

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 Royal 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 Grade 4/C including English Language, Mathematics and Science.

Applicants with an *Access to HE Diploma* should contact the university for entry requirements.

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

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 Royal College of Occupational Therapists website (<https://www.rcot.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 Grades 9-4/A*-C including English Language and Maths.

Applicants with an *Access to HE Diploma* in Health & Social Care (or other related programme) should have a minimum of 36 credits at Merit or Distinction.

Applicants with a *BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma* in a health and social care-related subject need to have gained at least Distinction/Distinction/Merit.

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: The university states that a Level 3 Diploma or equivalent (full award) will be considered for entry but we recommend that applicants clarify Access to HE Diploma/BTEC entry requirements with the university as these details are not specified. The university website states that “*Mature applicants without formal qualifications must demonstrate personal or professional experience of any of the caring professions and the ability to study at Foundation Degree level.*”

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.

NB Please check with individual course providers as entry requirements can change.

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 undergraduate 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 £22,128 - £41,787 per year, whilst consultants can earn £40,428 - £58,217.

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

LABOUR MARKET DATA

As at May 2018, there were 38,183 Occupational Therapists registered with the HCPC. 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, and occupational therapists may need to be flexible about the geographical area in which they are willing to work.

FURTHER INFORMATION

- Royal College of Occupational Therapists (RCOT): <https://www.rcot.co.uk>
- Health & Care Professions Council (HCPC): <http://www.hpc-uk.org/>
- National Careers Service: <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/>
- NHS Careers: <http://www.nhs-careers.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>

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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