

# 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  
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 below<sup>1</sup>, 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 probable support worker regulation in the future.

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 that:

- The main purposes of a foundation degree in health are: to consolidate students' skills and knowledge in their existing work area and environment, to develop new perspectives and capabilities appropriate to their working context, and to support work within the health service.
- Foundation degree programmes will lead to a stand-alone qualification at level 5 of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and level 8 of the Scottish Credit & Qualifications Framework (SCQF)<sup>2</sup>
- As a stand-alone qualification, the foundation degree is one of the possible qualifications for a level 4 post in the NHS Career Framework<sup>3</sup>, particularly the assistant practitioner role.
- Foundation degrees should also facilitate entry onto health professional degree programmes (see section 6) and in order to do so will need to take account of the specific academic entry requirements for the profession in question e.g. where a good grounding in a particular science such as chemistry is essential.
- 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. Entry Requirements**

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

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<sup>1</sup> BAPO, BDA, COT, CSP, RCSLT, SCoR, , SCPOD.

<sup>2</sup> The NQF can be viewed at <http://www.qca.org.uk/493.html> and the SCQF can be accessed via <http://www.sqa.org.uk>

<sup>3</sup> The NHS Career framework can be viewed at <http://www.dh.gov.uk/assetRoot/04/13/14/34/04131434.pdf>

- Ensure that their programme/s can be accessed by students from a wide variety of ethnic, social and academic backgrounds (see Section 4)
- Develop innovative ways of ensuring that experiential learning is a significant factor for admission onto a foundation degree programme (see Section 5)
- 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

#### **4. 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
- Facilitating a large group of people already in employment into education, recognising the learning they have gained through their experience
- Preparing non-standard applicants for entry into a programme leading to qualification as a healthcare professional

#### **5. Opportunities for Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning [AP(E)L] onto a Foundation Degree**

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

- Assess individuals' 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 (NQF) for the purposes of APL onto a foundation degree (e.g. N/SVQ level 3 and health awards, BTEC qualifications, NOCN accredited courses)

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

#### **6. Progression onto Qualifying Programmes**

When considering issues around progression from the foundation degree 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
- 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, at the earliest opportunity, the possibilities for APL onto specific qualifying programmes and will provide information about 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.

## **7. 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.

Whilst individual programmes may be developed to address local need this should not be at the expense of transferability.

## **8. Fit for Purpose, Fit for Practice**

Foundation degrees should be driven by practice and therefore they should be developed to a robust framework and standards which practitioners understand. That is:

- Quality assurance processes must be rigorous to ensure competency in practice upon receiving the award.
- Learning outcomes of a foundation degree must 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 NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework

## **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 which involves 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
- Support from the education provider for practitioners involved in delivering the foundation degree.

## **10. Engagement with Further and Higher Education and Employers**

The AHP professional bodies acknowledge that foundation degrees should be developed as three-way partnerships among Higher Education Institutions, Further Education Colleges and employers. The Sector Skills Council, Skills for Health, is also acknowledged as an additional partner in

foundation degrees aimed at NHS staff, having been tasked by the Government to address skills needs across the healthcare sector. <sup>4</sup>

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, about the potential for students to move from the foundation degree through to a programme leading to qualification as a healthcare professional
- 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

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
BTEC	The generic name for a raft of vocational qualifications. (The Business & Technician Education Council, from which the name derives, did exist as a body but merged in 1996 with the University of London Examinations & Assessment Council to become Edexcel, a qualifications awarding body.)
COT	College of Occupational Therapy
CSP	Chartered Society of Physiotherapy
N/SVQ	National/Scottish Vocational Qualification
NOCN	National Open College Network
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
RCSLT	Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists
SCPOD	Society of Chiropodists and Podiatrists
SCOR	Society and College of Radiographers

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<sup>4</sup> Further information about this can be found at <http://www.skillsforhealth.org.uk/qualifications-4.php>