

FAQs for Occupational Therapy Placement Educators

Where can I find out about placements in terms of aims, learning outcomes and assessment profile? All of this is detailed within the University of Cumbria Occupational Therapy Placement Handbooks. Educators should have access to both the BSc and MSc Handbook. Placement Coordinators and PEFs have copies and these are usually also posted on Trusts intranet sites. They are also available on the University's Learning in practice webpages

www.cumbria.ac.uk/LIP

or try also

<https://my.cumbria.ac.uk/Student-Life/Your-Studies/Placements/>

Where can I find out about the programme and what students have covered in terms of theory before each placement? The Placement Handbooks provide all of this information. If in doubt contact the Placement tutors at the University for guidance.

Who and what is a Placement Education Facilitator (PEF)? These are people employed by each trust (but funded by the Strategic Health Authority (SHA) to support mentors / placement educators within their Trust. They all have a health professional background so have a wealth of practical experience as well as experience and knowledge of educational matters. Their remit covers ALL health professions. They can support you with advice, education (Up Date sessions) and practical help in all matters relating to student learning within your Trust. They can support you and your team to develop your placement activities and capacity. Get to know who your PEF is and what they can do for you.

Do I need to write comments on the assessment form as well as use the tick boxes when grading students? YES. Students like to receive comments from their educators and we use your comments (anonymously) to aid our teaching for future placements. Please ensure comments are constructive and will help students to develop their skills. Students particularly like to receive recommendations for their future placements

Should the comments I make reflect the grading of the placement?

YES. It is important that you use the words we use in the grading scheme ie; expected; good; very good; out standing. For example; your communication skills were very good – I would expect to see a tick in the “Vg” column for this skill. If you mark at the Expected level it is useful to provide the student with ideas as to how they can further develop this skill.

I take both BSc and MSc level students is there a difference in what I should expect from them? NO. The placements are at exactly the same level for both BSc and MSc students. This is because the MSc programme is a pre-registration programme leading to registration with HCPC. Their placement aims, learning outcomes are similar and assessment profiles are identical. The placement paperwork is identical and completed in exactly the same manner.

Where can I get help in completing the assessment for placements? There are a number of ways you can help with completing the assessment form. You can read

what is expected of you in the Placement Handbook (see previous questions). You can seek guidance from a more experienced educator within your department / organisation. You can seek guidance / support from the Placement Education Facilitator (PEF) for your Trust. You can seek help from the University Placement Tutors (Liz Harrison and Georgina Callister). You can ask for advice / help during the half way visit by the visiting tutor. Placement Tutors are happy to come along to meetings to discuss this with you and your team – just ask OR request this is included in Up Date sessions organised by your PEF.

I have been told that I should not use the very good and outstanding boxes with 1st year students as they cannot achieve this level is this correct? NO this is not correct. At each level you are grading the students at their level (ie. you are grading a 1st year student against the requirements of being a 1st year student at level 4) NOT against being a qualified OT. So it is entirely feasible for a 1st year student to be “Very Good” or “Outstanding” for some skills in their first year.

How do I decide if a student is at the “Expected”, “Good”, “Very Good” or “Outstanding” level? Grade Descriptors have been developed for the placements and these now feature on the University’s Learning In Practice webpage’s (see below). They are also included in the newer versions of the Placement Handbooks. Please make sure your Handbook includes these within the Appendices, ask for an updated version if not.

<https://my.cumbria.ac.uk/Student-Life/Your-Studies/Placements/>

What does it mean if I grade a student for everything in the “Expected” column or the “Outstanding” column? For all grades in the “expected” column this student would achieve a mark of 50% for the placement. If all ticks are in the “Outstanding” column then this student would receive 100% for their placement. Where a student does achieve 100% the placement tutors will contact you to ensure that this is correct and that you have the evidence to support such an extremely high standard of achievement. It is best to discuss this (if you wish to grade the student at 100%) with the University Placement Tutors before you complete the report and give it to the student.

Where do I put the ticks on the assessment form? You should only use the right hand columns to indicate the grade of the student ie. The boxes marked “E”, “G”, “Vg” and “Og”. However, if a student has not met the expected level for that skill then grade them by putting a tick in the appropriate column in the left hand set of boxes. (refer to handbooks for “Failing students”).

What support can I have if I think a student is failing / not achieving the level they need to pass the placement? You can and should seek help at an early stage in the placement, the sooner the better. Help can be sought from the Placement Education Facilitator (PEF) AND the Placement Tutors from the University OR visiting tutor for that student on this placement. Students should be told clearly that they are failing during supervision and this should also be documented. An ACTION PLAN should be put into place to help the student and yourself to monitor their progress and to provide the opportunity for the student to work towards achieving a pass at the end of the placement.

How do I fail a student on the assessment form? Please refer to the appropriate pages within the Placement Handbooks for this information.

Do I have to be an accredited Educator or have completed a formal course before I can take students? NO you don't, it is not a requirement of COT that you are an Accredited educator before you take students. They do stipulate that you have had 1 year in practice before taking your first student.

It is, however, good practice to undertake a recognised course or module as this can enable you to provide high quality placements and also aid your own professional development. The University of Cumbria provides a number of ways in which you can achieve the RCOTs APPLE status (see RCOT website and University of Cumbria web site) or contact PEFs or Placement Tutors for details and to discuss your needs.

Can I ask a student to complete a case study / small piece of work / presentation / project to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of this placement? YES. Using any of the above, but especially case studies, are helpful in terms of developing knowledge and demonstrating understanding of the links between theory and practice. However, you need to give students time to do this either during their study time or during the working day. It is unfair to give students too much additional work whilst on placement.

Students often tell me they have coursework to do whilst they are on placement and can they have time to do this is this correct? The only coursework students have during their placements is the assignment which forms part of their placement module. This is a short assignment which directly relates to the placement. Students do need to collect information and may well want to discuss this with you. Anything other than this is not related to the placement and should be done outside of placement time.

How do I contact Placement tutors?

Placement tutor details:

Georgina Callister:

Email: georgina.callister@cumbria.ac.uk

Tel: 01228 616342

Liz Harrison:

Email: liz.harrison@cumbria.ac.uk

Tel: 01524 384577

How do I make contact with someone in case of an out of office hours emergency regarding a student? You should contact the University main switchboard:

Carlisle: 01228 616234

Lancaster: 01524 590800

Ask for the Duty Manager and discuss the situation with them

Learning In Practice webpage:

<https://my.cumbria.ac.uk/Student-Life/Your-Studies/Placements/>

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