

RCOT awards for learning, development and research

2025 funding round – notes for guidance

Introduction

Applying for an annual award is a competitive process. Please read these notes thoroughly before completing your application. Be sure to review both the general guidance and the specific instructions for each award category. This guidance is divided into two parts:

- General advice relevant to all award categories
- Specific instructions tailored to each individual award

Funding supports activities between **1 July – 31 December 2025**, except the **Ann Carnduff Legacy CPD Activities Award**, which supports activities from **1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026**. Applications for activities starting before 1 July 2025 will not be accepted.

Due to limited funding, we review our award funding on an annual basis, and the level of funding available may vary from year to year. We will always encourage those who are interest in applying for an award to express their interest at the earliest opportunity due to the competitive nature of our awards.

It is worth noting that in the current round of awards we will be prioritising applicants who submits a compelling funding need for a learning and development opportunity. We therefore ask that applicants only request the amount of funding needed to support these needs.

Applying for an award counts as CPD. The process can help you to learn more about grant funding, understand eligibility criteria and improve your application writing. You're likely to gain useful insights and reflections, no matter the feedback or outcome. Remember to record your grant application in your CPD portfolio - you can save a copy of your application as CPD evidence.

We value the diversity of our membership and strongly encourage applications from all sections of our community, especially those from under-represented groups.

All information submitted in your application will be treated confidentially and handled in accordance with the [RCOT privacy notice](#).

1. Eligibility and award criteria

- To apply for an RCOT Annual Award, you must be a current member of the British Association of Occupational Therapists (BAOT) and include your membership number in the application. Any other occupational therapy professionals involved in the project or group activity must also be BAOT members at the time of application.
- Some awards are restricted to specific membership categories. Ensure you meet the eligibility criteria for the award you are applying for.

- You can apply for more than one award if the applications are in different categories, **but you can't duplicate funding requests**. If you apply for more than one award towards the same activity/project, each application must be for funding for different parts of the activity. You can't ask for funding for the same part of the activity in two award categories, for example asking for travel costs from two different award categories.
- Group applications (up to four members) are allowed for certain awards categories. All group members must be eligible BAOT members, and person must be named as the lead applicant and main contact.

2. Completing the application form

- Our Annual Awards are normally personal awards, so you should complete your own application. If colleagues are applying for similar activities (e.g., attending the same conference), ensure your applications are written independently and do not duplicate content.
- Submit application forms as a word document using a minimum Arial 11pt font.
- To ensure all applicants are treated equally, complete each section of the application within the word count allocated for that section. You must state the total number of words for each section where asked. If you cite references, these are included in the total word count for that section.
- Don't attach additional pages or information to the application, except where this is specifically requested (for example, evidence of ethical approval).
- Write in an anonymous style, using terms like 'the service, the Trust' rather than the name of your institution/workplace. We'll remove all identifying information from your application before external review. Using an anonymous writing style ensures important details aren't accidentally deleted, giving reviewers a complete picture of your proposal.
- Present your application professionally, ensuring it is free from spelling and grammatical errors. Always proofread your submission carefully and consider asking a colleague to review it for additional feedback.
- The award-specific marking schedule provides information about the criteria that your application will be assessed against. Use it as a guide for completing your application form and supporting statement.
- The [Career Development Framework: Guiding principles for occupational therapy](#) (second edition, RCOT 2021) offers a set of guiding principles for occupational therapy and a structured process to guide learning and development within our profession. Using the framework can help you describe how the award will contribute to your continuing professional development.

3. What to include in each section of the application form

Personal details	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will remove this section from your application and anonymise it before sending it for external review. If you are the main or lead applicant, you must provide full details. Co-applicants should be named in the application, but personal details are not required.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remember to include your BAOT number, a daytime contact telephone number and email address in case we need to contact you.
Activity details and supporting statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to the award-specific guidance notes below to learn about each award category, criteria and who can apply. Within each application form, you will find information to support you with what to include in each section of your application. This includes a supporting statement and project requirements if applicable. Clearly identify how your project/activity is relevant to our profession and how it will benefit people who access occupational therapy services and/or carers. Most award applications ask for a description of the overall aim of the project (what you intend to achieve, learn, or develop) and up to three objectives (how you will achieve the aim). Give careful attention to writing the aims and objectives clearly. For example, 'The overall aim of this project is to develop a community information group session for older people at risk of falling. The objectives are 1) to involve local community partnerships in setting up the group 2) develop a falls prevention information session that can be delivered independently by community groups 3) pilot the delivery of the group session and evaluate the effectiveness of the group'. If an individual section of the form is 'not applicable' to your application, state this in the box. Don't delete or leave the section blank. If you are applying for more than one award, avoid cutting and pasting content as no two application forms are the same.
Financial assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give details of the expected costs of your activity/project and specify the amount of support you are asking for from the award. Evidence of estimates/quotes should be included where possible. All requests should be rounded up to whole pounds. You can only apply for assistance with costs directly related to your activity/project. These must be actual expenses that you expect to happen. If your activity is part of a larger project, please clearly identify the discrete activity/element that you are seeking funding for. Funding is not available for indirect costs such as childcare, or to enhance your salary. Where an award is used to backfill salary costs, this can only be paid to the employing organisation not an individual.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If your activity/project is being supported, or considered for funding support, by any other organisation(s) including another RCOT award category, please give details. • Give details of any other sources of funding not already covered on the application form. • If you secure funding from another source and no longer need support from an RCOT award, please email hello@rcot.co.uk as soon as possible. This way, we can withdraw your application.
Supporting evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide some form of documentary evidence to confirm your participation in the planned activity/project. This might be from your supervisor, employer, university, or a partner organisation. • As an applicant, you can't authorise or sign supporting evidence to support your own activity. • Refer to the award specific guidance notes for the evidence required for different awards. Start gathering supporting evidence early to make sure you can submit it at the same time as your application. • We will accept copies of email correspondence as supporting evidence if it's clear that the email(s) originated from an appropriate organisation. • If you provide a letter of support this should be a scanned copy of an original, or an e-letter on a headed template.

4. Submitting your application

- Submit your application by 5pm, 1 September 2025. Applications received after this time won't be considered. We will confirm all applications via email.
- Submit your application forms in Word format (not PDF) via email to hello@rcot.co.uk.
- Submit supporting documentation electronically along with your application form. You can scan and send supporting documents in a PDF format. We do not accept hard copies of your application or supporting documents.
- Please keep a copy of everything you email to us. If you are successful, you will need to refer to your application form when you prepare the award audit documentation at the end of your activity/project (see paragraph 6.4).

5. What happens next?

- We will screen all the applications to make sure that all the eligibility criteria have been met.
- Your anonymised application will be assessed by two occupational therapists, one internal assessor (an RCOT staff member) and one external assessor. If you are applying for an externally funded award, your anonymised application form may be confidentially shared with

the sponsor. They will then be asked to provide comments to the Awards Panel on the suitability of your application for funding.

- The Awards Panel, chaired by the Chair of RCOT Board of Trustees, will make final decisions by mid-November 2025. Applications are judged on quality and alignment with the criteria outlined in the marking schedule.
- Please note that the Awards Panel can use its discretion in making final decisions in all categories to benefit members, within the criteria of the awards available.
- You will be informed of the outcome by the end of November 2025. The selection process is confidential, and the Panel's decision is final. While individual feedback will not be provided, general feedback for unsuccessful applicants and a summary report of the funding round will be published in *OTnews*.

6. Successful applicants

6.1 Payment

- For those awards directly funded via RCOT, we will transfer the award money to the winner's nominated bank/building society account via BACs as soon as reasonably possible. Awards funded by external sponsors may have different payment arrangements.
- If the activity to be funded needs ethical approval, we will not make the payment of the award until we've received evidence of ethical approval.
- Where an award is to backfill salary costs, this can only be paid to the employing organisation not an individual.

6.2 Publication of outcome

- The names of the award winners and details of the funded activity will be published in *OTnews* and on the RCOT website.
- If you are successful in receiving an externally funded award, your name and contact details will be passed to the award sponsor. The award sponsor may wish to publish details of your success on their website and/or via other communication channels, such as a press release and may contact you directly about this.
- RCOT will celebrate your success as an Annual Award winner and provide more information about these celebrations.

6.3 Obligations on completion of the project/activity

The award winner will:

- Provide a statement of expenditure confirming how the award money was spent. You also need to provide evidence of expenditure, such as invoices/receipts/tickets in your name.
- Provide a one-page evaluation to show how they have achieved the aims/objectives set out in the supporting statement.
- Submit a summary report (500 words) for publication on the RCOT website. We will provide guidance on this. We'll also send a copy of the summary report to the sponsor of externally

funded awards, who may use it in their informational materials, including publishing it on their website.

- Share the results as indicated on the application form.
- Acknowledge the award sponsor in any presentations/publications related to the funded activity.
- Share their experience of applying for and winning an award with RCOT. Let us know how the opportunity has contributed to their professional development and any tips for future applicants.

6.4. Submitting finance/audit documents

- A statement of expenditure, summary report and evaluation of aims/objectives should be submitted to hello@rcot.co.uk within three months of completion of the activity for which the funding was given.
- We'll provide further guidance to the Award winners on how to submit financial statements.
- We'll send reminder emails to Award winners near the end of project/activity date.

7. Enquiries

For all enquiries about the RCOT Annual Awards please contact hello@rcot.co.uk.

Top tips

- Take a few minutes to check the award-specific guidance notes for all the available awards. You may find that you can apply for funding in a different category than the one you were initially considering.
- Download a copy of the marking criteria for the award from the RCOT website as a guide.
- You might find it helpful to discuss your ideas with a colleague, manager or academic tutor/supervisor. It can also be useful to talk through your intended outcomes and aims/objectives for the proposed activity to make sure they are clear.
- Ask a colleague to proofread your application. Aim to submit your application and documents in good time to avoid any last-minute panic or IT issues.
- Record the submission of your award application in your CPD portfolio, along with any learning and reflections from the application process.
- Keep a copy of these guidance notes. If you are successful, you will need to refer to the section on 'successful applicants'. If you win an externally funded award, you may also like to find out more about the sponsor.
- Applying for an Annual Award is a competitive process. Pay close attention to the guidance notes and submission criteria; the impact of the project/activity for people who access occupational therapy services/carers and the profession and identify the benefits to your own continuing professional development.
- Check the RCOT website to see examples of previous winners' reports.

Externally funded awards

The Royal College of Occupational Therapists would like to thank the following organisations for their support in the 2025 Annual Awards funding round:

External sponsor awards

- The Constance Owens Trust (supporting both The Barbara Tyldesley Student Award and The Constance Owens Liverpool Award for Service Development).
- Medequip UK (supporting the Medequip Innovation Award for Community Equipment)

Legacy funded awards

- The Institute of Social Psychiatry Award
- Eden Travel Award
- Ann Carnduff Legacy CPD Activities Award



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The Barbara Tyldesley Student Award

Open to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student • Associate apprentice
Number of awards	2
Funding amount	£500 each
Career levels (<i>RCOT Career Development Framework</i>)	3–5

Background

The Constance Owens Trust, based in Liverpool, established this award in 2014 in memory of their late Trustee, Barbara Tyldesley, a former President of the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT).

This award is designed to support UK-based pre-registration students or apprentices who are undertaking one of the following:

- A role-emerging or research placement
- An approved overseas practice placement
- Active involvement in a global health project, including virtual or online participation

If your proposed activity involves digital engagement, you must clearly demonstrate how you have considered equity, accessibility, and digital poverty in your planning.

Examples of previously funded placements include:

- The Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralysed in Bangladesh.
- A role-emerging placement at a Cambodian school for children and young people with intellectual disabilities.

Funding details

- Applicants must demonstrate how their experience will relate to their pre-registration studies and benefit people who access occupational therapy services or their carers.
- This award cannot be used to cover course fees or conference attendance.

How to apply

Please submit the following documents listed below to hello@rcot.co.uk:

1. Download and complete the application form.
2. Proof of participation in the planned activity, along with a letter or email of support from your programme lead or supervisor.
3. If you're involved in a project, include a signed letter from the project or organisation facilitator confirming their support.
4. If applicable, provide evidence of ethical approval.

Ann Carnduff Legacy CPD Activities Award

Open to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student • Associate apprentice
Number of awards	2
Funding amount	£500 (each)
Career levels (<i>RCOT Career Development Framework</i>)	3–5

Background

This award is funded through a legacy from Ann Carnduff, former Head of the Glasgow Occupational Therapy School, to support occupational therapy learners (students and apprentices). It provides financial assistance for CPD activities—whether in the UK, abroad, or online. This includes conferences, lectures, workshops, seminars, forums and networking. The award also covers RCOT paid events for members.

Participating in CPD activities provides valuable opportunities to learn, develop and network with your peers.

The award covers various aspects of participation, from attendance to presenting an accepted abstract or giving a talk. This award applies to CPD activities taking place between **1 July 2025 and 30 June 2026**. The deadline for receipt of applications is **1 September 2025**.

Funding is used for event attendance and may cover:

- Registration costs and meals.
- Standard-class travel and accommodation (members are encouraged also to apply for the Eden Travel Award, which covers **travel costs** only).

Funding details

- Hold a current RCOT membership at the time of CPD activity participation.
- Submit one application per event. If applying for multiple CPD activities, a separate application is required for each.
- Acknowledge RCOT funding in any abstract, poster, or presentation.
- By awarding funds to support attendance, RCOT is not endorsing any research or other work you may be presenting.

How to apply

Please submit the following documents to hello@rcot.co.uk:

1. Download and complete the application form.
2. Event details: Include information about the CPD activity, such as the theme, topics, and general details.
3. Provide a letter or email of support from your programme lead, course tutor, or work supervisor.
4. If applicable, provide evidence of ethical approval.
5. Accepted Abstract (if applicable): Include a copy of your abstract.

Institute of Social Psychiatry Award

Open to	Professional members
Number of awards	1
Funding amount	£2000
Career levels (<i>RCOT Career Development Framework</i>)	5–9

Background

Social psychiatry focuses on the interpersonal and cultural context of mental health and wellbeing. The Institute of Social Psychiatry Award provides support for an individual occupational therapist towards a research or developmental project/activity in a topic relevant to occupational therapy and mental health, which also demonstrates relevance to social psychiatry. The award can be used to support formal post graduate research activities and education.

If you are proposing digital activities, you must show how you have taken equity, accessibility, and digital poverty into account. You should also consider equity, diversity and belonging in your activity choices.

Examples of previously funded projects include:

- Research understanding how professional identity impacts occupational therapists and the occupational therapy profession in social care.
- Pilot of a six-week therapeutic gardening group to support mental and physical health while reducing home visits and travel.

How to apply

Please submit the following documents listed below to hello@rcot.co.uk:

1. Download and complete the application form.
2. If applicable, provide evidence of ethical approval.
3. A signed letter or email of support on institutional letterhead from your research supervisor or sponsor. Alternatively, provide a letter of acceptance if the activity is part of an award-bearing course.

International Activity Award

Open to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional members Associate members
Number of awards	2
Funding amount	£750 each
Career levels (<i>RCOT Career Development Framework</i>)	1–9

Background

This award aims to support an individual member's active participation in an overseas activity. This might include, for example, presentation at an international conference (which may be virtual); sharing professional practice/expertise; or working online with an overseas community to provide occupational therapy.

If you are proposing digital activities, you must show how you have taken equity, accessibility, and digital poverty into account. You should also consider equity, diversity and belonging in your activity choices.

Funding details

- For members based in the UK, the 'overseas' activity must be conducted outside the UK.
- This award is not available to students or apprentices. Individuals in these categories are advised to consider applying for the Barbara Tyldesley Student Award or the Ann Carnduff Legacy CPD Activities Award.
- Members whose funding includes travel-related expenses are encouraged to submit an additional application for the Eden Travel Award.

How to apply

Please submit the following documents listed below to hello@rcot.co.uk:

- Download and complete the application form.
- Documentary evidence that confirms your participation in the planned activity for example, programme agenda for an international conference.
- If you are an associate member (support worker), letter of support from your supervisor at work.
- If applicable, please provide evidence of ethical approval.

The Constance Owens Liverpool Award for Service Development

Open to	Professional members
Number of awards	1
Funding amount	£1000
Career levels (<i>RCOT Career Development Framework</i>)	5–9

Background

This award provides funding from The Constance Owens Trust to support an individual occupational therapist participating in a service development activity or project relevant to occupational therapy, and which will have a likely impact on the outcomes for people who access occupational therapy services and/or carers, the effectiveness of the occupational therapy service, and on the profession/professional practice in the UK.

If you are proposing online or digital innovations you must show how you have taken equity, accessibility, and digital poverty into account. You should also consider equity, diversity and belonging in your activity choices.

Past funding has covered:

- A research project focusing on older people who have dementia and their carers in Wales.
- An exploration of the contemporary lived experience of older people who are affected by multiple long term conditions using photography.
- Development of a Young People's Council within a child development centre to support engagement and coproduction

Funding details

- Applications are open to individuals or small groups (up to four people). All applicants must be members.
- Funding support must be used for activities relating directly to the service development project in the UK. These may include learning from specialist settings, purchase of specialist equipment, backfill, presenting the work at topic-related UK conferences (including virtual), dissemination costs, or other planned expenditure.
- Costs may include virtual participation in a service development project, or development of an online service (excluding software/hardware).
- This award doesn't support course/tuition fees or attendance at RCOT events

How to apply

Please submit the following documents listed below to hello@rcot.co.uk:

1. Download and complete the application form.
2. If applicable, please provide evidence of ethical approval.
3. Copy of a signed letter/email of support, on institution headed paper/email, from the person who has authorised the project with your application.

Eden Travel Award

Open to	All membership categories
Number of awards	2
Funding amount	£750 (each)
Career levels (RCOT Career Development Framework)	1–9

Background

This legacy award provides funding to be used to cover travel costs only, which are related to a planned professional development or a learning activity. The travel can be UK based or international. Thus Award is open all BAOT members.

Funding details

- We expect members to make efforts to seek reasonable prices and most appropriate means of transport.
- Travel costs/expenses does not cover accommodation, visas, registration fees and travel insurance.
- The date of the travel must occur during the Annual Awards period (1 July 2025–31 December 2025). For the **Ann Carnduff Legacy CPD Activities Award**, this will have to cover the period **1 July 2025 – 30 June 2026**.
- Due to unforeseen circumstances, if you are unable to travel or an event/activity is cancelled, you will need to inform us as soon as possible by emailing hello@rcot.co.uk.
- Applications are open to individuals or small groups (up to four people). All applicants must be members.

How to apply

Please submit the following documents listed below to hello@rcot.co.uk:

1. Download and complete the application form.
2. Estimated travel costs and details of your participation in the planned activity for example, programme or event details
3. If you are an associate member (support worker), letter of support from your supervisor at work.
4. If applicable, please provide evidence of ethical approval.

Medequip Innovation Award for Community Equipment

Open to	Professional members
Number of awards	1
Funding amount	£1,500
Career levels (<i>RCOT Career Development Framework</i>)	5–9

Background

This award offers funding to support an innovative or developmental project focused on the provision of community equipment. The project must align with one or more of the following criteria:

- personalisation
- choice
- sustainability
- successful outcomes.

In addition to funding, the winner will receive support from Medequip, including introductions to manufacturers, user groups and networks.

Funding may be used for initiatives such as:

- Evaluating new or innovative equipment solutions (e.g. purchasing CES equipment to study effectiveness or outcome measures).
- Implementation of new or innovative technology enabled care equipment.
- Enhancing efficiency in equipment recycling and reuse.
- Reducing hospital or care home admissions through effective equipment use.

Funding details

- Applications are open to individuals or small groups (up to four people). All applicants must be members.
- Funding may be used towards backfill for staff time to carry out the project.
- If your project involves virtual participation or online innovation, you must address potential barriers that can prevent participation.
- Projects that solely benefit a single business or institution commercially are not eligible for funding.

How to apply

Please submit the following documents listed below to hello@rcot.co.uk:

1. Download and complete the application form.
2. A signed letter or email on official headed paper from the person authorising the project.
3. If applicable, provide evidence of ethical approval.