
Working in occupational therapy

How do I become an occupational therapist?

Occupational therapy is a challenging and dynamic profession which makes a valuable difference in people's lives.

To become an occupational therapist you will need to study an approved pre-registration programme. Pre-registration degree courses, accredited by the Royal College of Occupational Therapists, are recognised internationally.

What qualifications are required to work in occupational therapy?

An occupational therapist who is employed by Addenbrooke's must be qualified and state registered (see below). This ensures that they are properly qualified, governed by a professional code of conduct; and are covered by personal liability insurance.

The minimum academic entry requirements for occupational therapy degree courses are:

- To be at least 18 years old and have five GCSE passes, including two at A level (or three at Higher Grade if you studied in Scotland). At least one science subject must be passed at one of these levels. A' level Biology is particularly useful and is required by some universities.
- Alternatives to GCSEs: There are a number of alternatives to GCSEs including validated Access courses, BTEC National Diploma/Certificates, NVQs AND GNVQs. Contact the Royal College of Occupational Therapists for further information.

There is also now an Occupational Therapy Apprenticeship which would offer on the job learning alongside university study to lead to a qualification in four years. Not all trusts have the facilities to offer this at present. At CUH, we have already been successful in an internal candidate being our first Occupational Therapy apprentice. We are looking to introduce this to external candidates within the next 1-2 years.

Where can I study?

There are many occupational therapy courses within the UK. The local universities to CUH

are University of East Anglia, University of Northampton, Coventry University and the University of Essex.

What personal qualities and experience do I need for occupational therapy?

In addition to academic qualifications, you will need to show empathy and rapport with a wide range of people. The role is demanding and occupational therapists need to be resilient, however it is also extremely rewarding and you will often leave work with a smile on your face! You will make a real difference to the lives of your patients.

What is an Occupational Therapy Assistant?

An occupational therapy assistant or OTA is someone who works under the direction of an Occupational Therapist. OTAs are mostly responsible for working with the patient to achieve the treatment goals set by the therapist.

What qualifications do I need to be an occupational therapy assistant?

You do not require any formal qualifications to become an occupational therapy assistant. However you do need to be aged 17 years or older - and some experience in healthcare is an advantage.

Are there work-shadow opportunities in the department?

The occupational therapy department offers a work-shadow opportunity to spend a day within the department. This is a fantastic way to see first-hand what the job entails and also gives you a chance to meet some of the staff and ask questions.

For further information please call 01223 217244 or email Occupational Therapy, Sara Levy (Associate Manager) or Alison Burt (Admin Co-ordinator)

Where can I go for more information?

Contact the Occupational Therapy department at CUH, or alternatively contact:

The Royal College of Occupational Therapists is primarily involved with the professional standards and educational aspects of occupational therapy, together with the development of research activity, evidence-based practice and the continuing professional development (CPD) of its members. The College also represents the profession on a local, national and international level. The advisory role of the College is crucial in influencing all governmental policies and procedures that affect the practice of occupational therapy.

- Career Handbook: The Royal College of Occupational Therapists have a very useful

career handbook which provides plenty of information and answers some frequently asked questions – please find it here.

Health and Care Professions Council: All therapists working in the UK must be registered with the Health and Care Professions Council.

For Occupational Therapists who have overseas qualifications, contact: Park House, 184 Kennington Park Road, London SE11 4BU; Tel (+44) 0207 840 9700