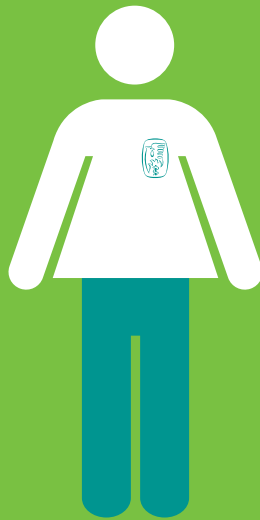


# OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY



## CAREER HANDBOOK 2017

**Occupational Therapy**

*helping people to live life their way*

College of  
Occupational  
Therapists

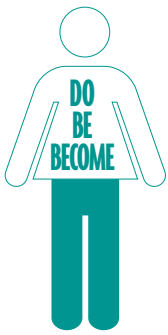




# OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

## CAREER HANDBOOK 2017

The occupational therapist role	4
What do occupational therapists do?	5
Becoming an occupational therapist	6
What qualifications do I need to become an occupational therapist?	7
Applying for University	8–9
What is included in an occupational therapy programme?	10
Why study occupational therapy?	11
Frequently asked questions	12–13
International students	14



#### OCCUPATIONS MIGHT BE:

- RIDING A BIKE
- GOING TO SCHOOL OR WORK
- ATTENDING TO SELF-CARE
- MEETING FRIENDS OR PARTICIPATING IN A COMMUNITY GROUP
- COOKING A MEAL

# THE OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST ROLE

We are all 'occupational beings', we like to 'do' and 'be' and 'become'. Occupational therapists work with people of all ages to find ways that will enable them to continue to do things that help to define their roles and allow them to live life the way they want.

## WHAT ARE OCCUPATIONS?

When occupational therapists talk about 'occupation', we don't just mean paid work or careers. We are talking about the occupations people do every day and affect their health and wellbeing. Occupations may form important and complex routines, roles and daily responsibilities. Occupational therapy is unique, because it is the only profession that uses occupation as a therapeutic tool to improve people's health, wellbeing and quality of life.

## WHEN MIGHT SOMEONE NEED AN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST?

Sometimes illness, disability, getting older or even a change in personal living circumstances may mean it becomes more difficult to be involved in the normal everyday routines and occupations which people or groups are used to taking part in. Occupational therapists may be needed if the following arises, for example: a cardiovascular accident (CVA); living with cerebral palsy; age related cognitive impairments; refugees seeking asylum.

Occupational therapists use core skills such as activity analysis and environmental adaptation.

## WHERE CAN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS WORK?





# WHAT DO OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS DO?



*"I find ways for children to participate in day-to-day activities, such as playing, dressing themselves, or having lunch at school."*



*"I help people with dementia find new ways to continue with their daily routines and to live well."*



*"I help people who have had an illness learn how to do everyday activities in different ways, like taking a bath, shaving or cooking a meal."*



*"I work with people experiencing exclusion from society to develop skills to prepare for re-engaging with their community."*

## A CASE STUDY OF AN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST'S JOURNEY



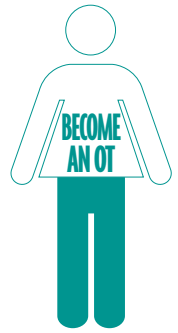
*"I found the profession of occupational therapy whilst at a careers library at my sixth form college. My 20 year career has given me a range of opportunities and taken my career in exciting directions. I spent a number of years working in large hospitals, including in intensive care, the acute wards and in neuro-rehabilitation. My specialist field is working with people with head injuries and stroke. My knowledge of occupation, how the body works and the role of the environment, helps me to understand how someone might struggle with day to day tasks and also identify what they are capable of doing to enable them to do their day to day tasks."*

*After completing my Master's degree in Neuro-rehabilitation, I moved into the university sector where I studied for my PhD and became a lecturer in occupational therapy. I studied for a post graduate certificate to be able to teach in Higher Education. As a researcher I have published a number of articles, presented at international conferences and written various book chapters. My first book is coming out next year and I'm very excited about that too.*

*Now I work for the professional body, The College of Occupational Therapists (COT), supporting our members with their own learning. It's another exciting job opportunity that arose so, when I saw it, I went for it and have been at COT since February 2016. I hope my case study shows that, although I don't have a firm career path beyond being an occupational therapist, the important thing for me is that I find roles where I keep learning and to walk through the right doors when they open."*

**DR STEPHANIE TEMPEST, EDUCATION MANAGER FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AT THE COLLEGE OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS**

# BECOMING AN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST



**KELLY HISCOX BSC (HONS),  
EDUCATION OFFICER (PRE-  
REGISTRATION LIAISON),  
COLLEGE OF OCCUPATIONAL  
THERAPISTS  
PROVIDES SOME USEFUL  
ADVICE IF YOU'RE  
CONSIDERING TO STUDY  
OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY**

*"If, like me, you found out about occupational therapy after completing your GCSEs, it is important to consider what A-level subjects could be helpful for your degree. At A-level I studied Psychology, Sociology, Health and Social Care and Media Studies.*

*All of these subjects supported me throughout my degree. Psychology increased my knowledge of the brain and human behaviour. Sociology encouraged me to write critically in assignments. Health and Social Care provided me with anatomy and physiology knowledge. Media Studies increased my creative skills."*



- You will need five GCSE's at A–C, including English, Maths and often Science.
- Consider your A-level, BTEC, HNC and Baccalaureate choices. Universities sometimes require a Science A-level to study Occupational Therapy.
- Entry requirements obtained at A-level vary between obtaining AAB to CC at A2, depending on the university.
- It's useful to look at each university's criteria for the desired attributes of their students. Desired attributes may include: patience, team working skills and good written and communication skills.
- Are there any experiences that you have that could be useful and make you stand out from other applicants? For example volunteering, community work or overseas experiences.
- Also, you should be aware of any other requirements, such as a period of work experience with a practising occupational therapist or evidence that you have met an occupational therapist, to learn more about the profession.

*Each university will their set academic and non-academic requirements, so visit each university's website.*

# WHAT QUALIFICATIONS DO I NEED TO BECOME AN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST?

You need to complete a pre-registration occupational therapy degree programme to practise as an occupational therapist.

Type of occupational therapy programme	Duration of the programme	Attendance required on the programme
Full time BSc (Hons) degree programme	3 years 4 years in Scotland	Full time
Part-time BSc (Hons) degree programme	4 years	2 days a week You do not need to be employed in health and social care to be considered for this route
In-service BSc (Hons) degree programme	4 years	2 days a week For students who work in health and social care and have the support of their employers to obtain the qualification whilst continuing to work
Postgraduate programme	2 years	Full time For those who have obtained a previous degree. This programme will award a postgraduate diploma or MSc in occupational therapy





# APPLYING FOR UNIVERSITY

## THE PERSONAL STATEMENT

When applying for an occupational therapy programme, either through UCAS or to the university direct, you will be asked to write a personal statement. This is your opportunity to stand out. In your personal statement make sure you:

- explain why you are interested in occupational therapy as a career;
- describe any experiences you have of working in, and/or visiting, occupational therapy departments, and what you think you gained from the experience;
- outline your personal qualities and skills and try to relate these to what may be required of you as an occupational therapist;
- provide a brief account of your interests.

### TIPS FOR COMPLETING YOUR APPLICATION

DO YOUR RESEARCH: TALK TO AN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST TO INCREASE YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROFESSION

IF POSSIBLE, FIND REFEREES WHO KNOW ABOUT OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

VISIT THE COLLEGE OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS WEBSITE. THERE IS LOTS OF USEFUL INFORMATION AND RESOURCES ON THE PROFESSION [WWW.COT.CO.UK](http://WWW.COT.CO.UK)

DOUBLE CHECK THAT ALL THE INFORMATION YOU SUBMIT IS CORRECT, WITH NO SPELLING OR GRAMMATICAL ERRORS

## APPLYING FOR A UNIVERSITY PLACE

Applications to three or four year-full-time pre-registration occupational therapy programmes should be made through UCAS (Universities and College Admissions Service) at the following address:

**UCAS, Rosehill, New Barn Lane, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, GL52 3LZ  
Tel: 0871 468 0468 [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)**

Applications to two-year accelerated programmes and four-year part-time/in-service routes should be made direct to the university. Check your chosen university websites for deadlines.

## REGISTERING WITH THE HEALTH AND CARE PROFESSIONS COUNCIL (HCPC)

The HCPC is the regulatory body for the allied health professions (AHPs) in the UK. It has been established to protect the public.

Occupational therapy is a protected regulated profession. To be an occupational therapist, you need to register with the HCPC. All pre-registration occupational therapy degree programmes must be approved by the HCPC to indicate they meet their standards of education, training and proficiency.

## WHERE CAN I STUDY OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY?

There are 32 universities across the UK that deliver pre-registration occupational therapy programmes accredited by the College of Occupational Therapists.

Please see the table opposite which lists the programmes currently accredited by the College of Occupational Therapists as of 31 July 2016.



		3 year full-time BSc (Hons)	4/5 year part-time/ in-service BSc (Hons)	Accelerated e.g. BSc/MSc (refer to entry requirements)
<b>ENGLAND</b>				
Bournemouth	Bournemouth University	✓		MSc
Bradford	University of Bradford	✓		
Bristol	University of the West of England	✓		
Canterbury (and Chatham)	Canterbury Christ Church University*	✓		
Colchester	University of Essex	✓	✓	MSc
Coventry (and Staffordshire)	Coventry University*	✓	✓	
Derby	University of Derby	✓		MSc
Eastbourne	University of Brighton		✓	MSc
Huddersfield	University of Huddersfield	✓		
Kingston	Kingston University London/St Georges University of London	✓**		
Lancaster (and Carlisle)	University of Cumbria*	✓	✓	MSc
Leeds	Leeds Beckett University			MSc
Liverpool	The University of Liverpool	✓		
London/Uxbridge	Brunel University London	✓		MSc
London/Southwark	London South Bank University	✓	✓	PG Dip, MSc
Middlesbrough	Teesside University	✓		PG Dip, MSc
Newcastle	Northumbria University	✓		MSc
Northampton	The University of Northampton	✓	✓	
Norwich	University of East Anglia	✓		MSc
Oxford	Oxford Brookes University	✓	✓	MSc
Plymouth	Plymouth University	✓		MSc
Salford	University of Salford	✓	✓	
Sheffield (and Grantham)	Sheffield Hallam University*	✓		MSc, BSc (Hons)
Southampton	University of Southampton	✓	✓	MSc
Worcester	University of Worcester	✓		
York	York St John University	✓	✓	MSc**

## NORTHERN IRELAND

Jordanstown	Ulster University	✓		
-------------	-------------------	---	--	--

## SCOTLAND

Aberdeen	The Robert Gordon University	4 years		
Edinburgh	Queen Margaret University	4 years		MSc
Glasgow	Glasgow Caledonian University	4 years		MSc

## WALES

Cardiff	Cardiff University	✓		PG Dip
Wrexham	Glyndŵr University	✓		

\*Programmes offered by these universities are available at more than one location \*\*Pending accreditation

## RECOGNISED SUPPORT WORKER PROGRAMMES

### SCOTLAND

#### Organisation

Glasgow Clyde College (full-time/distance learning)

#### Qualifications

PDA Occupational Therapy Support  
HNC Occupational Therapy Support

### WALES

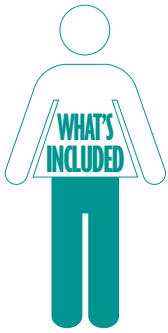
#### Awarding body

Agored Cymru

#### Qualifications

Level 3 Diploma in Occupational Therapy Support

FOR INFORMATION ON INDIVIDUAL PROGRAMMES, VISIT THE RELEVANT UNIVERSITY WEBSITES



# WHAT IS INCLUDED IN AN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PROGRAMME?

## OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PROGRAMMES COMBINE BOTH ACADEMIC STUDY AND PRACTICAL LEARNING

### Academic study

- Biological sciences
- Ergonomics
- Behavioural sciences
- Management and leadership
- Therapeutic interventions
- Environmental adaptations
- Research
- Occupational therapy knowledge and skills
- Core skills
- Humanities
- And lots more, such as public health agenda, occupational science.

### Practical learning

A minimum of 1,000 hours (approximately one-third of the programme) is required to be spent on practice placements, where you put into practice all the theory and knowledge you have learnt at university.

On placement, you may work in physical rehabilitation, learning disabilities, mental health and social care or in the voluntary sector.

During your practice placements, you will be under the supervision of a qualified occupational therapist. By the time you are in your final year, you will see service users on your own.



## THE COLLEGE OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS WHO ARE THE COLLEGE OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS?

The College is the professional body and sets the practice and educational standards for occupational therapy and represents the interests of the profession across the UK and internationally.

## THE COLLEGE OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS' ROLE IN ACCREDITATION

The College also has delegated authority to grant the approval of the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT) on pre-registration programmes in the UK. The College's accreditation of any pre-registration programme is the mechanism for this approval.



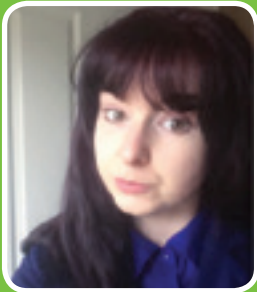
Recognition by the World Federation of Occupational Therapists means your qualification will be accepted in over 60 countries!



# WHY STUDY OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY? WHAT MAKES THE PROFESSION SO SPECIAL AND APPEALING?

- Occupational therapists can work in diverse settings, and with lots of different people.
- We help people engage in their most meaningful occupations.
- We are the only profession that uses occupation as a therapeutic tool.
- We have a complex understanding of the value of occupations on people's health, wellbeing and quality of life.
- We are trained and skilled at activity analyses that helps to break down everyday tasks into manageable and approachable sub-tasks.

## WHAT DO OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY STUDENTS SAY?



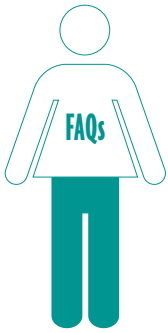
*"I was drawn to study occupational therapy as it is unique in the way that it is truly holistic when assessing the functional abilities and needs of clients. I love that all occupational therapists, no matter what service they work in, have the same transferable core skills and all work to enable people to do what is meaningful to them. As a student occupational therapist, I learnt the value of evidence-based practice and how it underpins our work. Being an occupational therapist gives you the opportunity to make a real difference to people's lives by promoting their independence."*

**NATALIE GREENWELL, FINAL YEAR OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY STUDENT, TEESSIDE UNIVERSITY (2016)**



*"I love studying occupational therapy as the answers are never right in front of you. You have to be creative and find solutions to the challenges that face people on a daily basis to improve their quality of life. I have worked in several practice areas including stroke, children and mental health. Occupational therapists work holistically, taking into account clients' mental and physical health needs. I think that there should be more male OTs, as they offer another perspective that is valued by clients... so if you want to improve someone's quality of life, occupational therapy is the profession for you!"*

**SÉAMUS HOGAN, FINAL YEAR OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY STUDENT, ULSTER UNIVERSITY (2015)**



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## WHERE CAN I FIND OUT ABOUT FINANCIAL SUPPORT?

In light of the current educational climate, financial support for students might be subject to change, therefore the links provided below should deliver the most up to date information:

- **GOV.UK: [www.gov.uk/apply-for-student-finance](http://www.gov.uk/apply-for-student-finance)**  
For information on how to apply for student finance support in all four countries.
- **Department of Health: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-health](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-health)**  
For the latest financial information for Allied Health Care students.
- **The College of Occupational Therapists: [www.cot.co.uk](http://www.cot.co.uk)**  
For up-to-date information and advice on NHS bursaries in England, and financial support for occupational therapy students.

## HOW MUCH DO OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS EARN?

- A newly qualified occupational therapist can earn in the region of £21,909.
- A more experienced occupational therapist can earn over £40,000.
- A consultant occupational therapist can earn between £66,500 and £82,000.

*(High cost area supplements are also available for those working in the London area)*

## WHAT ARE THE WORKING HOURS?

Increasingly, services will offer a 7 day week occupational therapy provision, which offers flexibility in working hours.

## I HAVE NOT STUDIED FOR A WHILE. CAN I APPLY?

All programmes welcome applications from career changers. The individual universities will advise on how to prepare for study. If you have not studied for a while, you are required to do a foundation degree or access course in a related field, such as health and social care, to help you prepare for the return to academic study. Visit the university websites for more information.

## CAN I STUDY OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY THROUGH DISTANCE LEARNING?

No, it is not possible to study to become an occupational therapist via distance learning as you are required to spend a number of hours on practice placements. Therefore, there are no courses available at evenings, weekends or online, due to the skills and competency based nature of the courses. To train as an occupational therapist, you need to attend university and complete a minimum of 1,000 hours of practice placements.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## CAN THE COLLEGE RECOMMEND A PARTICULAR PROGRAMME?

All university occupational therapy programmes in the UK have to be approved by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), the independent regulatory body. This is the minimum requirement for practising as an occupational therapist. All programmes are currently accredited by the College of Occupational Therapists and the World Federation of Occupational Therapists, ensuring that graduates are fit for purpose and fit to practise.

## WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN IN-SERVICE PROGRAMMES AND PART-TIME PROGRAMMES?

Some programmes provide access to study for professional qualifications to people who are already working in health and social care, and these are called 'in-service'. Other programmes enable students to study part-time, irrespective of their employment status. Both programmes of study include daily or weekly attendance, and all include full-time periods of practice placements.

## HOW DO I ARRANGE WORK EXPERIENCE?

- Use your network – do you know someone who knows an occupational therapist?
- Contact your local hospital or social services for information on visiting institutions where occupational therapists work.
- Residential nursing homes, homeless shelters or charities may also employ occupational therapists who could spend time discussing their role with you.
- Visit the College of Occupational Therapists website for more information and advice.

## DO THE UNIVERSITIES CHECK FOR CRIMINAL RECORDS?

Yes, enhanced disclosure and barring checks will be required before taking up a place on a university programme. This procedure is initiated by the university.

## WILL I NEED TO HAVE A HEALTH CHECK BEFORE STARTING THE PROGRAMME?

All students will be required to undertake a health check, and you may have to pay for some vaccinations before going on a placement. The university will provide further details.

## I ALREADY KNOW I WANT TO WORK WITH A SPECIFIC GROUP OF SERVICE USERS. DO I STILL HAVE TO COMPLETE A PRACTICE PLACEMENT IN ANOTHER PRACTICE SETTING?

Yes, it is the university's responsibility to provide you with a range of practice placement experiences. Although you may develop a preference for a particular area of occupational therapy practice during your time as a student, you will be expected to complete placements in a range of different settings.

## CAN I TRAIN ON THE JOB RATHER THAN DOING A DEGREE (OR OTHER POSSIBLE TRAINING ROUTES)?

To become an occupational therapist, individuals need to complete what is termed a "pre-registration" degree programme. At the end of the study programme you are required to register with our regulator, the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), to be able to practise as an occupational therapist. There are no apprenticeships but the 'in-service programme' may be an option. Visit the university websites for more information.



## INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

### I AM AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT. CAN I STILL STUDY OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY IN THE UK?

International students can find information on the entry requirements for each university in the course listings at [www.cot.co.uk](http://www.cot.co.uk). For more information, please contact the university directly.

### WHERE ELSE CAN I GO TO GET MORE INFORMATION?

The UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) produces guidance notes for international students wishing to study in the UK. Visit [www.ukcisa.org.uk/](http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/) or write to UKCISA, 9–17 St Albans Place, London N1 0NX or call +44 (0)20 7288 4330.

### THE BRITISH COUNCIL

The British Council provides information for international students wishing to study in the UK. Visit [www.britishcouncil.org](http://www.britishcouncil.org)

### INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION FINANCIAL AID (IEFA)

IEFA provides information on financial aid, scholarships and grant information for international students wishing to study abroad. Visit [www.iefaf.org](http://www.iefaf.org)

While all UK pre-registration occupational therapy courses are accredited by the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT), if you are an international student, this does not automatically mean you will be able to register and work in your home country. You may need to apply, submit documentation, complete extra study and sit exams, as each country sets its requirements differently.

As the professional body, the College of Occupational Therapists does not deliver any programmes, so does not participate in the Erasmus programme or organise internships. You would need to contact the universities directly.





# OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

HELPING PEOPLE TO LIVE LIFE THEIR WAY

[www.COT.co.uk/careers](http://www.COT.co.uk/careers)

**College of Occupational Therapists Limited**  
*The professional body for occupational therapy staff*

(The College of Occupational Therapists is the trading name and a subsidiary of the British Association of Occupational Therapists)

© 2016 College of Occupational Therapists Ltd. A registered charity in England and Wales (No. 275119) and in Scotland (No. SCO39573) and a company registered in England (No. 1347374)

College of  
Occupational  
Therapists

