Summary of the BSc Occupational Therapy Practice Based Learning Programme

Course Philosophy

The profession of occupational therapy aspires to enable engagement in occupation and recognises the fundamental link between occupation, health and wellbeing (Townend & Polatajko 2007). Occupational therapy is still a developing and evolving profession and as such it is important that it considers not only how as a profession it can be of service to the individual and society but, envisage how it can be an agent for change and innovation (Kronenberg, Algado & Pollard 2005) in developing services with a person centred focus and an occupational perspective.

Occupational therapists believe that individuals have the potential for change and have a right to full social participation, self-determination, choice and meaningful occupation. The need to participate in everyday occupations is so integral to what it is to be human that we believe that people are, in essence, occupational beings. Occupation influences the formation of an individual's identity and is the means through which a person meets the demands of their life roles.

The BSc (Hons) in Occupational Therapy practice based learning educational programme is grounded in the belief that human beings engage in a dynamic process of interactions with the physical, psychological, cultural, spiritual, built and virtual environments (Haynes 2007). This programme focuses primarily on developing occupational therapists that are competent to practice within the UK, not only in existing service delivery settings but in new and emerging situations particularly in the community. This is an essential requirement of educating future occupational therapists in order that they can meet the challenges of rapidly changing health and social systems. Entry level occupational therapists need to adapt their skills and develop their knowledge to meet the need of the individual in whatever care system or environment they may be located.

Additionally, this practice based programme adopts an integrated educational approach to learning and teaching that involves concurrent learning in academic and practice environments. This allows the students to incrementally build their confidence and competence in both theoretical and practice aspects of the course. Students are encouraged to reflect on their existing skills and knowledge and to utilise these to build a strong foundation on which to develop their professional artistry. The practice based learning programme prepares the students for this role by immersing them in the working environment, encouraging them to see service users as an important part of their education process and working collaboratively with fellow learners, patients and practitioners (Baxter 2009). It is well recognised that stand-alone teaching improves knowledge but not necessarily the skills, attitudes and behaviours of students (Coomarasamy and Khan 2004).

Therefore, by integrating academic modules directly with practice placement education throughout the programme, practice based learning students have the opportunity to maximise their learning opportunities and make sense of theory as it is revealed through practice. The practice based learning programme reflects the key
elements of deep learning, intrinsic motivation, active learning, interaction with others and a structured knowledge base (Gibbs, 1992).

The programme is underpinned by the philosophical requirements of the World Federation of Occupational Therapists, which expects all internationally recognised occupational therapy qualifying programmes to focus on the occupational nature of humans and the occupational challenges they face in relation to their health and welfare (Hocking & Ness 2002). The primary goal of occupational therapy is to enable the individual to participate in activities that have unique meaning and purpose in a person's life.

Our occupational philosophy provides a foundation for all our teaching, learning and assessment strategies within the development and delivery of the programme. A strong theme throughout the programme is occupation as can be seen through the Occupational Performance modules at level 4 and 5. Although we are expected to address university, professional and regulatory body requirements, and these can clearly be seen mapped throughout this document, there is also a need for our students to not only to learn about occupational therapy, but to develop their occupational potential where they can see themselves as occupational beings (Wilcock 2000).

Alongside the practice learning elements, the academic programme is built upon an occupational philosophy with students learning about the founders of the profession, the concept of occupation, the impact of dysfunction, disease and disorder has in a person's life, the meaning of health and ill health to an individual, and the considerable impact that society, politics, culture, belief, and the built environment may have on health and well-being. This is delivered through the Occupational Performance modules. The curriculum builds on this knowledge by developing each student’s ability to analyse, synthesize, and integrate increasingly complex theory and practice, enabling the students to develop the necessary critical reasoning processes utilised by occupational therapists. Level 6 modules focus on developing this level of reasoning and encourage students to think beyond the 'normal' parameters of care and looking towards potential development and opportunity for occupational therapy within communities of practice.

The curriculum is designed to enable the students to develop attitudes, beliefs, behaviours, values, knowledge, and skills necessary for successful practice within the ever-changing care arena. It encourages the students to focus on promoting engagement in occupation to enable individuals to fulfil their role and meaning in life. Beyond this the students learn about the value of community engagement and how an individual is part of a wider community and how that influences their sense of worth and well-being.

Self-reflection and self-evaluation are key to transformational learning, and the students are continually encouraged to identify opportunities for learning and personal development, and to appreciate the importance of 'doing', and being empowered to take control of their professional development. Engagement with practitioners, service users and carers, and students from other programmes within
the Faculty and beyond is essential in creating the behaviours and values necessary for professional practice.

When qualified these students will have a strong professional identity, and will have the skills, knowledge, values and clinical reasoning ability to work in a contemporary and dynamic health and social care environment. Graduates from this programme will understand the importance of, and, have the required skills and knowledge to work as part of an integrated team focussed around the needs of the service user.

i) Aims of the Course

To enable the student to:

a. Develop personally and professionally and attain the level of competence required to meet the UK College of Occupational Therapists professional standards, and the UK Health and Care Professions Council Standards of Proficiency for registration to practice under the protected title of Occupational Therapist.

b. Become an autonomous, reflective occupational therapy practitioner ready for employment in a wide range of public, voluntary, and independent practice settings

c. Develop a critical understanding of your role, and that of others within the health and social care arena, and deliver person-centred care through effective communication and inter-professional and inter-agency collaboration.

d. Develop the skills necessary for lifelong learning and the capacity to maintain and develop professional competence in the changing context of health and social care provision.

Design of the Course

The themes identified below embrace the occupational therapy profession's expected graduate competences which are embedded within the module descriptors and indicative content. They also absorb the proposed changes.

The core competencies require the graduate to have:

- Knowledge and understanding of occupational therapy
- Professional and ethical reasoning and practice
- Professional relationships and partnerships
- Professional autonomy and accountability
- Scholarly practice in occupational therapy and occupational science
- Leadership in occupational therapy
- Promotion of occupational therapy
- Employability
# Themes of the Occupational Therapy practice based learning programme

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<td>Occupational Performance</td>
<td>Occupational Performance</td>
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*Note: The diagram visualizes the themes and their corresponding levels.*
In this course design the occupational performance modules will help the student to understand the professional practice of occupational therapy, alongside studying; essentials of occupational therapy; groups; and occupation and well being modules.

The occupation, creativity and well-being module will introduce the student to the concepts of occupational science which can be further explored through evidence based practice modules.

Practice learning and interprofessional education will provide opportunity to explore professional and ethical reasoning and will facilitate the student in developing therapeutic relationships and sustain collaborative working practices. Through placements the student will gain understanding of the importance of meeting regulatory standards and the requirement for ethical and professional conduct.

The research theme formed through the three evidence informed practice modules will provide the student with the ability to seek, critically evaluate and justify occupational therapy practice and to understand the importance of utilising current and relevant research to inform day to day practice.

The personal and professional development theme will lead the student through core skills of occupational therapy such as activity analysis, facilitating occupational engagement through groups and creativity. This theme and related modules will then develop the student’s understanding of the principles of leadership and management, promotion of occupational therapy and enhance employability skills by proving the student with the means to recognise and articulate professional and personal attributes and to fluently articulate the aim and benefits of occupational therapy to both individuals and communities.