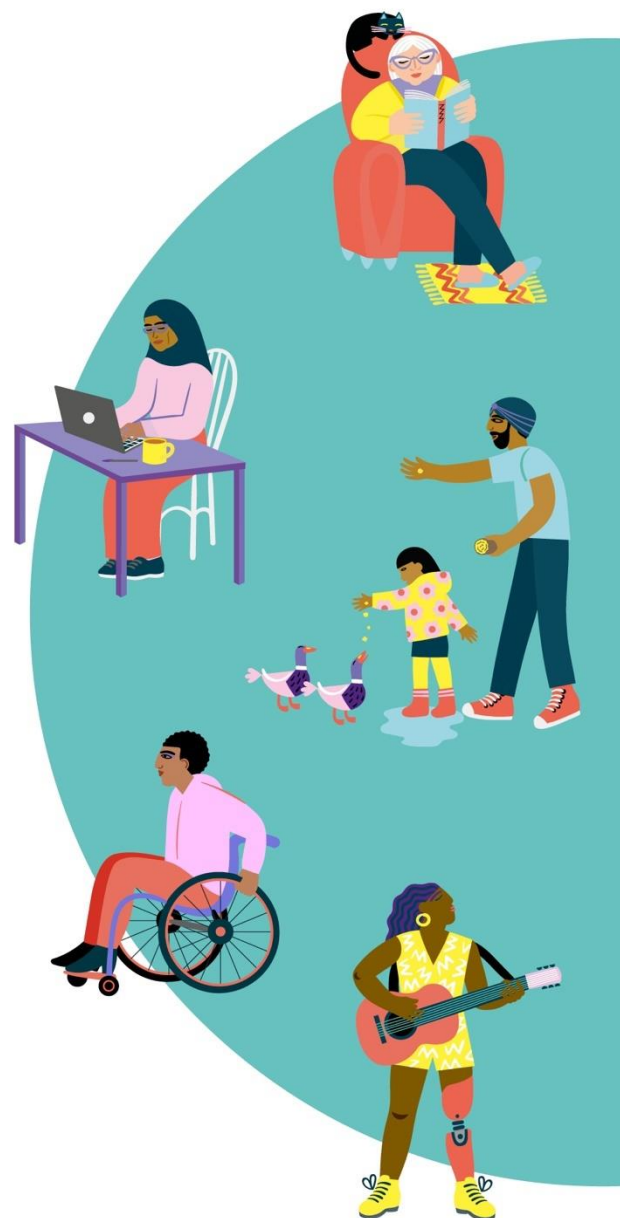


Annual monitoring of accredited pre-registration programmes

For the academic year 2019/20

Pre-registration education team

May 2022



Contents

Introduction	2
Accreditation events	3
Accreditations	3
Degree Apprenticeship	3
Annual monitoring	4
Section 1 – Programmes	5
1.1 Learning and development standards for pre-registration education and support during the Covid-19 pandemic.	5
1.2 Applications and funding	5
1.3 Selection process	7
1.4 Age and gender profile of new learners 2019/20	8
1.5 Previous qualifications	9
1.6 Teaching staff	9
1.7 Learning resources	10
1.8 Graduate completion	10
1.9 National attrition rate: Loss to programmes through voluntary or involuntary withdrawal	13
1.10 Graduate destinations	14
1.11 RCOT student membership and professional body engagement	15
Section 2 – Practice education	16
2.1 Availability of practice-based learning opportunities	16
2.2 Quality assurance of practice education	17
Section 3 – Good practice	19
3.1 Areas of good practice	19
References	20

Annual monitoring of accredited pre-registration programmes

Compiled report for the academic year 2019/20

Introduction

The Royal College of Occupational Therapists (RCOT), is the sole professional body for occupational therapy in the UK and supports, develops, and protects the UK domain knowledge. RCOT sets the professional and educational standards for the occupational therapy profession against the Learning and development standards for pre-registration occupational therapy education (RCOT 2019). RCOT accredits and monitors pre-registration programmes offered by education providers.

RCOT's Accreditation Process uses the Standards to assess whether a pre-registration programme, and the education provider that delivers that programme, competently and ethically meets the occupational needs of the community for HCPC registration. While the HCPC determines 'fitness to practise', RCOT determines 'fitness for the profession' which is above and beyond the expectations of the HCPC.

RCOT is an organisational member of the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT), holding the delegated authority to confer WFOT approval.

During the academic year 2019-2020 there were 67 RCOT accredited pre-registration programmes delivered in 36 education providers over the four nations as reported in Table 1. Of the 67 programmes being delivered, 13 providers were delivering one pre-registration programme, 16 providers delivered two programmes and seven providers delivered a portfolio of three programmes.

Table 1 Distribution of pre-registration programmes over the 4 nations for 2019/2020

Nation	No. of education providers	No. of programme pathways	BSc (Hons)	BSc (Hons) Part-time	Degree Apprenticeships	MSc	PgDip/ MSc	MOccTh
England	29	55	27	4	6	15	2	0
Northern Ireland	1	1	1	0	N/A	0	0	0
Scotland	4	7	3	0	N/A	2	1	1
Wales	2	4	2	1	N/A	0	1	0
Total	36	67	33	5	6	17	4	1

The number of part-time programmes in England were reduced from seven in academic year 2018/19 to four. Degree apprenticeship programmes have opened as the part-time programmes have been phased out. There were two programmes in England accepting new learners on their part-time programmes, the remaining two programmes were overseeing completion of their final cohorts. The one programme in Wales runs alternate years with an intake in 2019/20. In addition to the data presented in Table 1 there was one recently accredited MSc programme that was not

delivered in 2019/20 due to staffing issues.

Accreditation events

During 2019/20 academic year RCOT was involved in the re-/accreditation of 16 pre-registration programmes. There were 12 events, considering 18 programmes, during this academic year. It is not unusual for an event to be scheduled in one academic year and the accreditation completed in the next once conditions and recommendations are met. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic in the second half of the academic year, six events (for eight programmes) were accredited remotely, rather than face-to-face, to facilitate the accreditation process.

Care should be taken when drawing conclusions regarding the data from this report as not all education providers were required to complete an AMR for the 2019/20 period due to their place in the accreditation cycle (see Annual Monitoring section below).

Accreditations

There were five new programmes, from five providers, successfully accredited in 2019/20 starting delivery the following academic year. This consisted of one Degree Apprenticeship (England, new provider), one BSc (Hons) (England), one MSc (England) and two MOccTh (one each in England and Scotland both to existing providers).

Re-accreditation of eleven programmes (eight providers) was also approved during the 2019/2020 academic year to commence in delivery in later academic years. This consisted of five BSc (Hons) programmes (four in England and one in Scotland) and six MSc programmes (four in England and two Scotland). There was also a major change for an existing degree apprentice programme (England) to extend delivery to an additional site to increase learner numbers, demonstrating continued growth of this route.

Summary of accredited pre-registration programmes in 2019/20

- Five new programmes
- One BSc (Hons) Degree Apprenticeship
- Six BSc (Hons) full time
- Seven MSc
- Two MOccTh

Additionally, two accreditation events were carried out with two new providers during the academic year for which conditions needed to be met prior to accreditation being awarded. RCOT were approached by six new providers who were considering offering pre-registration occupational therapy pathways in the future. Future developments will be reported in subsequent AMR reports.

Degree Apprenticeship

The first degree apprenticeship programme accredited and started in 2018/19 and five more were accredited that year and started delivery in 2019/20, so that 6 in total were accredited and running. One education provider increased their accredited numbers by opening a second degree apprenticeship site in London with apprentices starting the following year 2020/21. Another two were accredited with delivery starting in September 2020.

Annual monitoring

Annual Monitoring Reports were submitted by all education providers for this monitoring period as required under the terms of RCOT accreditation. 14 Full reports (England 12; Northern Ireland 1, Scotland 1; Wales 0), 43 Light reports (England 37; Northern Ireland 0, Scotland 2; Wales 4) from 36 education providers as some deliver more than one programme.

Programmes that had undergone re-/accreditation in 2019/20 are not usually requested to complete an AMR report however due to the impact of Covid-19 on programme delivery, Section 4 of the light report was requested by all programmes that had undertaken the accreditation process (England 11; Northern Ireland 0, Scotland 3; Wales 0). Eight of these programmes were also asked to complete Section 7 of the light report to establish the transition from the 2014 standards, used in their accreditation, to the 2019 standards (England 6; Northern Ireland 0, Scotland 2; Wales 0). The following report has been compiled based on the information submitted within those reports and is therefore an indicator of the national picture. Some data presented has been collated from all education providers from the four nations and is highlighted at the relevant points.

The RCOT continues to review and evaluate the value and purpose of the data requested from programme teams in producing this combined report. Should you wish to provide any feedback, please contact the RCOT Education and Learning Department (QA@rcot.co.uk).

RCOT has reviewed the annual quality monitoring reports for the 2019/20 monitoring period and confirms the ongoing accredited status of all pre-registration programmes.

Section 1 – Programmes

1.1 Learning and development standards for pre-registration education and support during the Covid-19 pandemic.

RCOT's Learning and development standards for pre-registration education (2019), were sent to education providers in September 2019 following an eight-month development project. Details of the standards development can be found on page six and a list of the major changes to the 2019 standards found on page eight of the document. Implementation of the 2019 Standards was phased in over a six-month period, and providers due for accreditation could elect whether to use the 2014 or 2019 standards. All education providers were required to submit accreditation documentation mapped to the 2019 standards thereafter, and education providers accredited to the 2014 Learning and development standards were supported to transition to the 2019 standards via section 7 of the 2019/20 quality annual monitoring process.

Due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the rapid response required for continued pre-registration delivery, RCOT was keen to support programme teams. The RCOT major change process was suspended from March to September 2020 with the 2019/20 AMR report providing a process to capture changes for retrospective approval. The majority of education providers requested retrospective major changes to: -

1. practice-based learning provision to enable timely academic delivery instead of practiced based learning (PBL) at a later date.
2. change in PBL delivery from 'in person' to 'remote/virtual' (see section 2.1 for further details).
3. assessment changes to enable online provision e.g. face to face oral presentations to recorded presentation submission.

Throughout the pandemic programmes continued to be monitored against the [Learning and development standards for pre-registration education](#) and programme teams were encouraged to work within the standards by using their flexibility to navigate the pandemic and minimise the impact on learners' programmes of study.

In April 2020 an amendment to the Standards was issued to standard 4.1.2 removing the requirement to request permission from RCOT to extend the maximum individual length of study, and this was communicated to stakeholders. Throughout the pandemic period RCOT supported education providers by regularly updating a frequently asked questions section within the website and responding to enquiries.

1.2 Applications and funding

There was a total of 2818 RCOT accredited places on pre-registration programmes during 2019/20. 516 (18%) of these places were not filled. Of the unfilled places, 95% were in England, 4% Scotland, 0.5% Wales and 0.5% in Northern Ireland. Reasons for unfilled places are attributed to new courses having not yet reached their full capacity, less teaching staff affecting capacity and insufficient applicants meeting recruitment criteria. The high number of unfilled places in England are also explained by the changes to self-funding, insufficient suitable applicants, local competition, concerns regarding the education provider experience and methods of delivery due to Covid-19, staffing levels and lack of resources. It seemed that while some education providers did not recruit to their full capacity of accredited places, others filled, or exceeded their accredited places. 15 education providers exceeded their accredited places and needed to seek RCOT's retrospective approval using the major change process. 428 (16.7%) accredited places were not used meaning there was an overall increase in places being filled for 2019/20 compared to 2018/19.

Growth in accredited places

Following successful accreditation events in the 2019/20 academic year, there has been a growth of 16% (401) available places. This is shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Growth in number of places for academic year 2019/20

Programme	2018/19 number of accredited places	Number of new accredited places	2019/20 number of accredited places	% increase/decrease
BSc (Hons) FT	1966	75	2041	4%
BSc (Hons) Degree Apprenticeship	15	150	165	1,000%
MSc	456	129	585	28%
Totals	2451	401	2852	16%

Occupational therapy programmes in England can be individually paid or funded by tuition fee loans (GOV.UK) and in Northern Ireland the Department of Health and Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) continues to fund learners if they had lived there for three years. In Scotland the Students Award Agency Scotland (SASS) fund Scottish occupational therapy learners to study on Scottish pre-registration programmes and the NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership (NWSSP) fund in Wales.

Where known, 6221 (5495 in 2018/19) applications were made via UCAS, for full time undergraduate places excluding apprentices, and 1796 (1719 in 18/19) directly to education providers. This demonstrates an upward trend in both areas and may be due to the pandemic and government promotion of Allied Health Professions. In total, across all four nations, there were 2808 learners who enrolled at the start of the academic year. Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of learners in 2019/20 according to their chosen pre-registration pathway. Comparing the Figure 2 data for 2018/19 we can identify that accredited places have increased by 377, between 2018/19 (2431) and 2019/20 (2808), with an increase of post graduate pre-registration places increasing by 61 in 18/19 (585).

Figure 1 Learner intake to all pathways by Country 2019/20

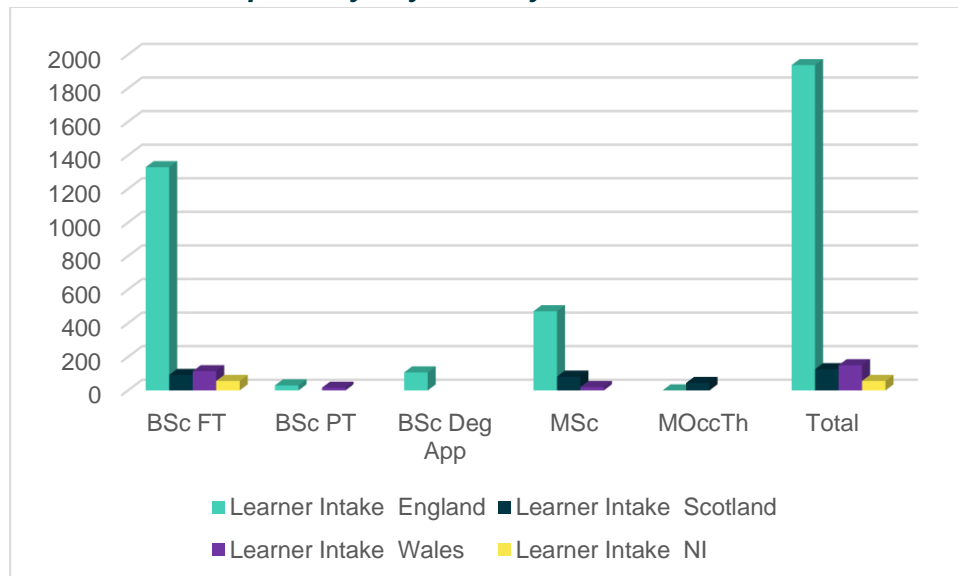
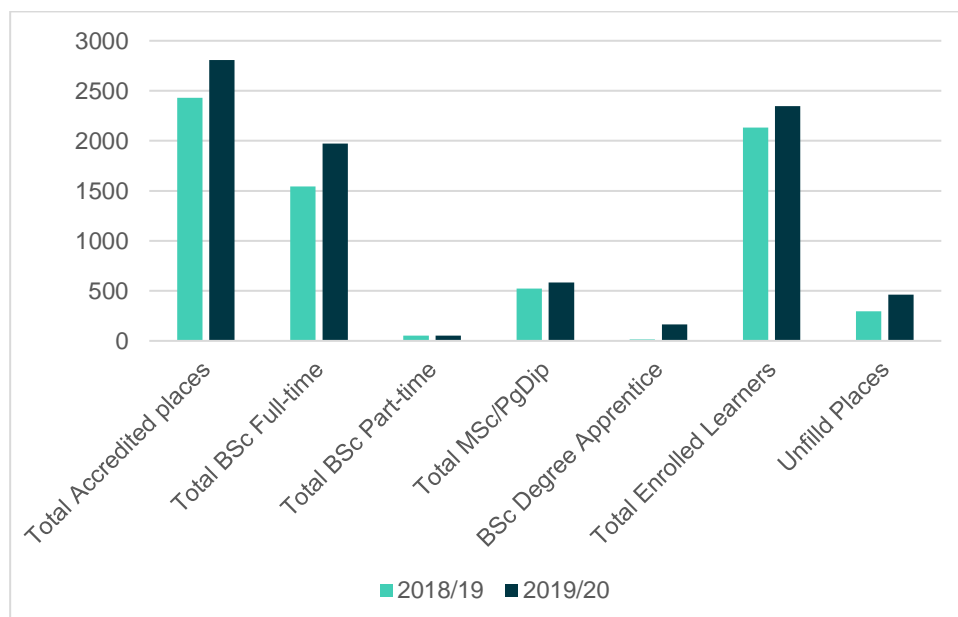


Figure 2 Comparison of totals approved and actual learner places between 2017/18 and 2018/19



Degree Apprenticeship

In 2019/20, five education providers started a Degree Apprenticeship programme making a total of six. The number of accredited places rose from 25 to 165 and 115 learners started their first year.

1.3 Selection process

As in previous years, learner interviews were undertaken at education providers, either in groups, individually or a combination of both, throughout England, Scotland, and Wales. The sole Northern Ireland education provider continued to use the Health Professions Admissions Test.

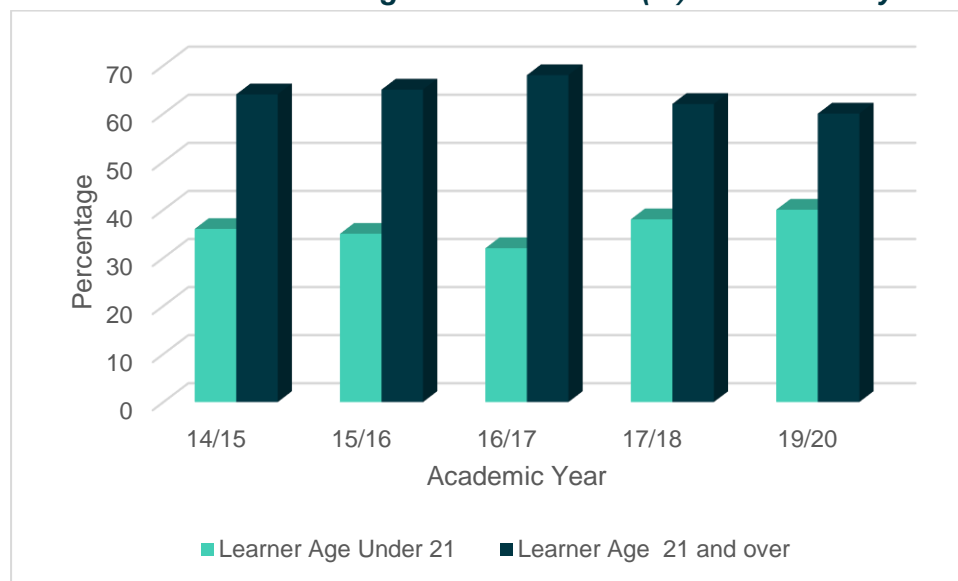
In England, Scotland and Wales people who access occupational therapy services, carers and practice educators were involved in the shortlisting and selection processes of candidates at most education providers. The recruitment processes included group tasks, written tasks, individual interviews, virtual interviews, paper-based applications, or a combination of some of these elements.

Applicants were selected for interview using values-based principles and these criteria were explored more fully in interviews.

1.4 Age and gender profile of new learners 2019/20

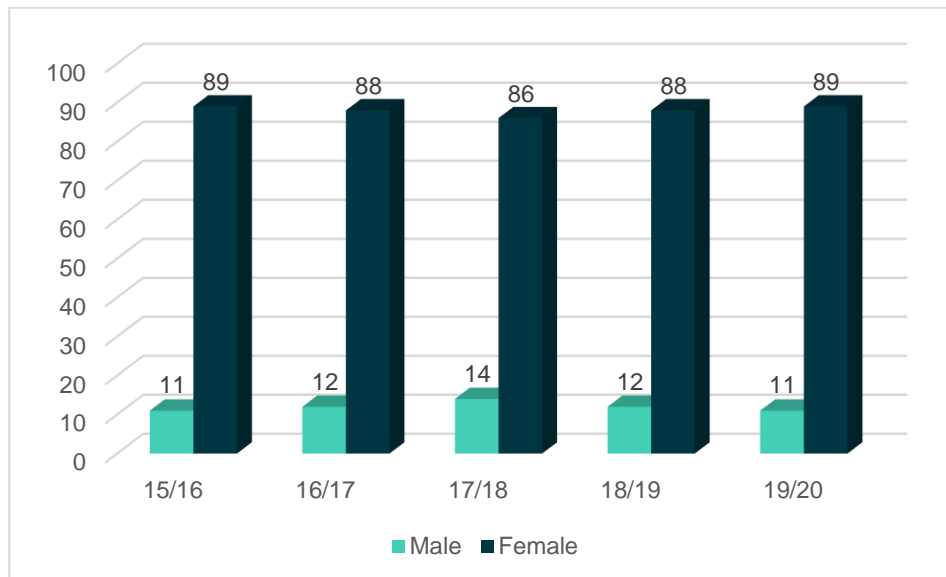
Overall, 60% of all new learners were 21 years of age or over; 54% of new learners on the BSc (Hons) programmes and 81% on post-graduate entry pre-registration programmes. This data suggests most learners start their pre-registration programmes after completing their first degree or after gaining further life experience. Conversely, the trend of learners aged over 21 is decreasing since 16/17 as illustrated in Figure 3. This shift may be influenced by the change in funding as older learners may have additional financial responsibilities. No data was collected for the 2018/19 academic year.

Figure 3 Distribution of new learners aged under/over 21 (%) for the last 5 years



The gender profile of all new learners for the 2019/20 period was 89% female (2052) and 11% male (250). Illustrated in Figure 4 is a slight reduction in male learners in comparison to 2018/19 when 12% (297) of learners were male. According to records, the 2017/18 period had the highest percentage of new male learners (14%). Data collection for gender from 2021/22 has been reviewed to include transgender and non-binary categories in recognition of the importance of a complete data set enabling an understanding of inclusion (Stonewall 2016) and supporting policy development to further inclusion (ONS, n.d).

Figure 4 Comparison of gender distribution for new learners, as a percentage, over the last 5 years



1.5 Previous qualifications

Of all new learners in 2019/20, 30% held a previous degree level qualification, including 14% of learners who enrolled on an undergraduate programme. This suggests that nearly one third identified occupational therapy as their career choice later in their education pathway. This should be considered in recruitment drives.

Eight percent of learners who accessed the graduate entry accelerated programmes had a postgraduate qualification in addition to the minimum requirement of a previous undergraduate qualification.

Most new learners were UK nationals, while 10% were from the EU and 8% were international. Of the UK nationals who started a pre-registration programme 77% attended BSc (Hons) and 23% graduate programmes. This is in comparison to the European and International market where 55% attended BSc (Hons) programmes and 45% graduate programmes.

When only considering graduate pre- registration programmes, 70% of learners were UK nationals and 30% were from the EU or international. While UK programmes have a European and International market, over 80% of all learners are UK nationals and it would be valuable to establish how many of the EU and International learners locate to the UK following graduation to help workforce prediction.

1.6 Teaching staff

All education providers were able to demonstrate that programmes were led by suitably qualified occupational therapists with the relevant experience and expertise to support the learning required for learners to qualify for professional practice. Many education providers have staff holding Fellowships/Senior Fellowships from the Higher Education Academy.

Ten programmes reported changes to their teaching teams during this monitoring year. In most cases staffing levels were maintained overall and new staff were recruited to take the place of those who had retired or moved, demonstrating forward planning. 22 universities reported they will be

increasing staffing, mostly to make sure their staff to student ratio (SSR) stays within the RCOT standard and to staff new programmes

The reports demonstrated that staff were involved in a range of professional development activities, including research, studying for higher degrees, delivering short courses, supporting PhD learners and attending conferences and regional occupational therapy meetings.

1.7 Learning resources

From September 2019 until August 2020 all programmes reported access to adequate and appropriate learning resources.

Covid-19 pandemic restrictions were imposed from March 2020 and a range of digital platforms were used to deliver on-line teaching and support. A few education providers commented that additional CPD opportunities, library services/resources and additional learning materials and equipment had been made available to learners and staff to support them during this period of change.

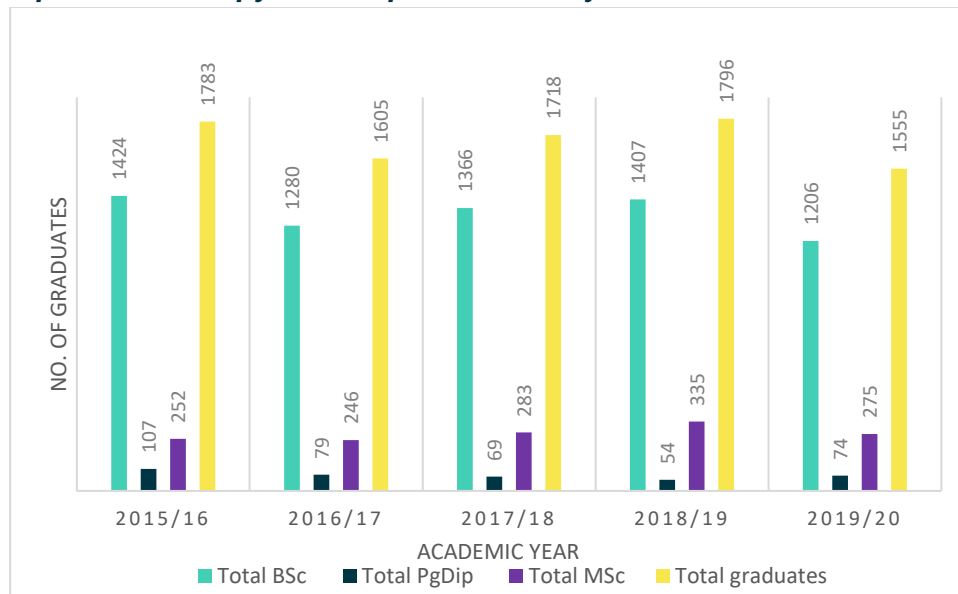
Three education providers reported learners were required to attend campus for face-to-face mandatory training and embracing a hybrid model of learning. It is anticipated that this model of learning was more widespread than suggested especially towards the end of the academic year, demonstrating that in a time of great uncertainty and quick-change, new methods of learning were introduced to support continued learning.

1.8 Graduate completion

During the academic year 2019/2020 the Covid-19 world pandemic impacted upon learner progression, including practice-based learning and final year completion. In total 1555 graduates completed their studies and were awarded a pre-registration occupational therapy qualification. Of these, 1206 were awarded BSc (Hons) and 349 secured a postgraduate pre-registration award. In the same period during 2018/19 1796 graduates completed their studies, 1407 with a BSc (Hons) and 389 a postgraduate pre-registration award, an overall difference of 241 fewer graduates between the two periods.

The pattern of graduate numbers over the last 5-year period is illustrated below in Figure 6. This demonstrates 2018/19 as the period with the most MScs being awarded, and the highest total number of pre-registration qualifications awarded. The 2015/16 academic year saw the greatest number of pre-registration occupational therapy graduates being awarded a BSc. This figure has steadily increased since a fall of BSc (Hons) awards in 2016/17, until the 2019/20 figure which reflects delayed completions due to the global pandemic. Between 2015/16 and 2018/19 the trend for pre-registration MSc graduates has increased and it will be interesting to monitor recovery following the small change in graduates in 2019/20.

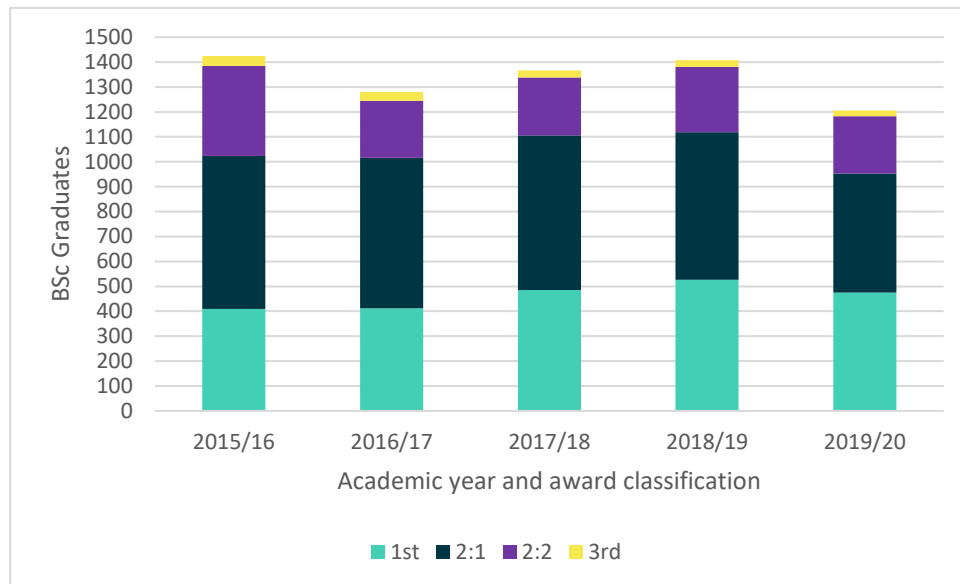
Figure 5 Occupational Therapy awards per academic year



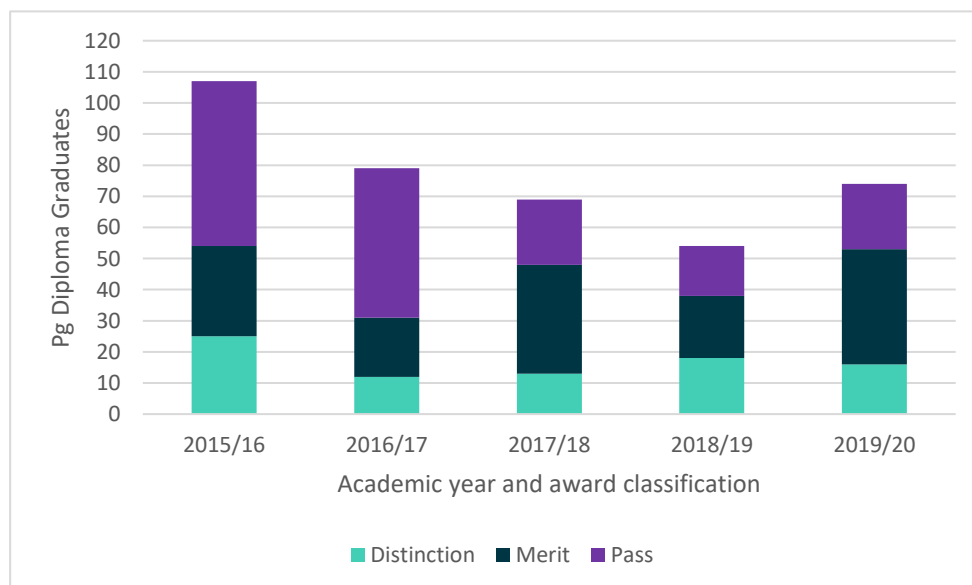
The distribution of awarding classifications varies depending on the award studied, with a 2:1 consistently being the most frequent award for BSc (Hons) graduates. For learners graduating with a Postgraduate Diploma (PgDip) or MSc, a merit is the most frequent award, for the last 3 years for PgDip and last 2 years for MSc. There has been a decrease in the frequency of third class awards being given for BSc (Hons) over the last 5 years and a reduction of pass grades for both PgDip and MSc awards. The distinction awards for MSc has also seen a gradual increase with 13% of all MSc graduates achieving a distinction in 2015/16 compared to 28% in 2019/20. This suggests that the overall achievement in graduates is rising. This is illustrated in Figures 6 a-c for each of the awards over the same periods.

Figure 6 Distribution of awarding classifications for a) BSc, b) PgDip and c) MSc over the last 5 academic year

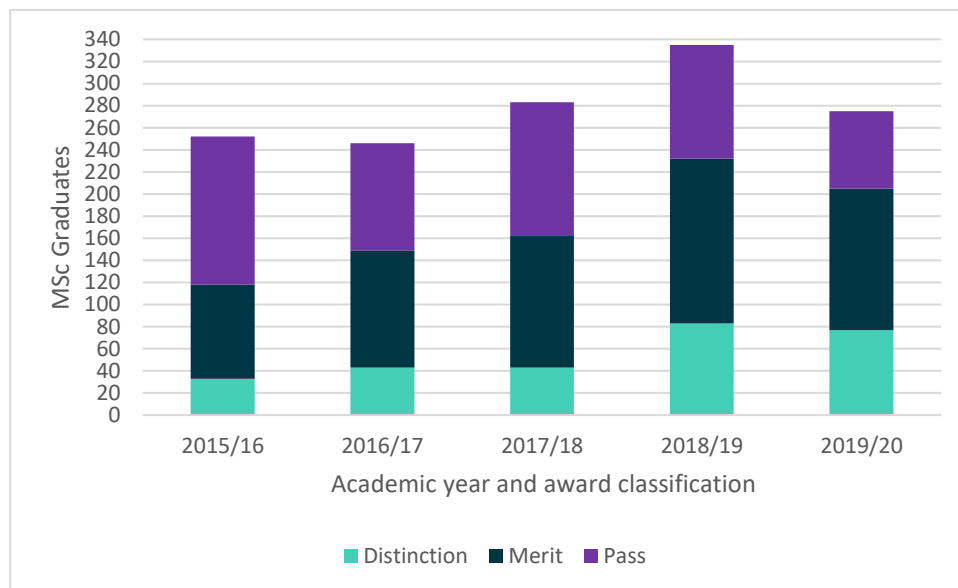
a) BSc



b) PgDip



c) MSc



It is anticipated that the 13% drop in graduates for 2019/20 is predominately due to the pandemic affecting on-time programme completion. Graduate numbers may be elevated for the same period in 2020/21, reflecting both those graduates who completed their studies in the 2020/21 academic year, and those who required an additional academic year (or part of it) to complete outstanding modules. Conversely, the impact of learners completing programmes and graduating may be affected over the next few years.

1.9 National attrition rate: Loss to programmes through voluntary or involuntary withdrawal

Based on the submitted annual monitoring reports, the national attrition rate for all responding programmes in 2019/20 was 5.4%, which was higher than 3% recorded the previous year.

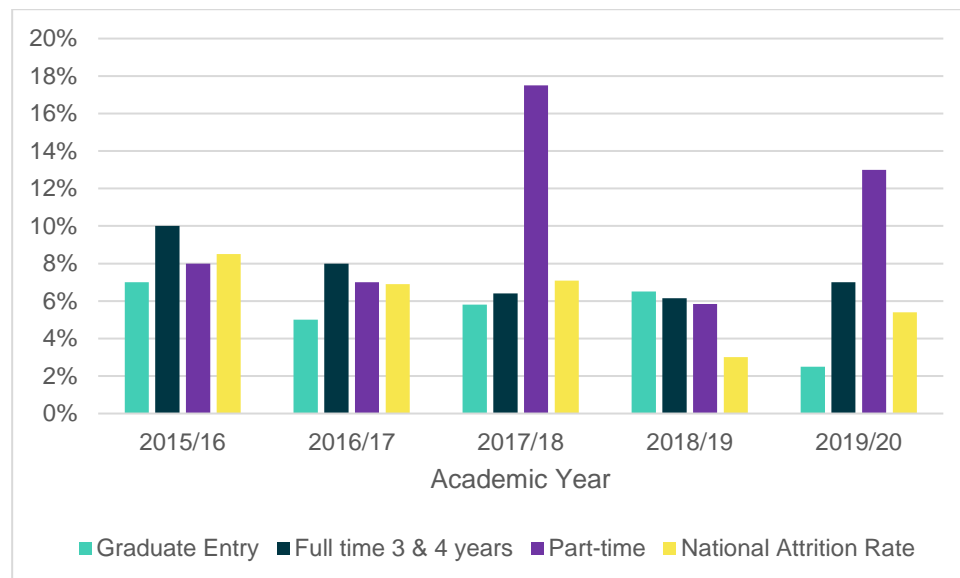
The national full-time programme attrition (undergraduate and graduate) for 2019/20 was 5.5%, which was down from 6.4% previous year. Full time programme attrition by country for 19/20 was: 6.1% in England, 1% in NI, 1.8% in Scotland and 3.25% in Wales. The mean attrition rate for the part-time programmes is up from 6% in 2018/19 to 13% in 2019/20.

Nationally the graduate entry attrition rate was 6.9%, which was 0.4% higher than the previous year 2018/19. Graduate entry programme attrition by country was: 7.8% in England, 0.9% in Wales and unreported in Scotland. There is no graduate entry programme in Northern Ireland. This rise in graduate entry overall attrition, from England, may be a direct reflection of the impact of reduced funding for MSc programmes in England from September 2018 (August 2017 for undergraduates), but there is no evidence to support this.

England continues to deliver four part-time routes and Wales delivers one. The one remaining in-service programme in England closed in 2019 and a degree apprentice route was opened at the same education provider. Numbers fluctuate as part-time programmes are mostly being phased out by education providers and have fewer learners remaining. In 2017/18 the attrition rate for the part-time routes was unusually high due to two programmes no longer recruiting and the low numbers of learners on the programmes distorting the representation as a percentage.

The most common reasons for temporary and permanent learner withdrawal continues to be for personal reasons, health, academic failure, financial reasons and not the right career choice.

Figure 7 National Attrition Rate 2015-2019



As in previous years, high attrition rates (above 10%) were seen in some programmes. In response, teams developed numerous strategies to deal with these including:

- Developing the quality of personal tutoring and a sense of community and belonging
- Enhancing learner support
- Continual review and evaluation with practice educators and people who use services
- Investment in learner engagement officers to review and enhance learner experiences at some education providers
- Annually review admissions processes to make sure they allocate places wisely.

1.10 Graduate destinations

As information is not always available it remains difficult to report on first post destinations of graduates. Ten programmes reported they were unable to access this information. Those programmes that were able to provide information reported most graduates gaining employment as an Occupational Therapist. Five individual programmes reported that 100% of their graduates were successful in gaining an occupational therapy post and another five programmes confirmed that over 90% of their graduates were in occupational therapy posts.

Graduates not employed as occupational therapists took on roles including Registered Social Care Practitioner; Registered Practitioner in a Rapid Transfer Service; Mental Health Practitioner; Support Worker; Social Inclusion Project Co-Ordinator; Employment Specialist and Team Leader; Relief project worker in a housing group; occupational therapy assistant practitioner; training for a new healthcare career.

1.11 RCOT student membership and professional body engagement

When reviewing RCOT membership for 2019/2020, 59% of all learners (new and continuing) were registered as student members. This is a decrease from 70% in 2018/19. Student membership figures do not include degree apprentices who have registered as associate members.

For the 36 education providers delivering occupational therapy programmes in 2019/20 RCOT 17 had membership rates below 59%. Ten education providers were paying membership fees for at least one year of the programmes they provide, an increase from eight education providers the previous year.

There were active RCOT learner groups or Occupational Therapy Societies at four of the 10 education providers that were asked this question, a decrease from nine out of 15 in 2018/19. Groups and societies run CPD events and annual conferences demonstrating engagement with the profession and its development. Some learners were encouraged and supported to participate in OT week activities and promoting the profession.

The RCOT Education Liaison Officer visited learners at 28 of the occupational therapy programmes (in three of the four nations) to demonstrate the benefits of being an RCOT member and to recruit new members. Due to the pandemic, from March 2020 face-to-face visits were stopped in line with government regulations. Instead, online materials, presentation slides and links were shared with education provider learner groups and societies for their online events and benefits.

From the data provided, academic staff from all education providers demonstrated engagement with RCOT. This is evidenced by RCOT memberships, specialist section memberships and working with the professional body as BJOT reviewers, engaging in regional group activities, RCOT Board members, accreditor roles and conference abstract reviewers.

Section 2 – Practice education

2.1 Availability of practice-based learning opportunities

Until March 2020 sufficient quality practice-based learning opportunities were reported by 55 of the 57 programmes who were asked this question. The two programmes (one education provider) who reported difficulties resolved this by working with practice-based learning (PBL) providers creatively and effectively. One programme reported their continued expansion of diverse PBL opportunities from their already healthy number, and another extended their PBL geographical area due to competition with their local providers from other education providers spreading their boundaries.

Due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the uncertainty this created, access to PBL opportunities proved challenging from March 2020. To assist with the uncertainties RCOT and WFOT encouraged educators to exercise sensible creativity within the spirit of the Learning and Development Standards for Pre-registration Education, to maximise access to PBL opportunities. This included the use of a maximum 40 hours of simulated practiced-based learning (Standard 5.2).

Fifteen programmes (10 education providers) reported PBL opportunities being postponed for at least one of their cohorts over the later six months of the academic year. Consequently, the impact of delayed PBL opportunities had a knock-on effect to learners' progression with pre-registration programme delivery adaption required to reschedule PBL opportunities and programme completion and this is reported by the same 15 programmes.

23 programmes from 11 education providers reported embracing innovative solutions to PBL delivery through using simulated (SIM) hours meeting Standard 5.2 (5 programmes/3 education providers) and/or increased use of different/diverse models (21 programmes/10 education providers). The use of PBL models used to assist delivery included:

- blended work-based (a combination of working from home and on the premises);
- remote (working from home instead of the organisation's physical base. 6 programmes /2 education providers);
- virtual (working from home as per the usual organisational system. 8 programmes /4 education providers)
- part-time hours over a longer period (3 programmes/1 education providers);
- increased role emerging opportunities (3 programmes/1 education provider);
- peer PBL remote opportunities (2 designs in 4 programmes/3 education providers).

The introduction of remote PBL opportunities provided the benefit for those learners who were shielding or blended, for those required to isolate during their PBL period enabling continued PBL opportunities. One education provider (three programmes) reported their education provider invested in additional technology for learners to access these PBL opportunities from their own homes. The increased use of role emerging PBL opportunities also enabled overseas learners (four programmes/two education providers) the opportunity for continued PBL opportunities and programme progression. Of the three programmes (two education providers) in Scotland who were asked this question a good supply of quality PBL opportunities was reported throughout the academic year. Additionally, two programmes (two education providers) in England reported a secure and wide-ranging PBL supply throughout the whole academic year.

Although not a direct question, two education providers reported their final year learners completed their programme in the usual timeframe/without any delay as scheduled PBL occurred in the earlier half of the academic year, prior to the national impact of Covid-19 on PBL opportunities. Four other programmes (three education providers) reported benefits of the paid PBL initiative to assist

learners the opportunity to undertake PBL. In some cases, this enabled final year learners to complete their programme and join the workforce aided by the HCPC temporary register.

It is anticipated that the huge scale of innovations employed by programme teams in conjunction with learners and education providers over the later six months of the 2019/20 academic year are wider than reported in the submitted AMR's. Therefore, this is not exhaustive to all innovations that to continue to meet the Standards and programme teams should be congratulated on their development of creative learning opportunities in such extraordinary circumstances.

2.2 Quality assurance of practice education

Of the 15 programmes (ten education providers) that were asked, all evaluated the practice-based learning process.

PBL reflections formed part of the learner report form for three programmes (three education providers) with one requesting completion of another evaluation process in addition to the report form. It is anticipated that this allows learners the possibility to provide feedback without their practice educator having sight.

Four programmes (three education providers) used an online form or email to gather evaluation of PBL experience and it was not possible to distinguish if this was a new initiative, considering the pandemic, or a process already rooted in the programme. Eight programmes (four education providers) used the module evaluation to seek PBL evaluation from learners. For five of these programmes (three education providers) this was their primary data gathering method, while the other education provider used the module evaluation form in combination with a briefing.

Four programmes (two education providers) reported learners participating in an end of placement debrief to discuss any specific issues with the professional practice placement lead. One programme (one education provider) reported having recently reviewed their practice education evaluation survey during the monitoring period as part of an action research project demonstrating the high value of PBL evaluation and development.

Two programmes (two education providers) also reported PBLs being audited biannually as part of their ongoing processes (one programme) or regular audits as part of the Quality Standards for NHS Scotland (one programme).

Learner evaluations were reviewed by the programme teams and accessible to the placement educators through several channels including stakeholder meetings (one programme/education provider), direct with the PBL (one programme/education provider), summary reports to the PBL (three programme/education providers), academic visits (one programme/education provider), trust placement coordinators (one programme/education provider). All programmes reported that concerns raised from learners or practice educators were followed up.

The experience of practice educators was evaluated through several mechanisms including questionnaires (four programmes/two education providers), placement debriefs (one programme/education provider), visits (three programmes/education providers), placement updates (one programme/education provider) and via the learner through the report form (two programmes/education providers). One programme (one education provider) acknowledged that while they used their visits to gather practice educators' evaluation there was no evaluation process currently in place for educators and acknowledged its importance to implement.

Additional remote support during the PBL period was also reported including: a duty system for

placements to ensure access and support is provided effectively thorough the working week (three programmes/ one education provider), and additional training to support placement educators who were working indifferent ways (one programme education provider). The later education provider also provided drop-ins during PBL periods open to both placement educators and learners to access. This further demonstrates the innovative mechanisms developed during such a challenging period for programme delivery whilst maintaining high quality evaluation systems to ensure quality.

Section 3 – Good practice

3.1 Areas of good practice

There have been plenty of examples of good practice during this academic year, particularly in response to disruption of placements due to Covid-19. The following are examples of good practice as identified by the education providers themselves:

- Final year learners were able to meet their course objectives and finish their programme via remote practice-based learning opportunities. These types of placements have since been adopted more widely to help learners make up practice hours with this type of placement particularly when learners haven't been able to travel to placements due to Covid-19. The feedback from remote placements was very positive and learners commented on how well it worked considering other commitments learners and supervisors (OT lecturers and organisations) had; how motivated learners were; how valuable the weekly supervision and peer support sessions were; and it highlighted how much can be achieved from a virtual service, including the importance of skills development within the current and future world of remote working.
- A support network was created for learners on placement away from home. Due to the routine delivery of online lessons learners were able to meet weekly with others in the same situation. They were able to tap into peer support and found it reduced the feeling of isolation. Even learners who did not attend said that they found it comforting to know there was a point of contact whilst they were away from the education provider environment. This offer has been extended into the new academic year.
- Having highlighted the need for wider conversations on racial justice across health professions in the UK, due to structural inequalities highlighted by the Covid-19 pandemic and the corresponding Black Lives Matter movement, a Race Working Group has been established. This is a collaborative effort between academic staff and learners of Black, Asian, and Minoritised Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds. Several initiatives have been implemented with success and excellent feedback from learners of Minoritised Ethnic backgrounds.
- Learners of all backgrounds had identified lacking confidence and skills to support peers in the face of injustice and discrimination. To empower learners to stand up for one another and to foster solidarity among the higher education OT community, the group were looking at ways to commission Allyship Training for all. This has been piloted with success on one cohort. Learners of different racial / ethnic backgrounds and nationalities have reported being able to bridge divides and advocate for one another when needed. Moving forwards, the group aims not only to continue this fruitful collaboration, but also to expand efforts to include all learners of all backgrounds.
- The External Examiners commended one programme team for the use of Padlet (an online collaboration tool) to encourage sharing of ideas and peer feedback. The programme team was praised for encouraging innovative group projects related to approaches in practice and the Excellence in Practice certificate for graduating learners.
- International learners commented that racism had been one of their concerns on moving to the UK. They felt more confident and reassured to see open discussion around this topic during Welcome Week, where reading, reflection and dialogue around race set the stage for brave conversations.

RCOT recognises the response from education provider programme teams during the pandemic to implement changes to their PBL strategy in response to the advice from WFOT regarding their Minimum Standards for the Education of Occupational Therapists (revised 2016) related to Covid-19 pandemic which advises 'A dynamic and flexible approach to how the 1000 hours is achieved has always been the intent of the Minimum Standards.' And 'Other teaching strategies include problem-based case study work, video assessments and in-depth, evidence informed reflective practice.'

National occupational therapy associations and regulators should continue to recognise the relevance of evidence-based experiential learning and the conditions in which they are undertaken.' As reported in the AMRs education providers developed creative and flexible strategies to make sure that learners were able to graduate.

References

Council of Deans of Health (2016) *Health Education Funding in England from 2017/18: Student Funding Information*. Council of Deans of Health. Available at: <https://www.councilofdeans.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Student-Funding-Information-22042016-final.pdf>

Office for National Statistics (n.d.) *Sex and gender identity question development for census 2021*. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/censustransformationprogramme/questiondevelopment/sexandgenderidentityquestiondevelopmentforcensus2021#executive-summary>.

Royal College of Occupational Therapists (2019) *Learning and development standards for pre-registration education: revised edition 2019*. London: RCOT. Available at: <https://rcot.co.uk/practice-resources/rcot-publications/learning-and-development-standards-pre-registrationeducation>

Stonewall (2016) *DO ASK, DO TELL Capturing data on sexual orientation and gender identity globally*. Available at: https://www.stonewall.org.uk/sites/default/files/do_ask_do_tell_guide_2016.pdf

UK Government (2022) *Student Finances for Undergraduates*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/student-finance/who-qualifies>.

Funding Northern Ireland (DHSSPS) *Student finance* Available at: <https://www.studentfinancenir.co.uk/student-finance-explained/before-you-apply/before-you-apply-what-can-you-get/your-nationality-and-residency/#main>

Funding Wales (NWSSP) *Student award services* Available at: <https://nwssp.nhs.wales/ourservices/student-awards-services/>

Funding Scotland (SAAS) *Student finance* Available at: <https://www.saas.gov.uk/full-time/funding-information-undergraduate>

Health Education England *Clinical Placement Expansion Programme (CPEP)* Available at: <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/news-blogs-events/news/funding-boost-clinical-placements-growth-teaching>

Quality Standards for NHS Scotland. *NHS Scotland Preparation for practice supervisors and practice assessors*: https://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/media/ui0nzqhs/nesc1240_unit3_v4.pdf