

**RCOT Approved Learning**

CPD Short Course   
Application Guidance

Contents

[1. Contact details for RCOT Approved Learning 2](#_Toc49164914)

[2. What is RCOT Approved Learning? 2](#_Toc49164915)

[3. The application 2](#_Toc49164916)

[4. Linking to the RCOT Career Development Framework 3](#_Toc49164917)

[5. Submission to RCOT 3](#_Toc49164918)

[6. Application assessment 3](#_Toc49164919)

[7. Application outcome and next steps 4](#_Toc49164920)

[8. Maintaining and renewing the RCOT Approved Learning award 4](#_Toc49164921)

[9. RCOT Approved Learning standards for CPD Short Courses 5](#_Toc49164922)

**Appendix 1: RCOT Career Development Framework for Occupational Therapy:**

Pillars of Practice and their Key Skills 7

**Appendix 2:** **Career Development Framework for Occupational Therapy**:

Career Levels 8

**PLEASE NOTE**: Due to the current circumstances caused by COVID-19, it is important that you demonstrate adjustments you have made to face to face delivery in order to meet hygiene and safety needs.

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# Contact details for RCOT Approved Learning

We want to support you through the Approved Learning application process. We welcome discussions with you before and during your application.

For all queries and to submit completed applications, contact us using the following email:

RCOTApprovedLearning@rcot.co.uk

# What is RCOT Approved Learning?

The Royal College of Occupational Therapists (RCOT) Approved Learning award verifies quality for continuing professional development (CPD). The College uses the definition of CPD as set out by the [Health and Care Professions Council](https://www.hcpc-uk.org/cpd/) (HCPC). CPD is the way in which professionals continue to learn and develop throughout their careers to keep skills and knowledge up to date, to be able to practise safely and effectively.

Approved Learning is awarded to specific courses, not organisations. It is available for courses produced by commercial providers, RCOT Specialist Sections, Regional Branches and internally developed learning resources. Approved Learning is not available for credit-bearing courses leading to formal qualifications. Events linked to product demonstration must include a significant proportion of wider content beyond product use alone.

The award demonstrates that courses relevant to occupational therapy personnel have met defined learning and teaching standards, benchmarked internationally. The award is valid for three years.

The award can be conferred for different types of learning, for example face to face courses, study days, workshops, distance learning and online learning. The intended audience need not be specifically occupational therapy personnel, but the relevance to occupational therapy must be clear.

The benefits of RCOT Approved Learning award are:

* Confirmation that RCOT’s quality standards have been met;
* Validation that the course is current, professionally relevant and meets sound educational principles;
* Verification of best practice;
* Assists RCOT members with their learning and development by linking to the *RCOT Career Development Framework*;
* RCOT Approved Learning branding on promotional and marketing materials;
* Listing on the RCOT Approved Learning webpage.

# The application

When you are developing your course, refer to and address the standards that will be used to assess it (Section 9). If you build these standards into your resource, it will likely be awarded RCOT Approved Learning much more quickly.

The application process for CPD Short Courses is very straightforward. We need some basic information for processing, such as the name of the course and contact details. In addition, we ask you to map the course to the [RCOT Career Development Framework](https://www.rcot.co.uk/cpd-rcot) as explained in the following section.

# Linking to the RCOT Career Development Framework

The Framework consists of four interlinked Pillars of Practice that occupational therapy personnel and other allied healthcare professionals are expected to develop throughout their careers. These are: Professional Practice, Facilitation of Learning, Leadership and Evidence, Research and Development.

Three Key Skills have been identified for each Pillar (see Appendix 1 – page 10). Identify the specific Key Skills your course delivers to participants. It is unlikely that a course will address all the Key Skills. In many cases, only one Pillar of Practice will apply.

The *RCOT Career Development Framework* describes nine Career Levels for each Pillar of Practice. These range, for example, from school leavers working as assistants, learners at the beginning of formal study, newly qualified occupational therapists, to very experienced personnel working to advance the profession at the highest level (see Appendix 2 – page 11).

Once you have identified the Key Skills delivered by your course, examine the skills and abilities expected of each Career Level. Next, categorise the Career Level(s) for the Pillar(s) of Practice covered by your course. You may decide the course is specific to one career level, or covers a range of levels. Carefully match your course and explain the range of career levels you have selected.

Remember, the Career Levels apply to each of the Pillars of Practice, not just clinical Professional Practice. Choose the Career Levels with reference to the specific Pillar of Practice you are considering.If the course covers more than one Pillar of Practice, it is quite possible that the Career Level(s) will be different for each.

You can find more information about the [*Career Development Framework: guiding principles for occupational therapy*](https://www.rcot.co.uk/cpd-rcot) on the RCOT website.

We ask you to link your course to this Framework because occupational therapists use it as a structure to identify and plan their continuing professional development. Mapping to the Framework allows potential learners to decide if the course is at the right level for them and if it covers their learning needs. It will also help you to define the target market for the course. We will include your Pillars of Practice and Career Level(s) on the [RCOT Approved Learning](https://www.rcot.co.uk/rcot-approved-learning-continuing-professional-development) webpage.

# Submission to RCOT

When you have filled out the application form, email it with the CPD Short Course documents and a signed copy of the Terms and Conditions.

# Application assessment

When your application is received, we check that it is complete. We select two assessors whom we have confirmed are qualified for RCOT Approved Learning and who do not have a conflict of interest with the course. For example, we would not ask a member of a Specialist Section to assess a course developed by that Section. All assessors are members of RCOT and are HCPC registered occupational therapists or previously registered retired occupational therapists.

Assessors review your application and provide an assessment according to the eight RCOT Approved Learning standards for Short Courses (Section 9, page 5). We will inform you of the expected outcome date, and any unforeseen delays should they arise.

After review, assessors will prepare their Assessor Reports within an agreed timeframe. We aim for a short turnaround between sending out your application and receiving the two Assessor Reports. However, timing may vary according to individual circumstances.

We review the Assessor Reports and use them to make a final decision on the application outcome. At the end of the review process, you will receive a detailed Outcome Report.

# Application outcome and next steps

We designate one of two possible outcomes based on the Assessor Reports:

1. **Awarded**:

All RCOT Approved Learning standards have been fully met.

1. **Subject to Adjustment**:

Not all RCOT Approved Learning standards are fully met or there is insufficient evidence that they have been met.

1. When RCOT Approved Learning is **awarded**, you will receive the Outcome Report, Major Change form and the RCOT Approved Learning logo.

Any exceptional areas identified by Assessors are highlighted in the Outcome Report as **commendations**. Commendations are specific to the course being assessed and are not transferable. You are welcome to use commendations in your course marketing materials.

We will provide you with guidelines for the logo. You may use it on course documentation and any related marketing materials.

1. To achieve the RCOT Approved Learning award, applications **subject to adjustment** must address the standards that are not met or not fully met. The Outcome Report will contain **conditions** that explain what is required. You must then respond, showing how you have met the conditions, within a time frame agreed with RCOT. We will support you and work closely with you to meet the conditions.

# Maintaining and renewing the RCOT Approved Learning award

RCOT Approved Learning is valid for three years. As detailed in the Terms and Conditions, we will ask you for an annual report each year, due no later than the anniversary of the date of award. You must respond promptly to any queries arising from scrutiny of the annual report. If you fail to meet the deadline for annual report submission, or to respond to queries arising from the report, the RCOT Approved Learning Award for the course may be reviewed and may be withdrawn.

If you propose major changes to your awarded course, RCOT must be notified immediately using the Major Change form. You will receive this when RCOT Approved Learning is awarded.

At the end of three years, the RCOT Approved Learning award expires. You will receive notification that the end of the award period is approaching, and will be invited to re-apply with a new application. To maintain continuity, we recommend that the application is submitted at least six weeks prior to expiry.

# RCOT Approved Learning standards for CPD Short Courses

**STANDARD 1: Content**

**1.1** The course materials, such as readings, video clips, web pages, are up to date, relevant to the topic and are produced or written by reliable sources.   
  
The course signposts and reinforces best practice.  
  
If any branded equipment or materials are suggested or referred to, the course explicitly provides full commercial disclosure.

**1.2** The course has an introductory overview that orients the participants and prepares them for learning. It explains the knowledge and skills that the course covers for participants’ professional development.  
  
The main purpose of the content is:

* to deepen the practical ability of the participants to do their professional work at the level they already achieve;

AND/OR

* to develop abilities in the content topic(s) beyond the knowledge and skills they already have at the start of the course.

**1.3** The course includes work on problem-solving and decision-making. There are several clear opportunities within the course for participants to consider different problem-solving and/or decision-making strategies.

The content provides different suggestions or approaches to help participants meet complex challenges and/or to improve the quality of their work.

**1.4** The course promotes equality, diversity and inclusion. Content is respectful to everyone.   
  
The content and the delivery encourage participants to promote equality and diversity in their work.

**STANDARD 2: Accessibility**

**2.1** All course materials are accessible for people with impairments, for example dyslexia, sensory impairment such as vision and hearing, and limited mobility.   
  
Plain English is used as far as possible and technical terms and acronyms are explained.

**2.2** Participants can assess the following information at the beginning of the course:

1. Course structure, outline or timetable.
2. Any course pre-preparation and how long it should reasonably take to do.
3. Overall length of the course.
4. Maximum number of learners per event, if numbers limited.
5. If the course is commercially funded, information on the funder(s)/sponsor(s).

**2.3** The course structure and course materials give a good participant experience.

1. The course is clearly laid out and logically ordered.
2. Materials relate well to the course topic.
3. Recommended resources are safe and of good quality – for example, web resources are produced by reputable sources.
4. All provided hyperlinks are functional and navigation is straightforward.
5. Content prepared by sources other than the developer is listed with a recognised and consistent system. Copyright and permission are acknowledged, for example for graphics and images. The source and date of issue or publication is indicated in the relevant section of the course materials (for example, PowerPoint slides).
6. The resources are listed with a recognised and consistent system. Enough information is provided for learners to locate them after the course is over. The resources are grouped logically (for example, published papers, online resources, useful materials, or other clear groupings). The lists of resources are ordered in a logical way, for example publications are alphabetical by first author.

**STANDARD 3: Participant Engagement**

**3.1** The content is delivered using different types of activities. The facilitator is supported to encourage participants to learn through active participation.   
  
The facilitator is supported to make sure all participants engage in the problem-solving and critical thinking course activities.

**3.2** The facilitator is supported to direct and guide participants so they can fully engage and learn from the activities.   
  
Any content that may cause concern or issues for learners is signposted within the course and guidance is given to participants and/or the facilitator on how to manage any problems that may arise as a result of this content.  
  
Enough time is given to each aspect of the course so that the material can be covered in suitable depth. This includes time for questions, supplementary discussion and practice.  
  
The facilitator is supported to lead informally with questions that check all participants understand the course content and activity instructions.

**3.3** The course provides opportunities for participants to share their experiences and learning with each other.   
  
Participants are encouraged to share their learning with colleagues after the event.

**STANDARD 4: Learning Assessment and Reinforcement**

**4.1** The facilitator is supported to feed back to participants to help their understanding and reinforce their learning throughout the course.   
  
The facilitator is supported to use language that encourages the participants.  
  
At the end of the course, the facilitator is supported to summarise the content and describe what the participants should now be able to do.

**4.2** If the course includes formal learning assessment leading to a pass or fail designation, participants receive information about assessment, if included, before the course begins or during the course introduction.   
  
Participants receive information before the learning assessment so that they understand what they must do or achieve in order to pass. If levels other than pass are awarded (for example merit, distinction) the criteria to achieve these levels are explained.   
  
The participants know what will happen if they do not pass.

**4.3** Reinforcement of learning includes the opportunity for participants to reflect on and record their learning, with enough time set aside for these activities.

**STANDARD 5: Relevance**

**Note: this standard will be assessed in relation to your application form as well as the course**

**5.1** The course must be relevant to occupational therapy personnel, including support workers, but need not be exclusive to them. The course demonstrates the relevance to occupational therapy personnel by mapping to one or more Pillars of Practice. One or more Pillar may apply. The PIllars are described in the [RCOT Career Development Framework](https://www.rcot.co.uk/cpd-rcot).   
  
The Pillars of Practice identified in the course are accurately mapped to content and learning outcomes. If Professional Practice is one of the Pillars of Practice, the course makes clear links between content and helping people to do what they want, need or have to do.

**5.2** The course has been designed for a specific, defined audience of people, with a certain level of skills and knowledge. For example, it could be aimed at students, support staff, early career professionals or personnel highly experienced in the topic. It could be designed to teach a particular skill relevant to all or most career levels of a given Pillar of Practice.  
  
The course makes clear what the intended audience is. (Appendix 2: Career Levels, pg. 11)  
  
If more than one Pillar of Practice is covered by the course, different career levels may be covered for each one. The course materials make this clear.

**5.3** The following information is clear at the beginning of the course:

1. Description of who the course is intended for.
2. The knowledge and skills participants will learn that will support or advance their professional development;
3. The level and type of knowledge and/or skills that they need before participating in the course.

Participants receive evidence that they have completed the course.

**STANDARD 6: Learning Outcomes (Skills and Knowledge Gained)**

**NOTE:** Learning Outcomes are general statements about what participants should be able to do as a result of taking the course, how well they should be able to do it, and how they can apply their learning to their work.

The number of Learning Outcomes varies depending on the course, but as a rule of thumb may range from three to four for a Short Course.

Learning Outcomes should: i) be general, not too detailed; ii) be realistically achievable; iii) lead to participants feeling confident about achieving all of them by the end of the course; iv) be assessable - facilitators and learners can assess that learners have achieved them.

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**6.1** The Learning Outcomes are directly relevant to the Pillars of Practice identified in the course.

Learning Outcomes conform fully to the NOTE above and describe precisely, not vaguely, what the participants should be able to do as a result of completing the course.

If the skill area is Professional Practice, at least one key skill **must** cover how the course content helps people to do what they want, need or have to do.

**6.2** The Learning Outcomes are pitched at the right level for the skills and experience of the participants who the course is designed for.  
  
Participants should reasonably be able to achieve the Learning Outcomes within the course timeframe.   
  
The resources and content fully support the course Learning Outcomes.

**6.3** The Learning Outcomes are assessable, that is, they are worded so that participants can judge if they have been achieved.   
  
This judgement may be based on formal or informal learning assessment, reflection, action plans or other means.

**STANDARD 7: Course Follow Up**

**7.1** The course includes an up-to-date annotated resources list that supports on-going learning.

**7.2** The participants receive at least one learning resource in addition to links and references (as for standard 8.1) to support on-going learning.   
  
This may include, for example, tip sheets, access to a community of practice, webinars or suggested further CPD activities.

**7.3** The course includes guidance to develop action plans, encouraging participants to apply their learning to their work. Development of action plans may be part of the course, or resources may be given to participants to develop their action plans independently after the course has finished.

**7.4** The facilitator is supported to guide participants to record the Continuing Professional Development they have gained from taking the course. The course encourages learners to think about the outcomes of their learning. This may be related to the delivery of the service or the service user experience they provide in professional practice or in other occupational therapy work such as management and research.

**STANDARD 8: Quality Monitoring and Continuous Improvement**

8.1 Participants have access to information on who to contact in the event of a complaint or problem about the course and what to expect if they make a complaint or have a problem.

8.2 All participants know that they can evaluate the course. The information on how to do this is clearly provided in the course materials.

**APPLICATION OUTCOMES AND NEXT STEPS**

**Figure 1. RCOT Approved Learning Process**

**Appendix 1**

**RCOT Career Development Framework for Occupational Therapy:**

**Pillars of Practice and their Key Skills**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **PILLARS OF PRACTICE** |  | **KEY SKILLS - The course supports participants to:** |
| **Professional Practice** |  | P1. Make links between the course content and helping people to do what they want, need or have to do |
|  | P2. Deliver safe, effective, person-centred and ethical practice |
|  | P3. Use professional judgement, reasoning and decision making |
|  |  |  |
| **Support Learning** |  | S1. Teach, mentor, supervise and/or assess others for learning |
|  | S2. Assist and/or guide others to learn in the workplace |
|  | S3. Create and test learning environments, tools and materials |
|  |  |  |
| **Leadership** |  | L1. Identify, review and improve own knowledge and skills |
|  | L2. Guide, direct and/or support teamwork |
|  | L3. Design, carry out, manage professional and/or organisational change |
|  |  |  |
| **Research, Gather Evidence, Develop Profession** |  | R1. Influence local, regional, national, international policy and decision-making |
|  | R2. Create, use and/or explain evidence to inform practice |
|  | R3. Design, carry out and test research, distribute research evidence |

**Appendix 2**

**RCOT Career Development Framework for Occupational Therapy:**

**Career Levels**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **CAREER LEVEL** | **CAREER LEVEL SKILLS AND ABILITIES** |
|  |  |
| **LEVEL 1**: basic general knowledge; awareness of the role of occupational therapy;  entry level | * Any new starter in the sector but not necessarily straight from school. * Can do a limited number of straightforward tasks under direct supervision. |
|  |  |
| **LEVEL 2**: understands at basic level occupational therapy and any specific topic of study | * Carries out duties with guidance and supervision. * Can participate in improvement initiatives. |
|  |  |
| **LEVEL 3**: knows and understands occupational therapy procedures, processes and general concepts for own subjects of study and practice | * Carries out wide range of delegated duties with guidance and supervision when needed. * Can contribute to improvement initiatives. |
|  |  |
| **LEVEL 4**: knows and understands occupational therapy procedures, processes and general concepts for own subjects of study and practice | * Self-guided by written procedures and protocols, makes judgements, plans activities. * May have some responsibility for aspects of supervision of some staff or students. |
|  |  |
| **LEVEL 5**: has comprehensive, specialised knowledge and understanding of occupational therapy;  understands boundaries of both personal knowledge and knowledge within the sector | * Makes judgements within own particular area of work, actively contributes to improvement initiatives. * May have responsibility for supervision of staff or students. * May be eligible for registration as an occupational therapist with the regulatory body (HCPC)   **OR**  May be non-regulated, experienced care workers or have own specialist trade or craft e.g. posture and seating skills. |
|  |  |
| **LEVEL 6**: has critical understanding of occupational therapy knowledge | * Leads in a specific area of work with some responsibility for service and team performance. * Supervises staff and/or students. |
|  |  |
| **LEVEL 7**: has highly specialised knowledge and critical awareness | * Has specialist practice-based, technical or scientific skills. * Responsible for service development in complex environments. * Leads in services/research/education, supervises staff and/or students. |
|  |  |
| **LEVEL 8**: has most advanced and specialised knowledge | * At the forefront of the profession as for example strategic leader, original thinker, political leader. * Responsible for finances, service development and/or multiple teams. |
|  |  |
| **LEVEL 9**: innovates and widely advances occupational therapy | * Develops services for a population, works at the highest level of an organisation. * Accountable for the performance of staff and services, thinks at a systems level. |