RCSLT accreditation

About RCSLT accreditation

The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists accredit all pre-registration undergraduate and postgraduate degree-level entry routes to the speech and language therapy profession, including apprenticeships, in the UK.

RCSLT's accreditation process assesses pre-registration programmes against the Curriculum Guidance (2025). The Curriculum Guidance integrates the updated Newly Qualified Practitioners (NQP) framework and the Professional Development Framework while emphasising the importance of relevant knowledge from related disciplines and key areas within speech and language therapy.

The guidance encourages Higher Education institutions (HEIs) to adopt a flexible and adaptive approach to programme design, ensuring that learners develop the knowledge and skills necessary for continuing professional development and lifelong learning.

RCSLT's accreditation process ensures that pre-registration programmes:

- meet the education expectations set by RCSLT
- are responsive to current and predicted local and national issues which may affect the profession
- produce graduates who are fit for academic award and professional practice.

Accreditation is usually granted for a **five-year period.**

RCSLT accreditation requires programme providers to:

- strongly encourage enrolled students to take up RCSLT membership
- make appropriate arrangements for inducting and supporting all those involved in the programme's delivery in the university and practice environment
- present their programme for review and accreditation when: a) a major change is made to the programme (which would affect how the programme meets the RCSLT Curriculum Guidance); b) the current accreditation period is close to expiry.

A programme provider will apply for accreditation, or reaccreditation, when:

- a new programme is being developed
- major changes are being made to a previously accredited programme
- a previously accredited programme is coming to the end of its five-year accreditation period.

Definition of a major change

A major change refers to any significant modification to an accredited programme that may affect its ability to meet RCSLT accreditation standards. These changes typically require formal notification to RCSLT and may trigger a review or reaccreditation process.

Examples of major changes include:

- substantial revisions to the curriculum structure or content
- changes to the mode of delivery (e.g., transitioning to fully online or blended formats)
- significant alterations to assessment methods or learning outcomes
- introduction of new pathways, awards, or qualifications within the programme
- changes to key staffing, such as programme leadership or core teaching personnel.

These changes may impact the programme's alignment with RCSLTs curriculum guidance. Timely communication with RCSLT is essential to ensure continued compliance and to support informed decision-making.

Benefits of accreditation

RCSLT accreditation provides a recurring opportunity for you to reflect on and review your own curriculum content and direction in relation to current professional practice. We offer you support and guidance when undertaking this process.

Additional benefits for RCSLT-accredited programmes:

- Inclusion of the programme provider and pre-registration programme details in the careers pages of the RCSLT website and highlighting the programme to prospective learners who contact the RCSLT
- Use of the RCSLT logo for publicity and marketing
- Actively participate in future reviews of RCSLT's Curriculum Guidance and other related processes and resources
- Free RCSLT student membership for all learners and induction of learner cohorts to the profession
- All newly produced RCSLT policy and guidance documents sent to the programme lead
- Access to RCSLT resources which support academic staff and placement providers/ practice educators involved in the provision of practice-based learning in all settings
- Inclusion in the approved programmes list for **the Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA)**.

Learners enrolled in accredited pre-registration programmes receive free RCSLT student membership. This links learners to professional practice from the outset, thus easing their transition to the workforce.

RCSLT student membership

Students are the future of our profession, and we are excited that we can support you in your journey to becoming a qualified SLT.

Student membership includes:

- **Student hub**: a place on our website where you can access the tools and clinical guidance you need to support you at all stages of your studies and prepare you for your SLT career.
- RCSLT student member e-newsletter with resources and updates bespoke to students, sent each academic term.
- Fortnightly RCSLT member e-newsletter with all the latest news and updates from the profession.
- Access to read our quarterly **Bulletin magazine online.**

- An annual free event open to all penultimate and final year student members to help with life after graduation, job applications, interviews and getting to grips with what's expected as an NQP.
- Opportunities to join **Clinical Excellence Networks** and our **regional hubs** to help organise activities and events in your local area.
- Option for SLT societies to request RCSLT promotional materials for fairs or events.
- Help and support when you need it through our dedicated enquiries service – email **info@rcslt.org**.

The RCSLT accreditation process establishes shared expectations for curriculum and practice-based learning, promoting consistency in the knowledge, skills, and attributes of the future workforce. This ensures graduates are well-prepared to deliver high-quality care. By aligning education with professional standards and service needs, accreditation strengthens trust in the profession, supports workforce planning, and contributes to the development of member resources. With input from the wider membership, the curriculum remains relevant and reflective of professional values. RCSLT is here to support programme teams throughout this process, recognising the vital role they play in shaping the future of the profession.

Preparing for accreditation

A programme provider will apply for accreditation or reaccreditation if one of the following applies:

1. You are developing a new programme
2. You are planning to make significant changes to a previously accredited programme that will impact on the programme's alignment with the Curriculum Guidance
3. Your previously accredited programme is nearing the end of its five-year accreditation period.

RCSLT's approach to accreditation is collaborative and focused on ensuring quality pre-registration programmes. During the preparation for accreditation, RCSLT can support you with advice and guidance. We ask you to seek this input from RCSLT as early as possible in the development or review stages to ensure you have a clear understanding of the requirements of accreditation.

Please contact RCSLT at **info@rcslt.org** within the following timescales:

New programme provider
At least 18 months before the proposed start date if:

- you do not currently deliver an RCSLT-accredited pre-registration SLT programme
- you are planning to start up a new pre-registration SLT programme

Existing programme provider
At least 12 months before the proposed start date if:

- you currently deliver an RCSLT-accredited pre-registration SLT programme
- you are planning to start a new pre-registration programme
- you are planning significant changes to an existing RCSLT-accredited pre-registration SLT programme

Roles and responsibilities

The RCSLT will:

1. Provide a named contact in RCSLT to respond to queries and support the process
2. Provide information, guidance and support to the programme provider on how to interpret and meet the Curriculum Guidance
3. Provide information, guidance and support to the education representative regarding the accreditation process and required documentation
4. Review the report from the education representative and decide the outcome
5. Provide a formal letter to the programme provider to notify of the outcome of the accreditation review process (and copy to the education representative)
6. Present commendations, recommendations and conditions to the programme provider and agree a timescale for completion of conditions
7. When conditions are attached, review submitted evidence and send a letter to the programme provider confirming sign-off of these conditions
8. Support the programme team in institutional contexts (e.g. help the programme team to make the case for resources or programme-specific assessment regulations)
9. Support the programme team in tackling any issues and problems affecting provision (e.g. those relating to resources, staff support, and staff development)
10. Support the programme team to ensure their programme remains responsive to significant and rapid changes in patient care, service delivery, and professional development needs.

The education representative will:

1. Be a representative from another HEI with an RCSLT accredited programme
2. Work collaboratively with the RCSLT named contact, the programme provider and other relevant stakeholders, demonstrating positive regard at all times
3. Attend and represent RCSLT at any relevant meetings or events
4. Be familiar with the RCSLT accreditation documentation, the HCPC's Standards of Proficiency for speech and language therapists and Standards of Education and Training
5. Assess and critically review programme documentation submitted by the programme provider
6. Attend an accreditation event, whether in person or online and assess the programme's alignment with the Curriculum Guidance and highlight areas of concern and possible solutions/developments
7. Submit a report of commendations, recommendations and conditions (if any) within two weeks of the accreditation event

8. When conditions are attached, review submitted evidence and confirm to RCSLT whether/when these have been met.

The programme provider will:

1. Notify the RCSLT at **info@rcslt.org** as soon as possible in the programme development or review process (see timescales for notifying)
2. Involve the RCSLT at the earliest opportunity with the development of, or planned changes to, the programme
3. Arrange for a single point of contact for all main discussions with RCSLT regarding accreditation
4. Complete and submit the required documentation to the RCSLT within the required timescales
5. Address any recommendations provided at the point of accreditation
6. When conditions are stipulated, take necessary action and submit evidence within the mutually agreed timescales
7. Evidence that the programme aligns with, or that they are working towards alignment with, the Curriculum Guidelines throughout the accreditation period
8. Work proactively and in partnership with RCSLT throughout the accreditation period.

Accreditation of new programmes

Steps taken in the accreditation process

1. Contact RCSLT- approx. 18 months before programme start date
2. Meeting 1- approx. 6 weeks once contacted by education provider
    a. Establish information from the education provider
        - Full name of HEI and school/department/faculty
        - Rationale for the programme
        - Level of programme
        - Stakeholder engagement- service users, local employers, potential placement settings
        - Stage of development
        - Intended start date for first cohort
        - HCPC approval
        - University validation
        - Programme team, including programme lead
    b. RCSLT to provide the following information
        - Current curriculum guidance
        - Explanation of accreditation process including possibility of in person visit
        - Fees and charges– annual fee for accreditation and expenses for the accreditation process
        - Send relevant guidance re placements, accreditation, apprenticeships and link to the education provider hub
        - Possible timeline of key events in process including application submission and accreditation event date
        - Explanation of expectations if accreditation awarded
3. Book follow up meetings which will cover the following:
    a. Meetings booked approx. every 3-4 months
    b. Discuss examples of evidence required to evidence each area of the curriculum guidance
    c. Confirm educational representative name and ensure no conflicts of interest
    d. Confirmation of event date
    e. Confirmation of application submission date
    f. Placement provision including supervision of learners and practice educator support
4. Submission of application
    a. Application submission date confirmed by RCSLT in consultation with the education provider

b. The following information must be submitted:
    - Audit form
    - Evidence to meet the requirements clearly referenced for ease of review
    - This should include placements and programme handbooks or the equivalent
    - Programme delivery plan showing an outline of when modules-teaching and placements will take place and the inclusion of any assessment periods.

5. Accreditation event

   The accreditation even may be in person or online. This will have been communicated by RCSLT when an educational representative was appointed and the event dates confirmed.

   The event, whether online or in person, will comprise of the following:

a. Education provider presentation- "university presentation" – this may cover the following information:
    - General information about the HEI and its relationship with AHP programmes, where it is based, any relevant history
    - Why an SLT programme? A general rationale and the aims of the programme
    - Any other relevant information such as any areas of the programme which are unique or innovative, if there are any areas where you are working particularly with employers in the area, placements, collaboration etc
    - Current status- are the places filled? Are all the placements allocated? Staffing and resources.
    - Anything else that you think it would be good for us to know and understand- whether about the HEI in general or about the community.

b. Questions from RCSLT and the educational representative:
    - This will allow for clarification of the information provided within the application
    - Opportunity to address any omissions or incomplete evidence
    - Any comments or request for explanation about the information submitted

The accreditation event can take between half a day and a full day depending on whether the event is online or in person and the information that is required from RCSLT and the educational representative.

Reaccreditation

The Reaccreditation process triggers every five years or when a major change has been made to the existing programme.

Accreditation has lapsed

After your course has been accredited for five years, you will need to apply for accreditation again.

If there are no major changes to the curriculum planned, this process follows the same steps as a new accreditation

Accreditation after a major change

Explanation of major change: A major change refers to any significant modification to an accredited programme that may affect its ability to meet RCSLT accreditation standards. These changes typically require formal notification to RCSLT and may trigger a review or reaccreditation process. Reaccreditation is required when any major changes to the curriculum are planned, even if the current accreditation is less than five years old.

Examples of major changes include:

- Substantial revisions to the curriculum structure or content
- Changes to the mode of delivery (e.g., transitioning to fully online or blended formats)
- Significant alterations to assessment methods or learning outcomes
- Introduction of new pathways, awards, or qualifications within the programme
- Changes to key staffing, such as programme leadership or core teaching personnel
- These changes may impact the programme's alignment with RCSLTs curriculum guidance. Timely communication with RCSLT is essential to ensure continued compliance and to support informed decision-making.

Register a major change and start the reaccreditation process:

1. The education provider contacts RCSLT if a major change is planned for the existing accredited programme.
2. Follow Accreditation steps.

Once major changes have been accounted for, the process of reaccreditation follows the same steps as Accreditation. For a step by step guide, see Accreditation.

Implementation of new Curriculum Guidance

As part of the transition to the revised 2025 Curriculum Guidance, all HEIs with accredited programmes will be asked to complete a self-monitoring form. This form is designed to help programme teams reflect on how their current provision aligns with the updated guidance, and to identify areas where further development may be planned.

The information gathered will support RCSLT in understanding what, if any, changes may be needed to ensure each accredited programme continues to meet the expected standards. Our aim is to work collaboratively with HEIs throughout this process, offering guidance and support where needed.

Documentation required

- **RCSLT education representative report form**
- **RCSLT accreditation of pre-registration speech and language therapy programmes audit form**

Outcomes of (re)accreditation

There are three possible outcomes following accreditation/re-accreditation:

1. **Accreditation**

Your programme is granted RCSLT accreditation for a five-year period. No conditions are set or the conditions which were set have now been met. There may be some recommendations which you are encouraged to implement.

There is an expectation the programme structure and content remains fundamentally the same as when the application was submitted. If any changes are made to the programme during the period of accreditation RCSLT will be informed. It will be decided whether the change constitutes a major change and the re-accreditation process needs to be implemented.

2. **Accredited subject to conditions**

Your programme is granted RCSLT accreditation for a five-year period, subject to conditions being met.

You and the RCSLT named contact will agree on a date by which conditions must be met. We will support you to respond to the conditions within the agreed timescales.

You will need to submit evidence to demonstrate that the conditions have been met. The RCSLT named contact, and the education representative will review this evidence to consider whether the issues identified through the conditions have been addressed.

We will work with you if your response does not sufficiently address the issues. The RCSLT named contact will send you a letter to confirm once we are satisfied that all conditions have been met.

There is an expectation the programme structure and content remains fundamentally the same as when the application was submitted and if any changes are made to the programme during the period of accreditation, RCSLT will be informed. It will be decided whether the change constitutes a major change and the re-accreditation process needs to be implemented.

3. **Deferred decision**

RCSLT will not grant accreditation if the evidence you provide is deemed insufficient to demonstrate that the programme aligns with the RCSLT Curriculum Guidance.

You will be able to submit a new application or evidence following support and guidance from RCSLT. The RCSLT named contact will tell you what further information or evidence you need to provide to evidence alignment with the curriculum guidance

You and the RCSLT named contact will agree on a timeline for this process.

Monitoring

Annual monitoring

To help maintain the quality and relevance of accredited programmes, RCSLT carries out an annual monitoring process. Each year, programme leads are invited to submit a brief review of their accredited programme. This includes updating key information about the programme and the programme team.

All Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) with an accredited programme are expected to complete this review annually, or when specifically requested. The information provided helps RCSLT ensure that programme details and contact information remain accurate and up to date.

If any clarification is needed, or if further discussion would be helpful, RCSLT will reach out directly to the programme lead. Our aim is to support programme teams in maintaining high standards and to foster open, constructive communication throughout the accreditation cycle.

Ad-hoc requests

From time to time, RCSLT may reach out to request updates or additional information about your accredited programme. When this happens, we kindly ask programme leads to respond in a timely manner to help us maintain accurate records and ensure continued alignment with accreditation standards.

The responses will help RCSLT understand what adjustments, if any, may be needed to ensure programmes continue to meet the required standards. RCSLT is committed to providing guidance and encouragement throughout this process, recognising the efforts of programme teams in maintaining high-quality education.

Stakeholder engagement

RCSLT may occasionally request to meet with, or receive input from, key stakeholders such as learners, placement provider partners, members of the programme team, and employers of apprentices and graduates. These meetings may be held virtually, and sufficient notice will be provided along with an outline of the topics to be discussed.

The insights gathered through these engagements contribute to a fuller understanding of the programme's delivery and impact. They also support the educational representative in making an informed and well-rounded decision regarding the programme's continued alignment with accreditation standards.

Multi-profession/internal re-validation events

The programme provider may request participation from RCSLT in an internal re-validation event, or a multi-professional accreditation event (either virtually or in person). For this type of event, we ask you to:

- inform RCSLT as early as possible to help ensure the availability of both RCSLT and the educational representative
- ensure that arrangements include an appropriate balance between multi-professional and profession-specific discussion
- ensure that there is sufficient time for the education representative to raise and discuss the speech and language therapy programme specifically, as well as develop their understanding of the institution's multi-professional ethos and approach to programme delivery
- send all paperwork related to the event to the RCSLT at least 8 weeks in advance of the event
- make and pay for any accommodation, travel and related expense arrangements for both the RCSLT named contact and the educational representative if required.

Guidance for Education Representatives

The accreditation process is peer reviewed. As part of the conditions for accreditation, we expect each course provider to nominate a colleague as an Education Representative, who will be involved in reviewing the accreditation of a different course provider. This system ensures a robust and fair peer review process.

Education representatives are professional members of the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT), registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), who have experience in pre-registration speech and language therapy education and practice.

As an RCSLT education representative, you have an important role to play in the RCSLT's accreditation process for pre-registration entry routes to the speech and language therapy profession.

The following information is relevant only to people who are fulfilling the role of an RCSLT Education representatives.

The role of RCSLT Education Representatives

Their main role in the accreditation process is to critically review documentation submitted by the programme provider to assess whether the programme aligns with the RCSLT Curriculum Guidance (2025). They are required to attend meetings and/or an accreditation event (online or in person) and to submit a report to RCSLT with recommendations regarding (re-) accreditation of the programme after the event.

Education representatives work collaboratively with the RCSLT, the programme provider and other stakeholders, demonstrating positive regard for others' perspectives and maintaining confidentiality. They represent the RCSLT's position in any communication, meeting or event, impartially, upholding the reputation of RCSLT. Any known conflict of interest and biases in the course of your work as an RCSLT education representative must be disclosed.

Education representatives write a report, submitted to the RCSLT's professional development team using a **prepared template** within two weeks of the accreditation event. The report will highlight areas of good practice, identify areas in the curriculum which may require development, and suggest possible solutions or developments.

As well as your recommendation regarding (re-)accreditation of the programme, you will also identify commendations, recommendations or conditions (if any).

When conditions are attached, you will review further submitted evidence from the programme provider and confirm to the RCSLT (via email) whether/when these have been met.

Preparing for your role

As an education representative, you will already have some knowledge of, or experience in, the design and delivery of pre-registration programmes and of quality assurance processes. To fully understand the context in which pre-registration programmes are delivered, you should be familiar with relevant professional standards and guidelines including:

- **RCSLT curriculum guidance (2021)**
- **RCSLT practice-based learning roles and responsibilities framework (2025)**
- **RCSLT guidance for employers and universities on the speech and language therapy degree apprenticeship in England (2021)**
- **HCPC standards of proficiency for speech and language therapists**
- **HCPC standards of education and training**

You will need to refer to the curriculum guidance during your assessment of the programme documentation, and you may need to refer to the other documents listed.

The RCSLT will inform you of any relevant updates, and of any new standards, guidelines or policies that might impact on pre-registration programmes.

The RCSLT will offer support for new education representatives. The RCSLT can also put you in touch with more experienced education representatives who can offer support and guidance before your first accreditation.

Support from the RCSLT

When you agree to act as education representative for a specific programme (re-)accreditation, the RCSLT named contact will work with both you and the programme provider to ensure the process runs smoothly.

RCSLT will give you access to all the relevant application documents and guidance regarding the accreditation process. They will be your first point of contact at the RCSLT and will respond to any queries you have about the process and your role.

The RCSLT named contact will liaise directly with the programme provider during the development stage of the process to ensure that the new programme/planned changes align with the curriculum guidance. They will send the education provider all relevant forms for completion (Application form; Audit form), advise the programme provider on document production and completion and on what

supporting documentation is required.

They will agree a date for submission of the documentation by the programme provider that suits both the programme provider and you as education representative. They will send you all the completed documentation **within one to two weeks** of receiving it from the programme provider. You will be asked to fill in a template for any areas of the application that may require further clarification or discussion with the education provider.

You and the RCSLT named contact will meet prior to the accreditation event to discuss the application and decide on themes or specific questions for the event. You will also be asked whether you have any concerns about the programme, the education provider or the event.

You can get in touch with your RCSLT named contact at any point during the accreditation process, particularly if you have any concerns about the programme, you are accrediting or the evidence submitted by the programme provider. You and your RCSLT named contact can discuss and agree on relevant additional documentation that may be required from the programme provider. They can then liaise with the programme provider about your concerns and request further evidence on your behalf.

Your RCSLT named contact will agree with your input on the agenda for the meeting and who should be present at the meeting (e.g. members of the programme team, learners, placement provider partners, employers) depending on the issues to be discussed. They will send the agenda out along with all relevant paperwork at least two weeks before the meeting takes place.

If you are required to attend an accreditation event in person, your RCSLT named contact will send you all paperwork related to the event at least four weeks in advance of the event.

The education provider will pay travel, subsistence, accommodation and any other out-of-pocket expenses for the education representative where necessary.

Completing your report

After the event, you will be asked to submit a report to the RCSLT named contact within two weeks of the accreditation event. Any recommendations and conditions that you stipulate should be restricted to aspects of the programme that impact on its alignment with the RCSLT curriculum guidance.

Recommendations do not need to be met before the programme is granted accreditation or re-accreditation. The aim is to encourage further enhancements, and/or to support the programme team in internal discussions (e.g. about resourcing). In this section of your report, please highlight aspects of the programme or curriculum that would benefit from development (with reference to a specific curriculum guidance section), but that do not materially affect the programme's *overall*

alignment with the curriculum guidance.

Conditions are requirements the programme must meet before it can be accredited or have re-accreditation confirmed. RCSLT will work with the programme provider to ensure that the conditions are met within an agreed timescale. In this section, please highlight *key* aspects of the programme or curriculum for which there is insufficient evidence of alignment with a specific section of the curriculum guidance thus impacting on the programme's overall ability to produce graduates with the required capabilities for practice.

You can see some examples of recommendations and conditions in the sample completed report. If you are not sure whether your concern about the programme should be designated a recommendation or a condition, please contact your RCSLT named contact for discussion before completing the report form.

The **Commendations** section provides an opportunity for you to highlight areas of good practice within the programme. Commendations do not affect accreditation but can be helpful to the programme provider in other quality assurance processes.

The RCSLT develops guidance to promote good **clinical** and **professional** practice in line with HCPC standards. **Please read our statement on guidance** to understand how it is developed and how to use it.