Royal College of Occupational Therapists

RCOT Fellowship Awards

Guidance notes 2027

What is an RCOT Fellowship?

An RCOT Fellowship is one of the highest honours awarded by RCOT. It recognises Professional Members who have made an exceptional and sustained contribution to occupational therapy, RCOT and/or people accessing services throughout their career.

Fellowship recognises individuals whose contribution has had a significant and lasting impact on occupational therapy practice, education, research, leadership and/or the profession.

Eligibility criteria

The nominee must:

1. Be a current RCOT Professional Member.
2. Have been a Professional Member of RCOT for at least 10 years.
3. Be in good professional standing.
4. Have demonstrated exceptional practice over a sustained period.
5. Have achievements beyond normal role expectations.
6. Be using their occupational therapy skills in practice, education, research and/or scholarly activity.
7. Have contributed to RCOT.
8. Demonstrate commitment to RCOT's Values.
9. Have made a significant national and/or international impact.

Merit Award and Fellowship Award eligibility

To recognise the distinct difference between the levels of achievement represented by Fellowship and Merit Awards, RCOT introduced a three-year interval between receiving either award from 2025 onwards.

This means that individuals who have received a Merit Award from 2025 must wait three years before becoming eligible to be nominated for a Fellowship Award. If you are unsure whether your nominee is eligible, please contact RCOT before submitting a nomination.

Multiple nominations for the same member

In some circumstances, RCOT may receive nominations for the same individual for more than one award during the same awards cycle. Where nominations are received for both a Fellowship Award and a Merit Award for the same individual, each nomination will be assessed independently against the relevant award criteria.

If both nominations are approved, the higher award (Fellowship) will normally be recommended. RCOT reserves the right to refer nominations to the Fellowship and Merit Awards Committee for further consideration where appropriate.

What makes a strong nomination?

Strong nominations typically demonstrate:

- Exceptional contribution over a sustained period
- Leadership and influence beyond the nominee's primary role

- Significant contribution to RCOT and the profession
- National and/or international impact
- Lasting benefits to occupational therapy, services, education, research or workforce development
- Evidence that the nominee's work has made a measurable difference
- Recognition by peers, professional communities, people accessing services, carers, employers, educators, partner organisations or other stakeholders who have benefited from the nominee's contribution

The strongest nominations focus on impact, outcomes, evidence and influence, rather than job titles, committee memberships or position descriptions.

Assessment criteria summary

To understand how nominations are reviewed by the Fellowship and Merit Awards Committee (FMAC), please refer to the 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.

Examples of contribution

Contributions may be demonstrated through:

- Clinical practice
- Independent and private practice
- Education and academia
- Research and evidence generation
- Leadership and management
- Professional consultancy and advisory work
- Service development and innovation
- Policy and advocacy
- Workforce development
- National or international occupational therapy activity
- Equity, Diversity and Belonging (EDB) initiatives

Examples may include:

- Developing innovative occupational therapy services, including independent or private practice models
- Leadership within higher education, workforce development or occupational therapy education
- Development of occupational therapy curricula, learning opportunities or professional development initiatives
- Conducting or supporting research that has influenced practice, education or policy
- Professional consultancy, advisory work or strategic leadership
- Entrepreneurship that has advanced occupational therapy services
- Equity, Diversity and Belonging (EDB) initiatives that improve inclusion, representation or equitable access
- Policy, advocacy or influencing activities that benefit occupational therapy
- National or international leadership, influence or professional recognition

Demonstrating Impact

When describing achievements, consider:

- What contribution did the nominee make?
- What changed as a result?
- Who benefited?

- What evidence demonstrates the impact?

Where possible, include evidence of:
- Measurable outcomes.
- Service, educational or workforce improvements.
- Policy influence or professional recognition.
- Research outputs, publications or evidence generation.
- Influence on professional standards or occupational therapy practice.
- Raising the profile of occupational therapy.
- National and/or international impact.
- Impact on Equity, Diversity and Belonging (EDB).
- Impact through independent practice, consultancy, leadership or innovation.

The strongest nominations clearly demonstrate how the nominee's contribution extends beyond normal role expectations and has resulted in positive and lasting change for occupational therapy, people accessing services, carers, RCOT and/or the wider profession.

Strong nominations should focus on contribution, influence and impact rather than job titles, committee memberships or positions held. The Committee considers the difference the nominee has made and the benefits resulting from their contribution.

Preparing your nomination

Before starting the nomination:
1. Check that the nominee meets the eligibility criteria.
2. Identify two RCOT members who will support the nomination.
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

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

The nominee must sign the relevant sections of the nomination form to:
- Confirm the information provided is accurate
- 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

The nominee must provide a personal statement of up to 500 words outlining their achievements and contribution. This helps ensure important information is not missed during the nomination process.

The statement should cover:

- Career journey
- Key achievements
- Contribution to RCOT
- Contribution to occupational therapy
- Impact of their work
- Why their contribution is important to the profession

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:

- Occupational therapy colleagues
- Other healthcare professionals
- Senior managers
- People accessing services or their carers
- Non-RCOT members familiar with the nominee's work

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.
- Testimonials are confidential and should not be shared with the nominee.

3. Optional additional supporting evidence and information

- Optional CV (maximum four sides of A4)
- Optional publication list (maximum two sides of A4), 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 Fellowship Award 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