

Practice-Based Learning

Considerations for developing new and innovative practice-based learning opportunities.

Innovation within practice-based learning (placements) is encouraged and celebrated! Recently the proliferation in innovative practice-based learning has emerged from the challenges posed by Covid-19, including managing a placement backlog, and facilitating opportunities for dispersed and shielding learners. Coupled with the deficit in practice placement capacity that has been observed in recent years, innovation within practice-based learning is essential to ensure that a consistent flow of graduate Occupational Therapists is maintained.

Whatever the motivation, the guidance remains constant in terms of the professional, statutory, and regulatory body requirements for practice-based learning: enabling sustainable, quality learning opportunities to effectively prepare learners for professional practice.

This brief outline for occupational therapy pre-registration education providers seeks to act as a supportive resource to facilitate thinking when considering the development of non-traditional / non-clinical practice-based learning opportunities. This may include research, leadership, role-emerging, blended practice-based learning experiences.

Overarching points to consider

- **All practice-based learning opportunities include interventions that focus on the person, the occupation, and the environment.**
- Consider the **learning outcomes** of the practice-based learning module/experience. Do these need to be amended? If they do, this could be a red flag that the placement design may need reviewing. This is a key first question to ask and relevant to education standards set by HCPC, RCOT and WFOT.
- In reviewing the **assessment criteria**, do these require any changes? Again, if they do, this could highlight that the placement design needs review.
- Often, within non-clinical practice-based learning opportunities, the **interprofessional education** (IPE) element needs some careful consideration regarding how they can be maintained.

Professional and Regulatory Body Guidance and Standards

- Domain 5 of the **Royal College of Occupational Therapists' (RCOT) Learning and development standards for pre-registration education** (2019) considers practice-based learning. Please pay particular attention to the following aspects of this domain as you begin to explore a potential practice-based learning opportunity:

Standard 5.2 - the structure, duration and range of practice-based learning must support the achievement of the learning outcomes and the standards of proficiency.

- 5.2.2 - through practice-based learning, the learner is provided with the opportunity to experience or implement the occupational therapy process and gain wider knowledge of service provision.
- 5.2.3 - there is a logical progression and structure to practice-based learning, to ensure integration of theory into practice.
- Guidance and evidence – All practice-based learning opportunities include interventions that focus on the person, the occupation, and the environment.

Standard 5.3 - the education provider must maintain a thorough and effective system for approving and ensuring the quality of practice-based learning.

Standard 5.4 - practice-based learning must take place in an environment that is safe and supportive for learners and people who access occupational therapy services.

- 5.4.2 - all learners undertaking practice-based learning have equivalent support from practice educators, regardless of the setting.

- Simulated practice-based learning is defined, within the Learning and Development standards (RCOT 2019:15) as:

'Artificially constructed environments designed to represent realistic scenarios that provide opportunities for learners to practise clinical and decision-making skills within a safe environment. It allows for repetition, feedback, evaluation and reflection, with examples including video based learning, role-playing interactions, scenarios where learners or others act as the person receiving occupational therapy services, scenarios using professionally trained actors, and the use of high-fidelity manikins (Reed 2014). The method chosen should be determined by the learning outcomes (Toserud et al 2013) and be used effectively and proportionately to support learning and assessment (Nursing & Midwifery Council 2018).'

If simulation is being considered as a component of the 1,000 practice-based learning hours, 'simulated learning must be assessed, must not exceed a maximum of 40 hours (Imms et al 2018) and must take place with individuals in the role of people accessing occupational therapy services' (RCOT 2019:16).

It is therefore not possible to replace, for example, a 4-week placement with a simulated practice-based learning opportunity if it is to be included in the 1,000 hours calculation.

Grant et al's (2021) recent literature review, which explores the use of simulation within occupational therapy education, may be of interest in understanding more about the available literature in this area.

- SET 5 of **Health and Care Professions Council's (HCPC) Standards of Education and Training** (2017) considers practice-based learning. RCOT advises you to pay particular attention to the following aspects of this domain as you begin to explore a potential practice-based learning opportunity:

- SET 5.2 - The structure, duration and range of practice-based learning must support the achievement of the learning outcomes and the standards of proficiency.
- Guidance - This standard is about making sure that the way practice-based learning is designed allows learners to achieve the learning outcomes of the programme and the SOPs. We do not set requirements for the structure, length or range of practice-based learning that you must include in your programme to meet our standards of education and training. However, we expect you to have clear reasons for your decisions relating to this and your decisions must be appropriate to the design and content of the programme and the learning outcomes.
- SET 5.3 - The education provider must maintain a thorough and effective system for approving and ensuring the quality of practice-based learning.
- SET 5.4 - practice-based learning must take place in an environment that is safe and supportive for learners and service users.

Should you need any further guidance about meeting these HCPC standards, please liaise directly with the HCPC.

- RCOT's pre-registration programme accreditation process confers accreditation by the **World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT)**. While the core elements of the WFOT minimum standards are reflected within the RCOT Learning and development standards for pre-registration education (2019), it may also be valuable to consider specific aspects of WFOT's **Minimum Standards for the Education of Occupational Therapists (2016:48-49)** in relation to practice education when considering a new placement opportunity.

- The purpose of practice education is for students to integrate knowledge, professional knowledge, professional reasoning and professional behaviour within practice, and to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes to the level of competence required of qualifying occupational therapists.
- Practice education experiences are consistent with the philosophy and purpose of the programme.
- Students experience a range of practice education that require them to integrate knowledge, skills and attitudes to practice with a range of different people who have needs, and in different contexts. The range of student experiences always includes:
 - People of different age groups
 - People who have recently acquired and/or have long-standing health needs
 - Interventions that focus on the person, the occupation and the environment
- The 1,000 practice placement hours refers to the time each student spends implementing an occupational therapy process, or an aspect of an occupational therapy process involving human interaction with person or persons as client (individual, family, group, or community to business, institution, agency or government). Examples include:
 - Assessing and interpreting the person-occupation-environment relationship and how that relationship influences the person's health and well-being
 - Establishing and evaluating therapeutic and professional relationships
 - Planning and preparing for an occupational therapy assessment or intervention
 - Implementing an occupational therapy process (or some aspect of it)
 - Demonstrating clinical and professional reasoning and behaviours in a practice context
 - Generating knowledge of the contexts of professional practice through the use of evidence-based reasoning and critical thinking

The checklist in Appendix 1, though not exhaustive, may help capture your consideration of the guidance above and highlight any actions you need to take to ensure your proposals meet the required standards.

We hope you find this guidance useful as you begin to explore a new practice-based learning opportunity. In addition, we would encourage you to make contact with the RCOT pre-registration team for a supportive conversation to consider the practice-based learning opportunity in relation to the Learning and development standards (2019).

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References

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Toserud R, Hedelin B, Hall-Lord ML (2013) Nursing students' perception of high- and low-fidelity simulation used as learning methods. *Nurse Education in Practice*, 13(4), 262–270.
World Federation of Occupational Therapists (2016) Minimum standards for the education of occupational therapists. Available at: <https://wfot.org/resources/new-minimum-standards-for-the-education-of-occupational-therapists-2016-e-copy> Accessed on 14.04.21

Useful resources

Health and Care Professions Council (2017) Supporting innovation in practice-based learning, a blog. Available at: <https://www.hcpc-uk.org/news-and-events/blog/2020/supporting-innovation-in-practice-based-learning/> Accessed 14.04.21

Health and Care Professions Council (2017) Supporting innovation in practice-based learning, part II, a blog. Available at: <https://www.hcpc-uk.org/news-and-events/blog/2020/supporting-innovation-in-practice-based-learning-part-ii/> Accessed 14.04.21

Appendix 1

Practice-based learning development initial checklist

Shaded boxes indicate a response which would support development of this opportunity in line with PRSB guidance and standards.

	Yes	No	Unsure	Actions Required	Outcome
Does the practice-based learning opportunity include interventions that focus on the person, the occupation, and the environment, and involves human interactions?					
Is the learner provided with the opportunity to experience or implement the occupational therapy process and gain wider knowledge of service provision?					
Do the learning outcomes for the practice-based learning module need to be revised?					
Do the assessment criteria for the practice-based learning module need to be revised?					
If simulation is being used, does this exceed 40 hours?*					
Will the practice-based learning opportunity take place in an environment that is safe and supportive for learners and people who access occupational therapy services?					

* NB: If simulation is being considered a component of the minimum 1,000 practice-based learning hours, simulated learning must be assessed, must not exceed a maximum of 40 hours and must take place with individuals in the role of people accessing occupational therapy services.