

St George's, University of London (SGUL)

BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy Revalidation and MSc/PgDip Validation Event

Wednesday 13th – Thursday 14th October 2021

Venue: Online, through Microsoft Teams

Panel Membership

Karen Elcock (Chair)	Head of Programmes - Pre-registration Nursing / Deputy Head of School, Faculty of Health, Social Care and Education, Kingston University & St George's University of London
Dr Jennifer Stott	Lecturer in Molecular Pharmacology, Institute of Medical and Biomedical Education, St George's, University of London
Vafie Sheriff	Student Reviewer, St George's, University of London
Dr Rebecca Khanna	Professional Coach, Mentor and Critical Friend, Shared Wisdom Ltd.
Dr Duncan Pentland	Lecturer in Occupational Therapy, Division of Occupational Therapy and Arts Therapies, Queen Margaret University
Dr Theresa Baxter ¹	RCOT Panel Member
Anna Clampin	RCOT Panel Member
Clair Parkin	RCOT Panel Member and Officer

In attendance

Glen Delahaye	Quality Assurance and Enhancement Manager, St George's, University of London
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Introduction and context

- 1) The BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy was validated in December 2016 for an October 2017 launch and had been running since then. Development of an MSc Occupational Therapy and an Occupational Therapy Doctorate (OTD) began in 2019. This event would focus on the revalidation of the BSc for launch in October 2022 and the validation of the MSc, also for launch in October 2022. There was an intention to hold a separate event in 2022 aimed at validating the OTD for launch in October 2023.

¹ Dr Baxter was unable to attend the event, but was involved in RCOT's review of the documentation.

- 2) The Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) is the regulator for the occupational therapy profession and anyone practising as an occupational therapist (OT) in the UK must be registered with the HCPC. To be eligible to register as an OT, the student must have successfully completed a programme approved by the HCPC. The validation documentation for the MSc had been submitted to HCPC, but they had indicated that under their new approval process, they did not require to attend the validation event and would instead complete a desk-based review of the course.
- 3) The Royal College of Occupational Therapists (RCOT) is the professional body for occupational therapists in the UK and, as such, the College accredits pre-registration training programmes. They were in attendance and would be producing a separate report from the SGUL Panel, with their own decision, conditions, and recommendations.
- 4) The course team intended to seek accreditation from ACOTE (Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education) at a later date.
- 5) The purpose of the event was therefore to secure:
 - a. SGUL validation and RCOT accreditation for the intention to offer a PgDip/MSc Occupational Therapy (Pre-registration) course;
 - b. To consider the revised BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy course and to revalidate and reaccredit it for a further period of five years.

Conduct of the meeting

- 6) Prior to the meeting, the Panel received the documents listed in Annex A. Documents were received six weeks ahead of the review.
- 7) The Panel members held a private meeting at which they confirmed the range of issues that they wished to discuss with the course team. Meetings were then conducted by the Panel. These included separate meetings with senior staff, a student, service users, practice partners and a meeting with the course team. At the conclusion of these meetings, the Panel members held a private meeting in which they agreed the outcome, including areas of good practice, conditions, and recommendations. These are recorded in paragraphs 7 to 17.

Outcome of the meeting

- 8) The Panel recommended to Senate that the BSc Occupational Therapy and MSc/PgDip Occupational Therapy programmes should be approved for five years with the first intakes commencing in September 2022. The deadline for responding to the conditions and recommendations would be 26th November 2021.
- 9) The Panel also concluded that the that BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy and MSc/PgDip Occupational Therapy (Pre-registration) were in principle compliant with the expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education published by the QAA.
- 10) In the weeks following the event, the course team took the decision not to offer the PgDip as a pathway for prospective students. It would continue to be made available as an exit award for students on the MSc pre-registration pathway.

Good Practice

- 11) Service user involvement appears authentic and inclusive rather than tokenistic or 'illness tourism'.
- 12) The course curriculum is well aligned with the RCOT CPD pillars. Associated learning outcomes and proposed content should allow good opportunities for students to develop a range of core skills and attributes as well as some important transferable skills (critical thinking and reflexivity being evident in modules).
- 13) A good range of learning and teaching techniques are indicated in the learning activities details of the module descriptors. An appropriate mix of didactic, independent and peer assisted activities are on offer with a good spread of them across modules and across the BSc.
- 14) Range and variety of assessments is impressive, as is the decision to allow students to select a preference for assessment type.

Conditions and Recommendations

- 15) The following conditions were agreed by the Panel for the BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy programme:

Condition 1

Careful comparison and coordination is needed across the module directories, programme specification and programme regulations in terms of credit dispersal.

Condition 2

More detailed assessment specification is needed in the module directory with more detail provided about expected length and content of assessments.

- 16) The following conditions were agreed by the Panel for the MSc/PgDip Occupational Therapy programme:

Condition 3

The distribution of modules/credits to be reviewed to provide a more balanced programme for students undertaking the PgDip route.

Condition 4

Information to applicants needs to clearly articulate the two different routes including differences in time commitment and workloads.

Condition 5

Review the assessment strategy for the Research in Practice module so that it is more reflective of the requirements for a 60 credit level 7 module.

Condition 6

Clearer commitment to and plans for formative assessment to be provided; students must be given the opportunities to benefit from individual formal feedback as part of the formative assessment process to ensure they have opportunities to identify their level of learning/development and improve on this as they work towards their summative assessments.

Condition 7

Clearer parameters for the summative assessments are needed to ensure they meet level 7 requirements (currently parameters are unclear).

- 17) The following conditions were agreed by the Panel for both the BSc and MSc/PgDip Occupational Therapy programme:

Condition 8

To present a workplan in a table format that identifies for each course, the projected student numbers for the next 3/5 years, identifying FTE staffing and staff/student ratio based on common minima for 1:20 (particularly applicable to new courses of this nature).

Condition 9

To provide an outline of the intended programme of specific CPD events for Practice Educators, which will support provision of high-quality practice education.

Condition 10

Within the documentation clarify the function and process of the Professional Behaviour Assessment, considering the implications of the formative nature of this for student outcomes.

- 18) The following recommendations were agreed by the Panel for both the BSc and MSc/PgDip Occupational Therapy programme:

Recommendation 1

To enhance development of the Service User strategy and operational plan to assure sustainability and support for this aspect of these programmes.

Recommendation 2

To work with your marketing communications teams to ensure communication channels reflect the distinctive features of these programmes to safeguard market share.

Recommendation 3

To produce a risk register for this programme that supports delivery of the overall strategic priorities including mitigations or areas for escalation to School/Faculty SLT.

Recommendation 4

To review the arrangements to support students who are deferred as a result of academic failure on the MSc, optimising opportunities for in-course retrieval and retain students.

Recommendation 5

To develop a formal mechanism for all stakeholders to provide input for curriculum development including placement learning and provide feedback.

Meeting with senior staff

- 19) The validation process at SGUL consists of six stages. These stages ensure consultation is taking place with different stakeholders within the University and externally. As part of the process, a business case had been developed and was being considered internally by the Education and Students Strategy Committee.
- 20) The senior staff were aware that the staff-student ratio for the occupational therapy courses was at the upper end. There was a plan to grow the programme and with that the staffing as well.
- 21) A number of staff within the course team had been signing up to complete doctorates, which would help to ensure the team was sufficiently qualified to support MSc students. The Centre for Allied Health also had a well-established MSc Physiotherapy pre-registration programme and cross supervision between the courses was expected.
- 22) Labs and specialist areas to support the MSc were already in place, including the Art of Living suite. All of the University's facilities would remain open throughout the whole year. As a medical school, the University's curriculum covered the whole year, meaning that they were always open for business.
- 23) The course team had been able to continue running the BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy course throughout the pandemic, despite the temporary site closure in 2020 and the move to online teaching.
- 24) The pandemic had transformed the University's understanding of online teaching and it was currently in the process of developing an approach to designing and monitoring online content. It was expected that the University's provision would become increasingly blended in the future.

Meeting with students

- 25) The Panel met with only one student. A second student had confirmed, but unfortunately was unable to attend.

Development of the MSc

- 26) The student had not been directly involved in the development of the proposed MSc Occupational Therapy but was aware of it and interested in it.

Student support

- 27) The course team provided exceptional student support. The student that met with the Panel had previously studied at another university and found the services for student support, health and wellbeing offered by SGUL to be at a much higher level.
- 28) All students on the programme are assigned a personal tutor and would typically have the same tutor for the full three-year duration of the course.
- 29) The student that met the Panel had been a student representative for three years and had found the Student Union to be very helpful. When she planned events, they had supported her and offered advice.

Assessment

- 30) The formative assessments were very helpful, and the feedback provided helped to highlight where students needed to improve to increase their marks.

Placements

- 31) The course team ensured that students were well prepared for their placements. Students are made aware of the number of hours that they need to complete on placement by the course team and through the placement handbook. Once on placement, students have a placement supervisor who they meet with on a weekly basis to discuss what the student was doing well and where they may need to improve. The student found the support to be phenomenal.

Student Feedback

- 32) There were opportunities to provide feedback throughout the course. Students were invited to complete a survey at the end of each module. The student felt that her feedback was valued and could see changes being made to the course to address concerns raised by students. An example of this was the shared first year IAP module with MBBC and HealthCare Science students. Depending on their background, Occupational Therapy students found the module challenging and had fed this back. Since then, the structure of the module had been changed so that the content was more accessible for all students taking it.
- 33) The student noted that there was a delay between concerns being raised through feedback and changes occurring to address them. This could be frustrating for students, but she appreciated that it took time.

Meeting with Practice partners

- 34) The Panel met with representatives from two different practice partners.

Development of the MSc

- 35) The practice partners that the Panel met had not been directly involved in the development of the MSc. They understood that the course team had held events for stakeholders to engage with the new course design but had not been able to attend.
- 36) They were aware of the changes being made to the BSc and had had general conversations about them. One of the practice partners had also been involved in the early stages of the BSc's original validation in 2016.
- 37) The MSc would lead to an increase in demand for placements and the practice partners were confident that they'd be able to support additional students. There were placements that were particularly suitable for MSc students
- 38) The practice partners noted that not having an MSc could delay career development for occupational therapists. There were jobs that required applicants to be educated up to MSc level and so they welcomed the development of the new MSc.

Communication with SGUL

- 39) The practice partners felt very well supported and had a lot of communication with SGUL.
- 40) SGUL offers regular training for practice partners. They had also recently held a course aimed at the St George's Hospital Trust which was attended by over 25 people and received very good feedback from staff.

Preparation of students

- 41) The practice partners believed that the students were being well supported by the University. There had been student who required additional support while on placement and the University had arranged meetings with the practice partners in advance to consider and agree how to support those students.
- 42) The practice partners believed that the University was encouraging students to make contact ahead of placement and this was welcome. Students typically make contact with the practice partners, asking if there is anything that they can do to prepare and occasionally visiting the site to meet with practice partners before the placement commences.

Meeting with Service users

- 43) The Panel met with two service users.
- 44) The service users believed that between the two of them they were able to provide sufficient support to the course team. They had been engaging with students both formally, for example through committees, and informally when they had been on site at the same time.
- 45) They had not encountered any obstacles to prevent them from being involved in the programme. One of the service users stated that despite being a wheelchair user with no dexterity in her hands, she had been able to take up an honorary tutor post on the course. She had also been involved in interviewing prospective students.

Meeting with the course team

Admissions

- 46) One of the course's unique selling points was that the University was based on a hospital site and this was appealing to prospective students. Additionally, SGUL had access to a diverse range of practice placements and the cohort sizes were smaller than competitors. The course had done well in the NSS and the professional lead was well known in the occupational therapy community.
- 47) Open days provide the course team, as well as current students, an opportunity to speak to prospective students about the programme. Prospective students are provided with the admissions tutor's contact details in case they have questions before they apply. The website also provides prospective students with an option to submit questions.

- 48) Students are invited to declare any disabilities or additional needs, and these can then be accommodated before they start the course.
- 49) The open days would include both the BSc and the MSc once the MSc had been approved.
- 50) The pandemic had made it difficult for prospective students to gain work experience prior to applying for the BSc. As a result, the course team had decided to stop requiring applicants to have work experience provided that their personal statements demonstrated that they had a strong desire to do the course.
- 51) Training on unconscious bias was available to staff, service users and clinicians involved in the admissions process. This training had been on site, but was now offered online.
- 52) If students wished to transfer to SGUL's BSc from an occupational therapy programme at another institution, they could join the BSc programme with advanced standing through the recognition of prior learning of up to 120 credits. Transfers are accepted in to Year 2 only.

Independent learning

- 53) There would be a lot of face-to-face learning in the first year of the BSc. By the third year, students would have more independent learning. The research module would have a block of teaching at the beginning and students would then work study independently. The Reflection and Leadership for Occupational Therapy module also contained a lot of self-directed content, where students would work independently and would only interface with the course team when they had questions.

Interprofessional learning

- 54) Instead of shared modules, the MSc would facilitate interprofessional learning through interprofessional activities spread throughout the course and on practice placements. The course team was currently in discussion with the course director for BSc Paramedic Science to agree a shared activity between the courses that would focus on mental health.

Placements

- 55) The BSc was becoming more established, which was making it easier to secure placements. The course team was confident that they would continue to have sufficient placements for both the BSc and the MSc.
- 56) Funding had been secured from HEE which would be used to recruit a placement facilitator who would seek further placements in the southwest London region.
- 57) The course team arranges a pre-placement week to prepare students for each placement, informing them of HCPC and RCOT requirements. They are provided with information through the VLE and placement handbook.
- 58) The course team provides training for practice partners that are taking students on placements. The placement providers are encouraged to get in touch with their link tutors if their students are in danger of failing, so that they can work towards getting the student back on track.

Assessment

- 59) As a rule, the course team was ensuring that there were always at least ten days between assessment deadlines. The decision to ensure a ten-day gap was made following the receipt of feedback from students that the assessments were too close. The ten-day gap was aimed at ensuring a more even spread of workload for both the students and the staff responsible for marking the assessments.

Trailing credits

- 60) The MSc is designed as an accelerated course. As a result, it could be difficult for students who fell behind to catch up again. At SGUL, students on accelerated courses who had missed a significant portion of the course would normally be expected to take a year out and then to re-join the course later instead of trailing credits. On the MSc Physiotherapy course such situations had been very rare and as long as students were adequately supported then the course team did not expect many students would need to step off for a year.
- 61) If students on the BSc have difficulty in passing assignments within the first two attempts, a Panel determines if they should have a third attempt. It may be in the students' best interest to take an interruption of studies for one year, instead of attempting assignments for a third attempt whilst also continuing onto the next year. The course team stated that they were good at staying in touch with students on interruption. They recognised that reintegrating into the course after an interruption could also be challenging, as the student would have different classmates, and they aimed to support the student through this process.

Structure of the PgDip

- 62) The PgDip and the MSc would run alongside each other, utilizing the same teaching sessions. While the credits of the MSc were split evenly across the two years, PgDip students would complete 90 credits in the first year and 30 in the second. The course team had not been able to move any of the first-year modules to the second year to create a more even split, as these modules needed to be completed in the first year to meet ACOTE standards from the US (for which the course team intended to seek accreditation).

GD/Nov2021

Annex A: Documents

For the BSc

Self-evaluation document (including most recent APMR and EE reports)
Validation Report (2017)
Module Directory
Programme Specification
Programme Specification Commentary
Resource and Delivery Document
Scheme of Assessment
Programme Regulations
Student Handbook
APMRs and EE reports from the previous three years
RCOT Learning and Development Standards mapping document

For the MSc

Module Directory
Programme Specification
Programme Specification Commentary
Resource and Delivery Documents
Scheme of Assessment
Programme Regulations
Student Handbook
RCOT Learning and Development Standards mapping document
Course Viability Report for PGT Occupational Therapy

The following attachments relate to both courses:

Briefing document
Service User involvement strategy
Staffing Strategy
Centre for Allied Health Organogram
A Zip file containing policies relevant to students on the courses
Information related to staff student ratio numbers (for Panel)

Annex B: List of Attendees

Senior staff

Prof Rachel Allen, Director of the Institute of Medical and Biomedical Education
Prof Andy Kent, Dean of Joint Faculty of Health, Social Care and Education (with Kingston University)
Prof Iain Beith, Head of School (Centre for Allied Health)
Susan McPheat, Director of Finance

Course team

Dr Jane Cronin-Davis, Associate Professor, Professional Lead for Occupational Therapy (0.6 wte), Deputy Dean for Students (0.4wte), Module leader
Caitlin Beavis-Hardy, Course Director, Module Leader and Doctoral Student
Sarah Wink, Senior Lecturer, Year 1 Lead, Admissions Lead and EdD student starting January 2021.
Dr Elizabeth Taylor, currently 0.5 wte, seconded for 0.5wte for research post - Senior Lecturer, Year 2 Lead and Practice Placement Lead

Dr John Hammond, Associate Professor, part of MSc/OTD development, will act a research supervisor for MSc projects, part of MSC/OTD steering group
Prof Cilla Harries, Associate Dean for Research and Business Innovation, part of MSC/OTD development team
Prof Iain Beith, Head of School (Centre for Allied Health)

Practice partners

Sally French, AHP and Workforce Development Lead, Southwest London and St George's Mental Health NHS Trust
Clare Cooper, Senior Occupational Therapist/Practice Educator, Southwest London and St George's Mental Health NHS Trust
Paul Marshall-Taylor, Principal Occupational Therapist, St George's University Hospitals NHS Trust