

Professional standards for occupational therapy practice, conduct and ethics

Audit tool Section 6

Principles and standards – capability and fitness to practise

Introduction – reviewing your practice or your service

The *Professional standards for occupational therapy practice, conduct and ethics* (Royal College of Occupational Therapists 2021), hereafter known as the 'Standards', describe the essential practice, behaviours and values which you have a responsibility to abide by at all times. They may be taken as appropriate standards of reasonable care, as defined by the professional body. You can use the standards as an informative and convenient way to monitor and maintain your professional practice as an individual. This process will identify the areas where you meet the professional requirements and any areas where you need to take action to improve your performance. This will also help you to meet the requirements of the Health and Care Professions Council. The results of monitoring and improving your practice can be included in your continuing professional development (CPD) portfolio, along with your other evidence of learning and development.

The Standards can also be used as a benchmark against which to scrutinise your service as a whole. This would enable you to gather data for yourselves and others who have an interest or investment in the service.

These audit forms are based upon the full Standards document (RCOT 2021). Please refer to the full document as you review your practice or service. Please note that the numbering used in these forms correlates to that used in the full document.

Each standard statement is written as a description of the expected action/behaviour. If you don't do it, you are not meeting the standard, although you may have a justifiable reason if this is the case. These forms allow you to answer 'Yes' or 'No' to each statement. Some statements have multiple sub-sections, each of which you need to consider. If there are some you do not meet and you have no justifiable reason, you do not meet the standard. You are asked to identify what evidence supports your answer. If required, you can describe any action needed to meet the standard. If there are standards that are not relevant to your practice, note this in the form. You, or any other reader, will then know that it is not due to underperformance.

Some of the statements in the Standards define the ethical or professional principles underpinning occupational therapy. Although not written in the form of a standard, they are still statements against which you can reflect upon your practice.

The audit forms have been grouped into the sections of the full document, which can be downloaded separately. Refer to the Contents page of the full document to see what is included in each section.

Terminology and language

A number of terms are used in this document for which you may need a definition. Please refer to page 1 and Section 7 of the full Standards (RCOT 2021) for an explanation of the terminology and language used. Considering the breadth of the profession, you may need a degree of interpretation when applying these terms to your individual scope of practice or work setting.

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6.1 Fitness to practise					
The HCPC refer to a practitioner's 'fitness to practise', which means you have the skills, knowledge, experience, character and health to practise safely and effectively (HCPC 2017b, p4). In order to remain competent, you need to keep your skills and knowledge up-to-date and relevant to your level and scope of practice. You also need to be attentive to and look after your own physical and mental health and wellbeing.					
6.2 Your professional competence					
	Statement	Y	N	What is your evidence for this?	Action to be taken, by whom and by when?
6.2.1	You only provide services and use techniques for which you are qualified by your professional education, ongoing learning and/or experience. These must be within your professional competence, appropriate to the needs of those who access the service, and relate to your terms of employment.				
6.2.2	You have sufficient knowledge, skills and experience to make reliable professional judgements suitable to your level of responsibility and scope of practice.				
6.2.3	You seek advice or refer to another professional when you do not have sufficient knowledge and/or skills.				
6.2.4	You are attentive to and abide by the current legislation, guidance and standards that are relevant to your level and scope of practice and place of work.				
6.2.5	You make yourself aware of developments within the profession and current research, relevant to your level and scope of practice, applying these where appropriate and possible.				

6.3 Maintaining and expanding your capability					
	Statement	Y	N	What is your evidence for this?	Action to be taken, by whom and by when?
6.3.1	You continuously maintain high standards in your professional knowledge, skills and conduct across the four pillars of practice: Professional Practice; Facilitation of Learning; Leadership; and Evidence, Research and Development (RCOT 2021b).				
6.3.2	You reflect on and apply the <i>Principles for continuing professional development and lifelong learning in health and social care</i> (Interprofessional CPD and Lifelong Learning UK Working Group 2019). The five principles state that continuing professional development (CPD) and lifelong learning should: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. be each person's responsibility and be made possible and supported by your employer; 2. benefit service users; 3. improve the quality of service delivery; 4. be balanced and relevant to each person's area of practice or employment; and 5. be recorded and show the effect on each person's area of practice. (Interprofessional CPD and Lifelong Learning UK Working Group 2019, p6)				
6.3.3	You remain up to date with any changes to legislation, guidance and standards, both general and specific to your level and scope of practice.				

6.3.4	You remain up to date with professional developments, guidance and research, both general and specific to your level and scope of practice.				
6.3.5	You participate in any statutory and mandatory training required for your work.				
6.3.6	You seek to extend your capabilities, across all four Pillars of Practice, through post-graduate study which may or may not be award bearing.				
6.3.7	You maintain a continuous, up-to-date and accurate record of your CPD activities according to the requirements of the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC 2017a, p5).				
6.3.8	As a practitioner, you receive and/or provide regular professional supervision and appraisal, where critical reflection is used to review practice. This may be provided locally or via long-arm support.				
6.3.9	You support the learning and development of colleagues and the profession by sharing your knowledge, skills and experience.				
6.3.10	You keep up to date with digital skills, understanding the scope, benefits and potential impact of emerging digital technologies to ensure that you can make best use of what is available.				

For further information about continuing professional development, please refer to the Interprofessional CPD and Lifelong Learning UK Working Group (2019) *Principles for continuing professional development and lifelong learning in health and social care*.

6.4 Changing roles and responsibilities					
	Statement	Y	N	What is your evidence for this?	Action to be taken, by whom and by when?
6.4.1	If you seek or are asked to work in areas within which you have less experience, you ensure that you have adequate skills and knowledge for safe and effective practice and that you have access to appropriate supervision and support (See Section 6, point 6.2).				
6.4.2	You assess any possible risks in taking on a different role or responsibilities, to ensure that you provide a safe service.				
6.4.3	If you are asked to act up or cover for an absent colleague, or if you are asked to take on additional tasks, such duties are only undertaken after discussion, considering additional planning, support, supervision and/or learning and development requirements.*				
6.4.4	You ensure that adequate support and learning opportunities are provided to enable you to carry out any additional tasks or responsibilities safely and effectively.				
6.4.5	You formally raise any concerns you may have about your capability to carry out any additional tasks or responsibilities.				
6.4.6	If you find that you cannot agree to such a request, you contact your local union representative for advice and support where necessary.				

* Circumstances may require you to be flexible in what you do. You need to use your professional judgement to remain safe in your practice and always work in the best interest of those who access the service. It is the responsibility of the organisations in which you work to ensure you are supported to do this (NHS England et al 2020).

6.5 Delegation					
	Statement	Y	N	What is your evidence for this?	Action to be taken, by whom and by when?
6.5.1	When you delegate interventions or other procedures, you ensure that the person to whom you are delegating is competent to carry them out.				
6.5.2	You provide appropriate supervision and support for the individual to whom you have delegated the task/s.				
6.5.3	Although all registered practitioners are autonomous professionals, responsible for their own practice and professional judgement; you, as delegating practitioner, retain ultimate accountability for any actions taken.				

6.6 The capability of colleagues					
	Statement	Y	N	What is your evidence for this?	Action to be taken, by whom and by when?
6.6.1	<p>Should you have reasonable grounds to believe that the conduct or professional performance of a colleague may be deficient in standards of professional capability, you notify their line manager or other appropriate person in strictest confidence. This includes (but is not limited to) when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a colleague's performance is seriously deficient; • they have a health problem which is impairing their competence to practise; or • they are practising in a manner which places those who access the service or colleagues at risk. 				
6.6.2	<p>In reporting any concerns to a line manager or other appropriate person, the information is objective, relevant, substantiated where possible and limited to the matter of concern.</p>				
6.6.3	<p>If asked for a second opinion by a person who accesses the service and/or their carer, it is confined to the case in question and not extended to the general capability of any other practitioner.</p>				

6.7 Occupational therapy pre-registration practice-based learning					
	Statement	Y	N	What is your evidence for this?	Action to be taken, by whom and by when?
6.7.1	You take professional responsibility to provide regular practice-based learning opportunities for pre-registration occupational therapy learners where possible, and to promote a learning culture within the workplace.				
6.7.2	You recognise the need for personal development and learning to fulfil the role of the practice educator and, where possible, undertake appropriate study.				
6.7.3	As practice educator, you provide an experience of practice for learners that complies with the current version of the RCOT Learning and development standards for pre-registration education (RCOT 2019) and current professional standards, and is compatible with the stage of the learner's education or training.				
6.7.4	As practice educator, you have a clear understanding of the role and responsibilities for yourself, the learner and the education provider.				

More information is available from the current version of RCOT Learning and development standards for pre-registration education (RCOT 2019) and the Career development framework: *guiding principles for occupational therapy* (RCOT 2021b).

6.8 Your health and fitness to practise					
	Statement	Y	N	What is your evidence for this?	Action to be taken, by whom and by when?
6.8.1	You monitor and proactively look after your own physical and mental health and wellbeing.				
6.8.2	You seek help or advice at the earliest opportunity should your physical or mental health become a concern.				
6.8.3	You make changes to how you practise, or you stop practising, if your health may affect your ability to perform your job capably and safely.				
6.8.4	You inform your employer/appropriate authority and the Health and Care Professions Council about any health or personal condition that you believe may affect your ability to practise safely and effectively, if you are unable to adapt your work or if you need to stop practising (HCPC 2017b, p6).				

More information on informing the regulatory body is available from *Guidance on health and character* (HCPC 2017b).

References

All websites accessed on 29.04.20

For a full list of references, please see the *Professional standards for occupational therapy practice, conduct and ethics* (Royal College of Occupational Therapists 2021a).

Health and Care Professions Council (2017a) *Continuing professional development and your registration*. London: HCPC.

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