current research being done on the topic.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews were conducted on academic fieldwork coordinators to gain their perspective on their roles and responsibilities, their view on accommodating students in fieldwork, their process when accommodating students in fieldwork, and resources or guidelines available on the topic of fieldwork accommodations.

Personal Reflection

The student investigator wrote a reflection about their personal experience when navigating the process of requesting accommodations for fieldwork. The student investigator reflected on the process, resources within the university, resources and guidelines outside the university, and barriers for successful fieldwork accommodations. This gives insight into the students who go through the process of acquiring accommodations in fieldwork.

Procedures:

Semi-Structured Interviews

Two participants were recruited by word of mouth. Both participants worked as academic fieldwork coordinators and work in education. Once informed consent was given, the participants were invited to take part in a 30-minute semi-structured interview. Participants were interviewed online via WebEx by the student investigator. Both interviews were recorded and transcribed. An interview guide was created by the student investigator. It was shaped by the student investigator's knowledge about fieldwork accommodations and literature about the topic with the aim of allowing academic fieldwork coordinators to share their perspective on fieldwork accommodations. The interview guide included a variety of open ended questions on fieldwork accommodations and recommendations which can be found in (table 1). While both participants were asked the same questions, the interviewer let the participant responses guide the conversation. Identifying information was removed from the transcripts and names were changed to pseudonyms before analysis took place. When analyzing the transcribed data, the student investigator used a thematic approach. First the student investigator read through both transcripts and then coded the data. The codes were then turned into themes and reviewed by the student investigator.

Table 1
Semi-Structured Interview Questions and Prompts for Key Informants

Academic fieldwork coordinator questions and prompts about fieldwork accommodations
Describe your role and responsibilities as an academic fieldwork coordinator.
In the time that you have worked as an academic fieldwork coordinator, how many students have requested or needed fieldwork accommodations?
What does AOTA recommend that OT schools do when accommodating students with disabilities in fieldwork?
Based on your experience what gaps/improvements could AOTA provide to more easily navigate the process?
Can you explain your current process in supporting students that require accommodations in fieldwork including communication with students before fieldwork?
In your opinion, do you think the process that you use to accommodate students with disabilities in fieldwork needs to be improved, if so what way would you change it?
In my literature review, an overarching theme is how important communication is. Can you describe how communication works in the fieldwork accommodations process?
What do you recommend that students with disabilities do in preparation for fieldwork such as disclosure of disability, requesting accommodation for fieldwork, communication with clinical instructors before being on site, etc.?
What do you recommend students do when communicating about their disability on site?

Participants:

Semi-Structured Interviews

The participants in this needs assessment included key informants, consisting of adults who are currently working as or were occupational therapy academic fieldwork coordinators in Georgia. Both participants are female and have prior experience as fieldwork educators. Interviewee 1 worked as an academic fieldwork coordinator for 3 years and worked as an academic fieldwork coordinator during the creation of a new OT program. Interviewee 2 is currently working as an academic fieldwork coordinator and has been in the position for a year and 3 months. These key

informants functioned as experts by sharing their expertise on occupational therapy fieldwork procedures.

Personal Reflection

The student investigator is a female occupational therapy student in Georgia and has a visual disability. The student investigator has also successfully requested and implemented fieldwork accommodations in three clinical rotations. The student investigator used classroom accommodations in higher education.

Results:

Through formal interviews with Georgia academic fieldwork coordinators and the researcher's personal reflection, some themes were identified.

Responsibilities

Participants described their responsibilities as academic fieldwork coordinators in three parts.

One part of the responsibility is to the program by making sure to follow the standards required by the university and by ACOTE. Another responsibility is to the students and making sure that they have a productive fieldwork experience. The last responsibility is to mediate and advise students on fieldwork and future careers. Both responsibilities are equally important and require balance when working as an academic fieldwork coordinator. One participant describes the responsibility as "My role has a number of responsibilities inside of it such as scheduling student onboarding, programmatic compliance with health requirements for clinical rotations, and monitoring student performance while on rotation." Another participant described their responsibility as, "It was a lot of contacting sites, keeping in touch with students, trying to match students with the best sites, considering where they lived, what the types of experiences they would like to have, that type of thing."

Both participants stated that they were responsible for planning clinical rotations which includes factors such as distance, money, and accommodations, and participants mentioned the difficulty of creating a process to accommodate students in fieldwork.

Students not using fieldwork accommodations

Participants both mentioned that accommodating students in fieldwork was important but that it was often difficult. Both participants mentioned that they had less students than expected use formal accommodations in fieldwork. One participant stated that it was more common for students to run into issues in the middle of fieldwork than asking for accommodations before the rotation began. When asked why students may not want to ask for fieldwork accommodations, one participant theorized that it would make them feel “other” or feared that “they (fieldwork educator) would think they could not do the job.” The other participant agreed and added, “There are some barriers in the accommodations process and education generally about accommodations that I think, you know, may have prevented or interfered with a student requesting those accommodations.” As the above participant noted that the accommodation process for fieldwork is very complicated and may have led to less students using it.

Fieldwork Accommodation Process

When asked about the participants’ process for accommodating students in fieldwork, both had similar processes. Both would start by talking to students as early as possible about the existence of fieldwork accommodations. One participant would reach out specifically to students that were using classroom accommodations. The other participant had students come to her for more information. Both participants would advise students on placement options and accommodation recommendations. The participants stated that level 2 rotations are when students are most likely to need extra support. Both participants made sure that students were aware that they had

complete control of going through the process. One participant required students to have documentation from the university to qualify for fieldwork accommodations. When asked how they felt about their current process accommodating students in fieldwork, one participant described it as, “I think even just verbalizing that you can tell it's a really convoluted process.” The participants both stressed the importance of communication throughout the accommodation process.

Importance of Open Communication and Early Communication

Communication was found to be extremely important not only with sites but also with the students. Academic fieldwork coordinators must communicate with fieldwork sites for successful placement. When asked what role communication played in accommodating students, one participant mentioned disclosure. For a student to receive fieldwork accommodations, they must disclose their disability status to the site. One participant mentioned the benefit of communicating from a fieldwork educator standpoint as “Being someone who took students on a fairly regular basis when I was in the clinics, you want to be open and honest from the beginning.” Both participants stated that fieldwork educators were more likely to react better to honesty especially when done early.

Another key part was communicating with sites early about the needs of students. One participant described their thoughts as, “Typically sites do best knowing how to support a student from the get go, rather than having to pivot the amounts of supports that they are giving midway through and that's just because all of our field works are on a timeline.” The other participant stated that “Sites do not like to be surprised” when discussing the benefits of early communication with sites. Both recommended that students disclose before starting the rotation for the best results. Still the choice to disclose is up to the student.

Limited guidelines and resources

Both participants were asked about guidelines and resources on how to accommodate students in fieldwork. Both interviewees mentioned that ACOTE standards for fieldwork did not cover a process for accommodating students. One participant said that ACOTE was “hands off” and allowed OT schools to make their own process. The other participant said that “Fieldwork accommodations are talked about nationally but no standard processes are in place” when discussing resources. Both participants mentioned that AOTA conference and other academic fieldwork coordinators discuss fieldwork accommodations often. Resources on the process of accommodating students were described as being available, but one participant stated that she bought two books to gain more insight into the topic. The other participant recalled that there were information sessions at the AOTA conference where other fieldwork coordinators would share how they accommodated students in fieldwork. Both participants agreed that fieldwork accommodations were a gap in care in occupational therapy education. One participant who has less experience working as an academic fieldwork coordinator stated, “I definitely think it's a gap. I mean, experientially stepping into this role as a new academic field or coordinator. It was very challenging for me to understand.” The other participant described resources from AOTA as, “They're out there, but you have to choose to get involved and read them and utilize them. It's not nationally there for our work. They have the standards and that's it.” Both participants expressed that it would be beneficial for more national guidelines, especially for new academic fieldwork coordinators.

Conclusion

The results from the interviews, literature review, and personal reflection noted that the process of requesting accommodations is complicated and varies greatly between OT programs.

Additionally, the results of the needs assessment found that there was a lack of resources and guidelines on the accommodation process. The lack of support and resources causes confusion for academic fieldwork coordinators navigating the accommodation process. The interviews also pointed towards students not registering for accommodations in fieldwork due to the process not being clear or easy to find. Furthermore, the results from the interviews found that GSU's OTD program would benefit from a more streamlined fieldwork accommodation process and more materials to guide students through the process.

Chapter 4: Theories and Models

Two models were chosen to guide the creation and give reason to complete this capstone project.

Human Rights Model

The Human Rights Model bases itself on the rights of all humans. It recognizes three statements. These state.

1. Disability is a natural part of human diversity that must be respected and supported in all its forms,
 2. People with disability have the same rights as everyone else in society,
 - and 3. Impairment must not be used as an excuse to deny or restrict people's rights
- (Introducing the Human Rights Model of Disability, 2019).

The Human Rights Model therefore guides the reasoning behind the necessity of creating guidelines for fieldwork accommodations by emphasizing the rights granted to people with disabilities and that not having a process to accommodate students in fieldwork would therefore restrict their freedom. This model was based on disability advocacy that later led to land breaking legislature on disability rights. Additionally, the model is based on disability law such as the ADA which requires that people with disabilities receive reasonable accommodations for work which includes being a student. While the human rights model supports the capstone project, it does not have recommendations on ways to achieve its three principles.

Social Model of Disability

The Social Model of Disability reframes disability and impairment and states,

It is society which disables physically impaired people. Disability is something imposed on top of our impairments by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society. (Berghs M, et al. 2016)

This model also was created when disability rights groups pushed to move away from the medical model. Activists wanted to focus less on curing a person and more on decreasing limitations. This model focuses more on the idea of the barriers that people with disabilities face due to the environment not being accommodating to their needs. The Social Model of Disability supports and guides this capstone project because fieldwork accommodations is a way to lessen the barriers. The model also focuses on changing the environment which is a focus of this capstone project.

Chapter 5: Methods

Project: Creating a Fieldwork Accommodation Policy

The following steps were taken during the capstone experience.

1. Conduct a SWOT analysis on the GSU OTD Program

The SWOT analysis (Appendix 4) was conducted on Georgia State University Occupational Therapy Doctorate Program. The SWOT analysis was conducted to overview the resources that GSU's OTD department could use.

2. Develop onboarding paperwork, evaluation paperwork, and edit current evaluation materials

Current onboarding and evaluation paperwork was reviewed before creation and revising of materials. Material developed included the Student Evaluation of Fieldwork Accommodations Form (Appendix 7) which has students evaluate sites on accommodation implementation and environment. Materials revised included the biweekly review (Appendix 6) and the student fieldwork education orientation PowerPoint. Changes were made to include the acquisition and implementation of fieldwork accommodations.

3. Create student education materials about fieldwork accommodations

The student education materials included the Fieldwork Accommodations PowerPoint which included a description of what fieldwork accommodations are, how to decide if you need fieldwork accommodations, how to get fieldwork accommodations, and student resources. The education materials also included the fieldwork accommodation process infographic (Appendix 8) and the recommended fieldwork accommodation timeline

(Appendix 9). The infographics covered the process of requesting and implementing accommodations in fieldwork and time recommendations for requesting fieldwork accommodations.

4. Write the fieldwork accommodations policy to be added to the clinical fieldwork student handbook

The fieldwork accommodations policy (Appendix 5) included what fieldwork accommodations are and how they differ from classroom accommodations, the roles and responsibilities, an outline of the fieldwork accommodation process, disability disclosure, a template for disability disclosure, information sessions on fieldwork advising, information on navigating requesting accommodation at Georgia State University, and recommendations.

5. Create a readability survey and distribute it to participants

A survey testing perceived readability was created by having participants rate agreement to seven statements shown and answer three short answer questions shown in table 2. The survey was created in Qualtrics and distributed to participants via email. No identifiable information was asked. Participants were all over 18 and current Georgia State University Occupational Therapy Doctorate students and were recruited via an email. Fourteen participants were recruited to take part in the survey. Four participants were removed from the study for either not consenting to take part in the survey or not answering the survey questions. The email included the clinical fieldwork student handbook chapter and a link to the survey with instructions to read the chapter before taking the survey.

Informed consent was obtained before participants were allowed to take part in the survey. The data collected via survey will undergo quantitative and qualitative analysis to

identify readability of the clinical fieldwork student handbook chapter and guide revisions for said chapter.

Table 2

OT clinical fieldwork student handbook chapter (fieldwork accommodations) readability survey questions

On a scale of 1 to 5 rate these items on how much you agree with the statement 1 Strongly Disagree, 2 Disagree, 3 Neutral, 4 Agree, 5 Strongly Agree
I am able to easily understand the chapter
The language (word choice, sentence structure, etc.) used is appropriate and easy to understand
The font and size of letters are easy to see
The graphics and charts are easy to read and follow
The information in the fieldwork student handbook chapter is correct
I am confident I would be able to request fieldwork accommodations using the fieldwork student handbook chapter
I would recommend the fieldwork student handbook chapter be used when guiding students on the process requesting accommodation
Short answer questions
What would you change about the fieldwork handbook chapter to make it easier to understand?
What would you change about the infographics to make them easier to understand?
Additional comments

6. Revise OT fieldwork student handbook (fieldwork accommodations) chapter

Revisions were guided by the data collected from the survey and were completed after data analysis. Revisions included organizational changes, grammar corrections, and increasing font sizes.

7. Organize and submit all materials and capstone paper by April 18th, 2025.

Site: Georgia State University, Occupational Therapy Doctorate Program

The capstone project was spent developing the fieldwork accommodation policy, evaluation forms, and education materials with site mentorship from the academic fieldwork coordinator of the occupational therapy department at GSU. The site mentor has experience with the process of requesting and implementing fieldwork coordinators as well as the policies of GSU and ACOTE. The academic fieldwork coordinator has also vocalized a need for a more streamlined fieldwork accommodation process.

The project consisted of creating the fieldwork accommodation policy, evaluation forms, PowerPoints, and infographics. The materials were created from a SWOT analysis of GSU, literature research, conversations with experts, and guidance from the site mentor. It is expected that the academic fieldwork coordinator at GSU will review and revise all the material before its use.

Chapter 6: Results

Student perceived readability agreement ratings regarding the fieldwork accommodations appear in table 3. The highest ratings of agreement were given on statements 5 (SD = 0.630), 6 (SD = 1.027), and 7 (SD = 1.167) with a mean score of 4.14 on a scale of 5 = strongly agree and 1 = strongly disagree. The lowest rating of agreement was for statement 2 (SD = 1.138) with a mean of 3.71. Statements 1 (SD = 0.919), 3 (SD = 0.784), and 4 (SD = 0.784) had a mean of 4.

Table 3
OT clinical fieldwork student handbook chapter (fieldwork accommodations) readability agreement rate

	Mean level of agreement	Standard Deviation	N
1. I am able to easily understand the chapter	4	0.919	14
2. The language (word choice, sentence structure, etc.) used is appropriate and easy to understand	3.71	1.138	14
3. The font and size of letters are easy to see	4	0.784	14
4. The graphics and charts are easy to read and follow	4	0.784	14
5. The information in the fieldwork student handbook chapter is correct	4.14	0.630	14
6. I am confident I would be able to request fieldwork accommodations using the fieldwork student handbook chapter	4.14	1.027	14
7. I would recommend the fieldwork student handbook chapter be used when guiding students on the process requesting accommodation	4.14	1.167	14

Note: Statements were ranked on agreement levels with 1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-neutral, 4-agree, and 5-strongly agree.

Participants' short answer results can be found in table 4. Participants, when asked about the chapter, had 2 participants recommend less words, 6 participants suggest formatting changes, and 2 participants recommend better organization for the appendices. For infographics 2 participants requested bigger font size, 1 participant asked for fewer words, and 6 participants left positive comments about the infographics. Finally, in additional comments 1 participant suggested checking for grammar and spelling errors and 1 participant recommended formatting changes for the student evaluation of fieldwork accommodations form. 5 participants expressed positive views on the chapter in the additional comments section.

Table 4
OT clinical fieldwork student handbook chapter (fieldwork accommodations) readability short answer

Short answer question	Participant's comment	N that gave the comment	Total N
What would you change about the fieldwork handbook chapter to make it easier to understand?	Make the chapter more concise (less words)	2	10
	Formatting changes (Bolding and/or underlining headings and spacing between sections)	6	
	Appendices organization (spacing, add check boxes and line, and location of appendices)	2	
What would you change about the infographics to make them easier to understand?	Decrease words in the infographics	1	9
	Larger font	2	
Additional comments	Check grammar and spelling	1	7
	Student evaluation of fieldwork Accommodations form format (bolding/underlining headings, spacing, etc.)	1	

Note: Varying participation is due to non respondents. Participant comments were left out if they did not suggest any changes.

Outputs

SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis was conducted to guide the creation of education material and resources for students. The intended use was for the student investigator and academic fieldwork coordinator to examine and inform if changes would be supported by the program. The SWOT analysis included resources available to use as well as unavailable resources. The SWOT analysis findings can be found in (Appendix 4).

Evaluation forms

Two different evaluation forms were created or revised to be used by the academic fieldwork coordinator. The biweekly evaluation form (Appendix 6) was revised to include questions about fieldwork accommodation implementation and additional questions about supervision and student progression. The biweekly evaluation form is intended to be filled out by the student and fieldwork educators during week 2, week 4, week 8, and week 10 of fieldwork level 2 rotations. The Student Evaluation of Fieldwork Accommodations form (SEFWA) (Appendix 7) is to be distributed by the academic fieldwork coordinator to students that used fieldwork accommodations after a fieldwork rotation. The SEFWA will be used for students to assess the site's accessibility and ability to accommodate and inform the academic fieldwork coordinator for future student placements.

PowerPoints

Two different PowerPoints are available as resources for student education on fieldwork. The fieldwork orientation PowerPoint is to be used by the academic fieldwork coordinator during student orientation and will cover fieldwork requirements and expectations. This PowerPoint was

revised to include information about fieldwork accommodations and more detailed information about costs for better transparency. The fieldwork accommodations PowerPoint includes more detailed information about the fieldwork accommodations and additional resources available. The PowerPoint is to be distributed by the academic fieldwork coordinator to all students during fieldwork advising or if a student requests it.

Fieldwork Accommodations Policy: OT clinical fieldwork student handbook chapter (fieldwork accommodations)

The fieldwork accommodations policy includes detailed information on fieldwork accommodations, roles and responsibilities, process of requesting, disability disclosure, fieldwork advising, recommendations. The policy is to be added to the GSU OTD fieldwork student handbook after approval from the academic fieldwork coordinator and GSU OTD faculty. Students will have access to the handbook after orientation and will continue to have access throughout their OT education.

Fieldwork Accommodation Infographics

Two infographics were created to illustrate a recommended timeline for requesting and implementing accommodations and a simplified version of the fieldwork accommodation process. The fieldwork accommodations process infographic (Appendix 8) and Student timeline for requesting and implementing fieldwork accommodations (recommended) (Appendix 9) should be given to students as early as possible. The infographics are included in the fieldwork accommodation PowerPoint and the clinical fieldwork student handbook.

Chapter 7: Discussion

Reflecting on the Capstone Experience

The challenge was creating a policy and resources during the short, allotted time. It was made further difficult due to the lack of national guidelines, university support, and no prior policy on fieldwork accommodations. The fieldwork orientation PowerPoint was revised to include fieldwork accommodations and expose students to the opportunity as early as possible. The fieldwork accommodations PowerPoint was created to give more information and resources to students that need more context. The biweekly review was revised to include questions about fieldwork accommodation implementation to catch any problems earlier and to normalize fieldwork accommodations to fieldwork educators. The student evaluation fieldwork accommodation form was created for a more precise tool for students to review their sites on how they manage fieldwork accommodations. Infographics were easier to create as they were created from the fieldwork accommodation policy and less specific. The fieldwork accommodation policy was created as a resource for students to use for better understanding of the process as well as guide students to more open dialogue with the academic fieldwork coordinator. The fieldwork accommodation policy's readability was assessed and was revised by the suggestions made from the survey results. An additional challenge when writing the policy was the changes that were not present when the student investigator went through the process of requesting fieldwork accommodations. It should be noted that the student investigator was highly influenced by her own experience and worked closely with GSU's OTD academic fieldwork when creating all the materials.

Future Directions

The goal of the fieldwork accommodations policy is to help make students aware of the existence of fieldwork accommodations and help guide students in going through the process. This is difficult to track as being made aware of opportunities does not directly cause students to register for fieldwork accommodations. Instead the assessment of the policy and resources can be handled by the academic fieldwork coordinator through conversations with students. The academic fieldwork coordinator once the chapter is approved by faculty can also reassess the readability of the fieldwork accommodations policy and revise the chapter as needed.

Limitations

One barrier to the creation of the fieldwork accommodation policy was the lack of literature and guidance on the topic. AOTA allows OT programs control of making their own policies for fieldwork accommodation which causes differences between programs. This requires the policy to depend on the resources that are available instead of being able to copy another OT program's policy. In addition, the success of the policy is dependent on the support and maintenance of the GSU OTD faculty. Another limitation is that there was a limited number of participants that took part in the survey. Additionally, demographics were not taken to ensure participant privacy which means that the participants that took the survey may not ever use it. Also, the student investigator used personal knowledge about accommodating students. While the student has experience requesting accommodations, the student is not a disability law specialist or able to write legal accommodations. Finally, the student investigator may have a personal bias due to being disabled. While this may cause the student investigator to place more importance on the topic, it also gave the student investigator a differing view than academic fieldwork coordinators, fieldwork educators, and professors which typically create policies.

Chapter 8: Implications for Occupational Therapy Education

Impact

Value for GSU OTD Students

GSU OTD students will benefit from the materials and policy in a few diverse ways. While the policy mostly affects students with disabilities in completing fieldwork which is a requirement for students to graduate from the GSU OTD program, some of the materials have been changed to improve transparency for all students. Students with disabilities will benefit greatly from a more streamlined and available process that was not available before. It should be noted that students are not required to use fieldwork accommodations but having policies will make information more readily available and consistent between individuals.

Value for GSU OTD Program

The impact that having the fieldwork accommodation policy will greatly benefit the program and the academic fieldwork coordinator. The academic fieldwork coordinator benefits from having more precise tools to evaluate different outcome measures in fieldwork as well as available resources that the academic fieldwork coordinator has at their disposal. Additionally, having a written process will allow for more consistency on information given instead of relying on unstructured conversations. While ACOTE does not require a specific process for fieldwork accommodations, AOTA's vision states that they respect and uplift the diversity of our profession which includes occupational therapy students with disabilities and occupational therapists with disabilities (AOTA. n.d.). Having a policy decreases confusion and provides a guide for students and faculty to follow.

Chapter 9: Implementation Plan

Implementation

The most ideal scenario for implementation would be for the academic fieldwork coordinator to review the fieldwork accommodations policy and seek approval from GSU OTD program faculty. Once approved by faculty, the policy should be added to the 2025-2028 clinical fieldwork student handbook. The academic fieldwork coordinator should then introduce the education materials as needed to the student body. The biweekly form and SEFWA form ideally will be evaluated fall of 2025 on GSU'S OTD 2026 cohort. The academic fieldwork coordinator should review and revise the policy as needed.

Sustainability

The responsibility of sustaining the fieldwork accommodation policy and other corresponding materials will be up to the academic fieldwork coordinator. No extra cost is associated with the implementation of the project's outputs. It is recommended that the academic fieldwork coordinator formally and informally review and revise the fieldwork accommodation policy, evaluation forms, and education materials every year.

Chapter 10: Conclusions

Conclusion Summary

Occupational therapy has a wide scope that works with a diverse population. Part of the responsibility of occupational therapists is to advocate for the rights of people with disabilities. Occupational therapists with disabilities are unique due to their ability to empathize better with what a patient may be feeling. For this reason, AOTA sees the value that therapists with varying backgrounds and ability levels bring to the profession. Although occupational therapists with disabilities provide a valuable view, they still face more barriers to becoming clinicians. It is the responsibility of occupational therapy programs to help overcome the barriers. Therefore, occupational therapy programs should have supports and policies to help students with disabilities become clinicians. GSU's OT program can benefit from having a policy that informs and supports students with disabilities in fieldwork. This policy and materials were created to better inform students about fieldwork accommodations and have more consistent evaluations and information. Students with disabilities at GSU could benefit from being more informed about the available resources to them. This benefits fieldwork educators and academic fieldwork coordinators by having a more consistent fieldwork accommodation process.

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Appendix 1 - Learning Objectives

Learning Objectives Timeline	
Specific Aim 1: Conduct a SWOT analysis on the Georgia State University's Occupational Therapy Department Resources	
Write the strength analysis	Week 1
Write the weakness analysis	Week 1
Write the opportunity analysis	Week 1-2
Write the threat analysis	Week 2
Compile all parts into complete SWOT analysis	Week 2
Specific Aim 2: Develop instruments for onboarding fieldwork sites and forms for students to evaluate fieldwork sites for accessibility and accommodations	
Analyze and discuss current onboarding paperwork that are being used and SWOT analysis resources	Week 3
Research resources used by other programs	Week 3
Create and compile onboarding and final evaluation paperwork	Week 4-5
Specific Aim 3: Create student educational materials detailing fieldwork accommodations and evaluate the understanding of the material	
Choose appropriate mediums for conveying information to students	Week 5
Analyze and discuss current materials that are being used and SWOT analysis resources	Week 5
Create student education materials and compile them into handouts	Week 6-7
Perform data collection on student perceived understanding and readability of handouts via Likert scale survey	Week 8-9
Analyze survey results and revise materials	Week 9-10
Specific Aim 4: Create a communication procedure on accommodations for fieldwork to be added to the GSU OTD program's student handbook	
Read over current handbook procedures for fieldwork	Week 10
Write procedure for accommodations in fieldwork	Week 10-12
Compile correct resources and infographics to be used in GSU handbook procedure	Week 10-12
Compile all information into capstone write-up paper	Week 11-14

Appendix 2 - Supervision Plan

Student Responsibilities:

1. Understand and abide by the GSU program policies and procedures relative to the capstone.
2. Complete the 14-week capstone experience
3. Complete a literature review based on the topic of the capstone project to obtain the most up to date information on topic.
4. Create clear and consistent communication with site mentor to ensure the goals of the capstone project are attainable and necessary.
5. Complete a needs assessment to further analyze goals and objectives for capstone project to ensure success of the learning experience, alignment with chosen focus areas, and outcome of capstone.
6. Collaborate and communicate with the site mentor, occupational therapy faculty, and doctoral capstone coordinator, and necessary GSU staff to implement goals for the capstone project.
7. Develop, plan, and create a comprehensive schedule of important dates necessary to create and disseminate deliverables, making sure to consider time management and deadlines.
8. Provide appropriate feedback to the site at the formal midterm and final evaluation.
9. Utilize constructive feedback from faculty, site mentor, and doctoral capstone coordinator for personal and professional growth.
10. Take initiative to finalize all documentation with the site mentor, faculty mentor, or doctoral capstone coordinator.

11. Complete and disseminate a culminating capstone project within the time frame determined by the academic program.
12. Write letters of appreciation to site mentors and all those who participated in capstone experience, to thank them for their time and expertise.

Mentor Responsibilities:

1. Provide evidence of expertise in given area (documentation of terminal degree, current CV or resume, verification of completed specialty training / certification).
2. Orient student to the capstone site, policy and procedures, expectations, other personnel, and stakeholders.
3. Assist student as needed to perform specific learning activities consistent with the student's learning objectives.
4. Provide supervision/mentorship through the duration of the experience along with constructive feedback on student's performance during the experience.
5. Collaborate with capstone team to guide the capstone student through needs assessment component of the project proposal as well as verify scheduled planning for event dates and additional due dates.
6. Provide guidance on the logistics of completing the work-related requirements at the capstone site, which could include workflow at site, general hours of operation, and access to workspaces.
7. Provide formal evaluative information on students' performance and verify time log.
8. Provide meaningful and timely feedback on drafts of the capstone project as needed.

Communication methods

Email for daily (response within 48 hours 9-5 not during weekends)

Meeting via WebEx, teams, or zoom.

How to resolve possible disputes

Communication of the dispute to start with over a WebEx meeting with a mediator that both parties approve of if either party requests one

Types of expertise desired from site mentor

Experience of working as an academic fieldwork coordinator and clinical instructor to provide perspective on regulations, roles, etc.

Follows OTD program curricular design

Enhancing advocacy and leadership skills

Advocating for the rights of students with disabilities

Enhancing diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence

Helps to secure a more diverse and equal fieldwork experience between students with disabilities and nondisabled peers.

Appendix 3 - Summary Pages

Background

An individual with a disability is defined as an individual with a physical and/or mental impairment that limits one or more major life activities by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (Ozelie, et al. 2022). A recent nationwide survey estimates 13.4% (~44 million) of the US population is living with a disability (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024). 22 million individuals with disabilities are within the working age of 16-64 years (United States Department of Labor, 2024). This means people with disabilities are the largest minority group in the workforce (Swenor, 2021; Teborg, et al. 2024). Employment among individuals with disabilities increased during the COVID-19 pandemic to 22.5% (Miller, 2024). However, individuals with disabilities are three times less likely to be employed than their nondisabled peers (Miller, 2024).

Barriers in healthcare professions for individuals with disabilities are less known compared to other professions (Edelist, et al. 2024). Clinical components of health care professional education create different challenges from classroom education when accommodating and supporting individuals with disabilities (Ozelie, et al. 2022). While the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act prohibit discrimination of individuals with disabilities and requires reasonable accommodations be provided, there remains a gap when accommodating students in clinicals (Ozelie, et al. 2022). Occupational therapy is one such healthcare profession that is required by accreditation bodies to have clinical components (AOTA 2024). Clinical accommodations for

students with disabilities in occupational therapy is a complex problem that has not been as thoroughly researched (Ozelie, et al. 2022).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this Doctoral Capstone Experience is to create a communication procedure to be added to the GSU Handbook on fieldwork accommodations for students with disabilities.

Specific aims

Specific Aims of the project are to:

1. Conduct a SWOT analysis on the Georgia State University's Occupational Therapy Department Resources
2. Develop instruments for onboarding fieldwork sites and forms for students to evaluate fieldwork sites for accessibility and accommodations.
3. Create student educational materials detailing fieldwork accommodations and evaluate the understanding of the material.
4. Create a communication procedure on accommodations for fieldwork to be added to the GSU OTD program's student handbook

Significance and Outcomes

The immediate outputs of the Doctoral Capstone Experience will be a developed communications procedure on fieldwork accommodations for the GSU OTD program.

Additional outputs are a more precise instrument for onboarding fieldwork sites and data from other occupational therapy programs. Over time, it is expected that the procedure will be used by students with disabilities and improve the transition between classroom and clinicals by providing a detailed procedure that will lessen confusion. Additionally, it can be shown to other occupational therapy programs to have a more national impact.

Appendix 4 - SWOT Analysis on Georgia State University Occupational Therapy Program

Strengths (Helpful Internal)

One major strength of Georgia State University's occupational therapy doctoral program is that it is built on the foundation of a successful master's program. GSU accepted its first Master's cohort in 2017 and operated four years before transitioning to a doctoral program in 2021 (Georgia State University, 2020). The master's program boasted a high NBCOT pass rate averaging 99.6% and the OTD 2024 cohort has a 100% pass rate demonstrating that students were well-prepared to become clinicians (Georgia State University, 2023). Due to the success of the master's program, the doctoral program received a certificate of accreditation in 2023 meaning that the GSU OTD program is adhering to the standards. Furthermore, GSU is now one of only 3 schools in Georgia with accreditation making it competitive. Another strength of GSU is the diversity of its faculty in background and specialties. Many of the professors worked as clinicians for years before entering academia. Currently, the program has ten full-time faculty with specialties in brain injury, pediatrics, spinal cord injury, assistive technology, and hand and upper extremity. GSU's diverse faculty, with varied clinical experiences and research interests provides students with better clinical insight and opportunities in research.

An additional strength is the affordability of the doctoral program. In-state tuition at GSU is approximately 66,000 dollars to complete the program (Georgia State University, 2023). In contrast, Brenau's Doctoral program tuition is 143,000 dollars (Brenau University, 2024).

Augusta University's Masters 2-year program costs about 40,000 while Brenau's Master's program costs approximately 80,000 dollars (Augusta University, 2025; Brenau University, 2024) Georgia State holds a competitive advantage as the most affordable doctoral program in

Georgia. GSU also offers numerous opportunities for employment and financial aid that reduce costs even more. Many employment opportunities provide partial or full tuition coverage and potential stipends, allowing students to attend the program without accruing additional debt. Another strength is the access to multiple opportunities outside the classroom. Currently, the GSU OTD program offers opportunities to go to India, Belgium, and the Dominican Republic. Students have also studied abroad in Germany. Studying abroad enhances students' knowledge of their field of study. Additionally, the GSU OTD program has partnered with various community organizations for classes. This provides students with firsthand experience and allows them to apply knowledge learned from textbooks to real life. This also gets students involved with the community, making them aware of different issues that may be affecting the community. Which will equally benefit both parties.

Weaknesses (Harmful Internal)

The main weakness of the GSU OTD program is how relatively new it is compared to other programs. GSU first started its master's program in 2017 making the program less than a decade old (Georgia State University, 2020). In comparison, Augusta has had its program since 2008 and Brenau has had its master's program since 2014 (Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education, 2007). Having a more established program allows for the program allows it to accumulate more resources and partnerships as well as a greater presence. This could help recruit more faculty or students in the future or access more organizations.

Another weakness for GSU is the high turnover of faculty. In the last three years, the faculty has lost five of its members. Turnover rates in graduate education as of 2023-2024 were 14% which is lower than the program's faculty turnover rate (CUPA-HR, 2024). High turnover rates are often viewed in a negative light by potential hires and potential students. This could

limit the program's ability to find new faculty. Additionally, this negatively impacts the current students and faculty. The workload of the current faculty fluctuates due to open positions within the department. The decrease in faculty also results in a lack of professors available to teach elective classes. This limits what students can take for electives and leads to students enrolling in classes outside of the OT department to fulfill the requirement.

An additional weakness is the lack of communication between professors and students. This often leads to disorganization among professors who may be co-teaching. It also causes difficulty and frustration for students when they receive different answers from professors. This issue can also be seen when there are scheduling conflicts that arise between different professors' classes. For example, there have been a few instances of professors scheduling a required activity that overlapped with another professor's required class. There have also been a few times where the professor had put the wrong room for class. This caused many students to be confused and lose valuable class time.

A weakness that primarily affects the faculty of the GSU OTD program is the minimal administrative support provided. Currently, the program has one administrative assistant working full time and shares business manager with the health informatics department. This causes the department to rely heavily on student assistance through graduate research assistantships. While this benefits the student body, the trade-off is that students cannot remain in their positions beyond graduation or during part-time semesters (the last two semesters of the OTD program). This means that faculty must train a replacement every year causing efficiency to be lower. Administrative support would benefit the faculty by allowing professors to have more time and ability to focus on teaching.

The last weakness of the GSU OTD program is that it often has hidden costs that are not communicated beforehand. This can be not only frustrating for students but potentially harmful because students may lack the funds to cover these extra expenses. While other programs charge students a one-year charge, which often is more than what is necessary, this charge is expected and given in advance. This allows students to plan their finances effectively for their education. A way to mitigate this weakness would be to develop a plan to disclose costs within a specific amount of time before it is required.

Opportunities (Helpful External)

One major opportunity for the GSU OTD program lies in its location in downtown Atlanta. Downtown Atlanta hosts Grady Hospital on campus while the Shepherd Center is about fifteen minutes away. The campus is also close to several other major hospitals such as Emory, CHOA, Piedmont, and Northside. Downtown Atlanta is home to many organizations including the Salvation Army and CFI. GSU's presence in a growing large city enhances the opportunities available to students. An extra advantage is that Atlanta is accessible by multiple modes of transportation including car, walking, bus, and train. This enables more students, particularly those limited due to disability or financial constraints, to participate.

An additional opportunity is that the GSU program is the only public OTD program offered in Georgia. GSU is also a research institution that has been increasing its effort to produce research. This provides students more opportunities to work on research projects under professors or pursue their own research. The university offers many occasions to present their findings at the university or at conferences. This contributes to the program's growth and its expansion into the research world. GSU is also a large state university that has been around for decades. GSU being this established means that they have greater access to funding and

resources as well as significant say in downtown Atlanta. The OTD program can leverage on GSU's name and its partnerships to potentially form its own. GSU also has a legal department that can address any unforeseen issues that may arise. Additionally, the program being newer could be a potential benefit when it comes to adaptability. Newer programs are generally less bound by tradition which makes them more flexible and open to change

A final opportunity is that occupational therapy is one of the fastest-growing professions with expected employment to increase by 6.7 million in the next ten years (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023). Currently, healthcare professionals are needed due to the aging population which is projected to increase significantly soon. This indicates an increased need for more OTs which likely result in a surge of incoming students. The growing number of professionals may also positively influence the laws concerning healthcare reimbursements as well as healthcare education and regulation.

Threats (Harmful External)

A threat to the GSU OTD program is that competition negatively impacts participation and growth. There is competition within GSU for resources. The OT is new compared to the more established physical therapy department which is given better resources from the school. This discrepancy can be observed in the differences in funding allocated to each department as well as in the challenge of finding classroom space. There is also competition among OT programs for limited sites. Every student is required to complete five fieldwork rotations which necessitates a site and clinician to supervise them. Some clinicians are only able to take on a limited number of students, creating competition between programs to secure the best possible sites. This restriction on where students can be placed and can affect their future in the profession. Furthermore, GSU faces challenges with communication between departments. Due

to its large size, communication is often terribly slow or nonexistent. This results in departments failing to reach out or collaborate effectively. This is a missed opportunity in the healthcare departments because healthcare workers are frequently expected to collaborate.

Another threat is the impact that COVID-19 had on the healthcare field. During the pandemic, many facilities such as hospitals and nursing homes determined that students posed a risk and did not allow them to shadow or do fieldwork (Ocampo et al., 2024). This caused a shortage of future clinicians as most hospitals prefer the clinician to have had experience before hiring. It also prevents students from observing settings and assessing their interest in the setting. COVID-19 also adversely affected outpatient therapists. Due to OT in this setting not being considered primary, many clinicians either lost their jobs or reduced their hours (Ganesan et al., 2021). A study on the COVID-19 epidemic surveyed occupational therapists and found that 76% reported that the pandemic negatively impacted their income while 10% reported losing their jobs (Ganesan et al., 2021). Overall, the pandemic led to record levels of burnout among clinicians with many therapists leaving the profession altogether (Hackathorne et al., 2024; Yeoh et al., 2024). Another threat is changes in the reimbursement rates as well as education. With a new cabinet and president, alterations are likely to occur in healthcare costs and education policies. While this could be an opportunity or a threat, congress reduced occupational services by 1.42% in 2024 (Parsons, 2024). Georgia also faces a current shortage of occupational therapists particularly in rural areas (Morris, 1989). All these factors negatively impact interest in the field as well as the retention of clinicians in practice.

The final threat is the practicality of moving around campus. Georgia State University is located in downtown Atlanta which while accessible by multiple modes of transportation is not known to be truly accessible by students. The buildings have limited access, and a lot of the

automatic doors are not operational. The majority of the pedestrian lights do not emit sound. The lack of accessibility makes the campus less accessible to students with disabilities. It also poses safety risks for all students. This limits the pool of possible students who may choose to enroll in the program.

What are fieldwork accommodations?

Under Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a reasonable accommodation is a modification or adjustment to a job, the work environment, or the way things are usually done. Accommodations are also associated with education. Students with disabilities that limit academic performance typically qualify for classroom accommodations. Fieldwork accommodations are modifications or adjustments during clinical placement. The clinical setting differs from the classroom, which means that accommodations written for the classroom do not directly transfer to the clinical context. Students may need accommodations in the classroom, during fieldwork, in both settings, or neither.

Roles and Responsibilities

The process of acquiring and implementing successful fieldwork accommodations requires four parties to work together. The four parties are the student, the academic fieldwork coordinator, disability services, and the fieldwork educator and/or student coordinator.

The Student

- The student is responsible for initiating the process of acquiring fieldwork accommodations. The student is also an expert on their disability. The student should collaborate with the academic fieldwork coordinator on what settings would be the most appropriate for the student. The student should also collaborate with disability services on what accommodations are appropriate. The student also needs to collaborate with the fieldwork educator on what accommodations can successfully be implemented at the

fieldwork site. The student should communicate with their fieldwork educator and the academic fieldwork coordinator if any changes need to be made to their accommodation plan.

The Academic Fieldwork Coordinator

- The academic fieldwork is responsible for matching all students to fieldwork sites. They are also responsible for explaining to students what fieldwork accommodations are. The academic fieldwork coordinator takes an advising role in the fieldwork accommodation process. They advise students on what fieldwork settings may require and if accommodations may be needed. The academic fieldwork coordinator also advises disability services about different fieldwork settings for more accurate accommodations. The academic fieldwork coordinator helps to guide communication between the fieldwork educator and the student before the start of fieldwork and during.

Disability Services

- Disability services are the experts on disability law and legal accommodations. They are responsible for deciding whether a student is eligible for accommodations. They advise students on appropriate accommodations and provide documentation that proves disability status. Disability services also collaborate with the academic fieldwork coordinator to write the accommodations for a nonacademic setting.

The Fieldwork Educator

- The fieldwork educator coordinates with the student and academic fieldwork coordinator for the successful implementation of fieldwork accommodations. The fieldwork educator is responsible for approving accommodations or offering alternatives that may work for the setting. The fieldwork educator can deny an accommodation if it is unreasonable. The

fieldwork educator should contact the academic fieldwork coordinator immediately if they are unable to accommodate the student or if issues occur when implementing the student's accommodations.

Outline of the process

Registering with AACE

Students who want to use fieldwork accommodations must be registered with GSU's Access and Accommodations Center (AACE). This can be done by visiting <https://access.gsu.edu/> and filling out the registration form. Students are also required to submit appropriate disability documentation of a diagnosis from a healthcare professional, reasons the disability limits academic performance, and proof of past accommodation use (IEP, 504 plan, etc.). More information about how to register can be found at (<https://access.gsu.edu/how-to-register/>). Once registration and documentation are completed, the AACE staff will decide if a student is eligible to receive accommodations. Access and Accommodations, upon approval, will assign an advisor to the student who will have a private meeting to collaborate on what accommodations are available and would be most beneficial for the student to use. The advisor will then draft an accommodation letter that will be used as proof of disability and what accommodations the student has been approved for. This letter has to be sent EVERY SEMESTER and signed by the professors to use accommodations in classes.

Accommodation advising and placement planning

Next, the eligibility letter should be sent to the AFWC, and the student should schedule a private meeting with the AFWC to discuss placements, strategies, and future plans for fieldwork accommodations. The AFWC can advise a student against a setting, but the student does have

the final say on what they want. The AFWC will then decide where to place the student and notify the student with the appropriate contact information for the site. The student will need to disclose disability status to the site to get accommodations. Student disability disclosure is recommended after the placement has been made. Students are advised to work with the AFWC and disability services to come up with a list of appropriate accommodations. The student should then communicate with the fieldwork educator to discuss which accommodations can be implemented at the site. The fieldwork educator may deny, approve, or suggest changes to requested accommodations. The fieldwork site may be unable to implement certain accommodations. If the fieldwork site does not approve the student's fieldwork accommodations, the student AFWC will discuss if an alternate placement is necessary. If the fieldwork educator approves the student accommodations, the student, fieldwork educator, and AFWC will make a plan to implement the approved accommodations once fieldwork starts. The student is responsible for taking the lead in communication with the fieldwork educator. The AFWC is there to support the student and help bridge any communication issues. The student should continue to communicate with the fieldwork educator until the start of the fieldwork rotation. During the semester of the fieldwork rotation that the student has requested accommodations, the student must register for accommodations for the corresponding fieldwork class. The student should register by sending out their accommodation letter to the corresponding class through the GSU AIM website (<https://whitney.accessiblelearning.com/s-GSU/Default.aspx>). Once the student's accommodation letter has been signed by the fieldwork coordinator, the student is ready to begin the implementation of their fieldwork accommodations.

Implementing fieldwork accommodations

Implementation of the accommodations typically begins once the student starts the fieldwork rotation. The fieldwork educator and student should work together to implement the agreed-upon fieldwork accommodations. Once the accommodations have been implemented, the fieldwork educator and the student should continue to communicate on whether the accommodations are working, if they need to be changed, or if the accommodation is unnecessary. The student should contact the AFWC if their fieldwork accommodations have not been implemented or there is miscommunication between the fieldwork educator and the student. At the end of fieldwork, the student should self-reflect on the implemented fieldwork accommodations and complete the Student Evaluation of Fieldwork Accommodations Form (SEFWA).

Disability disclosure

Georgia State University is committed to providing a quality and equal education to all students. Self-disclosure of a disability is entirely voluntary. However, disclosure and submission of current documentation verifying a disability is required to determine eligibility and identify reasonable accommodations. If a student is diagnosed with a disability and would like to request academic accommodations, please contact the Access and Accommodations Center, Student Center East, Suite 304, phone number 404-413-1560. The information the student provides is confidential and is only disclosed to University personnel responsible for coordinating disability services for the University.

The student has the right to choose whether to disclose or not to disclose a diagnosed disability to the FW site. Under the ADA, institutions (including fieldwork sites) are obligated to make reasonable accommodations only for the known limitation of an otherwise qualified student with a disability. Notification of the need for accommodation must occur if the student desires

accommodations during FW. Students who wish to disclose a disability for the purpose of accommodations need to have gone through the Access and Accommodations Center. The AFWC does not have the right to disclose a student's disability to a FW site without written permission from the student.

Students with disabilities who want accommodations on their FW placements are encouraged to disclose their disability as early as possible to the FW site or to give permission to the AFWC, in writing, to disclose this information to the site after the placement has been made. (Appendix A An example disability disclosure email template)

Disability Disclosure Template

Dear (fieldwork educator/student coordinator,

I have (provide the preferred term for your disability). I have been successful in my classroom studies and previous fieldwork, but sometimes (indicate your functional limitations) might interfere with my ability to (describe the duties you may have difficulty performing). I accommodate my functional limitations by (explain some ways that you accommodate your disability such as past school accommodations or strategies). It's helpful if I have (describe the specific accommodations you need). I am happy to discuss these accommodations further and am open to exploring other possible options.

Thank you,

Student

Information sessions about Fieldwork Accommodation

The AFWC will speak with students about fieldwork experience in multiple information sessions.

Fieldwork Orientation (1st Semester)

The first session takes place during student orientation and will be given to all students. The session will introduce the AFWC's role, what fieldwork is, expectations, and what fieldwork accommodations are.

Fieldwork Advising Meetings (2nd Semester)

The second session takes place during the fall semester. Students are advised in small groups. During this session, the student will discuss interests for future fieldwork experiences. The AFWC will remind ALL students about the availability of fieldwork accommodations.

Fieldwork Level 2 Orientation (5th semester)

The third session will take place with all students during the fifth semester. Students will have mostly been placed with their fieldwork level 2 sites. This session will cover what fieldwork level 2 is, expectations, a rough timeline, classroom assignments, and policies. The AFWC will remind students of the availability of fieldwork accommodations.

Navigating the accommodations process at GSU in graduate school

- GSU
 - If you are a returning GSU student and have already registered with AACE in undergraduate, your accommodations carry over into graduate school. It is still

advised that you send up-to-date documentation on your disability, especially impairments that fluctuate.

- Different University
 - If you are coming from a different university, you must go through the typical registration process. You should attach proof of accommodation use throughout undergraduate as well as a diagnosis and how it limits you from a healthcare provider. It is recommended that your healthcare documentation be no older than five years old.
- Requesting University Accommodations for the 1st time
 - If this is your first time requesting accommodations in college, you first need to collect the correct documentation. You should first have a qualified evaluator (PCP, Psychologist, etc.) provide documentation that attests to the presence of a disabling condition that fits with the ADA definition and how the disability substantially limits academic performance. It is also beneficial to provide any previous use of accommodations in education (IEP, 504, etc.). More information can be found at https://www.usg.edu/academic_affairs_handbook/section3/C793. Once all documentation is gathered, you must self-identify by filling out a registration form on the AACE website.

Recommendations

- Gathering the correct documentation and registering with GSU's AACE can take a while. It is recommended that you register a month before the student needs to use the accommodations.
- It is recommended that if the student feels they may need fieldwork accommodations that the student goes through the registration process.
- It is recommended that the student disclose to the AFWC. The AFWC can collaborate with the student about which setting may be better and which environments may be more open.
- Typically, fieldwork educators prefer to be notified about accommodations as early as possible.
- When disclosing a disability, the student does not have to give their formal diagnosis.
- Students do not have to use fieldwork accommodations, nor do they have to disclose. The student can start the process and stop the process at any point.

Appendix 6 - Biweekly Evaluation Form

Fieldwork Educator (Please fill out this part)

Student's Name

Fieldwork Educator (FW Ed.) 1 Name

Fieldwork Educator (FW Ed.) 2 if more than one CI Name

FW Educator Email (List all if more than one)

Facility Name

Fieldwork Week

- Week 2
- Week 4
- Week 8
- Week 10

Date: _____

Does the student have fieldwork accommodations?

- Yes
- No

Have the student's fieldwork accommodations been implemented?

- Yes
- No
- N/A

Bi-Weekly Performance Ratings			
	0 Performing below standards per current week's expectations for competency in this skill area.	1 Meeting standards for competency per current week's expectations with minimal cueing and reminders in this skill area.	2 Exceeding standards for competency in this area as student is independent.
Safety Awareness/Following Regulations			
Time Management & Organization Skills			
Written Communication			
Verbal Communication & Interpersonal Skills			
Self-directed Learning & Initiative			
Responsiveness to Constructive Feedback			
Clinical Problem Solving			
Evaluation Skills			
Treatment Planning & Implementation Skills			

Briefly comment on the student's areas of strength.

--

List student's areas of weakness requiring further development. (3-5 areas)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

List 3-5 goals that are to be met by the student over the next two weeks.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Goals met from the previous two weeks.

Choose one statement

- Student **is** progressing as expected for this clinical experience.
- Student **is not** progressing as expected for this clinical experience.

If student is not progressing as expected, please contact the Academic Fieldwork Coordinator (Karen McWaters, kwortham3@gsu.edu)

Fieldwork Student (Please fill out this part)

Student Reflection of Performance: 1. What I think I did WELL this week (my strengths): List in bullet form or explain in brief narrative format.

Student Reflection of Performance: 2. What I think I did NOT DO WELL this week and WHY (My areas of weakness requiring improvement and reasons for the challenges in these areas):

Student Reflection of Performance: WHAT will I do to insure that my performance is stronger within the next two weeks? Include facility or self-generated assignments, readings, or other resources that you will use to strengthen your skills.

Supervision level

- Too little
- Adequate
- Too much

Comments: _____

Does you have fieldwork accommodations?

- Yes
- No

Have your fieldwork accommodations been implemented?

- Yes
- No
- N/A

Fieldwork Educator's Signature

Fieldwork Student's Signature

Appendix 7 - Student Evaluation of Fieldwork Accommodations Form (SEFWA)

Student

Name

Email

Fieldwork Educator(s)

Name(s) _____

Email(s) _____

Fieldwork Site Name

Fieldwork level

- FW1A
- FW1B
- FW1C
- FW2A
- FW2B

Placement Dates mm/dd/yyyy to mm/dd/yyyy

Setting/Specialty (Select all that apply)

- OP pediatric
- IP pediatric
- School based
- Early intervention
- OP Adult Neuro
- Acute care
- Home health
- Mental health
- OP Adult ortho
- Hand therapy
- Skilled nursing facility (SNF)
- OP Lymphedema (CLT)
- Driving rehab
- Low vision
- Assistive technology
- Workers rehab

When did you request Fieldwork Accommodations (Multiselect)

- Before placement (6+ months)
- Before placement (6 months to 3 months)
- Before placement (2 months to the first day of fieldwork)
- During placement

List the accommodations that were requested

Were all of your accommodations implemented?

- Yes
- No

When was each accommodation implemented (Fill in the table below)

Accommodation	Date implemented (week)

Student-perceived attitude of your CI when accommodating you was

- Positive
- Somewhat positive
- Neutral
- Somewhat negative
- Negative

Student-perceived attitude of your fieldwork site when accommodating you was

- Positive
- Somewhat positive
- Neutral
- Somewhat negative
- Negative


What did your fieldwork site do well with fieldwork accommodations (environment, implementation, communication, e-documentation, schedule flexibility, etc.)?

What could your fieldwork site improve with fieldwork accommodations (environment, implementation, communication, e-documentation, schedule flexibility, etc.)?


Would you recommend this site to other students, why or why not?

10 STEPS TO SUCCESSFULLY Acquire & Implement FW Accommodations


To Qualify for accommodations, students must have documentation from a healthcare professional including a current diagnosis and how it limits academic performance.

- 


01. Acquire Documentation

Fill out the Registration form and attach required documentation
<https://whitney.accessiblelearning.com/s-GSU/ApplicationStudent.aspx>
- 


02. Register with AACE

Meet with AACE advisor to discuss eligibility and accommodations that will be given. The advisor will create an accommodation eligibility letter that documents proof of school accommodations
- 


03. Meet with AACE Advisor

Download the AACE eligibility letter from the AIM website and send it to the AFWC to be documented
- 


04. Send accommodation letter to AFWC

Meet privately with the AFWC to discuss and plan placement. AFWC will discuss setting, site environment, disclosure, etc
- 


05. Meet with AFWC

Student will decide to disclose and how. (Students must disclose to request FW accommodations)
 Student then requests accommodations from site/CI.
- 


07. Request accommodations for FW class

Students must request accommodations through AACE for the corresponding class (FW1 or FW2). Students can go to AIM to request
- 

08. Accommodation implementation

Student should continue communication with the CI and site. The site/CI should approve accommodations and implement them.
- 

09. Communication & Flexibility

Students should communicate with their CI and AFWC if any problems with implementation occurs, if more support is needed, or if the accommodation requires changes
- 

10. Self Reflection & Evaluation

Once FW has been completed, students should self reflect on what worked and what could be improved. Students should also evaluate the site.

Appendix 9 - Student Timeline for Requesting and Implementing Fieldwork Accommodations (Recommended)

