

Joint Statement on Foundation Degrees for Support Workers

A collaborative statement from the:

British Association of Prosthetists and Orthotists
British Dietetic Association
College of Occupational Therapists
The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy
Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists
Society and College of Radiographers
Society of Chiropodists and Podiatrists



THE CHARTERED SOCIETY OF PHYSIOTHERAPY



1. Purpose of the Joint Statement

This joint statement has been agreed by the Allied Health Profession (AHP) professional bodies listed below¹, in recognition of the generic nature of foundation degrees and their emphasis on inter-professional learning. It is acknowledged that the development of foundation degrees is based on a partnership between employers and education providers across the health sector and that a collaborative approach across AHP professional bodies is therefore appropriate. It is also acknowledged that the development of foundation degrees will assist support workers in gaining accredited recognition for their level of expertise. This is likely to be increasingly relevant in light of the current consultation around support worker regulation.

The purpose of this statement is to:

- Influence the development of foundation degrees aimed at AHP support workers
- Support education providers
- Influence/advise commissioning and funding bodies
- Influence other Professional Bodies
- Disseminate information to potential students
- Promote the integration of academic and work-based learning

2. Qualification Status

The AHP professional bodies wish to make explicit the expectation that:

- The main purpose of a foundation degree is to consolidate students' skills and knowledge in their existing work area and develop new perspectives and capabilities appropriate to their working context
- The emphasis will be on foundation degree programmes as leading to a stand-alone qualification, recognising that it may be associated with a specified role within the new NHS Career Framework
- An additional requirement of a foundation degree will be the possibility of using it to progress onto a health-related degree programme
- Foundation degree learners and/or potential learners should have access to an appropriate range of information, guidance and support to help them with entry to and progression through and beyond the foundation degree

3. Widening Access and Participation

The AHP professional bodies welcome the development of foundation degrees as a method of:

- Growing the support workforce in specific areas of need and of expanding the diversity of the support workforce in general
- Exposing more people to the NHS as a potential employer

¹ BAPO, BDA, COT, CSP, RCSLT, SCoR, , SCoD.

- Facilitating a large group of people already in employment into education, recognising the learning they have gained through their experience
- Preparing non-standard entrants for entry into a programme leading to qualification as a healthcare professional

4. Opportunities for Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning (AP(E)L) onto a Foundation Degree

When considering issues around AP(E)L for entry onto a foundation degree programmes the AHP professional bodies expect education providers to:

- Assess individuals on their skills and knowledge for entry onto a foundation degree
- Develop innovative ways of ensuring that experiential learning is a significant factor for admission onto a foundation degree programme, in line with Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) guidelines
- Recognise all appropriate vocational qualifications at a minimum of Level 3 (e.g. N/SVQ, BTEC, NOCN) for the purposes of APL onto a foundation degree

In this way it is hoped to widen access to and participation in foundation degree programmes.

5. Opportunities for AP(E)L onto a Qualifying Programme

When considering issues around progression onto programmes leading to qualification as a healthcare professional there is an expectation that:

- Foundation degree graduates will normally have the opportunity to use APL as a means of claiming advanced standing for admission to a qualifying programme if appropriate
- Education providers will look to the relevant professional bodies for specific guidance on APL opportunities for foundation students onto qualifying programmes
- Education providers will make explicit to students, from the outset, the possibilities for APL onto specific qualifying programmes and outline other possible routes for progression
- Education providers will explore the opportunity for foundation degree students to APEL clinical practice placement experience when progressing
- The overarching integrity of the programme leading to qualification as a healthcare professional will be maintained
- Structures and resources will be in place to support foundation degree graduates on entering a qualifying programme

6. Transferability

When considering issues around the transferability of the foundation degree as a qualification the AHP professional bodies would like to see foundation degrees that are:

- Transferable across the UK, in line with other QAA-recognised qualifications, within both the education and employment sectors

7. Fit for Purpose, Fit for Practice

- Quality assurance processes must be rigorous to ensure competency in practice upon receiving the award.
- Learning outcomes of a foundation degree must be able to demonstrate compliance with education and conduct standards issued by the governing, regulatory bodies and professional bodies.
- Foundation degree programmes should be enhanced by reference to relevant occupational standards, professional body standards and the Knowledge and Skills Framework
- Individual programmes may want to address local need but this should not be at the expense of transferability

8. Entry Requirements

The AHP professional bodies expect that application to foundation degree programmes will be open to all. Programme providers are expected to:

- Ensure that their programme can be accessed by students from a wide variety of ethnic, social and academic backgrounds (see Section 3)
- Develop innovative ways of ensuring that experiential learning is a significant factor for admission onto a foundation degree programme (see Section 4)
- Encourage the submission of well-written reflective portfolios to demonstrate experience, knowledge and skills in support of entry onto the programme
- Ensure that potential students are aware of all the benefits associated with achieving a foundation degree and where the award sits within educational and career frameworks

9. Work-based Learning

The AHP professional bodies recognise that work-based learning is an essential component of foundation degrees. It is therefore expected that there will be in place:

- Strong and flexible mechanisms for supporting foundation degree students in the workplace
- Appropriate resources to ensure that the programme can be delivered effectively and to the required educational standard including in-built study skills support
- A structured, well-devised and appropriately resourced programme to involve practitioners in the education of foundation degree students.
- An opportunity for practice based educators to gain development opportunities from, and formal recognition for, their role within the programme

10. Engagement with Further and Higher Education and Employers

The AHP professional bodies acknowledge that foundation degrees should be developed as three-way partnerships between Higher Education Institutions, Further Education Colleges, and employers. The role of the

NHSU is also acknowledged as an additional partner in foundation degrees aimed at NHS staff. In addition it is expected that:

- Foundation degrees will be developed in line with professional body guidance
- There will be clarity within the partnership, from the outset, on the potential for students to move from the foundation degree through to a programme leading to qualification as a healthcare professional where appropriate
- Employers will make a commitment to sponsor employees through the foundation degree programme where it is identified that the foundation degree programme is appropriate for the employee and of value to the service.

Key to Abbreviations

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| AHP | Allied Health Profession |
| APEL | Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning |
| APL | Accreditation of Prior Learning |
| BAPO | British Association of Prosthetists and Orthotists |
| BDA | British Dietetic Association |
| B/TEC | Business/Technician |
| COT | College of Occupational Therapy |
| CSP | Chartered Society of Physiotherapy |
| N/SVQ | National/Scottish Vocational Qualification |
| NHSU | National Health Service University ² |
| NOCN | National Open College Network |
| QAA | Quality Assurance Agency |
| RCSLT | Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists |
| SCPOD | Society of Chiropractors and Podiatrists |
| SCOR | Society and College of Radiographers |

² Although the NHSU does not have a charter to operate as a university it has been tasked by the Government to address skills needs across health and social care