
CSP Education Position Statement

Practice-based learning within pre-registration physiotherapy programmes

This position statement sets out the approach taken by the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP) to defining the scope, volume and characteristics of practice-based learning within UK pre-registration physiotherapy education programmes. It is designed to support the following:

- All CSP members and physiotherapy service providers to reflect on their capacity (current and future) to contribute to physiotherapy students' practice-based learning
- Pre-registration physiotherapy education providers to develop and keep under review how they ensure their students gain practice-based learning across a breadth of population/patient needs, settings, sectors and specialisms
- Physiotherapy students to understand how they develop the breadth and depth of their practice-based learning and to see the opportunities that placements offer for consolidating/developing their professional values, behaviours, knowledge and skills
- The active involvement of service users and others in students' practice-based learning, including through contributing to its design, delivery and evaluation.

All CSP members have a responsibility to engage in practice-based learning – regardless of their grade, occupational role, or practice setting. The CSP seeks to shape and support the design, delivery and ongoing development of practice-based learning, recognising its central place in preparing physiotherapy students for their future professional practice and job roles. This focus forms part of the broader CSP's role in leading and supporting the development of the UK's physiotherapy workforce to ensure its responsiveness to changing population, healthcare and service needs. The CSP works with and through its members to do this.

Practice-based learning is a collaborative process that should benefit everyone involved - students, service users and practitioners. In order to realise these benefits, approaches and resources to support the process and the people involved must be embedded in plans and contracts for service delivery, and in policies and practices within the workplace.

CSP's expectations

Practice-based learning is a vital component of pre-registration physiotherapy education. It is the process through which students safely learn and develop within a physiotherapy practice environment or setting. The process enables students to gain knowledge and skills to assess, diagnose and work with patients/clients to maximise their capacity for movement. The outcomes of learning can be assessed formatively and summatively in the practice setting, as well as through assessments undertaken in the academic setting.

A condition of CSP pre-registration programme accreditation is that physiotherapy students gain at least 1000 hours of practice-based learning. 1000 hours is seen within the profession

as the minimum practice-based learning that enables physiotherapy students to do the following:

- Develop their practical understanding of how physiotherapy meets the needs of a wide range of client groups/conditions in a variety of practice environments and across all the sectors and settings in which registered physiotherapists practise
- Develop and demonstrate their competence to perform the physical, cognitive and affective bodywork associated with contemporary physiotherapy practice
- Engage critically and creatively with issues and opportunities in ways that generate evidence to demonstrate the impact and value of physiotherapy practice.

Practice-based learning can occur in any environment or setting that physically supports the delivery of physiotherapy practice. It can be facilitated using varied models of student supervision. These include models that promote students' peer-to-peer learning and their learning within interprofessional teams.

The CSP neither prescribes where practice-based learning occurs, nor how it should be facilitated. Rather, we encourage and support practice-based learning opportunities that align with changing models of care, role reconfiguration, and developments in practice. Opportunities should therefore contribute strongly to the profession's responsiveness to changing population, patient and service delivery needs.

Simulated learning¹ has a value in enabling students to learn and develop their clinical knowledge and skills in a safe, protected environment where the risks associated with the real world can be managed. Simulated learning can therefore be used to complement (rather than replace) the practice-based learning process.

Upholding all physiotherapy students gaining a minimum of 1000 hours of practice-based learning is essential for ensuring the ongoing capacity of newly-qualified physiotherapists to do the following:

- Meet legal/ethical requirements to deliver safe and effective physiotherapy practice
- Deliver autonomous, person-centred problem-solving practices associated with contemporary professionalism
- Support the ongoing development of physiotherapy as it responds to changing population needs, developments in research and technology, and shifts in the design and delivery of healthcare.

Students need time, space and support to transfer, consolidate and develop their practice-based learning. This process enables students to share and reflect on their experience and learning, and to understand and articulate how development of their personal and professional behaviours, knowledge and skills in one situation relates to that in others. This reflective process also generates themes, issues and questions for students to share and explore further on their return to the academic setting.

¹ "...an educational technique that allows interactive, and at times immersive, activity by recreating all or part of a clinical experience without exposing patients to the associated risks" (Maran and Glavin, 2003, p.22).

Practice-based learning must be supported by arrangements for physiotherapy education, workforce and service commissioning, funding and planning in each of the four countries of the UK. The sustainability of practice-based learning relies on the vision, foresight and collaboration of all stakeholders involved.

Key points

A collaborative approach is needed to optimise and expand practice-based learning capacity. This is essential for ensuring that

- The quality and relevance of students' learning is maintained
- Physiotherapy students and newly qualified practitioners are supported in developing the values, behaviours, knowledge and skills that are essential for physiotherapy practice and roles
- The physiotherapy workforce is enabled to develop and expand in response to changing population/patient, service and workforce needs.

The position statement will be kept under review to ensure its currency and updated as necessary.

Key references and further reading

CSP (2012) [*Learning and Development Principles for CSP accreditation of qualifying programmes in physiotherapy*](#)

CSP (2014) [*Practice Education – information, support and guidance*](#)

CSP (2014) [*Ensuring sufficient practice placement capacity for physiotherapy students*](#)

CSP (2015) [*Maximising the potential of physiotherapy student practice placements across care sectors and settings: Guidance for practice educators, managers, physiotherapy employers and HEIs.*](#)

Health & Care Professions Council (2013) [*Standards of proficiency: physiotherapists.*](#)