

CSP guidance:

Use of terms in the context of physiotherapy pre-registration education

Introduction

1. This CSP guidance note has been produced to advise programme teams on using terminology within pre-registration physiotherapy education. It sits in the following context:
 - The increasing diversity in programme provision, with some new types of programme (e.g. integrated Master's degrees and professional doctorates) enabling learning and development opportunities that go beyond what is possible within 'traditional' types of pre-registration programme (i.e. a three-/four-year BSc(Hons) degree, or a two-year MSc)
 - The need for new types of programme that allow for extended periods of learning to have clearly articulated added value, particularly for prospective/enrolled students and employers
 - The need for the additional benefits of these programmes to align with changing population, patient, service and workforce needs and how the physiotherapy profession can usefully respond to these and to optimise its value and impact
 - The move towards a more consistent use of terminology in post-registration education; e.g. more structured approaches to advanced clinical practice/role development, and more overt recognition that 'specialist' and 'advanced' mean different things (the former does not denote a level of practice, while the latter does).

2. The guidance is not intended to be prescriptive. However, it does make recommendations about how terms can be used to seek to ensure clarity. This is both in the context of pre-registration education specifically and professional learning and development before and after registration.

3. The statement focuses on descriptors relating to enhanced, specialist and advanced learning. Its coverage is not intended to be exhaustive, and we recognise that other terms and descriptors can and will be used. The explanations given here encourage :
 - Careful consideration of the connotations of particular terms
 - How particular terms may be interpreted (including in unintended ways)
 - How clarity of intended meaning can be maximised.

4. We see 'enhanced learning' or 'enhancement of learning' opportunities as preferable terms to use in the context of pre-registration education programmes. This is because they should make clear the nature of learning within pre-registration education and be more likely to avoid misunderstanding or misinterpretation.

Enhanced learning, or enhancement of learning

5. Use of the terms 'enhanced' and 'enhancement' are useful for describing learning components that are designed to enable students to develop their knowledge and skills above and beyond what is usually possible within a pre-registration curriculum. They do this without either implying a different level of learning from the rest of the programme (as with 'advanced'), or a narrowing of learning focus (as with 'specialist', or similar).
6. The opportunities for enhanced learning or the enhancement of learning might be in terms of developing knowledge and skills in a particular area within physiotherapy practice, or broadening knowledge and skill beyond what it is usually possible to cover within pre-registration education.
7. The academic level at which the learning is developed and demonstrated needs to be in line with the requirements of the award, while the learning derived needs to complement students' learning in other parts of the programme.
8. It also needs to be clear that the learning components do not detract from enabling students to develop and demonstrate the full range of learning required for qualification and registration as a physiotherapist in the UK.
9. Examples of opportunities for enhanced learning include the following:
 - Specific learning opportunities within an integrated Master's degree that strengthen students' preparation for subsequent practice in a particular area of growth for the profession; e.g. primary care, or meeting the needs of an ageing population
 - Specific learning opportunities within an integrated Master's degree that enable an extension of scope of practice on graduation; e.g. that would enable graduates to practise on both humans (on registration with the HCPC) and animals
 - Specific learning opportunities within a professional doctorate programme that have a particular focus on developing research skills (e.g. including through extended supervised research projects) and potential strengthened capacity for a research-oriented career on graduation
 - Elective placements within any type of programme that enable students to choose and pursue a placement in an area of particular interest.

Specialist knowledge and skills acquisition

10. These terms may be helpful to denote that particular learning components within a pre-registration programme enable students to deepen their knowledge and skills in a particular area of physiotherapy practice than would ordinarily be the case within a pre-registration curriculum. At the same time, they can imply a narrowing of

learning, or a distraction from the breadth of physiotherapy knowledge and skills acquisition required at pre-registration level.

11. If describing learning opportunities in this way, giving the following impression needs to be guarded against:

- The learning opportunities risk detracting from students being enabled to meet the full requirements for eligibility for registration on qualification
- The learning opportunities enable students to develop their knowledge and skills in ways that would ordinarily only be possible and appropriate within their subsequent post-registration practice and ongoing development (while specialism or similar words do not in themselves denote a particular level of competence or practice, they are often assumed to do so).

Advanced level learning

12. The term 'advanced' is sometimes used in pre-registration programme descriptors to indicate how particular modules enable a progression of learning from that which students have already developed and demonstrated at an earlier programme stage.

13. There is the risk, however, that it is inferred that the term means the development of knowledge and skill to a level that is gained through practitioners' post-registration practice and professional development (e.g. in terms of the ability to manage high levels of complexity, uncertainty and risk in clinical practice that 'advanced' denotes).

14. Use of 'advanced' within pre-registration programme descriptors may therefore create ambiguity, including by risking giving the impression that students are developing their learning in ways that require the consolidation and refinement of understanding, knowledge and skills through professional practice and CPD.

15. In addition, there is an increasing currency of advanced practice terms at post-registration level, and a move towards a greater standardisation of terms' use. As examples, this is the case in England with 'advanced clinical practice' and 'advanced clinical practitioner'.

16. In the context of the above, we strongly recommend that 'advanced' is not used as a descriptor within pre-registration programmes, since it risks creating ambiguity and misunderstanding, including among students.

17. If 'advanced' is used in existing module titles, it needs to be made clear to students and others that this

- Denotes intended learning progression within the programme
- Is relative to earlier programme components
- Is indicative of advancing learning or an advancement of learning from an earlier point in the programme
- Does not denote advanced learning or practice per se.