

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST

WHAT DOES AN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST DO?

Occupational Therapists help people with mental, physical or social disabilities to independently carry out everyday tasks or occupations. They work with children and adults of all ages, whose difficulties may have been present since birth, or the result of an accident, illness, ageing or lifestyle.

They create individual programmes for clients who may include people who:

- Have been affected in later life by conditions like Alzheimer's disease, arthritis or osteoporosis.
- Have a physical disability, either from birth or from an accident or illness
- Are affected by mental health issues, including anxiety, depression or eating disorders
- Have learning disabilities that affect, for example, their skills in reading, handling money or coping with others
- Have difficulties with drug or alcohol use and are trying to control their behaviour
- Are recovering from operations or other treatments

Depending on their clients' needs, Occupational Therapists may suggest strategies relating to:

- Daily living activities such as washing, eating, shopping or using public transport
- Using equipment or making adaptations to the home/workplace to help with their day-to-day activities
- Rediscovering or developing hobbies, leisure and social activities

SKILLS REQUIRED

Applicants for Occupational Therapy courses and jobs will need to demonstrate that they have:

- the ability to explain, encourage and build confidence, and develop rapport with a range of people
- excellent communication and self-management skills.
- enthusiasm, sensitivity and patience
- the ability to persuade and motivate others
- good creative and practical skills
- decision-making and organisational skills
- an inquiring mind in order to successfully solve problems through assessment and treatment

A driving licence may be useful.

QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED

- Occupational Therapists must have completed a degree or postgraduate qualification in Occupational Therapy that has been approved by the Health & Care Professions Council (HCPC): <http://www.hpc-uk.org/>. All Occupational Therapy degrees currently available in the UK are also accredited by the College of Occupational Therapists.
- Applicants with a Foundation Degree in Health and Social Care may be able to start on the 2nd year of a BSc (Hons) in Occupational Therapy. There are many Foundation Degrees in Health and Social Care, and related areas, in the West Midlands: visit <http://fd.ucas.com/> for further information.
- Applicants will need to pass a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.
- Check entry requirements and course content with individual course providers.

UNDERGRADUATE COURSES

There are three relevant courses in the West Midlands:

BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy: University of Worcester (<http://www.worcester.ac.uk/>)

- **Length of study:** 3 years full-time
- **Entry requirements:** Minimum of 5 GCSEs A*- C including English Language, Mathematics and Science. Applicants with an *Access to HE Diploma* (Health or Science are preferred) need to have 60 credits in total, with a minimum of 45 credits at Level 3 with at least 30 credits at Merit or Distinction, with at least 15 of those in Biological Science related subjects. Access to Health or Access to Science are preferred.

Applicants with a *BTEC Extended National Diploma* (Sport & Exercise Science, Health Science and Applied Science are preferred) need to have gained DDD. Other BTEC National Diplomas may be considered with AS or A2 Biology / Human Biology / PE at grade B.

Other additional qualifications may be considered where an applicant does not have the necessary Biology or PE qualifications.

- **Work experience required:** Applicants must gain some work experience by shadowing an Occupational Therapist and have thoroughly researched the breadth of the Occupational Therapy profession. They must be aware of the core areas of practice and where Occupational Therapists work, within and outside of the NHS. The diversity of the profession cannot be understood from one workplace visit and further research will be needed. Applicants should access information about the profession from the College of Occupational Therapists website (<https://www.cot.co.uk/>) and the Health and Care Professions Council website (<http://www.hpc-uk.org/>), as well as from: <http://www.stepintothens.nhs.uk/> and <http://www.nhs-careers.nhs.uk/>.

BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy: Coventry University (<http://www.coventry.ac.uk/>)

- **Length of study:** 3 years full-time
- **Entry requirements:** at least 5 GCSEs A*-C including English Language and Maths. Applicants with an *Access to HE Diploma* in a health-related subject need to have 36 Level 3 credits at Merit or Distinction, plus GCSE English Language and Mathematics at grade A*-C, or specified equivalents. Applicants with a *BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma* in a health-related subject need to have gained at least DDM.
- **Work experience required:** Applicants should have spent at least 2 days shadowing an Occupational Therapist.

Foundation Degree in Rehabilitation Work (Visual Impairment): Birmingham City University (<http://www.bcu.ac.uk/>)

- **Length of study:** 2 years full-time
- **Entry requirements:** Entry requirements for this course were not available at the time of writing this leaflet, so please check with Birmingham City University if you are interested in this course.
- **Work experience required:** It can help to have some experience of working in a relevant environment: experience of working directly with the public can be advantageous.

Students who successfully complete this course can apply for a place on Birmingham City University's top up degree: the BSc or BSc (Hons) Rehabilitation Work (Visual Impairment).

NB Please check entry requirements with individual course providers.

NHS FINANCIAL SUPPORT WHILST STUDYING

Candidates can apply for NHS funding for an approved course. Where this is available, tuition fees will be met in full and successful applicants will receive a non-means tested bursary to help towards living expenses. For details, check with individual universities and the NHS Business Services Authority: <http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/Students.aspx>.

POSTGRADUATE COURSES

Candidates can study for either a Postgraduate Diploma or Masters in Occupational Therapy on a course which usually takes around 2 years. To gain a place it is preferable, but not essential, to have a related first degree in a subject such as Biological or Medical Sciences, other health-related subjects, Psychology or Sociology plus healthcare experience.

EMPLOYMENT SECTORS

Occupational Therapists are employed by hospitals, residential homes, hospices, health centres, day centres, GP practices, schools, colleges, prisons, private companies.

WORKING CONDITIONS

The average working hours are 35-37.5 per week, with most full-time Occupational Therapists working nine to five, Monday to Friday. However, there are a number of posts, notably in mental health community services, acute hospitals, accident and emergency services and private practice, where evening and weekend work is more common.

Part-time work and flexible hours may be available. Many Occupational Therapists travel between different locations, and may visit clients at their homes. Some occupational therapists are self-employed. Travel within a working day is common if they work in the community.

SALARY

An Occupational Therapist can earn £21,692 - £40,964 per year.

NB These figures are only a guideline: see NHS pay scales, and job advertisements, for up-to-date information.

LABOUR MARKET DATA

There are more than 35,000 registered Occupational Therapists in the UK. The NHS is the principal employer of newly qualified Occupational Therapists, although some are employed by local authorities, particularly social services departments.

Entry has become more competitive in recent years: applicants may need to be flexible about the

geographical area in which they are willing to work.

PROFILE OF CURRENT WORKFORCE (Figures are for the whole healthcare sector)

Full-time: 67%; Part-time: 14%; Self-employed: 19%

FURTHER INFORMATION

- British Association of Occupational Therapists and College of Occupational Therapists (COT): <https://www.cot.co.uk/>
- Health & Care Professions Council (HCPC): <http://www.hpc-uk.org/>
- Health Learning and Skills Advice Line: 08000 150 850
- National Careers Service: <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/>
- NHS Business Services Authority: <http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/Students.aspx>
- NHS Careers: <http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/>
- Prospects: <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/>
- UCAS: <https://www.ucas.com/>

VIDEO CLIPS

- <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals/occupational-therapist>
- <http://www.nhs.uk/Video/Pages/Occupationaltherapy.aspx>
- <https://www.cot.co.uk/study-ot/study-ot>

ASSOCIATED ROLES: OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY SUPPORT WORKER/ ASSISTANT PRACTITIONER

Role: Occupational Therapy Support Workers work with Occupational Therapists and help with the assessment and treatment of patients, both in hospital and in their own homes. Duties can include helping a patient adjust to a new prosthetic limb to planning out a daily routine for someone with mental health issues.

Entry requirements: Applicants would normally need good general standard of education, such as GCSEs in English and Maths, and some experience of working in a healthcare or social care setting (paid or voluntary) to get into this career. Contact the voluntary services coordinator at your local NHS Trust for further advice about opportunities.

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