Royal College of Occupational Therapists

RCOT Honorary Fellowship Awards

Guidance notes 2027

What is an RCOT Honorary Fellowship?

An RCOT Honorary Fellowship is one of the highest honours awarded by RCOT. It recognises individuals who are not occupational therapists and/or not RCOT members who have made an exceptional and sustained contribution to occupational therapy, RCOT and/or people accessing services, or who have provided distinguished service to RCOT.

Eligibility Criteria

You may nominate an individual who:

- Is not an occupational therapist and/or is not a member of RCOT.
- Has a professional or public reputation consistent with RCOT's Values and is not known to have engaged in conduct that would bring RCOT or the award into disrepute.
- Has provided exceptional support to RCOT and/or occupational therapy over a sustained period.
- Has made an important and significant contribution through their role, expertise, leadership or influence.
- Demonstrates commitment to RCOT's Values.
- Has created opportunities, influence or benefits for RCOT, occupational therapists, people accessing services and/or the wider profession.

What makes a strong nomination?

Strong nominations usually demonstrate:

- Exceptional and sustained contribution
- Significant influence and impact
- Leadership, advocacy or partnership working
- Lasting benefits to RCOT, occupational therapy and/or people accessing services.
- Evidence of contribution supported by examples and testimonials

Assessment criteria summary

To understand how nominations are reviewed by the Fellowship and Merit Awards Committee (FMAC), please refer to the **Honorary Fellowship Award Assessment Criteria Summary**. This document outlines the key areas considered during assessment and the types of evidence that help support a strong nomination.

Strong nominations include evidence of:

- Measurable outcomes
- Lasting impact
- Significant contribution over time
- Influence on occupational therapy, RCOT and/or people accessing services
- Recognition by others
- Benefits to the profession, RCOT, services or communities
- Evidence of sustained achievement rather than a one-off contribution

Examples of contribution

Contributions may be demonstrated through:

Public advocacy, promotion and influence

- Raising the profile of RCOT and/or occupational therapy
- Influencing awareness, understanding or perception of occupational therapy nationally or internationally
- Supporting and promoting RCOT campaigns, initiatives and key messages through communications, media or social media activity

Strategic leadership and partnership working

- Providing strategic leadership, influence or expertise that has benefited occupational therapy, RCOT or people accessing services
- Acting as a champion for the occupational therapy workforce within strategic forums and high-level meetings
- Facilitating strategic partnerships, opportunities or introductions that have benefited RCOT or the profession

Supporting RCOT and the profession

- Partnership working with RCOT
- Contributing time, expertise or leadership to RCOT governance structures, advisory groups or significant projects
- Sponsoring or supporting occupational therapy initiatives that have benefited the profession

Workforce development

- Supporting workforce development initiatives
- Supporting learning and development opportunities for occupational therapists.
- Promoting inclusion, diversity and belonging within the occupational therapy workforce.

Research and evidence generation

- Supporting the involvement of occupational therapy researchers within high-profile research programmes
- Conducting or supporting research that has influenced occupational therapy nationally or internationally
- Generating evidence that has advanced occupational therapy practice, education or policy

Service improvement and innovation

- Developing, progressing or implementing new ways of working
- Leading service development or service improvement initiatives
- Supporting improvements that benefit people accessing occupational therapy services

Preparing your nomination

Before starting the nomination:

1. Check that the nominee meets the eligibility criteria
2. Identify a second RCOT member who will act as the supporting nominator
3. Obtain the nominee's agreement to be nominated
4. Gather evidence, examples and supporting information
5. Where nominations reference RCOT volunteering, committees, advisory groups, RCOT Communities, campaigns or other RCOT activities, nominators should provide sufficient detail and examples of contribution and impact. RCOT may verify participation in these activities where possible and where required

Important notes:

- Nominators must be in good professional standing
- Nominators must not be a spouse, partner or close relative of the nominee
- RCOT will only communicate with the lead nominator throughout the process
- You will need contact details for the nominee and supporting nominator

- Nominations may be submitted by RCOT members and RCOT colleagues/staff. If the lead nominator is an RCOT staff member, a non-RCOT staff member must support the nomination and sign the nomination form.

When completing the nomination:
1. Assume the FMAC knows nothing about the nominee
2. Include clear examples and evidence of the nominee's contribution and impact throughout the nomination
3. Avoid repetition between sections
4. Explain acronyms in full when first used
5. All information must be submitted electronically

The nominee must sign the relevant sections of the nomination form to:
1. Confirm the information provided is accurate
2. Provide consent for their information to be shared and assessed in line with the RCOT Privacy Notice

Electronic signatures are acceptable.

Supporting documentation

1. Nominee Statement

A statement from the nominee must be included (maximum 500 words).
The statement should describe:
- Career journey and background
- Key achievements
- Contribution to occupational therapy and/or RCOT
- Impact of their work
- Why the contribution is significant

2. Letters of support/testimonials

The nomination must be supported by **two letters of support or testimonials**.
Each letter should:
- Be written by individuals with first-hand knowledge of the nominee's contribution
- Provide evidence of impact and achievement
- Be submitted as separate documents
- Be no longer than 500 words each
- Be provided on appropriate letterhead where possible

Letters of support may be written by:
- RCOT members
- Occupational therapy colleagues.
- Other healthcare professionals.
- Senior managers/senior leaders
- People accessing services or their carers

The letter **must not** be provided by:
- The nominators.
- A spouse or partner.
- A close relative.

Please note:
- Only two letters/testimonials will be considered.

- Additional letters will not be reviewed

3. Optional additional supporting evidence and information

- Optional CV (maximum four sides of A4)
- Optional publication list (maximum two sides of A4). It should be listed in date order, with the most recent publications first.
- Supporting materials must not include promotional material and personal data for example, data that may identify a patient.
- 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

Equity and Diversity

RCOT actively encourages nominations from individuals from a wide range of backgrounds and is committed to ensuring Fellowship and Merit Awards reflect the diversity of the profession.

Assessment process

1. Step 1 (Committee review) - The Fellowship and Merit Awards Committee (FMAC) reviews all nominations against the published criteria and supporting evidence and determines whether the nomination meets the Honorary Fellowship criteria.
2. Step 2 (Board approval) – The FMAC makes recommendations to the RCOT Board, who approve or reject each nomination. The Board's decision is final.
3. Step 3 (Outcome notification) - The Chair of the Board informs nominees and lead nominators of the outcome. Please note that RCOT cannot provide detailed reasons where a nomination is not approved.
4. Step 4 (Administration) - RCOT acts as administrator to the FMAC and supports the nomination and assessment process.

Data protection

1. Personal data is managed in accordance with the RCOT Privacy Notice
2. Nomination documentation is reviewed by the FMAC. Personal contact details, such as addresses and telephone numbers, are removed before review, including from letters of support and testimonials where appropriate
3. Information will be securely destroyed after the awards process in accordance with the RCOT Privacy Notice

Help and support

If you have any questions about the process, need support completing a nomination, or anticipate barriers to participation, please contact: hello@rcot.co.uk

Requesting advice, guidance or support will not affect the assessment of a nomination.

Dated: October 2026