Department of Health, Psychology and Social Studies

FAQs about Occupational Therapy Practice Placements:

1. **What is a practice placement?**
   Approximately 1/3 of your programme is work based learning termed a “practice placement”. This provides the opportunity for you to learn from Occupational Therapy practitioners (we term these people Practice Placement Educators) and to develop your own therapeutic skills. You are able to put the theories learned in the classroom into practice in real settings with service users, their families and carers.

2. **What kind of places will we go to?**
   The placements are undertaken within the NHS, Social Services Departments and in the private, voluntary and independent sector (PVIs). You might do a placement in an acute hospital setting; a community hospital; a community based team; social services office, residential care home; day care centre or a local charity.

3. **How far will we have to travel?**
   All our placements are located within the Health Education England North West region. Our placements normally sit within Cumbria and Lancashire, we also have access to some placements in Dumfries & Galloway and the Isle of Man. You will normally be expected to travel to a placement within these areas. This is a large geographical area and we can expect you to travel for up to 1 ½ hours in each direction to access placements (based on AA Route planner). However, we would not expect you to travel for more than 1 ½ hours in each direction on a daily basis (refer to Q.10 also).

4. **Can we go abroad?**
   You are able to go abroad but only for the last placement (Elective placement). There are certain conditions relating to this which you will need to discuss with the placement tutors before organising this.

5. **How are the placements organised?**
   Placements are allocated by the University’s Placement Learning Unit in conjunction with the information you provide on commencing your programme and the placements offered for that time. Student’s individual circumstances such as childcare or the care of relatives is taken into account where possible. However, we do still expect that you can travel up to 1 ½ hours to access placements when (if) necessary.

6. **What influence or choice do I have on the type of placements I do?**
   The Health & Care Professions Council and College of Occupational Therapists stipulate that for eligibility for Registration to practice as an occupational therapist you have to have had a wide variety of practice placements. The Practice Placement Tutor's role is to ensure that you are provided with the opportunity to undertake both physical and mental health placements in a wide variety of settings, hospital, community and other

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organisations. If a student has a keen interest in a particular speciality we will try to include this within their placement allocations.

7. To what extent is where you live, circumstances, prior experience, interests, taken into account when allocating placements?
   Please also refer to Question 5. We will endeavour to take student's individual circumstances into account when allocating placements as far as is possible to do so eg, child care commitments, jobs (only if on the part time programmes), care of relatives, car driver, prior work experiences, areas of interest.

8. Can I do placements part time?
   ALL students are required to undertake practice placements on a full time basis ie: 37 ½ hours per week even if doing the part time programmes. In very exceptional circumstances (which must be agreed as being essential and the only option in advance with tutors) there may be a need to do a placement part time but this must be done over a 3-day week as a minimum. You are also expected to work the same hours as your educator and these may vary between departments eg: 8.30 -4.30 or 8.00 -4.00 or 9.00 -5.00; 7 day working patterns or shift working.

9. Do I need to have a car for placements?
   For some placements it is essential that you have a car which you are able to use. Students with cars will be allocated to these placements. If you do not have access to a car or do not drive, then you will be allocated placements where a car is not required. This may mean that you do not get as wide a range of placement experiences as students with cars but your experiences will still be acceptable for HCPC registration when you graduate.
   (note: you will be required to have adequate car insurance if you need to use your car for placements and you should discuss “business use” with your insurers).

10. Will I have to stay away from home for my placements and is accommodation available?
    If your placement is away from your home area and too far for daily travel, you will need to stay away from home Monday to Friday. Many hospitals still provide accommodation but not all do. Your placements will be allocated bearing this in mind. Hospital accommodation is not free and charges will also vary between sites. The Placement Learning Unit office does keep a record of places where accommodation is available. Where there is no accommodation available we would try to avoid sending students who would need to stay away from home (though is rare cases B&B has to be utilised).

11. How will I be assessed on placements?
    Placements are assessed and it is the Placement Educator who is responsible for the assessment outcome. These Placement Educators are experienced Occupational Therapy practitioners who also have expertise in the learning, teaching and assessment of students. The BSc programmes are graded and the MSc programmes are Pass/Fail (Qualificatory).

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