American Occupational Therapy Association

# Predictors of Student Outcomes & Implications for OT Programs

OT-ALC Session #2
10/22/2026

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# Presenters



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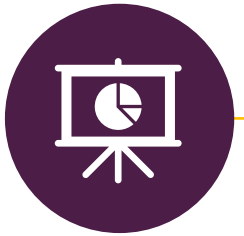
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# Objectives



Explain the methods, results, and implications of a recent scoping review about predictors of OT student outcomes.



Identify strategies to facilitate student self-regulated learning to achieve strong academic outcomes.



Identify strategies to promote emotional intelligence to achieve strong fieldwork outcomes.



Identify strategies for using exam preparation resources to achieve strong certification exam outcomes.

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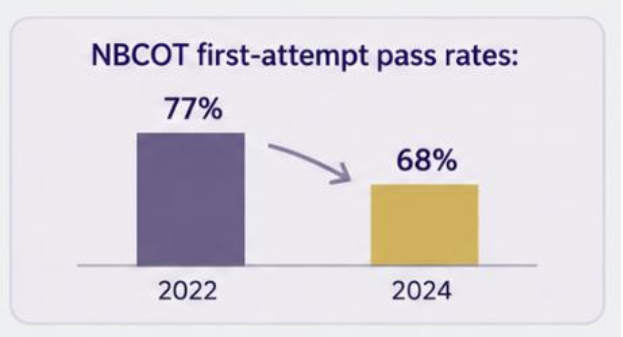
# Scoping Review Overview

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# Why Student Success in OT Education Matters

- Student success is multidimensional, extending beyond academic achievement to fieldwork performance and licensure outcomes.
- Declining NBCOT first-attempt pass rates raise concerns about student preparedness and progression.
- Traditional academic indicators, including GPA, may not adequately predict success across all stages of OT education.
- Cognitive and non-cognitive factors may contribute differently to academic, clinical, and licensure outcomes.
- Identifying meaningful predictors can inform admissions decisions, early interventions, and targeted student support.




(NBCOT, 2024; Khan et al., 2026)

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# Purpose and Conceptual Framework

## Purpose of the Review

- Identify predictors of academic success, fieldwork performance, and licensure outcomes in OT students.
- Synthesize evidence across diverse OT educational programs.
- Organize predictors using Astin's Input-Environment-Output (I-E-O) Model.
- Identify evidence gaps to inform future research and educational practices.



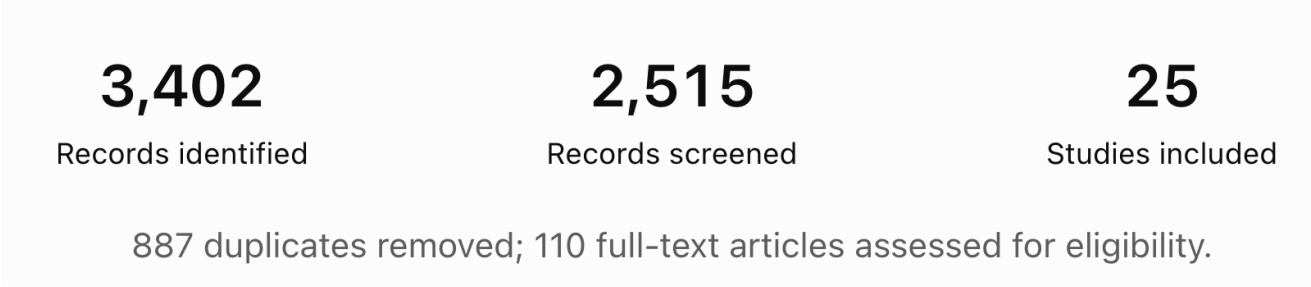

(Astin, 1993; Astin & Antonio, 2012)

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# Scoping Review Methodology

## Study Design & Search Strategy

- Design: Scoping review guided by Arksey and O'Malley (2005) and PRISMA-ScR reporting guidelines.
- Databases: MEDLINE, Embase, CINAHL, and OTSeeker.
- Search period: January 2016–January 2026.
- Eligibility: Peer-reviewed empirical studies examining predictors of OT student outcomes.
- Analysis: Predictors categorized using Astin's Input-Environment-Output (I-E-O) framework.



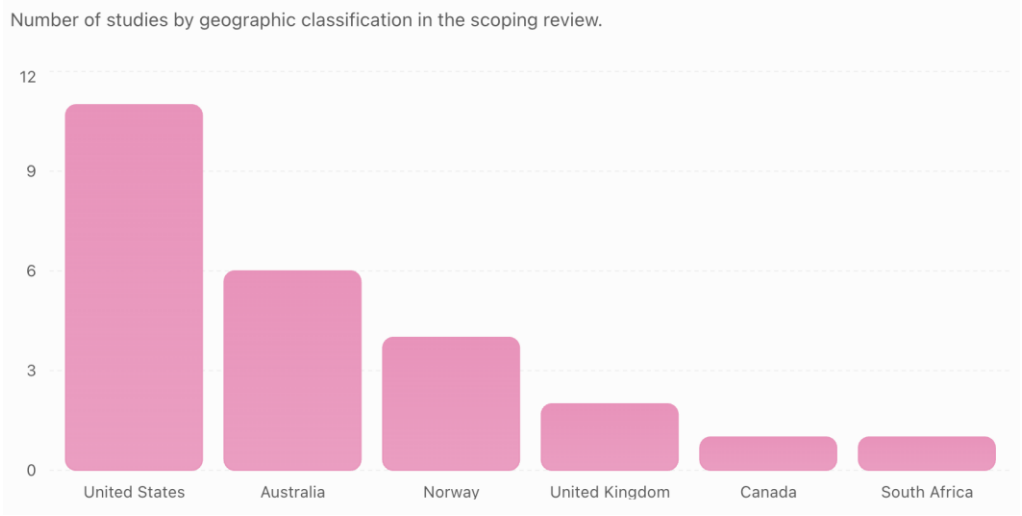

(Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Tricco et al., 2018)

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# Characteristics of Included Studies

## Overview of the Evidence

- 25 studies (2016–2025) across six countries.
- Geographic distribution: U.S. (11), Australia (6), Norway (4), UK (2), Canada (1), South Africa (1).
- Study designs: 12 quantitative, 11 retrospective, 2 mixed-methods.
- Programs: Undergraduate, master's, and entry-level OT/OTA.
- Limitation: Predominantly single-institution studies, limiting generalizability.



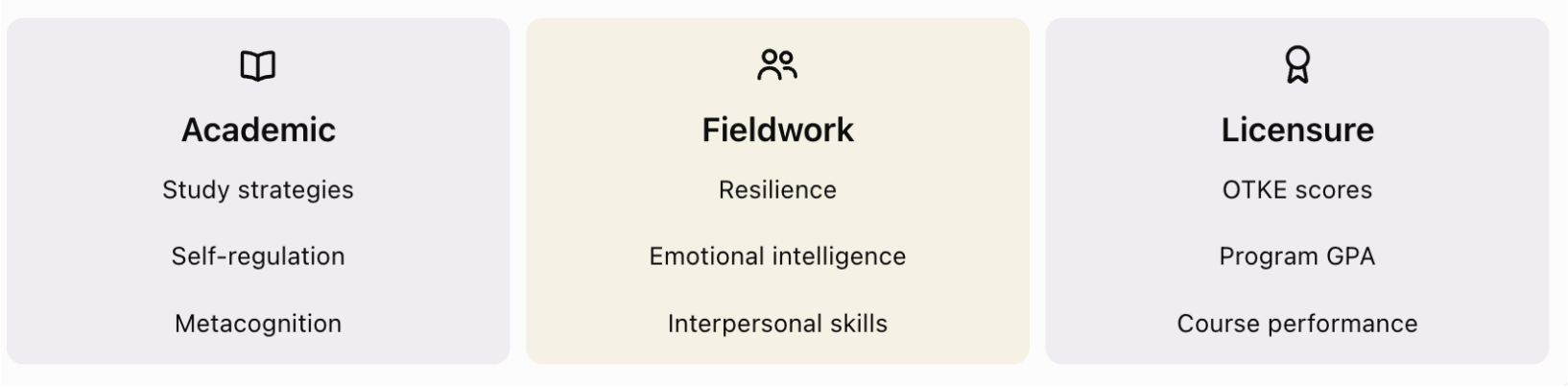

(Khan et al., 2026)

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# What Predicts OT Student Success?

## Key Findings Across Three Outcomes

- Academic Success: Study strategies, organization, and metacognition.
- Fieldwork Performance: Resilience, emotional intelligence, and interpersonal skills.
- Licensure Success: OTKE scores, program GPA, and course grades.
- Key Finding: Predictors differ by outcome; GPA alone is insufficient.




(Khan et al., 2026)

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# What Doesn't Consistently Predict Success?

## Mixed or Inconsistent Findings

- Pre-admission GPA: Inconsistent predictor across student outcomes.
- Demographics: Associations varied across studies and settings.
- Learning Environment: No significant associations identified in the reviewed studies examining these factors.
- Key Insight: Academic credentials alone may not reflect clinical or professional readiness.




(Khan et al., 2026)

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# Implications for OT Education

## Translating Evidence Into Practice

- Admissions: Consider a broader range of academic and non-cognitive indicators.
- Early Identification: Use in-program assessments to identify students needing support.
- Student Development: Strengthen study strategies, resilience, and emotional intelligence.
- Targeted Support: Align interventions with academic, fieldwork, and licensure demands.
- Program Evaluation: Monitor multiple student outcomes to inform continuous improvement.




(Khan et al., 2026)

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# Recommendations for Future Research

**Advancing Evidence on OT Student Success**

- Longitudinal Research: Examine predictors across OT education, fieldwork, and licensure.
- Multi-Institutional Studies: Include diverse programs and student populations to improve generalizability.
- Standardized Outcomes: Establish consistent measures of academic, fieldwork, and licensure success.
- Non-Cognitive Factors: Further investigate resilience, emotional intelligence, and learning strategies.
- Intervention Research: Evaluate targeted strategies to improve student performance and professional readiness.

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# Q&A

**Thank you!**

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# Self-Regulated Learning & Academic Outcomes

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# Self-Regulated Learning

The process by which students become proactive participants in their own learning process (Zimmerman, 2002)

- Involves setting goals, monitoring one's understanding, and adjusting strategies as needed
- Encompasses cognitive, metacognitive, and motivational components

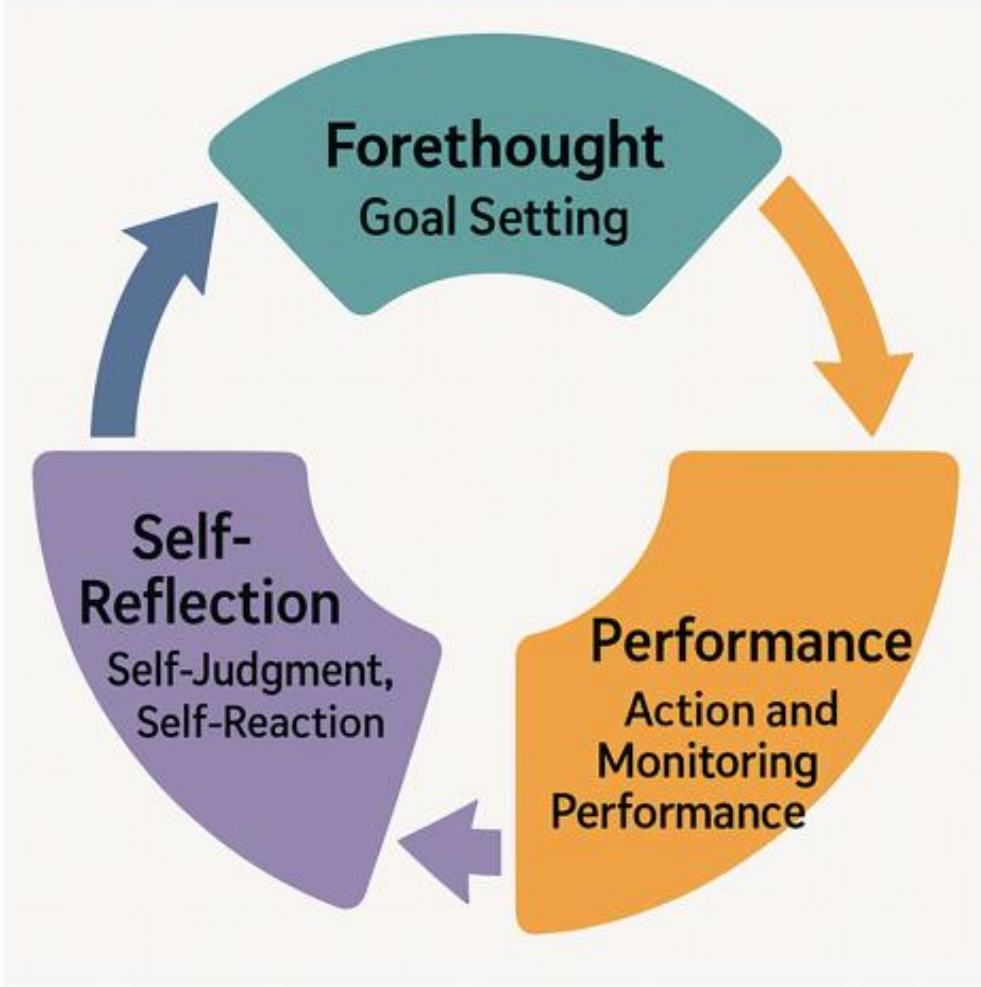
Integration of SRL activities into graduate-level course work has demonstrated increased student self-efficacy (Demiroren et al., 2016; Follmer, 2022)

- Faculty play a role in overseeing student growth in SRL through offering ongoing feedback especially for students with learning challenges and inadequate study skills (Demiroren et al., 2016)

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# Self-Regulated Learning

Self-regulated learning is a cyclical process consisting of three distinct phases - forethought, performance, and self-reflection.




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# Phases of SRL



## Forethought Phase

Analyze the task, set reasonable goals, and plan strategically

Relies on self-motivation constructs: self-efficacy, outcome expectations, intrinsic interest, and goal orientation

Prepares the learner for the performance phase



## Performance Phase

Apply strategies to stay on track (self-instruction, imagery, attention focusing, task strategies)

Involves self-observation to monitor performance and adjust strategies as needed



## Self-Reflection Phase

Self-judgment: Evaluate performance through self-assessment or feedback, and compare to goals

Reflect on successes and failures (causal attribution)

Self-reaction: Emotional responses (positive or negative) to outcomes

Involves adaptive inferences to assess what worked, what didn’t, and how to improve

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# Learning and Study Strategies Inventory

## Purpose

- Assess students' awareness, attitudes, and use of learning and study strategies related to academic success
- Provides insight into self-regulated learning processes across cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains

## Domains Measured

- Skill: Information Processing, Selecting Main Ideas, Test Strategies
- Will: Attitude, Motivation, Anxiety
- Self-Regulation: Concentration, Time Management, Self-Testing, Using Academic Resources

## Applications of LASSI in Self-Regulated Learning

- Identifies strengths and areas for targeted intervention
- Informs individualized coaching, workshops, and curricular supports
- Provides baseline and post-intervention data to evaluate self-regulated learning development

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# Self-Regulated Learning

## Workshop structure

- **AY 2025-2026**
- Occurred throughout fall quarter
- Attached to a mandatory professional development course
- Incorporated self-reflective hand-on activities and opportunities for faculty engagement

- **AY 2026-2027**
- Occurred during orientation
- Attached to mandatory welcome week activities
- Incorporated self-reflective hand-on activities and opportunities for faculty engagement



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# Self-Regulated Learning

## Sample Activities

**Personalized Action Plan**: Students were asked to evaluate their progress in the following areas

- Time management
- Applied study strategies
- Use of campus resources
- Engagement outside the classroom

In any areas where students or Program Director identified a need for improvement they where encouraged to meet with the Learning Specialist to create a customized success plan.

**The Picasso Challenge**

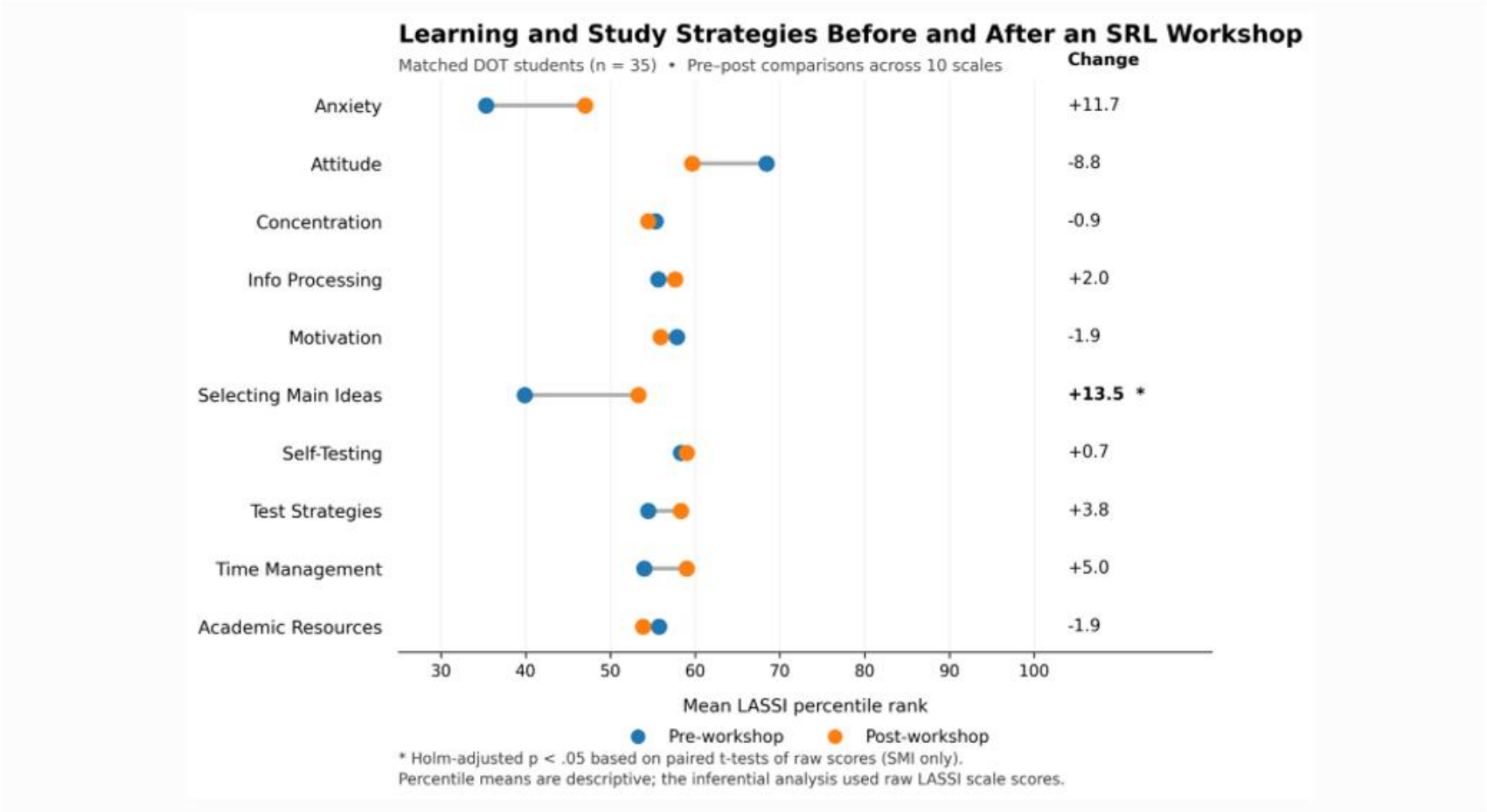
- With your groups, identify two people who will be drawing a picture.
- Those who are selected cannot communicate with each other in any way.
- The remaining group members will act as observers.
- When time starts, each designated drawer will take turns drawing a single line.
- Pass the drawing back and forth until time runs out.

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# Workshop Outcomes

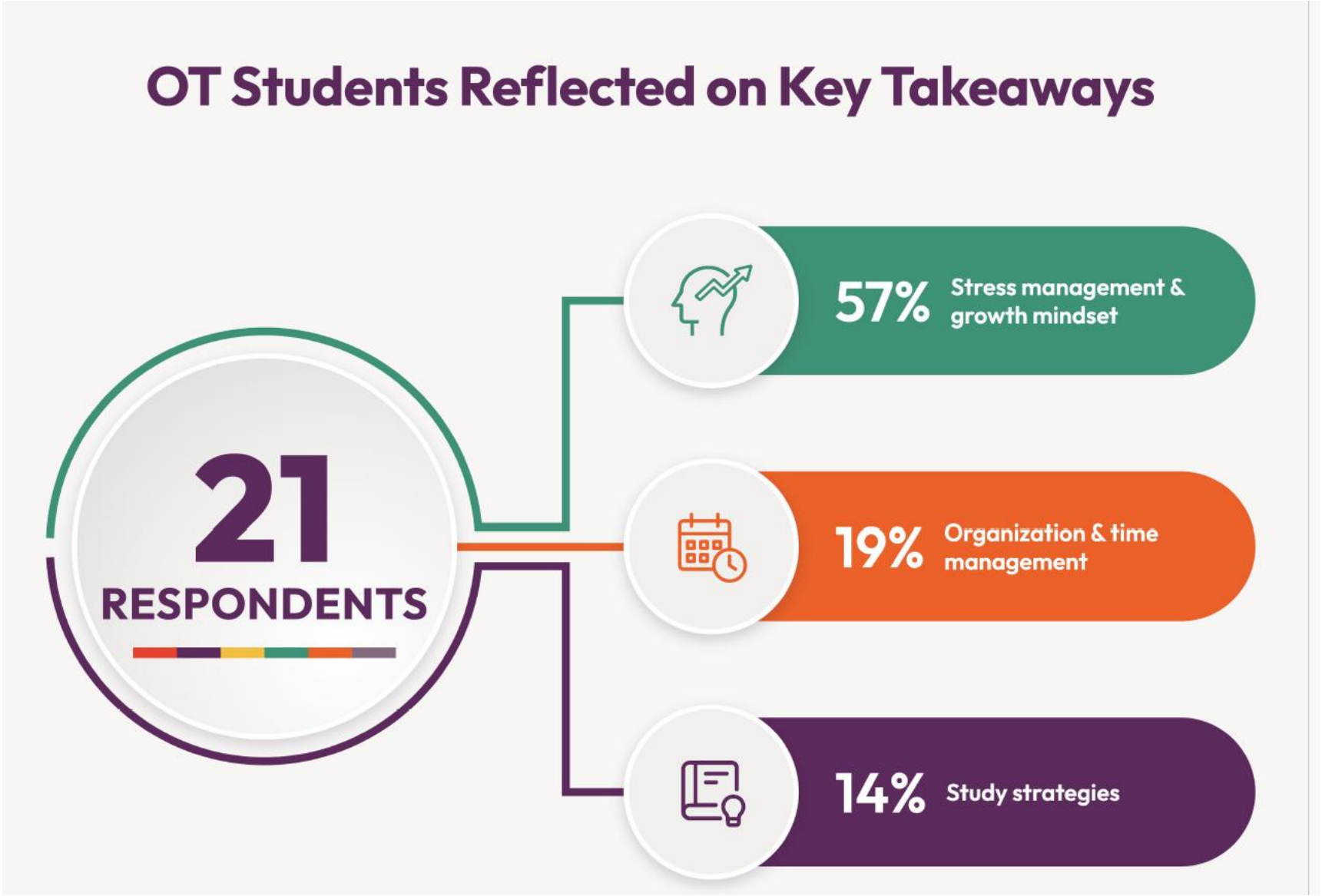
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# 2025-2026 AY

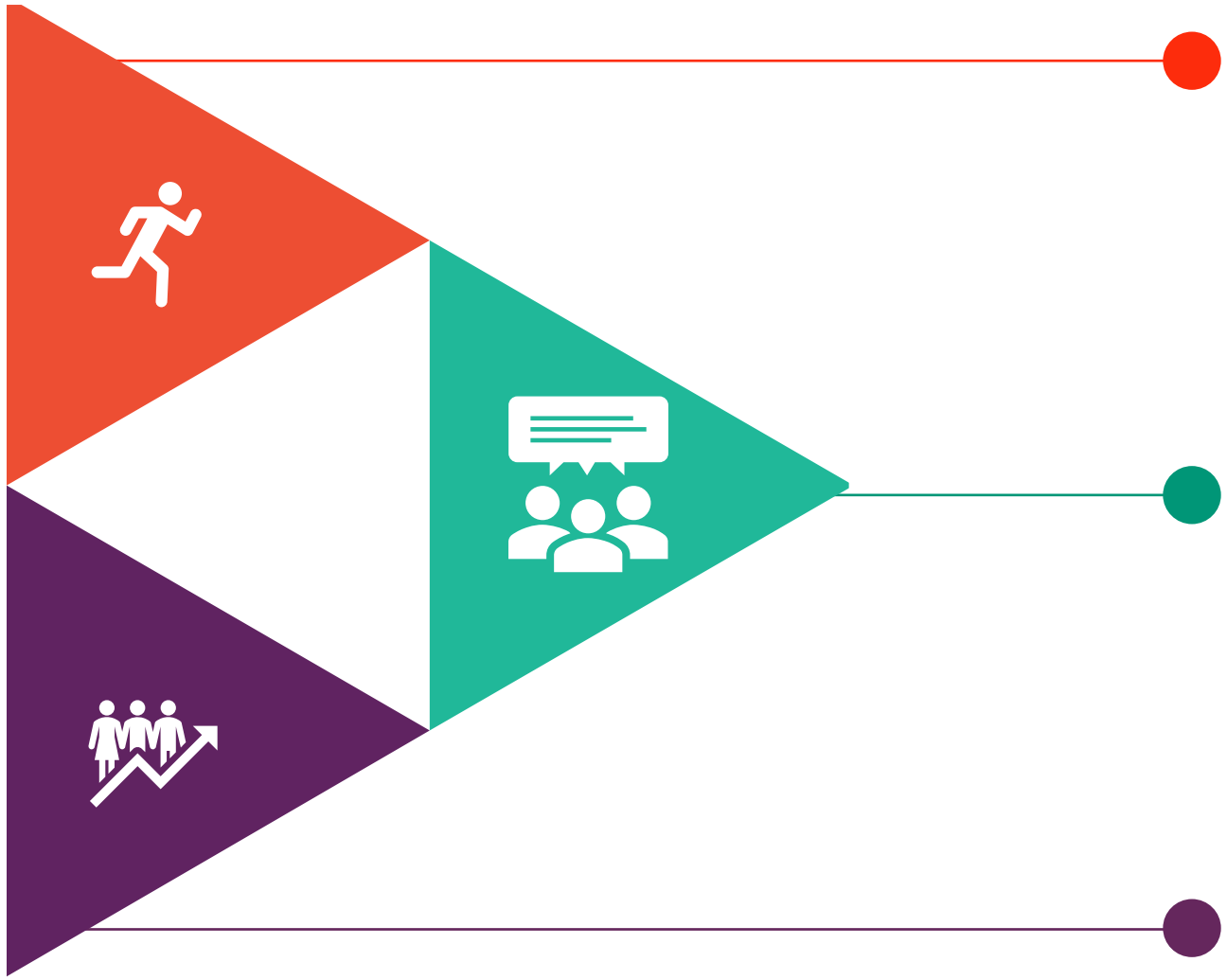



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# 2026-2027 AY




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**Early intervention**

- Encourages students to learn how to learn
- Helps students build a professional network
- Establishes a community of care

**Faculty Engagement**

- Provides course context
- Supports skill development & application
- Creates a common foundation and language for support and intervention

**Self-Assessment**

- Supports a growth mindset
- Helps teach students how to adapt and engage in positive change

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# Q&A

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# Emotional Intelligence & Fieldwork Outcomes

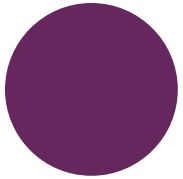
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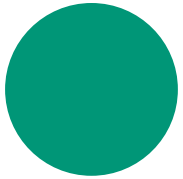
# Emotional Intelligence and Level II Fieldwork Outcomes

## What the current evidence suggests — and how we can develop EI in OT students

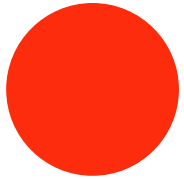
# Emotional Intelligence (EI)



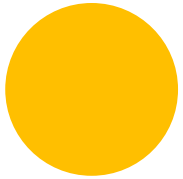
Ability to recognize your emotions



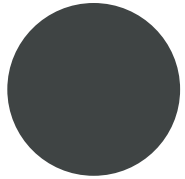
Understand what people are telling you



Realize how your emotions affect people around you



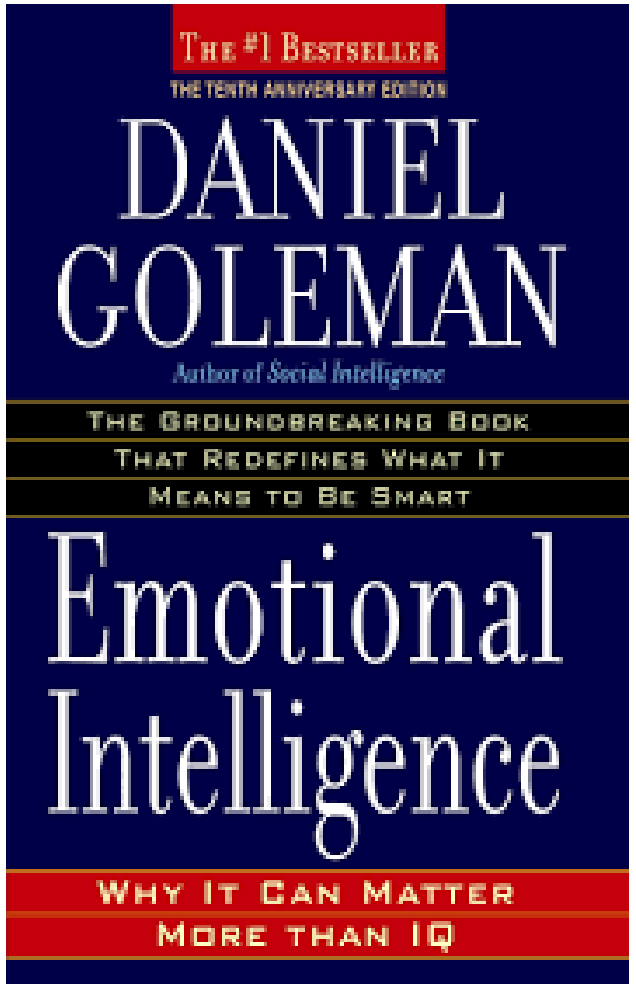
Understand how others feel



Allows you to manage relationships more effectively

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# Emotional Intelligence







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# Why EI Belongs in the Fieldwork Conversation

## Fieldwork asks students to perform relationally, not only technically.

### Clinical demands

- Read emotional and nonverbal cues
- Build therapeutic rapport
- Communicate with clients/families
- Collaborate across disciplines
- Receive and use feedback
- Regulate emotion under stress

### EI capabilities

- Emotional self-awareness
- Awareness of others
- Emotional reasoning
- Self-management / self-control
- Management of others' emotions
- Appropriate emotional expression

### Where they intersect

**Communication**

**Teamwork**

**Professional behavior**

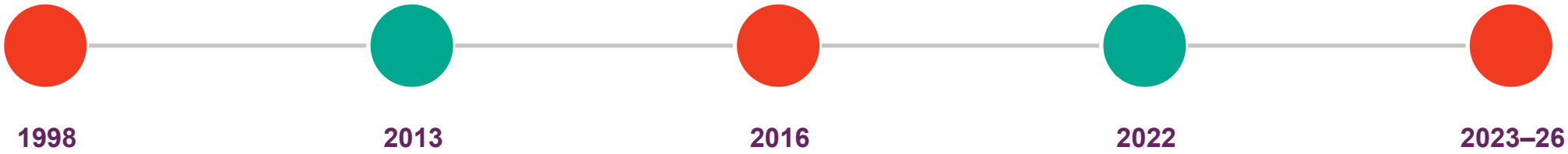
**Feedback response**

**Empathy & therapeutic use of self**

*EI constructs vary by model and instrument; avoid treating all EI measures as interchangeable.*

# The Evidence Is Positive — but Not Uniform

## The most defensible conclusion is a domain-specific association, with low-to-moderate certainty.




Interpersonal/emotional attributes varied by fieldwork setting

No global EI–FWPE link; specific EI branches linked to domains

Genos EI domains predicted communication, documentation, professional behavior

Mixed-methods study found positive EI–FWPE association

Reviews identify EI as an emerging success characteristic

**Interpretation: EI is promising as a modifiable educational target; it is not established as a stand-alone screening or causal determinant of Level II success.**

# Key OT Studies: What They Actually Found

| Study | EI measure / design | Fieldwork finding |
|---|---|---|
| Andonian (2013) | MSCEIT; OT students | No significant overall EI–FWPE relationship; selected EI branches associated with fieldwork domains. |
| Brown et al. (2016) | Genos EI; practice education | EI domains predicted communication, documentation and professional-behavior outcomes. |
| Dudzinski & Gill (2022) | Mixed methods; n=42 quantitative sample | Positive EI–fieldwork association after controlling for GPA; educator themes aligned with communication, teamwork, empathy, feedback and professionalism. |
| Wang et al. (2023) | Systematic review | EI identified among promising fieldwork predictors, but study quality and heterogeneity limit certainty. |

*Important: different EI constructs, instruments, countries, and fieldwork measures limit direct comparison.*

# Dudzinski & Gill (2022): A Clinically Meaningful Signal

## A mixed-methods design linked the quantitative association to behaviors fieldwork educators observe.

**partial r = .640**

EI and fieldwork percentile controlling for GPA

*Single-site convenience sample (n=42): interpret as an association requiring replication.*

### Fieldwork Educator Themes

- Effective communication
- Collaboration / team-player
- Empathy & therapeutic rapport
- Constructive response to feedback
- Professional behavior

# Systematic Reviews: Promising Predictor, Limited Certainty

## 2023 OT Systematic Review

14 studies; 10 addressed fieldwork performance. EI—particularly emotional reasoning and emotional management of others—was among the “promising” fieldwork predictors. However, all included studies had MERSQI scores below 14, and most were cross-sectional/exploratory.

## Broader Rehabilitation Evidence

A U.S. rehabilitation-science systematic review found conflicting EI–clinical performance results and judged certainty low. No single non-cognitive factor consistently predicted clinical or academic performance.

**Educational implication: target EI because it is clinically relevant and potentially modifiable—not because it can reliably classify who will pass or fail.**

# Accreditation Standards (ACOTE, 2023)

## TUOS

Demonstrate therapeutic use of self, including one's personality, insights, perceptions, and judgments, as part of the therapeutic process in both individual and group interaction. B.3.1.

## Communication

Demonstrate effective communication with clients, care partners, communities, and intraprofessional and interprofessional teams to support collaborative care and promote client outcomes. B.3.21.

## Teamwork

Demonstrate knowledge of intraprofessional and interprofessional team dynamics to plan, deliver, and evaluate patient- and population-centered care, programs, and policies that are safe, timely, efficient, effective, and equitable. B.3.22.

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# Why Train OT Students in EI?




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# EI Can Change During Training — but Growth Is Not Automatic

**283 therapy students followed over 16 months showed increases in total EI and multiple EI skills during extended clinical placements.**

But substantial subsets declined in emotional expression, assertiveness, self-expression, and stress tolerance.

**Experience alone is insufficient.**

Students need deliberate practice, coaching, reflection, feedback, and repeated opportunities to regulate emotion in authentic or simulated clinical situations.

# What Develops EI? Use Active, Longitudinal Learning

## The strongest curriculum signal across health professions favors practice + reflection over one-time didactics.




| NOTICE | PRACTICE | REFLECT | COACH | TRANSFER |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Emotion labeling, trigger mapping, body cues, self-assessment | Simulation, standardized patients, role-play, difficult conversations | Structured debrief, journaling, video review, critical incidents | Faculty/peer coaching, feedback language, feed-forward goals | Fieldwork learning goals, educator prompts, midpoint reassessment |

**Design principle: rehearse EI behaviors repeatedly as clinical complexity and stakes increase.**

# A Practical OT EI Curriculum: Embed It Across the Program

| Program phase | EI emphasis | Example learning activity |
|---|---|---|
| Early didactic | Self-awareness + emotion vocabulary | Trigger map; reflective prompt after client interaction lab |
| Skills / simulation | Regulation + perspective taking | Standardized-patient encounter; video-assisted debrief |
| Pre-fieldwork | Feedback + difficult conversations | Feedback role-play; “repair” after communication misstep |
| Level II fieldwork | Transfer to authentic practice | Weekly EI micro-goal + educator feed-forward prompt |
| Post-fieldwork | Integration + professional identity | Compare self-perception with observed behaviors; next-growth target |

**EI development should be longitudinal, behavioral, and tied to authentic OT performance—not isolated in a single lecture.**

# Teach the Feedback Cycle Explicitly

**Feedback tolerance is an EI behavior students can rehearse before stakes are high.**

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **REGULATE** | **CLARIFY** | **REFLECT** | **PLAN** | **CLOSE LOOP** |
| Pause; notice defensiveness or threat response | Ask for a specific behavioral example | Separate intent from impact; identify pattern | State one observable change for the next encounter | Return with evidence of change and request follow-up |

**Faculty move: grade the process of using feedback in low-stakes labs before expecting mastery on Level II.**

# Role-Play Lab: Receiving Constructive Feedback

## Teach the response before asking students to perform it under fieldwork pressure.

### FIELDWORK EDUCATOR

Deliver one specific, behavior-based concern:
“Your documentation has been late twice this week. I need notes completed before you leave.”

### STUDENT

Practice the response:
1. Pause and regulate
2. Thank / acknowledge
3. Clarify the expectation
4. Paraphrase what was heard
5. State a concrete change
6. Request follow-up

### OBSERVER

Score observable behaviors:
- Nondefensive verbal/nonverbal response
- Listening without interruption
- Accurate paraphrase
- Clarifying question
- Specific action plan
- Professional closure

**Debrief → coach one behavior → repeat the same scenario. The second attempt is where deliberate practice occurs.**

# Give Students Language for the Moment

**A regulated response does not mean agreeing with every comment—it means staying engaged enough to learn.**

| | |
|---|---|
| **ACKNOWLEDGE** | “Thank you for telling me. I want to understand what you are seeing.” |
| **CLARIFY** | “Can you give me a specific example so I can recognize the pattern?” |
| **PARAPHRASE** | “What I am hearing is that I need to ___ more consistently.” |
| **PLAN** | “For my next session, I will ___. Could you watch for that?” |
| **FOLLOW UP** | “Can we check back tomorrow so I can make sure I am improving?” |

**Then rehearse harder variants: vague feedback • feedback you disagree with • feedback delivered abruptly • repeated correction • feedback when already stressed.**

# Build an EI Skills Lab Series Before Level II

## Feedback & defensiveness

Receive corrective feedback; identify trigger; paraphrase; make a change plan.

## Difficult conversations

Address a missed deadline, boundary concern, conflict, or misunderstanding professionally.

## Empathy & perspective-taking

Respond to an upset client/family member; identify emotion and underlying need before problem-solving.

## Stress regulation

Complete a clinical task after an unexpected change; use a brief regulation strategy and reprioritize.

## Help-seeking & uncertainty

Practice saying “I am not sure,” asking for supervision, and escalating a safety concern.

## Teamwork & repair

Respond after interrupting, miscommunicating, or receiving disagreement from another discipline.

**Use the same cycle each time: PRE-BRIEF → ROLE-PLAY → DEBRIEF → FEEDBACK → REPLAY → REFLECTION.**

# Recommended Next Step: A 3-Part EI Fieldwork Readiness Bundle

1

## PRE-FIELDWORK WORKSHOP

90–120 minutes: emotion regulation, feedback, communication, and a standardized-patient challenge.

2

## FIELDWORK EI MICRO-GOALS

One observable behavior per week, reviewed with the fieldwork educator using brief feed-forward prompts.

3

## POST-FIELDWORK REFLECTION

Compare self-perception with observed behaviors; identify the next professional-development target.

**Treat EI as a developable professional skill set—not a fixed student trait.**

# Measure Growth Without Turning EI Into a Gatekeeper

### Use multiple data sources

- Validated EI measure when appropriate
- Behavioral rubric in simulation
- Reflective self-assessment
- Peer/faculty feedback
- Fieldwork educator observations

### Track behaviors, not labels

Focus on recognizing cues, regulating responses, communicating under stress, collaboration, feedback use, empathy, and professionalism.

### Avoid overreach

Do not infer clinical competence from a single EI score. Current evidence is heterogeneous, largely observational, and instrument-dependent; admissions use requires stronger validation and fairness evidence.

# Takeaways

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 01 | **EI is relevant** | OT evidence supports an association with fieldwork performance, especially interpersonal/professional domains. |
| 02 | **It is not deterministic** | Evidence is heterogeneous and mostly observational; avoid causal claims and single-score gatekeeping. |
| 03 | **Specific skills matter** | Emotional reasoning, awareness of others, emotion management, communication, teamwork and feedback response recur. |
| 04 | **EI is teachable** | Deliberate practice, simulation, reflection, coaching and clinical exposure can support growth. |
| 05 | **Embed, then evaluate** | Build EI longitudinally and measure transfer to observable fieldwork behaviors. |

# Selected Evidence


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# Q&A

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# NBCOT OTKE & Exam Outcomes

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# Use of the OTKE at Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center

- Description of how the OTKE is used
- Efforts to prepare students for the NBCOT exam
- NBCOT exam outcomes
- Lessons learned and suggestions

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# Q&A

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# Thank you!

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