

# Professional standards for occupational therapy practice, conduct and ethics

## Audit tool Section 5

### Principles and standards – professionalism

#### 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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5.1 Professionalism					
<p>Professionalism goes beyond being a capable practitioner. It concerns how a practitioner represents themselves, their employer and their profession to others. It is the way of thinking, values and motivations which underpin the behaviours and interactions seen.</p> <p>Your behaviour may be deemed unacceptable when it does not have the wellbeing of those who access the service at its core, or when it undermines confidence in the service, organisation or profession. This may be while in your work role, or outside of your work role.</p>					
5.2 Equality and inclusion					
	Statement	Y	N	What is your evidence for this?	Action to be taken, by whom and by when?
5.2.1	You must comply with the law and the requirements set out in <i>The Equality Act 2010</i> (Great Britain. Parliament), and not discriminate against the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.				
5.2.2	You embrace and value the diversity of everyone equally, across all aspects of life, and this is reflected in your practice.				
5.2.3	You recognise your own internal biases and the role you play in addressing continued systemic discrimination within your own practice and wider systems.				

5.3 Professional conduct					
	Statement	Y	N	What is your evidence for this?	Action to be taken, by whom and by when?
5.3.1	You are accountable for your actions and behaviours, both inside and away from the workplace.				
5.3.2	You maintain professional boundaries at all times.				
5.3.3	You reflect on and take responsibility for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the impression and impact you make on others, conducting and presenting yourself in a professional manner while in your work or study role;</li> <li>your conduct outside of your work or study role, in situations where your behaviour and actions may be witnessed by, or have an impact upon, your colleagues, your employer, those who access the service and/or the public.</li> </ul>				
5.3.4	You adhere to statutory and local policies at all times.				

5.4 Professional conduct on digital platforms, including social media					
	Statement	Y	N	What is your evidence for this?	Action to be taken, by whom and by when?
5.4.1	You reflect on and take responsibility for the way you use digital platforms.				
5.4.2	Your conduct and content on digital platforms and social media does nothing to undermine confidence in your professional practice or rationale, your employer, or your profession.				
5.4.3	When using digital platforms and social media, you recognise that you are presenting yourself, through words and images, to a wide group of people.				
5.4.4	You consider the outcomes that if known, or identified as a practitioner or an employee, your words and images may be seen as representing or applicable to your profession and/or your employer.				

5.5 Professional and personal integrity					
	Statement	Y	N	What is your evidence for this?	Action to be taken, by whom and by when?
5.5.1	You act with honesty and integrity at all times.				
5.5.2	You do not engage in any criminal or otherwise unlawful or unprofessional behaviour or activity which is likely to damage the public's confidence in you or your profession.				
5.5.3	You do not undertake any professional activities when under the influence of alcohol, drugs or other intoxicating substances.				
5.5.4	You inform HCPC and/or your employers if you are convicted of a criminal offence, receive a conditional discharge for an offence, or if you accept a police caution.				
5.5.5	If a registered occupational therapist, you inform HCPC if you have had any restriction placed upon your practice, or been suspended or dismissed by an employer, or similar organisation, because of concerns about your conduct or competence.				
5.5.6	You co-operate with any investigation or formal enquiry into your own professional conduct, the conduct of another worker or the treatment of a person who accesses the service, where appropriate.				

5.6 Communication					
	Statement	Y	N	What is your evidence for this?	Action to be taken, by whom and by when?
5.6.1	Your language and communication style and manner are always professional, whether towards your colleagues or those who access the service.				
5.6.2	You are able to articulate the purpose of occupational therapy and the reason for any intervention being undertaken, so enabling fully informed consent and promoting understanding of the profession.				
5.6.3	You communicate clearly, openly and effectively.				
5.6.4	You reflect on the potential significance and impact of verbal and non-verbal communication, remaining sensitive to the diversity of backgrounds, experiences and needs of your listeners				
5.6.5	Where possible and appropriate you facilitate communication in the individual's preferred or first language.				
5.6.6	Discussions related to those who access the service are held in a way that maintains their dignity and privacy.				

5.6.7	You clearly and accurately participate in formal and informal reporting.				
5.6.8	You communicate effectively within your line management structure.				
5.6.9	You document your communication where a record is needed				

5.7 Collaborative working					
	Statement	Y	N	What is your evidence for this?	Action to be taken, by whom and by when?
5.7.1	You actively seek to build and sustain positive professional relationships.				
5.7.2	You respect the responsibilities, practices and roles of other people with whom you work.				
5.7.3	You respect and value the diversity of your colleagues, recognising the unique assets they bring to the workplace.				
5.7.4	You act with integrity towards your colleagues at all times, treating them fairly and equally, without discrimination, bullying or harassment. Bullying and discriminatory behaviour are unacceptable and unprofessional.				
5.7.5	If you experience or witness bullying and/or discriminatory behaviour, you raise your concerns with a line manager or other appropriate person and follow statutory and local policy.				
5.7.6	You work with others within your area of expertise to promote knowledge, skills and safe and effective practice.				

<b>5.7.7</b>	You work collaboratively with or refer to your colleagues, utilising their skills to maximise the outcomes of intervention when appropriate.				
<b>5.7.8</b>	You consult with other service providers when additional knowledge, expertise and support are required.				
<b>5.7.9</b>	You refer a person who accesses the service to another appropriate colleague if the task is outside of your level or scope of practice (See Section 6, point 6.2).				
<b>5.7.10</b>	You recognise the need for interprofessional and multiagency collaboration to ensure that well co-ordinated, person-centred services are delivered in the most effective ways.				
<b>5.7.11</b>	You work and communicate with colleagues and representatives of other organisations to ensure the safety and wellbeing of people accessing services.				
<b>5.7.12</b>	When you and another occupational therapy practitioner are working with the same person, you work co-operatively, liaising with each other and agreeing areas of responsibility. This is communicated to the person and all relevant parties.				
<b>5.7.13</b>	You seek consent from those who access the service to share their personal information with colleagues or other services where necessary.				

5.8 Professional and personal relationships					
<p><b>5.8.1</b> It is your responsibility to ensure that you maintain a professional relationship with those who access the service and that you always act in their best interests.</p> <p>If concerns are raised about any relationship, sexual or otherwise, it will always be your responsibility to demonstrate that you have not exploited the vulnerability of an individual, regardless of when the relationship may have started or ended, or however consensual it may have been.</p>					
	Statement	Y	N	What is your evidence for this?	Action to be taken, by whom and by when?
5.8.1.1	You foster appropriate therapeutic relationships with those who access the service in a transparent, ethical and impartial way.				
5.8.1.2	You maintain a professional relationship and high standards of care in situations where there is tension or discord.				
5.8.1.3	You do not enter into relationships that would impair your judgement and objectivity and/or which would give rise to the advantageous or disadvantageous treatment of any individual or group.				
5.8.1.4	You do not enter into relationships that exploit individuals sexually, physically, emotionally, financially, socially or in any other manner.				
5.8.1.5	You do not exploit any professional relationship for any form of personal gain or benefit.				

<b>5.8.1.6</b>	You avoid entering into a close personal relationship with an individual whilst you are responsible for providing occupational therapy, but instead maintain an appropriate professional relationship.				
<b>5.8.1.7</b>	If there is a risk that any professional boundary may be broken, you disclose and discuss this with your manager. In such a circumstance, you hand over therapy care for the individual to an appropriate professional colleague.				
<b>5.8.1.8</b>	As far as is reasonably practical, you do not enter into a professional relationship with someone with whom you already have or have had a close personal relationship. This includes family members, neighbours, partners and friends.				
<b>5.8.1.9</b>	Where there is no reasonable alternative, you make every effort to remain professional and objective while working with the individual you know or have known.				
<b>5.8.1.10</b>	In such a circumstance, this is disclosed and discussed with your manager and a note made in relevant records. This is for your protection as much as for the person accessing the service.				

5.9 The professionalism of colleagues					
	Statement	Y	N	What is your evidence for this?	Action to be taken, by whom and by when?
5.9.1	Any reference you make to the quality of work or the integrity of a professional colleague is expressed with due care.				
5.9.2	<p>You raise your concerns with a line manager or other appropriate person and follow statutory and local policy if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• you become aware that something has gone wrong or someone has suffered harm as a result of your colleagues' actions or omissions;</li> <li>• you become aware of any intentional malpractice, criminal conduct or unprofessional activity, whether by occupational therapy personnel or other staff; or</li> <li>• you are aware of any kind of discrimination, bullying and/or harassment in the workplace, whether towards colleagues or those who access the service.</li> </ul>				
5.9.3	The information you provide is objective, relevant, evidence-based where possible and limited to the matter of concern.				
5.9.4	If giving evidence in an enquiry or court case concerning any alleged negligence or misconduct of a colleague, the evidence you provide is objective and substantiated.				

5.10 Personal profit or gain					
	Statement	Y	N	What is your evidence for this?	Action to be taken, by whom and by when?
5.10.1	You do not accept tokens such as favours, gifts or hospitality from those who access the service, their families or commercial organisations when this might be construed as seeking to obtain preferential treatment (Great Britain. Parliament 1889, 1906, 1916). In respect of private practice this principle still prevails in terms of personal gain.				
5.10.2	Local policy is always observed in the case of gifts.				
5.10.3	If an individual or their family makes a bequest to a practitioner or a service, it is declared according to local policy.				
5.10.4	You put the interests of those who access the service first and do not let this duty be influenced by any commercial or other interest that conflicts with this duty; for example, in arrangements with commercial providers that may influence contracting for the provision of equipment, or care and support.				

5.11 Information and representation					
	Statement	Y	N	What is your evidence of this?	Action to be taken, by whom and by when?
5.11.1	Information and/or advertising (in any format or on any platform) in respect of professional activities or work, is accurate. It is not misleading, unfair or sensational and complies with any relevant legislation.				
5.11.2	You accurately represent your qualifications, education, experience, training, capability and the services you provide. Explicit claims are not made in respect of superiority of personal skills, equipment or facilities.				
5.11.3	You respect the intellectual property rights of others at all times. You do not claim another person's work or achievements as your own unless the claim can be fully justified.				
5.11.4	You only advertise, promote or recommend a product or service in an accurate and objective way. You do not provide preferential or unjustifiable information about a product or service.				
5.11.5	If you are aware that possible misrepresentation of the protected title 'occupational therapist' has occurred, you raise a concern with HCPC.				

## References

All websites accessed on 11.01.21

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

Great Britain. Parliament (2010) *Equality Act 2010*. London: Stationery office.  
Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

Great Britain. Parliament (1889, 1906, 1916) *Prevention of Corruption Acts 1889 to 1916*. London: HMSO.

Royal College of Occupational Therapists (2021) *Professional standards for occupational therapy practice, conduct and ethics*. London: RCOT.