MScOT Admissions | University of Alberta, Department of Occupational Therapy

Route 2 Admissions - Full Information and Application Instructions

This page provides complete information for applicants wishing to be considered under Route 2 of the MScOT admissions process. Read this page in full before submitting a Route 2 response.

What Is Route 2?

Route 2 is a distinct admissions pathway that recognizes applicants whose lived experience has provided them with direct, sustained insight into communities with limited access to health, rehabilitation, or related services. It is designed for applicants positioned through that experience to contribute meaningfully to underserved communities as future occupational therapists.

Route 2 is not an alternative route for any applicant who did not reach the Route 1 GPA threshold, and it is not a secondary lottery. It is a specific pathway that requires specific preparation and lived experience. Academic achievement remains required: a competitive GPA is a condition of eligibility.

A competitive Route 2 score, not the number of indicators identified, determines whether an applicant is entered into the Route 2 lottery.

Is Route 2 Right for You?

Before submitting a Route 2 response, ask yourself honestly:

- Do I have direct, sustained personal or professional experience with a specific community that faces significant barriers to accessing health, rehabilitation, or related services?
- Can I describe what I learned from that experience about a specific unmet need -- something I could not have understood through coursework or brief exposure alone?
- Can I identify specific knowledge, skills, perspectives, or relationships I developed through this experience that would position me to contribute to occupational therapy practice?
- Do I have a contact person with direct knowledge of my engagement with this community, someone who can speak specifically to the nature and context of my involvement?

If you cannot answer yes to all four questions, Route 2 is likely not the right pathway for your application. Submitting a response that does not reflect genuine, sustained engagement will score poorly across all evaluation dimensions.

Route 2 is not a checklist. The previous framework required applicants to meet a minimum number of pre-defined criteria. The revised framework recognizes any one of seven indicators, but selection is based entirely on the quality of your narrative responses, not on how many indicators you identify.

Route 2 Eligibility

To be considered under Route 2, all of the following must be met:

- Admission GPA of 3.4 to 4.0 on the most recent 60 credits of study completed by January 1 of the admission year.
- Completion of all three MScOT program prerequisite courses within the required 5-year window.
- Completion of CASPer (no quartile minimum required for Route 2).
- Self-identification of at least one Route 2 indicator from the list below.
- Submission of a completed Route 2 narrative response as part of the Statement of Interest / ASRQ by the January 31 application deadline.

The Admissions Committee will give additional consideration to the following contextual factors when reviewing Route 2 applications:

- A history of rigorous, full-time study (24 or more credits over two consecutive terms) at any point in the academic record.
- Longer timelines since undergraduate graduation, which may reflect substantial professional, community, or caregiving experience.
- Evidence of academic progression or improvement over time.

Route 2 Indicators

Applicants must self-identify at least one of the following indicators. Identifying an indicator qualifies the applicant to submit a Route 2 application. Applicants may identify more than one indicator, but identifying multiple indicators does not improve your score. Applications are evaluated primarily on the quality of the narrative responses; the contact person identified in the application may also be contacted as part of the verification process, and their feedback will be considered in the overall assessment.

The narrative must connect directly to the indicator(s) identified. The committee will assess whether the experience described in the narrative aligns with the indicator claimed.

For the 2027 admissions cycle, applicants who have already completed formal coursework or certificates in anticipation of Route 2 eligibility are still recognized under the applicable indicator. These investments will strengthen their application.

Indicator 1: Member of an Equity-Seeking Group

This indicator recognizes applicants from communities that are historically and systemically underrepresented in occupational therapy and health professions. For Route 2, eligible equity-seeking groups include:

- Indigenous Peoples (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit)
- Black and racialized individuals
- People with disabilities (physical, sensory, cognitive, psychiatric, or chronic illness)
- Members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community

Note: Given that approximately 90% of MScOT applicants identify as women, gender alone does not constitute membership in an equity-seeking group for Route 2 purposes.

Applicants may self-identify under this indicator. The Route 2 narrative must describe how membership in this community has shaped direct, personal insight into an unmet need relevant to occupational therapy.

Indicator 2: First Person in Immediate Family to Attend University

This indicator recognizes applicants who are the first in their immediate family to pursue degree-level post-secondary education. For Route 2:

- "Immediate family" refers only to parents, step-parents, legal guardians, and siblings.
- "Attend university" means enrollment in a degree-granting post-secondary institution, not college diploma programs, trade certifications, or professional courses.
- Extended family members (grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins) are not considered for this indicator.

No documentation is required at the time of application. The Route 2 narrative should describe how this background has shaped the applicant's understanding of an unmet community need.

Indicator 3: Veteran of the Canadian Armed Forces

This indicator recognizes applicants who have served in the Canadian Armed Forces. To qualify:

- Applicants must have completed basic training and served in the Regular Force or Primary Reserve of the Canadian Armed Forces.
- Service type (Regular Force or Primary Reserve), component, and approximate length of service must be specified in the narrative.
- Documentation such as a Certificate of Service may be requested for verification.

The Route 2 narrative should describe how military service has provided direct insight into an underserved community or population relevant to occupational therapy practice.

Indicator 4: Significant Work Experience in an OT-Relevant Setting

This indicator recognizes applicants with substantial direct experience working with populations where occupational therapy services are relevant. To qualify:

- A minimum of 500 hours of direct service in a paid or formal volunteer capacity.
- The role must involve direct, sustained engagement with individuals -- not administrative, observational, or managerial functions.
- The population served must include one or more of the following: children with disabilities; injured workers; older adults in Continuing Care or Long-Term Care; individuals experiencing homelessness; individuals in correctional systems; individuals with mental health or substance use conditions; newcomers, refugees, or recent immigrants; individuals with significant neurological or physical disabilities.
- Primary caregiving for a family member or dependent with a disability, chronic illness, or significant health condition may also qualify. When the indicator is caregiving experience, the appropriate contact person is the healthcare provider or service professional involved in the care - not a family member.

- The organization, role, and approximate hours must be named and must be consistent with the submitted CV.

General healthcare work (e.g., hospital administration, clinical observation, pharmacy, reception) does not qualify unless it involves direct, sustained engagement with one of the listed populations.

Indicator 5: Formal Certificate in Leadership Education or Training

This indicator recognizes applicants who have completed a substantive, formally assessed leadership program. To qualify, the certificate or credential must meet ALL of the following:

- Issued by a recognized post-secondary institution (university, college, or polytechnic), a recognized professional association, or an accredited training provider.
- A minimum of 30 instructional contact hours (not including independent study, practicum hours, or work-based experience). Applicants holding other certificates should review the criteria below before self-identifying under this indicator.
- Includes a formal assessment or evaluation component (examination, project, practicum, or equivalent).
- Results in a named certificate or credential upon completion.

The following do NOT qualify under this indicator, regardless of duration:

- Workplace leadership workshops, employer-sponsored professional development, orientation programs, or HR training (e.g., supervisory or management skills workshops).
- Volunteer coordinator orientation or organization-specific leadership training.
- Single-day or weekend workshops, conferences, or retreat-based programs.
- Online micro-courses or digital badges (e.g., LinkedIn Learning, Google certificates) that do not meet the contact hour and formal assessment criteria above.
- Coaching certificates from non-accredited providers.

Indicator 6: 15 University Credits in Indigenous, Gender, Anti-Racism, or EDI Studies

This indicator recognizes applicants who have completed substantive university-level coursework focused on equity, diversity, and inclusion. To qualify:

- A minimum of 15 university-level credits (equivalent to five 3-credit courses) completed at a recognized post-secondary institution.
- Each course listed must have Indigenous studies, Gender studies, Anti-Racism studies, or EDI (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion) as its primary subject matter.
- Courses must appear on an official university transcript.
- For each course, applicants must provide: course name, course number, institution, year completed, and a one-sentence description of the course's primary subject matter.

The following do NOT qualify:

- MOOC certificates, online certificates, or professional development courses (regardless of content).

- The Indigenous Canada MOOC (this fulfills the Canadian Indigenous History prerequisite, not this indicator).
- Courses where EDI, Indigenous, or gender content is secondary or supplementary (e.g., a research ethics course with one lecture on Indigenous data sovereignty).

The committee reserves the right to request a course syllabus to verify that the primary subject matter meets the intent of this indicator.

Indicator 7: Other Relevant Experience

Applicants who have direct, sustained experience that does not fit neatly into Indicators 1–6, but that has provided meaningful insight into a community with limited access to health, rehabilitation, or related services, may self-identify under this indicator. Applicants selecting Other must briefly describe the nature of their experience in Component 1 of the Route 2 narrative. The committee will assess whether the experience meets Route 2's intent.

The Route 2 Narrative Response

All applicants wishing to be considered for Route 2 must address each of the following five components as part of their application. The responses must be submitted as part of the Statement of Interest / ASRQ by the January 31 application deadline. The total word limit is 1,000 words across the first four components.

Responses that do not address all five components, or that do not include a named contact person (Component 5), will not advance to committee review.

Component 1: The Community, Population, and/or Practice Area (maximum 100 words)

Identify a specific community, population, and/or practice area that experiences significant barriers to accessing health, rehabilitation, or related services. Name it specifically -- by geography, population group, or setting. Explain, briefly, what the key barrier is.

Examples of relevant communities and barriers:

- Indigenous populations in remote or rural communities with limited local rehabilitation services
- Refugees or newcomers navigating a healthcare system in an unfamiliar language without interpreter supports
- Adults with developmental disabilities in residential or community settings where OT services are limited or absent
- Individuals experiencing chronic homelessness with significant barriers to accessing health, rehabilitation, and daily living supports
- Individuals in correctional systems with unmet occupational or rehabilitation needs
- Older adults in rural supportive care facilities with limited or no access to occupational therapy
- Children with disabilities in under-resourced schools or communities lacking therapeutic services
- Caregivers struggling to balance their own occupational needs with the needs of those for whom they provide care

*A named community, population, and/or practice area is **required**. Responses that reference underserved populations or people who face barriers without identifying a specific community will not score well on this component.*

Component 2: Your Direct Engagement (maximum 300 words)

Describe your direct, personal engagement with this community, population, and/or practice area. Your response must include all of the following:

- Your role (e.g., paid support worker, formal volunteer, caregiver, community member, patient or service user)
- The organization or setting/community, including name and location, if applicable
- The duration of your engagement (e.g., 18 months, 3 years)
- The frequency and nature of your contact (e.g., weekly direct service, daily caregiving, ongoing community membership)

This information must be consistent with your submitted CV. Engagement not reflected in your CV will not be credited. A single volunteer shift, a brief shadowing placement, or an observation experience is not sufficient.

Component 3: What You Observed and Learned (maximum 300 words)

Describe a specific unmet need you identified through your direct engagement with this community, population, and/or practice area. Explain what your involvement gave you insight into that you could not have understood through coursework or brief exposure alone. Be specific: name what you observed, describe what you came to understand, and explain what it taught you about this community's experience. We are not looking for a compelling story; we are looking for clear, grounded evidence of what you learned and why it matters.

Component 4: Connection to Occupational Therapy (maximum 300 words)

Explain specifically how this experience has prepared you to contribute to addressing the unmet need you have described as a future occupational therapist. Name the knowledge, skills, perspectives, relationships, or capabilities you developed through your lived experience. Explain how these specifically position you to contribute to OT practice with this community, not OT practice in general.

Component 5: Contact Person

Provide all of the following:

- Full name
- Role and relationship to you
- Organization, if applicable
- Contact information (phone and/or email)
- A brief description of what this person can speak to specifically, and why you have selected them

Your contact must have direct knowledge of your engagement with the community, population, and/or practice area you have described, not simply of your general character or

academic abilities. A family member is not an appropriate contact. When the experience described is caregiving, the appropriate contact is the healthcare provider or service professional involved in the care. Contacts may be reached for verification after the committee review stage.

How Route 2 Responses Are Evaluated

Narratives are assessed by trained Admissions Committee members. Reviewers focus on the quality of insight, the authenticity of connection to lived experience, and the credibility of the applicant's potential contribution to practice, not on the apparent hardship described or the applicant's perceived diversity. Responses are evaluated across four dimensions:

1. Understanding of Need,
2. Connection to Lived experience
3. Capacity to contribute
4. Connection to occupational therapy

A fifth dimension, Internal Consistency, is a threshold check, not a scored dimension. Reviewers will check that the narrative, the CV, and the contact description are consistent with one another. Inconsistencies across these three elements, or a contact whose described role does not match the experience reported, are disqualifying: files that fail this check will not advance to the lottery, regardless of their scores on Dimensions 1-4.

Scores on Dimensions 1-4 will be combined into a total Route 2 score. Applicants who meet the GPA threshold, pass the consistency check, and achieve a competitive score will be entered into the Route 2 lottery for up to 30% of available seats.