# Information for the RCOT Specialist Sections

## **Introduction**

RCOT Specialist Sections are branches of RCOT that provide professional direction and leadership for occupational therapists working in specialist areas of practice. Specialist Sections are communities of practice that network, share and promote good practice.

Specialist Sections are communities of occupational therapists and support staff who come together with a common practice interest who are members of RCOT. Specialist Sections have a valuable and vital role within RCOT.

This information has been written to provide information about RCOT Specialist Sections and provide information and guidance on governance and management of branches. It should be read in conjunction with the following resources and training:

* *RCOT Branches Finance Manual (June 2022)*
* *Induction for RCOT Branch Committees*
* *The Six Guiding Principles for RCOT Branch Committees*
* [*RCOT Branch Resources webpage*](https://www.rcot.co.uk/about-us/rcot-branch-resources)

Supporting RCOT staff:

* Karin Bishop, Director of Movement Building and Membership
* UK Branch Manager
* Lorinda Sharkey, Engagement Officer
* Pinky Sidhpura, Branch Administrator
* Lanre Akingbade, Assistant Accountant

# RCOT Specialist Sections

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| 1. |  About Specialist Sections |
| 1.1 | The purpose of a Specialist Section is to:* Encourage, promote, facilitate and support the advancement of occupational therapy practice within a specialist area.
* Promote a broad practice area or interest such as mental health or to support the use of evidence to inform practice.
* Be proactive and responsible for intelligence gathering, strategic thinking and influencing policy across the UK.
* Support, inform and network with members in your specialist area and community of practice.
* Function as a resource to provide expertise at national and local levels.
* Act as advisors and influencers for and on behalf of RCOT.
* Act as an umbrella host organisation for clinical forums.
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| 1.2 | All Specialist Section business must be conducted in accordance with the *RCOT Specialist Section Branch Committee Terms of Reference (Appendix 1) and the RCOT Branches Finance Manual* and the information within this briefing.* Specialist Section membership is open to all RCOT members.
* Each Specialist Section must hold an Annual Review Meeting (ARM) after the end of the business year which includes a presentation of the annual report and statement of accounts.
* Specialist Sections must have a National Executive Committee (NEC) of 12 members. The core NEC committee posts are Chair, Treasurer and Secretary.
* All Specialist Section National Executive Committee and Clinical Forum Committee members should complete the nomination form and send it to RCOT.
* Specialist Sections must have a minimum of 150 members.
* Specialist Sections may be grouped into communities of practice called clinical forums.
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| 1.3 | Specialist Section Clinical Forums must act in accordance with the *RCOT Specialist Section – Organising RCOT Specialist Section Clinical Forum.** There can be as many or as few clinical forums as required. This is to achieve the right balance of the membership and activities of the branch.
* A Specialist Section Clinical Forum is made up of Specialist Section members. They are grouped because of their clinical interest in a community of practice.
* Clinical Forums offer a real or virtual resource to the Specialist Section membership and is an additional membership benefit. Members can opt into membership of a Clinical Forum.
* A Clinical Forum may host events up to four times each year for members. Events should focus on their community of practice and professional developments. It provides an opportunity to form a network with colleagues to share best practice and keep updated with practice information/resources.
* All Specialist Section Clinical Forums are required to follow the Specialist Section Terms of Reference and governance procedures to ensure clear and transparent governance, as well as assurance that their actions are supportive of the Specialist Section.
* Each Clinical Forum should have a Chair who will organise a committee of up to six people to oversee the activities of the Clinical Forum. Other positions within the Clinical Forum Committee can include secretary and event lead.
* All members on the Clinical Forum Committee must complete a nomination form and submit it to the administrator.
* Each forum must liaise with the NEC and report regularly on their activities and contribute to the business planning and reporting process. Clinical Forums do not hold an ARM but they should review their activities each year and have them included in the Specialist Section ARM and annual report.
* Each forum should contribute to the Specialist Section monthly newsletter, webpages, social media and reports to RCOT.
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| 2. | The National Executive Committee (NEC) structure and rolesThe National Executive Committee (NEC) is made up of 12 roles. As Specialist Sections focus on clinical and/or specialist areas of practice, the roles vary depending on the need of the Specialist Section and the activities they undertake.    **Chair** – To lead the Specialist Section NEC by chairing meetings and ensuring it fulfils its core business aims and responsibilities in line with the governance requirements of RCOT; and to work collaboratively with the NEC to achieve this. The Chair will also be a key contact for RCOT. **Vice-Chair** – To support the Chair and the NEC to ensure that the Specialist Section fulfils its core business aims and responsibilities and to deputise for the Chair when required.  **Secretary** – to support the management of the NEC with communication; to collate and circulate meeting papers including meeting minutes to the NEC and RCOT. **Treasurer** – To ensure the Specialist Section financial affairs are conducted in compliance with the current RCOT requirements and to act as a key contact for all financial matters. **Newsletter editor** – To produce a monthly newsletter for circulation to Specialist Section members in conjunction with the NEC and Specialist Section members. **Research and Development Lead** – To be responsible for leading and supporting research and development within the Specialist Section and to lead on research and development enquiries. **Communications Lead** – To maintain the webpages and engage with social media on behalf of the Specialist Section and be the first point of contact for members via social media. **Events and CPD Lead** – To take responsibility to lead, facilitate, support and have an overview of Specialist Section events and CPD offerings. Having an overview of the RCOT Career Development Framework to support learning is essential in this role. **Clinical Forum Lead** – To be a lead representative for clinical forums within the Specialist Section and act as a link between the forum and NEC. This role applies to Specialist Sections that have clinical forums.  **UK Nations / Regional Lead** – to be a lead representative for the UK nations and regions within the Specialist Section and act as a link between the nation/region representatives and NEC. This role may vary between Specialist Sections depending on the membership needs.  In addition to the above 10 roles, the NEC can elect members to 2 additional committee roles to support the work of the committee.  Co-opted members Each Committee can co-opt up to six members to assist in a role or piece of work of the Specialist Section for a fixed period of time (up to one year).Clinical Forum committeeEach forum should have a Chair, lead or link person, organising groups of up to six people to oversee the activities of the clinical forum. Each forum must liaise with the NEC and report annually on their activities to the NEC and contribute to the business planning process and ARM.Specialist Section region leadsSpecialist Sections may choose to have region leads within the Specialist Sections to lead on activities with the region for that particular Specialist Section. Region leads must liaise with the NEC and report annually on their activities to the NEC and contribute to the business planning process and ARM. Committee member/lead management* All committee members including co-opted members, forum committee members and region leads must complete a nomination form and submit it to the administrator.
* Any changes to the membership of the committee should be sent to the Engagement Officer and administrator.
* Contact information for committee members should be shared with the administrator and updated regularly.
* Roles on the committee can be shared with the agreement of the Committee except for the Chair and Treasurer roles.
* RCOT provide training annually for new committee members. All new members and existing members taking on a second term, should complete induction training.
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| 3. | Election of the Specialist Section National Executive Committee (NEC)Annual elections for Specialist Section NEC roles are held during July and August. RCOT will coordinate vacant posts with Committees, advertise vacancies, welcome new committee members and thank departing committee members. The timeline for the election process is:May Confirm vacancies with the Chair of the NECJuly When open, vacancies advertised in OTnews, website, social media and newslettersAugust Close of nominations 31 AugustSeptember Administration of nominations by RCOT staff. Confirmation of election results to candidates and NEC Chairs.October New NEC members commence their term of office. Induction and training are organised. * If two nominations are received for a vacancy, where possible, nominees will be invited to share the role (except for the Chair and Treasurer roles).
* If three or more nominations are received for a vacancy, nominees will be offered alternative vacancies on the NEC, a co-opted role or a job share if possible. Where this is not possible, members in the Specialist Section will be invited to vote for their nominee of choice.
* Members are welcome to join a NEC outside of the nomination period and will be co‑opted onto a role till the end of the business year. They are then welcome to apply for the post in the next nomination period.
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| 4. | Developing support for clinical areas within occupational therapy  |
| 4.1 | RCOT promotes the development of clinical expertise and member engagement via its Specialist Sections and creates opportunities for members to get involved in policy, practice, strategy and campaign work. It creates opportunities to develop leadership skills, networking, and resources to support and promote good practice.To support growing clinical areas within the profession, RCOT will strategically develop and support larger, more sustainable Specialist Sections by developing clinical forums in areas of need and in line with the RCOT business plan and strategies. RCOT will work with existing Specialist Sections to create clinical forums, which are dedicated, speciality subgroups of Specialist Sections, providing support, networking and resources. RCOT will also work with smaller groups, not yet a Specialist Section, to identify the best guidance within the RCOT structure. |
| 5. | Benefits of being a Specialist Section |
| 5.1 | Professional benefits* Opportunities to be ambassadors of the profession, both internally and externally, and to be part of the professional community.
* Contribute to the continuously developing professional knowledge, skills, research and practice base of the profession.
* Opportunities for debate and discussion, networking and sharing with other occupational therapists working in specialist areas to enhance practice and understanding.
* Promote excellence in practice.
* Opportunities for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and life-long learning.
* Involvement in joint working in policy, practice and strategy.
* Support and overview from the Country Boards – England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
* Opportunities to represent the profession in a variety of forums and within policy, advising government, business or industry in the UK.
* Support, advice and guidance from the Movement Building and Membership team, which includes the Connections and Communities Team, and Practice and Innovation team, which includes the Policy and Public Affairs Team and Professional Advisers, and other staff in teams across RCOT as necessary.
* A range of resources to support volunteers available on the [RCOT website](https://www.rcot.co.uk/about-us/rcot-branch-resources).
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| 5.2 | Assistance from RCOTFor events, RCOT will provide:* Delegate management.
* Free website listing on RCOT events page.
* Free event listing in *OTNews* for one month prior to event.
* The appropriate (paid or free) event form should be completed and sent to RCOT three months prior to the event taking place.
* Free listing of events via RCOT printed events listings, and via networks to other Specialist Sections as appropriate.

For advertising, RCOT will provide:* Support, advice and guidance on advertising procedures by RCOT Advertising Manager
* Advertising and Sponsorship Policy Guidelines for Branches offers guidance on aspects of advertising and provides procedures to follow. These are available on the [RCOT website.](https://www.rcot.co.uk/about-us/rcot-branch-resources.)

For newsletters, RCOT will provide:* Support, advice and guidance on newsletter structure and content.
* Formatting and sending of the newsletter in the RCOT brand on behalf of the Specialist Section.
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| 5.3 | Library facilitiesThe RCOT Library will:* Support the Specialist Sections when working on any project groups authorised by the UK Branch Manager or other RCOT Officers.
* Support activities such as an in-depth evidence-based literature required by Specialist Section working groups. Substantive literature searches of this type will need to be agreed with the library staff in advance and scheduled into the library work plan.
* Specialist Sections newsletters, journals and publications are held electronically. Due to copyright issues the library will no longer be able to make these available for library users.
* When the RCOT Library receives a request for permission to republish an article in a Specialist Sections journal/newsletter, the query will be directed to the editor of that Specialist Section.  Any requests of this nature Specialist Sections will follow RCOT policy.
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| 5.4 | Website RCOT will provide:* Dedicated Specialist Section pages within the RCOT website.
* Support and assistance in website and social media development from design to delivery.
* The RCOT Branch and Web teams will support the Specialist Sections to ensure content is managed and up to date (it is the responsibility of the Specialist Section to keep information on the website up to date and accurate).
* All Specialist Sections will comply with RCOT policy concerning copyright, consent and visual identity.
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| 5.5 | Research and DevelopmentRCOT will provide:* Designated contacts for liaison and advice on research and development issues – this will be the RCOT Research and Development Manager and the Research and Development Administrator
* Support and assistance with research and development activities.
* Advice and guidance on responding to research/project recruitment enquiries. More information is available on the [RCOT website.](https://www.rcot.co.uk/about-us/rcot-branch-resources.)
* Information and support on RCOT project governance process and ethics requirements such as membership surveys. More information is available on the [RCOT website.](https://www.rcot.co.uk/about-us/rcot-branch-resources.)
* Updates on RCOT evidence and research-related resources for members.
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| 5.6 | PublicationsAll publications and resources produced by Specialist Sections (excluding newsletters), should be done in collaboration with RCOT. Specialist Sections should contact the Quality Programme Manager before any work is commenced to discuss the proposed resource and ensure it fits within one of the required publication categories. Advice and guidance will also be provided on the RCOT processes to support the development and production of resources.  |
| 5.7 | Marketing materialsAll RCOT marketing materials will be produced and designed by RCOT. Please contact specialistsectionadmin@rcot.co.uk if you require these.  |
| 5.8 | TrainingRCOT will provide:* Finance training delivered by our finance team.
* Induction training for all NEC volunteers at the start of their term of office. If a member continues for a second term (after three years), this should be repeated.
* GDPR training for nominated members annually.
* Additional training offered as necessary.
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| 5.9 | FinanceRCOT will provide:* The accounting functions for all Specialist Sections.
* Support and advice on accounts, payments, BACs etc. will be provided as and when required.
* Training on a 1:1 basis is provided for all treasurers.
* Information on financial processes and matters within the RCOT Branches Finance Manual.
* All financial forms and templates can be found on the [RCOT branch resources webpages](https://www.rcot.co.uk/about-us/rcot-branch-resources.).
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| 6. | Governance of Specialist Sections |
| 6.1 | All Specialist Sections must comply with the RCOT Specialist Section Branch Committees Terms of Reference, information and policy provided to support Branch activity, including GDPR and financial processes. |
| 6.2 | All Specialist Sections must comply with arrangements for financial governance, as set out in the *RCOT Branches Finance Manual*. Support and advice is provided to all Specialist Sections from the Director of Finance and the Finance Team. |
| 6.3 | All Specialist Sections must have a representative attend the UK RCOT Branches Forum (UKRCOTBF) and the UK RCOT Specialist Sections Forum (UKRCOTSSF), twice a year (May and November).  |
| 6.4 | If there are any concerns or change in circumstances to the functioning and viability of a Specialist Section, then the UK Branch Manager should be informed immediately. Any failure to comply with governance arrangements should be reported to the UK Branch Manager who will then work with and provide additional support to the Specialist Section to develop an action plan to support the activities of the group. |
| 6.5 | If the Specialist Section has financial difficulties then the UK Branch Manager and Director of Finance must be informed immediately. A meeting will be arranged with the Director of Finance and the UK Branch Manager to assess the situation and develop a financial action plan and provide support. Regular updates must be provided to RCOT. This will be monitored by RCOT and the Specialist Section. |
| 6.6 | A Specialist Section will follow any guidance on policy issued to Specialist Sections by RCOT. All relevant resources are available on the RCOT website. |
| 6.7 | Governance: RCOT will provide:* Support, advice, guidance and management on the governance of a Specialist Section and additional information can be found on the [RCOT branch resources webpages](https://www.rcot.co.uk/about-us/rcot-branch-resources.).
* The RCOT UK Branch Manager, Engagement Officer or administrator can be contacted at any time for support, advice and guidance.
* Information on polices, practices and procedures, reporting and advice is provided via the UKRCOTBF, UKRCOTSSF and via the website.
* Web based resources are provided on the [RCOT branch resources webpages](https://www.rcot.co.uk/about-us/rcot-branch-resources.).
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| 6.12 | Representing your Specialist Section:* RCOT may ask Specialist Section members to represent RCOT at events, meetings, working and reference groups organised by government departments and other organisations. Formal agreements are required when a member is representing the professional body. Specialist Sections may also be involved in a piece of work or project, in line with the RCOT policy.
* RCOT provides guidance to help with the clarity of these roles and responsibilities, when acting as a representative, and this will be outlined to the Specialist Section and/or members who undertake the work.
* RCOT frequently ask Specialist Sections and their members to be involved in consultations. It is preferable that one response is submitted under the RCOT heading to ensure unified and greatest impact. We appreciate, however, that occasionally this may not always be the case and therefore please refer to the UK Branch Manager or Professional Adviser for clarification.
* The RCOT Professional Advisor will liaise with and support a Specialist Section when involved in consultations. Specialist Sections need to follow the process outlined for consultations when they identify a piece of work that may need having an RCOT response.
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| 7. | Reporting Arrangements |
| 7.1 | Specialist Sections should update RCOT on their activity from October to March. This can be done using the updated business and event plan or by the six-monthly update template. This update should be sent to the Connections and Communities team by the end of April.  |
| 7.2 | Specialist Sections must produce an annual report to update on activity throughout the year (Oct to Sept) and for the Annual Review Meeting. This report should be sent to the Connections and Communities team by the end of October. This can be done using the updated business and event plan or the annual update template. This is then consolidated into one Specialist Section annual report and reported to the Country Boards – England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. |
| 7.3 | Specialist Sections must prepare a business and event plan and budget annually. We will send a template for the business and event plan and budget. The plan should be sent to the Connections and Communities Team by the end of August each year. |
| 7.4 | Specialist Sections must be represented at both the UK RCOT Branches Forum (UKRCOTBF) and UK RCOT Specialist Section Forum (UKRCOTSSF) meetings. |
| 7.5 | Specialist Sections can raise any areas of concern to the Connections and Communities Team as soon as they arise and at the forums which take place in May and November. |
| 7.6 | Copies of the agenda and ARM minutes should be sent to the Connections and Communities Team within four weeks of the meeting. |
| 7.7 | Copies of the Specialist Section NEC minutes, agenda and any related papers should be sent to the Connections and Communities Team within four weeks of the meeting. |
| 8. | Specialist Section Membership |
| 8.1 | All members of a Specialist Section must be RCOT members. |
| 8.2 | Membership categories for Specialist Sections follow the same membership categories as RCOT. The following categories across all Specialist Sections for membership are:* Professional Membership
* Student Membership
* Associate Membership
* Overseas Membership
* Retired Membership
* Self-employed Membership
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| 9. | Closure of a Specialist Section |
| 9.1 | A Specialist Section may be closed if it:* Does not conduct its business in accordance with the purpose and functions agreed by RCOT.
* Is not of good financial standing or financially viable.
* Brings the profession, or professional body, into disrepute.
* RCOT decides it is no longer viable due to consistently low membership numbers.
* The Specialist Section can no longer meet the criteria/governance requirements.
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| 9.2 | All assets would be returned to RCOT. |
| 9.3 | A Specialist Section may be closed, on the recommendation to Council, via the Country Boards, if it fails to meet the criteria for Specialist Section status. |
| 9.4 | At such a time that a Specialist Section decides to close or transfer to another Specialist Section as a clinical forum, regular planning meetings must take place with all involved parties. A project plan developed and monitored by both the Specialist Section, the Director of Movement Building and Membership and UK Branch Manager. All assets of the closing Specialist Section will be transferred to the new clinical forum as part of the Specialist Section. |
| 9.5 | Throughout this process there must be consultation with the closing Specialist Section members. This will be in the most appropriate format, and in partnership with the Specialist Section and RCOT. |
| 9.6 | The UK Branch Manager must inform the Boards and the Director of Movement Building and Membership of any concerns of a branch and keep them up to date on any issues, progress or outcomes. |
| 9.7 | The final decision on closure of a Specialist Section remains with RCOT. |
| 10. | Useful RCOT Contacts  |
|  | Library – library@rcot.co.uk Web team – web.team@rcot.co.uk Research and Development queries (Aisha Sharif) – aisha.sharif@rcot.co.uk Professional Development queries (Kay Taher) – kay.taher@rcot.co.uk Pre-registration queries - carolyn.hay@rcot.co.uk Policy and Public Affairs queries - public.affairs@rcot.org.ukProfessional Practice Enquiries Service – professional.enquiries@rcot.co.uk Speaker requests (Practice and Innovation Team) - external.requests@rcot.co.uk Specialist Section Finance Assistant (Lanre Akingbade) – lanre.akingbade@rcot.co.uk Sales Manager including advertising (David Agyei) – david.agyei@rcot.co.uk  |

## **Appendix 1: Specialist Sections Terms of Reference**

## Royal College of Occupational Therapists – Specialist Sections Branch Committees

## Terms of Reference

**Specialist Sections are a group of occupational therapists and support staff with a common practice interest. They will be known as a Specialist Section, a Branch of the Royal College of Occupational Therapists (RCOT).**

**1. Purpose:**

* 1. Their purpose is to encourage, promote, facilitate, and support the advancement of occupational therapy practice within their specialist area of expertise representing the diverse interests and specialities of occupational therapy, in line with the RCOT Business Plan.
	2. To be proactive and take responsibility for intelligence gathering, strategic thinking and influencing policy development in the UK.
	3. To highlight where appropriate, to the four country Boards, areas of new development or concerns around practice matters.

**2. Authority:**

* 1. To operate within the financial resources of the branch in pursuance of the RCOT business plan.
	2. The branch committees of each Specialist Section should meet no more than four times per annum.

**3. Responsible for:**

* 1. The effective management of all the financial resources of the branch in compliance with RCOT’s Standing Financial Instructions and Financial Information.
	2. Providing an important communications link and point of direct contact for the individual members of the branch.
	3. Organising events and activities of interest and need for the branch membership.
	4. Holding an Annual Review Meeting (ARM) at which a report covering the activities of the branch and the annual accounts are presented to the branch membership.
	5. Nominating a member from the Committee to represent the branch at the next level of the BAOT/RCOT structure.
	6. Keeping minutes of all meetings, which are available for inspection by BAOT/RCOT.
	7. Organisation of archiving material with RCOT library.

**4. Constitution:**

* 1. All members of the Committee must be current BAOT/RCOT members.
	2. All members of the Committee must be nominated and elected by BAOT/RCOT members of the branch.
	3. The maximum number of members for the Committee is twelve.
	4. The branch committee will have the power to co-opt up to six for a fixed period within the agreed budget. These members will not have voting power.
	5. The minimum number of members for the committee to be quorate is 50% of committee membership excluding co-opted committee members.
	6. All committee members shall hold a term of office, in any post, for three years, and then can be re-elected for a further three years. Each committee person will serve no more than six consecutive years on the National Executive Committee (NEC).
	7. When any member completes a term of office, one year should normally elapse before the member is eligible to apply and be considered for a further term of office.
	8. The membership year for the branch committee commences from the date of the ARM, in line with the RCOT Business year. Where a member joins the NEC at another point in the year, say when a resignation occurs, the members term of office will commence from the following ARM.
	9. Any committee member who fails to attend two consecutive meetings without good reason may be asked to retire from the committee.

**5. Main Duties:**

* 1. To act as ambassadors and role models for the profession within the UK, especially in encouraging recruitment to all categories of membership.
	2. To act as an effective two-way communication mechanism between BAOT/RCOT and the branch membership, especially regarding consultations and to respond to emerging issues which relate to the practice of occupational therapy in the Specialist Sections areas of interest.
	3. Assist, support and encourage branch membership with the opportunities for networking, learning and support regarding practice issues within their speciality.
	4. To promote the identity of the branch especially with reference to the branches website and contributions to *OTNews*, and social media, where appropriate.
	5. The branch will provide advice and raise the profile of occupational therapy, disseminate information through publications and newsletters, and facilitate education through clinical conferences, national and regional study days, thus acting as a training ground and supporting member’s activities in respect to CPD within RCOT corporate guidelines.
	6. Promote the development of knowledge, skills and research in specific areas of practice.
	7. To report annually to BAOT/RCOT, covering activity and outcomes, in time for the BAOT/RCOT Specialist Sections Annual Report.
	8. Provide representatives for the UKRCOT Specialist Sections Forum (UKRCOTSSF) and for the UKBAOT/RCOT Branches Forum/Business Forum meeting.
	9. To highlight where appropriate for the Country Boards, areas of new development or concerns around practice matters.
	10. Opportunities to work closely with regions within the UK RCOT Branches Forum.
	11. Provide support to RCOT staff when required on consultations to government or policy.