

RCOT Merit awards

Guidance for nomination 2026

The Merit award recognises an individual's contribution to the occupational therapy profession which may be local; regional; in a specialist field of practice; or a diverse area of practice. Nominees will have been acknowledged by their peers in the occupational therapy community for excellence in their sphere of work and their special contribution to the occupational therapy profession.

Who can you nominate?

1. You can only nominate a current RCOT member with a **minimum of two years consecutive RCOT membership** irrespective of membership category (excluding Student and Associate Apprentice members) immediately prior to the date of the nomination.
2. Both the nominators and nominee must be in a position of good professional standing.
3. The nominee will be working or using their skills within the occupational therapy profession either in practice, education and/or research.
4. The nominee has made important and significant contribution(s) in their role; and demonstrates their commitment to [RCOT's strategy and values](#).
5. The nominee will have been recognised by their peers as making a significant achievement locally or regionally that will have had an important impact on the practice and/or delivery of occupational therapy. Consideration could be given to an individual who has:
 - Improved service delivery locally that has benefited service users and carers.
 - Developed specialist practice-based skills that are innovative and have informed local service delivery in what could be a complex environment.
 - Led an innovative way of working and promoted the contribution of occupational therapy in a diverse setting.
 - Created and supported a learning culture locally or regionally.
 - Supported the professional workforce locally through initiatives such as inclusion and diversity.
 - Translated and applied evidence to inform their practice locally for the benefit of service users and carers.
 - Facilitated involvement in research or created a culture that supports research.
 - Raised the profile of the profession through providing examples of local innovation that have been published and raised interest.
 - Developed and evaluated educational resources (for example for students, people accessing services, etc.) and new methods of delivery.
 - Contributed and co-created professional networks to promote the exchange of knowledge, skills and resources.

(This is not an exhaustive list).

6. The nominee may also have supported members through leading and influencing within one of RCOT's Communities, formally Specialist Section(s); RCOT committee(s) or advisory groups.
7. As part of the nomination form, we need a 500 word-summary telling us why the nominee should receive an RCOT Merit Award. This should explain the rationale for the nomination and what is special about the nominee's contribution:
 - How have they gone the 'extra mile'?
 - What is the significant achievement that has had an impact locally or regionally?
 - Has this achievement helped improve service delivery/care for the benefit of service users?

- Does it demonstrate partnership working?
- What has been innovative/inspirational/or influential in their area of practice that has been admired by the nominee's peers.

Before you start your nomination:

1. Make sure that your nominee matches the above criteria (who can you nominate).
2. Identify one RCOT member who supports this nomination.
3. We will only communicate with the main nominator to confirm receipt of documents and if further information is required.
4. Provide contact details for the nominee and the other nominator.
5. Your nomination will benefit from up to two letters of support or testimonials. These do not have to be from individuals within the profession (see the Merit Award process, further down for details).

Equity and Diversity

RCOT is keen to increase and promote diversity within the profession and actively encourages people from a range of backgrounds to nominate and be nominated for Fellowship and Merit Awards.

The process for the RCOT Merit awards

1. Make sure you share all the key information to show the nominee's contribution and impact. This will help the committee check that the nominee meets the criteria and avoid unnecessary disappointment.
2. Once you decide to nominate an individual for an award, as the main nominator, you will need to ask one other RCOT member to support the nomination and sign the nomination form.
3. You should work with the other nominator to decide who will lead on the different parts of the nomination, so you are not repeating information.
4. You should assume that the Fellowships and Merit Awards Committee knows nothing about the nominee. Include all relevant information and evidence so that the committee can make an objective decision.
5. All information submitted must be typed in electronic format.
6. If acronyms are being used throughout the nomination form, they need to be initially explained in full
7. When the nomination form is complete, please ask the nominee to sign parts 1 and 2 of the nomination form. This is to confirm that the information provided is correct and to give their consent for sharing this information, please see [RCOT Privacy notice](#). The nominee can add details to ensure the facts are correct. Electronic signatures are acceptable.
8. Please ask the nominee to write a 500-word max statement about themselves and their achievements. This helps ensure valuable information isn't missed out in the nomination.
9. Include two letters of support or testimonials with the nomination. Key information to note:
 - Individuals with first-hand knowledge of the nominee, should write these.
 - They can be written by non-RCOT members, occupational therapy colleagues, people accessing occupational therapy services and/or their carers, other health professionals; senior managers in other organisations or other senior individuals.
 - Think about who is writing the letters of supports or testimonials, as their position/role will influence the committee's decision.
 - These statements confirm the impact and contribution the nominee has made to the occupational therapy profession.
 - They are confidential – so please don't share them with the nominee.
 - Provide these statements as separate documents on appropriate letterhead and make sure, they're not longer than 500 words.

- If you send more than two letters of support or testimonials, the committee will not consider the additional ones.
 - Please remember that individuals cannot be the same people as the nominators and should not be a spouse/ partner or close relatives of the nominee.
10. Supporting materials must not include promotional material and personal data, for example, data that may identify a patient.
 11. Once you have finished the nomination form and supporting documents, please send to us by emailing; hello@rcot.co.uk. Make sure it includes the following supporting documents:
 - Completed nomination form with all the key information and signatures
 - Two letters of support or testimonials.
 - A statement by the nominee.
 12. When we receive your nomination and supporting documents, we will email the main nominator to confirm receipt.
 13. Group nominations will not be accepted. All nominees should be nominated on a separate nomination form by the nominators, as the committee needs to assess the unique contribution of each individual when assessing their suitability for both Fellowship and Merit Awards.
 14. If you have any questions about the nomination process or form, or would like to discuss your nomination, please contact us by emailing hello@rcot.co.uk

The Fellowship and Merit Awards Committee's role

1. The Fellowship and Merits Awards Committee will consider all nominations and will decide if the nominee meets the criteria. RCOT will collect feedback from the committee members to support discussions at their meeting.
2. The Fellowship and Merit Awards Committee will give final recommendations for The RCOT Board to approve.

RCOT Board role

1. The RCOT Board reviews and takes note of the report with the recommendations from the Fellowship and Merit Awards Committee. The Board's role is to approve or reject each recommendation. They will have access to nomination forms, letters of support, and testimonials, as required. The Board's decision is final.
2. The Chair of The Board will then contact all nominees and the main nominators to let them know the outcome.
3. We would not be able to share detailed information or reasons why a nomination was not approved.
4. RCOT is the administrator for the Fellowship and Merit Awards Committee.

Data Protection

1. All personal information relating to both the nominee and the nominators will be securely destroyed after the Awards event in line with [RCOT's Privacy notice](#).
2. The information provided in the nomination form and supporting evidence will be reviewed by the Fellowship and Merit Committee **without anonymisation**, except for specific personal contact details.
3. Only personal contact details, such as postal addresses and telephone numbers of both the nominee and the nominators, will be anonymised prior to review.
4. The personal contact details will also be anonymised in the support letters and testimonials.

Dated: March 2026