Published on *Health Careers* (https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk)

How to become an allied health professional

If you're thinking about a career as an allied health professional (AHP), you need to know the entry routes and the education and training needed. Let us help!

The education and training needed to become an AHP will depend on the profession. What they all have in common is that they all need at least a degree-level education, either through university or degree apprenticeship. .

Applying to become an AHP

The main route to becoming an AHP is an undergraduate or postgraduate degree approved by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC [1]) or the General Osteopathic Council (GOsC) for osteopaths.

Degree apprenticeship

You can also train for some AHP roles through a degree apprenticeship. This involves working and studying at degree level at the same time. They typically last 4 years and combine academic study with practical, paid employment. Universities and employers offering apprenticeships will usually expect you to attend an interview.

Entry requirements

You are likely to need at least two (usually three) A-levels or equivalent qualifications at level 3, such as a T level or BTEC, plus supporting GCSEs. Entry requirements can vary between universities and employers so always speak to those you wish to attend.

Courses often specify specific subjects, such as at least one science subject, but this varies between professions and courses.

Financial support while studying at university

Depending on the profession you are studying, you could be entitled to receive at least £5,000 a year towards your studies while at university. Your personal circumstances may mean you could receive more. The good news is that you won't have to pay a penny back.

- Find out more about financial support while at university [2]

Your application

Entry can be competitive so always look to really build a strong personal statement. You'll need to demonstrate that you have found out about the role and understand what the work involves.

Relevant experience [3] in any healthcare setting is useful but if you can gain it in an AHP setting, so much the better. Work experience placements can be difficult to find, so alternatives would be to shadow an AHP or talk to one about their role.

You'll be asked to show how you think the NHS values [4] would apply in your everyday work.

Your AHP training

Your university training will last between two and five years depending on the role and the course. It'll combine university study with practical experience in community settings as well as hospitals.

Courses vary in their content, the way they are structured, and how they are taught and assessed. The facilities available and amount of support and supervision may also differ from course to course. Find out more by looking at university websites and prospectuses, attending university open days and contacting admissions staff.

You'll also be supported while you study. Find out more. [5]

What happens after you have qualified?

After you have passed your course or degree apprenticeship, you must register with the HCPC or GOsC for osteopaths.

You may become a full member of a professional body such as the Royal College of Occupational Therapists [6], Institute of Osteopathy [7] or Chartered Society of Physiotherapy [8]. You can find jobs advertised in their journals or on their websites as well as in NHS Jobs.

You could work in a range of settings and progress up the career ladder. You'll need some initial experience in a more generalist role, but after awhile you might be able to specialise in an area that interests you. For example, physiotherapists can specialise in sports injuries, and speech and language therapists can focus on people with specific learning difficulties.

You'll have to maintain certain standards in your profession through continuing professional development [9] (CPD).

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Links
[1] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#HCPC [2] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/career-planning/study-and-training/considering-or-university/financial-support-university [3] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/secondary-school-or-fe-college/gaining-experience [4] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/working-health/working-nhs/nhs-constitution [5] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/career-planning/study-and-training/considering-or-university/support-university [6] https://www.rcot.co.uk/ [7] https://www.iosteopathy.org/ [8] http://www.csp.org.uk/ [9] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/working-health/professional-development