

Royal College of
Occupational
Therapists



**BECOME AN
OCCUPATIONAL
THERAPIST**



Are you a problem solver, people person, or good at sizing up situations? Do you get a buzz out of helping people?

If your answer to any of these questions is 'yes', then occupational therapy could be the perfect career for you.



WHAT DOES THE 'OCCUPATION' IN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY MEAN?

You probably know what 'therapy' is but what is an occupation? Simply put, 'occupation' refers to everyday activities that allow people to live independently and have a sense of identity.

In other words, occupation could be getting out of bed in the morning, enjoying your hobbies or meeting up with friends. That's why the job of an occupational therapist is so important – occupational therapists help people live their lives to the fullest.



WHAT WOULD I BE DOING?

As an occupational therapist, you'll look at the world through the eyes of other people, focus on the areas of life they find difficult or challenging, then help them find a way to overcome those challenges.

It's all about problem-solving, creativity and working with the individual to:

- Understand what they want to achieve
- Get to grips with the issues they face
- Figure out the kind of support they need

Physical assistance, psychological support, changes to people's living and working spaces, and technological aids: the solution you come up with could include elements of these and more.



**“I SUPPORT CHILDREN WITH
WRITING AND MAKING FRIENDS”**

WHO COULD I HELP AND HOW?

As an occupational therapist, you could have a profound and positive impact on the lives of people of all ages – from babies and young children to working-age adults and older members of the community – who find it difficult to deal with activities they need or want to do. This could be as a result of:

- A physical condition
- Mental health issues
- Injury or disability
- Frailty

Whatever the case, you'll work creatively with the individual and focus on enabling them to do the things that are important to them. You could be working in an emergency team, making sure people are safe to leave hospital. You could be working with architects to redevelop spaces to fit the needs of someone with learning disabilities. You could be helping children in schools reach their goals. As an occupational therapist, you'll broaden your own horizons as you broaden those of others.



**“I HELP PEOPLE
STAY IN WORK”**

WHERE WOULD I BE WORKING AND WITH WHO?

From health and social care to housing and education, occupational therapists work across a variety of sectors. Choose it as your career, and you could find yourself working in lots of interesting and rewarding environments, for example:

- Schools and universities
- Prisons
- Hospitals and care homes
- In the community

You could work in the public, private or not-for-profit sectors, alongside colleagues from all kinds of other professions, from doctors and nurses to teachers and parole officers.

And whatever path you follow, you'll find opportunities aren't limited to the UK. Occupational therapists are in demand around the world.

HOW COULD MY CAREER PROGRESS?

As an occupational therapist, there are countless career paths you could take. You could, for example, choose to become a clinical practitioner, manager, lecturer or researcher.

As your career develops, you may decide you want to specialise and work in a particular area, such as:

- Helping people who've had strokes and brain injuries
- Supporting people who have learning disabilities
- Helping people stay in or return to work
- Supporting personal injury cases

If you wish to go down a more entrepreneurial route, you could become a consultant or run your own practice.

The opportunities are many, and the job satisfaction is immense.



**“I ENABLE PEOPLE TO GET THEIR
SENSE OF FREEDOM BACK”**



**“I HELP PEOPLE DO WHAT’S
IMPORTANT TO THEM”**

WHAT COULD I EXPECT TO EARN?

The average starting salary for an HCPC* registered occupational therapist working in the UK is over £20,000. More experienced occupational therapists can earn around £39,000, and consultant therapists can earn up to £79,000.

The potential to run your own business in occupational therapy opens the door to even higher earnings – your wage will be in your own hands.

*Health and Care Professions Council - you have to register with this organisation to practice as an occupational therapist

HOW DO I BECOME AN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST?

To become an occupational therapist, you need to complete a pre-registration degree course in occupational therapy. There are over 30 universities across the UK running a variety of programmes including:

- Full-time three-year programmes (four years in Scotland)
- Full-time two-year programmes (if you already have a degree)
- Four-year part-time and/or in-service programmes (if you're a support worker or work part-time)
- Degree-level apprenticeships (if you want to earn while you work towards your qualification)

The grades and qualifications needed for the programmes are different depending on the institution, so we suggest visiting the websites of the universities you're interested in for more details.

Take the next step and find out more about the options and where you can study. Go to rcot.co.uk/become-an-occupational-therapist





WHO ARE WE?

The Royal College of Occupational Therapists is the UK's only professional membership organisation for occupational therapy professionals and students. We are leaders of the profession and champion the value of occupational therapy.

From the day you join us as a student, we're here to support you, and you'll be joining a vibrant community of over 33,000 members. We'll support you during your studies and throughout your career - in other words, we'll always be there when you need us.

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Find out more at
[rcot.co.uk/become-an-occupational-therapist](https://www.rcot.co.uk/become-an-occupational-therapist)

