



“Dementia education beyond the classroom”

An Alzheimer Scotland Occupational
Therapy Academic Internship Programme,
2013 to 2019. Development, Impact and
Recommendations for the Future

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- the student applicants who have demonstrated an interest in applying to, and taking time to understand, the purpose of the internship programme.
- the eleven interns* who completed an occupational therapy academic internship with Alzheimer Scotland.
- members of the wider Alzheimer Scotland team for their contribution in supporting interns to understand and learn about the role of the organisation as Scotland's national dementia charity.
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**Claire Kennedy, Catriona Chapman, Lyndsey Robertson, Chris Cousins, Marianne Wallace, Rachel Bew, Elizabeth Crockett, Nicola Kane, Sarah McFarlane, Ciara Felle and Danielle Timmons.*

Summary

This report sets out the educational background and policy context which informed the creation of the first Alzheimer Scotland occupational therapy academic internship programme, delivered between 2013 and 2019. The internships were funded by Santander Universities UK and Alzheimer Scotland, in partnership with the Division of Occupational Therapy & Arts Therapies, Queen Margaret University (QMU), Edinburgh.

Influenced by recent Allied Health Professional (AHP) Scottish Government policy, Connecting People, Connecting Support: 2017-2020 (CPCS: Alzheimer Scotland 2017, 2020a), the internship programme sought to contribute towards building capacity of the AHP workforce, skilled in dementia care.

It also offered a unique opportunity through which occupational therapy students and recent graduates could acquire knowledge and skills designed to empower people living with dementia, their families and care givers to sustain positive lives for longer. In parallel, the programme strived to enhance graduate employability and to promote dementia practice as a career path of value in the profession.

The occupational therapy academic internship programme employed 12 interns, all students, and recent graduates of QMU. This report therefore aims to outline the evolution and implementation of the internships, noting achievements, outcomes, and impact of this initiative. Impact has been considered via feedback provided by key stakeholders; the Scottish Dementia Working Group (SDWG), academic staff of the Division of Occupational Therapy & Arts Therapies, QMU, and former occupational therapy interns.

The academic internship programme was a successful example of translating policy with practice. Acting as a conduit to support the development of resources for people living with dementia and their supporters whilst, in tandem, enhancing the knowledge skills and confidence of interns.

Section 01

The policy context

The purpose of this section is to outline the rationale guiding the creation of the first Alzheimer Scotland occupational therapy academic internship programme. The wider AHP dementia policy context in Scotland is considered and how this has shaped the need to extend educational opportunities, to include internships. An explanation of what an academic internship is, including an outline of the key stakeholders and partners involved.

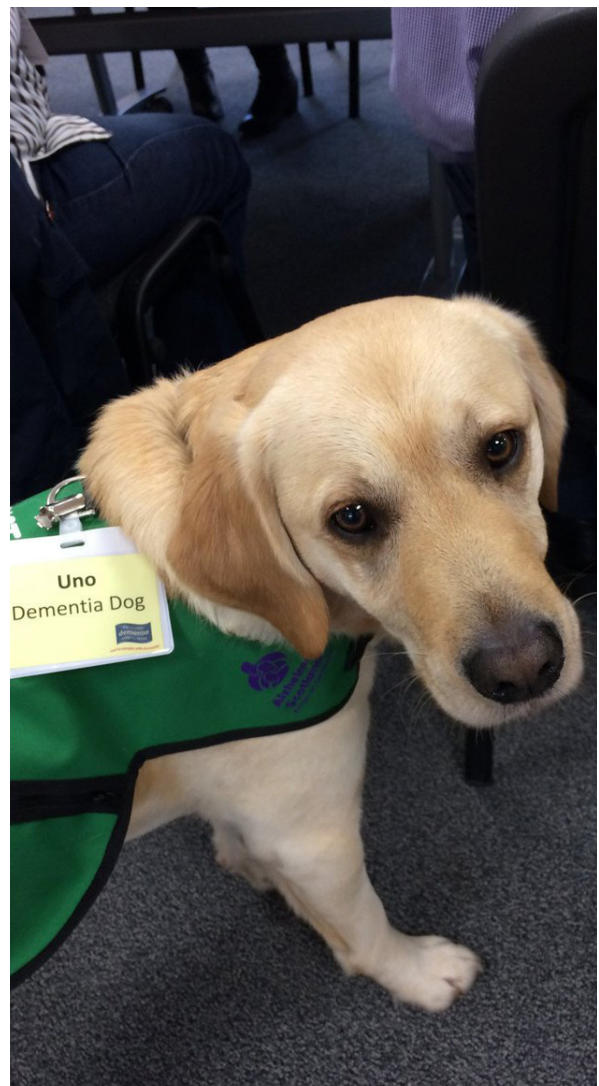
Occupational therapy is a degree-based, health, science and social care profession which takes a 'whole-person' approach to both mental and physical health and wellbeing (RCOT, 2020). Occupation can broadly be defined as the rich tapestry of everyday activities we do as individuals, families and communities that together bring meaning and purpose to our lives (ISOS, 2009). In the context of dementia practice, occupational therapists are experts in understanding the intrinsic relationship between the person, environment, and their occupation, to support people living with dementia to continue to engage in the life of their village, town, or city; to sustain their identity and sense of purpose through valuing everyday activity (Alzheimer Scotland, 2019).

1.1 The Alzheimer Scotland Practice Education Programme

The Alzheimer Scotland AHP Practice Education Programme is a partnership approach to supporting our future AHP workforce to develop their dementia practice in line with Promoting Excellence Framework at the informed and skilled levels (Scottish Government, 2021) through offering students:

- Experience of working with people living with dementia and their families, therefore contributing to the skills of the future AHP workforce.
- First-hand experience of Alzheimer Scotland as the leading organisation in dementia and people who come to Alzheimer Scotland.
- The opportunity to work with a range of allied health professionals for mutual benefit.

The Alzheimer Scotland AHP Practice Education Programme was established in 2013 in the context of a wider commitment to bring AHP practice to the forefront of dementia services offering placements. To find out more please view the web link, here: <https://tinyurl.com/5n8ej853>. In addition to AHP student placements, Alzheimer Scotland has worked with partner organisations to develop short-term internships for new graduates and students approaching graduation. This paper focuses on the academic internship programme for occupational therapy.



1.2 What is an academic internship?

In addition to academic qualifications, it has become increasingly recognised that relevant work experience is important to future graduates to help develop their career progression (The Gateways to the Professions Collaborative Forum, 2013). One mechanism through which work experience can be generated is by creating internship opportunities for students and recent graduates. Whilst internships are variously defined across literature, typically it will involve students or recent graduates completing a period of work with an employer, which connects to their career aspirations.

The benefit of an internship to a student includes the development of professional skills, to enhance their understanding of their chosen profession by undertaking work of value to the employer (The Gateways to the Professions Collaborative Forum, 2013). This in turn can improve a student's future employability (Braccio Herring, 2010), whilst simultaneously supporting the development of a skilled professional work force. In addition, employers can often benefit from the fresh and new perspectives that interns can bring with them into the workplace (Ricardo, 2015), using this to identify and recruit committed and capable employees (The Gateways to the Professions Collaborative Forum, 2013).

In addition, Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) can also directly benefit from the development and promotion of internship opportunities. For example, internship collaborations between businesses and HEIs can help to inform and refresh university curricula content, to support the translation of relevant knowledge and skills influencing learning and teaching, which is current and industry informed (Ricardo, 2015). As such, developing the occupational therapy academic internship meant creating a three-way partnership between the intern (student or recent graduate), the HEI (in this case Queen Margaret University) and the internship 'host' and/or employer (Alzheimer Scotland/ Scottish Dementia Working Group), to form a collaboration of value to all involved (Maclean et al, 2023).

1.3 Santander Universities UK – An academic internship partnership

The value of academic internships has been recognised by Santander Universities UK. Santander UK is a large retail and commercial bank based in the United Kingdom (UK). Since 1996, the bank founded Santander Universities in Spain, and recently has developed a UK mission to support students across three key areas: education, entrepreneurship, and employability (Santander Universities, 2020). Offering a tailored package of financial support, one stream of funding enabled the creation of internship opportunities for students and recent graduates.

Specifically, Santander Universities UK offered matched funding in partnership with small medium enterprises (SME) to develop internship programmes with the aim of improving student employability and to enhance links with the local community. Typically, the internships include current undergraduate and post graduate students, including recent graduates (up to two years post-graduation), lasting between 2 to 10 weeks. Internship opportunities can be situated in businesses and industry, however in this instance Santander Universities UK matched funding to create the first Alzheimer Scotland occupational therapy academic internship programme, between:

- The Division of Occupational Therapy & Arts Therapies, QMU, Edinburgh: whose vision is to develop and facilitate professional excellence for better lives and flourishing communities across the globe and throughout the life journey.
- The Scottish Dementia Working Group (SDWG): a national, member led campaigning and awareness raising group, for people living with a diagnosis of dementia in Scotland.
- The Alzheimer Scotland Allied Health Professional Consultant: a senior national strategic leader in the creation, design, and implementation of national AHP policy to transform the contribution of the AHPs to dementia care in Scotland.

Between 2013 and 2019, Alzheimer Scotland matched the criteria for applications to fund an internship from Santander, in partnership with the Division of Occupational Therapy & Arts Therapies, QMU, Edinburgh. Seven successful applications to Santander Universities UK were made, funding a total of 12 occupational therapy interns.

1.4 Academic internships and the allied health professions.

In Scotland, 'Allied Health Profession' (typically abbreviated to AHP), is an umbrella term which represents a variety of health care professionals, which include Arts Therapists, Dieticians, Occupational Therapists, Orthopodists, Orthotists, Paramedics, Physiotherapists, Podiatrists, Prosthetists, Radiographers and Speech and Language Therapists.

AHP pre-registration education across the United Kingdom (UK) widely embeds practice education placements as part of the curriculum. Practice education combines both practical and academic components of learning and are usually situated as part of AHP services in health and social care, or in new and emerging areas of practice e.g. the third sector. Practice education supports learner's understanding of their chosen AHP profession, including the opportunity to develop applied skills and techniques. Practice education is typically an integral part of AHP pre-registration education and is assessed. Conversely, an academic internship is a paid opportunity to undertake a focused project, aligned to the employer's organisational objectives, with support and supervision.

At the time of our internship programme, other examples of third sector AHP internships existed, such as the National Allied Health and Nurse Internship Programme, funded by Versus Arthritis, which aims to identify and introduce graduate AHPs and nurses to musculoskeletal (MSK) research (Fry et al, 2017). The Royal College of Occupational Therapy (RCOT) have also developed internship opportunities for students of the profession concerned with research and development including, in 2020, professional practice. Internships developed for the AHPs therefore tend to focus on, and advance, specialised skills, and knowledge.

1.5 Policy informing allied health professional education.

Influencing further the growth of internships is recognition of the need to extend and enhance AHPs knowledge and skills connected to dementia practice. The public policy framework for dementia practice in Scotland covers a range of objectives, including expectations of education informing knowledge of health and social care staff when working with people living with dementia, their families, and carers (Scottish Government, 2021). This has been set out in the Promoting Excellence Framework which details the incremental evolution of the knowledge, skills and behaviours health and social services staff should hold, relevant to their role when working with people living with dementia, their families, and carers. This outlines four levels of practice (Dementia Informed Practice Level, Dementia Skilled Practice Level, Enhanced Dementia Practice Level, Expertise in Dementia Practice Level) and identifies and defines the level of expertise required, specific to a worker's role and responsibility, set within a health and social care setting. It is recommended the Promoting Excellence Framework (2011) should be adopted by educational providers to help shape the content of learning as part of professional undergraduate and post graduate education. This influenced the development of the occupational therapy academic internship.

In addition, of direct relevance to AHPs is the publication of *Connecting People, Connecting Support: Transforming the allied health professionals' contribution to supporting people living with dementia in Scotland, 2017-2020* (CPCS; Alzheimer Scotland, 2017, 2020a) which has outlined for the first time the AHP Approach (diagram 1), applicable to all people with a diagnosis of dementia and in all care settings. This approach is evidence based and underpinned by principles of human rights.

embedding the PANEL principles (Participation, Accountability, Non-Discrimination and Equality, Empowerment and Legality) as a framework, to support and deliver person-centered, collaborative and partnership working integral to AHP dementia practice. The AHP approach outlines 5 key areas where AHPs can make a positive difference to people living with dementia. While the elements of the AHP approach are described separately, they must be considered collectively within overall universal, targeted and specialist AHP-led rehabilitation and for support for people living with dementia.

CPCS aims to promote and maximize the AHP contribution to high-quality, cost-effective dementia services, tailored to the needs of individuals, to reflect best available evidence, delivered by a skilled AHP workforce (Alzheimer Scotland, 2017). This aim is reflected and supported by its four key ambitions:



Diagram 1: The Allied Health Professional (AHP) Approach (Alzheimer Scotland, 2020a)

1	Enhanced access to AHP-led information, supported self-management and targeted interventions to tackle the symptoms of dementia
2	Partnership and integration , contributing to a personal-outcomes approach, multiagency pathways and integrated models of care
3	Skilled AHP workforce in dementia care , with a commitment to clinical leadership for transforming AHP practice
4	Innovation, improvement and research , utilizing and generating research and integrating improvement science within everyday AHP practice

As a response to ambition 2 (partnership working) and ambition 3 (a skilled AHP workforce in dementia care) widening learning opportunities, such as the internship programme, is important, as this can enable AHPs to access education to enhance the experience and outcomes of treatment for people living with dementia. Consequently, section 2 of this report considers the context, implementation, project outcomes and impact of the occupational therapy internship programme.

The Alzheimer Scotland occupational therapy academic internship programme

The purpose of this section is to describe the Alzheimer Scotland occupational therapy academic internship, highlighting its purpose, implementation, project outcomes and impact.

2.1 Purpose of the occupational therapy academic internship programme

The purpose of the Alzheimer Scotland occupational therapy academic internship programme was to offer a multi-agency approach (Alzheimer Scotland, Queen Margaret University, SDWG, Santander Universities UK), to strengthen knowledge and skills of occupational therapists aspiring to work with people living with dementia, their families, and caregivers. This purpose was guided by an evolving understanding throughout the development of the internship programme of how and in what way, a rights-based approach to occupational therapy practice could be adopted.

Alzheimer Scotland adopts a rights-based approach to ensure people who are affected by decisions connected to policy, strategy, services, support, or legislation can be involved (Alzheimer Scotland, 2020b). In tandem, and of relevance to the developing internship programme, the concept of occupational justice emphasizes people's right to engage in diverse and meaningful occupations (activities) to address individual and community needs, and to develop a person's potential to flourish (Durocher et al., 2013). Obstructing engagement in occupations, identified by the person as important, is considered unjust: a situation of occupational injustice (Townsend & Wilcock, 2004). Further information on the three-way academic internship partnership and underpinning ethos of the internship programme can be found at Maclean et al (2023).

This professional commitment to occupational justice, framed by a rights-based approach, influenced how projects were designed and created. This included projects which sought to:

- raise awareness of the rights of people living with dementia, including sustaining occupation as identified as important to people living with dementia.
- consider how professional education could progress to include the lived experience of people living with dementia, their caregivers and supporters.
- enhance opportunities for interns to further develop career paths which could lead to advanced and consultant posts, to make a professional contribution to challenge stigma experienced by those living with dementia.

2.2 Summary of the internship pathway

The internship programme ran each summer between 2013 and 2019. It was a paid internship of 10 weeks duration, full time, and evolved to ensure interns were based at the Alzheimer Scotland Head Office, Edinburgh. A total of 12 occupational therapy interns completed the programme, as highlighted in diagram 2.

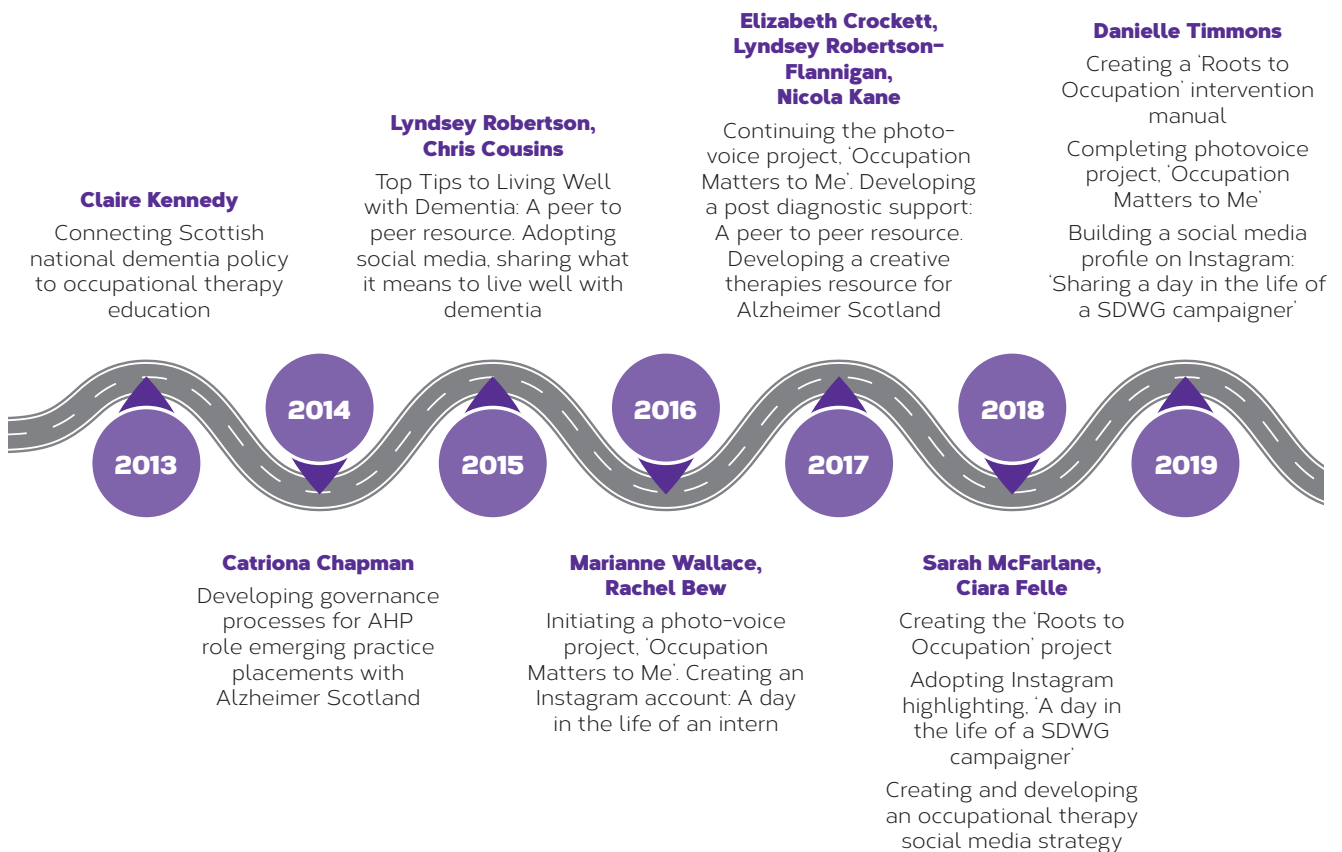


Diagram 2: The occupational therapy internship project summary

Occupational therapy interns, 2013 to 2019

Each project was undertaken either individually or in groups. Projects were designed in collaboration with the SDWG, and outcomes were developed and completed over time, noted overleaf.

2.3 Internship projects and outcomes

The occupational therapy internship programme resulted in four co-designed and co-developed self-management resources with the SDWG, a range of teaching and education materials, 14 publications, over 20 blog posts and up to 100 Instagram posts. All of the projects are still relevant and used to this day and a summary is outlined below.

A Post Diagnostic Resource

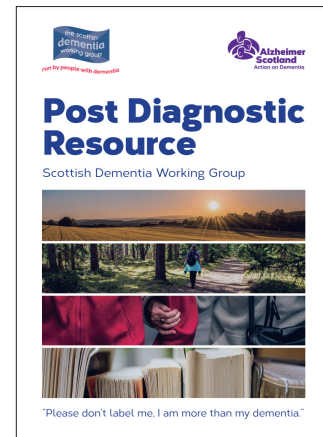
In partnership with the SDWG a peer to peer resource for people who have been recently diagnosed with dementia was created and published. The resource is based on the question:

What is the one thing you wish you had been told from somebody with dementia after being diagnosed? The resource is based on four themes:

- How to find acceptance and positivity
- Stay engaged in things that matter to you
- Having support from others can be vital to living well with dementia
- Get informed!

The publication can be found here:

https://www.alzscot.org/sites/default/files/images/0003/2286/Post_Diagnostic_Resource.pdf



Our 'Top Tips' for living well with dementia

The purpose of this project was to collect a range of tips to help people to live well with dementia, tried and tested by members of the SDWG. The tips were then collated into a booklet, to be shared more widely with people who are living with dementia.

The publication can be found here:

<https://www.alzscot.org/sites/default/files/2019-07/Top%20tips%20home%20and%20away.pdf>



Occupation Matters to Me

This is an e-book where seven members of the SDWG share the everyday occupations (activities) identified as important to them in continuing to live positive lives for longer, illustrated using photography.

The publication can be found here:

<https://www.alzscot.org/sites/default/files/2019-12/SDWG%20e-Book.pdf>



Roots to Occupation

Having identified in a previous occupational therapy internship project what occupations matter to people living with dementia (Occupation Matters to Me), the Roots to Occupation aimed to explore the ways through which these occupations could be sustained. Conversations with members of the SDWG identified three roots: my environment(s), my strengths, and people in my life.

The project created a diagram which aims to illustrate what occupations are identified by people living with dementia as being of importance, including how these can be maintained.

The publication can be found here:

<https://www.alzscot.org/sites/default/files/201912/roots%20to%20occupation%20final.pdf>



AHP Learning & Teaching Resources

A range of learning and teaching resources were created, integrated as part of pre and post registration AHP education at QMU. These included the development of bibliographies to support the delivery of the first MSc AHP module in Scotland, entitled 'Developing rights-based practice for Allied Health Professionals (AHP) working with people living with dementia, their families and carers'.

The bibliographies list publications connected to dementia and cultural beliefs, dementia and citizenship, dementia and individuality, dementia and personhood, dementia, and rights.

In addition, a film was produced in partnership with the SDWG highlighting the experience of being diagnosed with dementia. Entitled, 'This Is Me', the short film can be viewed here:

<https://www.bing.com/videos/h?q=henry+rankin+you+tube&view=detail&mid=3B85A5A717174AED45353B85A5A717174AED4535&FORM=VIRE>

In addition to the project outcomes and learning and teaching resources outlined here, a range of publications and social media activity grew from the occupational therapy internships. These are outlined on the following pages.

Published paper and poster presentations

Bew R, Hunter E, Maclean F. 2017. Using Instagram as an Alzheimer Scotland Occupational Therapy Intern (Poster). Royal College of Occupational Therapy Annual Conference, Birmingham.

Chapman C, Hunter E, Maclean F. 2014. Creating the resources to support role-emerging student placements with Alzheimer Scotland. [online]. [viewed 13 January 2020]. Available from: https://www.alzscot.org/sites/default/files/2019-07/AHP_Posters-20-Creating%20the%20resources%20to%20support%20roleemerging%20student%20placements%20with%20Alzheimer%20Scotland.pdf

Chapman C. 2015. Sharing the insights of undertaking an occupational therapy internship. College of Occupational Therapy Annual Conference, Brighton.

Hunter E, Maclean F. 2019. An Occupational Therapy Internship Programme Supporting a Workforce Skilled in Dementia Care. (Poster). 29th Alzheimer Europe Conference, The Hague, Netherlands. Available from: <https://www.alzscot.org/sites/default/files/201912/occupational%20therapy%20internships.pdf>

MacFarlane S, Felle C, Maclean F, Hunter E. 2019. Advocating for ourselves – an occupational therapy internship social media strategy. (Poster). Royal College of Occupational Therapy Conference, Birmingham. Available from: https://www.alzscot.org/sites/default/files/2019-07/AHP_Posters-20-Advocating_for_ourselves__an_occupational_therapy_internship_social_media_strategy.pdf

MacFarlane S, Maclean F, Hunter E. 2019. An Occupational Therapy Internship Project: The Roots to Occupation. (Poster). Royal College of Occupational Therapy Conference, Birmingham. Available from: <https://www.alzscot.org/sites/default/files/201912/roots%20to%20occupation%20final.pdf>

Maclean F, Elliot M., Hunter E. 2023. The Three 'C's' of Curricula Redesign. Conversations, Courage and Change in Dementia Education. In: Maclean F. et al (Eds.) Occupational Therapy and Dementia. Inclusion, Rights and Opportunities. London: JKP

Maclean F, Elliot, M, Hunter E. 2019. A pathway to success: building an occupational therapy internship programme. OTNews 27(3) p30-32.

Maclean F, Hunter E. 2019. Creating an occupational therapy internship pathway (Poster). Royal College of Occupational Therapy Annual Conference, Birmingham.

Maclean F, Hunter E. 2017. Understanding person-centeredness through an occupational therapy internship programme (Paper). Alzheimer Scotland Annual Conference, Edinburgh.

Nanagas M.L., Maclean F, Hunter E. 2021. Developing a rights-based approach for Filipinos living with dementia (Presentation). 7th Asia Pacific Occupational Therapy Conference, Manila.

Noon A, Maclean F, Hunter E. 2017. The importance of meaningful activity: An innovative collaboration between people living with dementia and occupational therapy students (Paper). Alzheimer Europe Conference, Berlin.

Robertson-Flannigan L, Maclean F, Hunter E. 2016. Developing MSc learning and teaching resources connecting Allied Health Professionals to a rights-based approach when working with people living with dementia, their families and carers (Poster). College of Occupational Therapy Annual Conference, Harrogate.

Wallace M, Hunter E, Maclean F. 2017. Photographing a 'Day in the Life' of an Occupational Therapy Intern (Poster). Royal College of Occupational Therapy Annual Conference, Birmingham.

Sharing the learning on social media

BLOGS. The AHP dementia blog, Lets Talk about dementia (<https://letstalkaboutdementia.wordpress.com/>) was launched during dementia awareness week in June 2014. The occupational therapy interns posted blogs on both their role and their projects, with over 20 blog posts in the seven years.

2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occupational Therapy Interns. https://tinyurl.com/pwfaftu5 • What's important ot me: living well with dementia https://tinyurl.com/3rsar7xx
2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our Top Tips” to Living Well with Dementia – Scottish Dementia Working Group @SDWG https://tinyurl.com/3d8kertm • A Day in the Life of Marianne, an intern https://tinyurl.com/5eev75su • Another Summer – Another Internship https://tinyurl.com/y9cp537s
2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celebrating a summer of growth: reflections from the 2017 Occupational • Therapy Interns. https://tinyurl.com/3hr9zb76 • An Occupational Therapy Intern’s experience of conducting a literature search: My 4 Top Tips https://tinyurl.com/4f9drdn7 • 5 years of Occupational Therapy Interns – Blog Takeover https://tinyurl.com/yc69rjat • Occupational Therapy Interns and AHP Volunteer Instagram Takeover https://tinyurl.com/2xa63reu • Alzheimer Scotland Occupational Therapy intern https://tinyurl.com/yhwmx8pt • “Occupational Balance” what does it mean & why is it important? https://tinyurl.com/ys39y8aw
2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alzheimer Scotland occupational therapy interns Summer 2018 https://tinyurl.com/bpw9nkx • Summer 2018 Alzheimer Scotland Intern: Development of an Occupational Therapy Focused Social Media Strategy https://tinyurl.com/5n8wv6uv • Three things I will take away from my occupational therapy internship this year https://tinyurl.com/5n8wv6uv • Roots to Occupation” by the Scottish Dementia Working Group @S_D_W_G https://tinyurl.com/yt5mstsz5
2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The value of the Alzheimer Scotland occupational therapy intern post to me as a training occupational therapist https://tinyurl.com/47rfx5r3 • A day in the life of an occupational therapy intern https://tinyurl.com/yzzw3uaw
2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My occupational therapy internship: then and now! https://tinyurl.com/yc7taf87 • Reflections of my occupational therapy internship with the @S_D_W_G https://tinyurl.com/bdhktr9z
2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What Alzheimer Scotland means to me: an evolution of Occupational Therapy Intern to Dementia-informed practitioner. https://tinyurl.com/4bxjx6b9

Instagram

In 2016, we integrated the use of social media platform, Instagram to challenge the stigma surrounding dementia, to highlight how the different AHP professions can make a positive impact on the lives of those living with dementia, and to offer practical advice to family members, carers and people living with dementia. The interns shared up to 100 posts and this work has been extended as a project to all AHP students when on placement at Alzheimer Scotland including art therapy, music therapy and physiotherapy students.

Evaluating the impact of an academic internship

To evaluate the Alzheimer Scotland occupational therapy academic internship programme, three points of impact were identified, modelled on the three-way partnership outlined in section 1. Consequently, feedback connected to the impact of the internships was collected from:

- The Scottish Dementia Working Group (SDWG)
- Academic staff; Division of Occupational Therapy & Arts Therapies, QMU
- Former interns; between 2013 and 2019.



3.1 Feedback from the Scottish Dementia Working Group

Three members of the SDWG, all of whom worked with the interns, were asked for their reflections of the occupational therapy internship. In conversation, two themes were identified: 'reciprocity of learning' and 'valuing internship outcomes'. Each theme is highlighted below.

Reciprocity of learning:

There was agreement from the SDWG members that the internship programme offered an opportunity to create an environment where reciprocity of learning existed. This focused on the ability of interns to learn and work beside people living with dementia, whilst also allowing members of the SDWG to learn from the occupational therapy interns. In practice this meant members of the SDWG provided space and time during the development of joint projects to encourage interns "to ask us questions and hopefully we can give some answers back". In so doing, to allow interns to "find out things from us", and in turn for SDWG members to "learn just as much from them [interns]".

The introduction of interns to the SDWG group was seen as a way through which new ideas and perspectives could be shared. In supporting the occupational therapy internship programme, "a bit of fresh air" was seen to be brought to the group "with their [intern] knowledge". There was also satisfaction highlighted at the ability of the group to support and influence the development of future graduates into the profession of occupational therapy, as SDWG members were "proud to be part of that [internship], helping them [interns] with their careers."

Valuing internship outcomes:

In addition to the value placed on learning together, members of the SDWG also appreciated the outcomes of the various projects created in partnership with the interns. In relation to the 'Occupation Matters to Me' eBook, interns created a personalised edition for each member which was significant, *"I've still got the photo album sitting on the coffee table and everyone lifts it up and looks through. I feel emotional thinking about it."*

In addition, the process of undertaking projects, such as the eBook was seen as rewarding, for example, *"collecting the photographs with [the interns], it was so personal, so relaxing."* This was also the case in developing the various booklets, *"that's the first time I had ever heard of 'Top Tips to Living Well with Dementia', and it opened my eyes",* influencing everyday life, *"I still use a lot of them now [Top Tips]".* Consequently, working with the interns was regarded as positive and the experience described as *"absolutely fabulous"*, in part because of the *"high standard, we've come to expect from them now"*. In addition, the intern's *"patience"* and because they were *"attentive"*.

"Over the last 10 weeks we have had the amazing opportunity to spend time with the Scottish Dementia Working Group (SDWG) in Glasgow. We have used the time to establish a "Roots to Occupation" model highlighting key occupations that individuals in the group engage in and what enables them to carry out these occupations. We focussed greatly on the "how", looking at what supports are used by people living with dementia. we would like to say a big thank you to the SDWG for sharing their lived experience with us and allowing us to carry out this project. Keep an eye out for the finished project"

Intern tweet 2018

3.2 Feedback from academic staff

Four members of academic staff from the Division of Occupational Therapy & Arts Therapies at QMU, who had supported the internships, provided written feedback connected to their experiences of the programme and reflections connected to potential future developments.

Two themes were identified, 'innovation for and with occupational therapy interns' and 'building the future'. Each theme is highlighted below.

Innovation for and with occupational therapy interns:

The internship was viewed as an innovative idea which was seen to benefit both interns and members of the SDWG, *"I genuinely think this is a brilliant idea and wonderful opportunity both for the students and people living with dementia"*. Reasons highlighting the importance of this innovation included the *"engaged/engaging projects"* that were *"meaningful to interns and people living with dementia"*. This in turn, allowed interns to develop skills which were considered not to be *"available elsewhere"* as part of the University curriculum. The internship also provided an *"invaluable opportunity to add to the [interns] experience and employability"*.

In turn, through the programme commitment to share various outcomes there was a view that the *"national reach"* of the work *"has been important"*. More widely, this was seen to have raised the profile of the profession *"in a creative and positive way"*.

Building the future:

The existing internship programme was seen to offer a platform through which to build a skilled graduate workforce which included *“a change in [interns] once they returned to university”*. This was seen to be positive and contributed to the legacy of the internship in terms of wider educational delivery to allow interns to *“share their learning as visiting lecturer(s) as part of [University] module learning, demonstrating innovative, partnership working”*. The materials created by the interns could also be used by *“Alzheimer Scotland staff”* in the future and through collaboration with QMU students across the subject group, *“respect and understanding of the work of Alzheimer Scotland”*. This was consolidated by the work interns undertook using social media and blogs which were viewed as *“particularly strong”*. In turn, allowing the projects undertaken and the outcomes produced to stay *“alive in the minds of stakeholders and interested parties”*.

Whilst there was agreement the internship was a collaboration of value for all involved and that this should continue to *“keep on connecting”* people with dementia with new graduates, with *“great energy and enthusiasm”*, there was also pragmatism. This focused on funding and how and in what way innovations such as the occupational therapy internship programme could be sustained into the future when *“investment in AHP services is needed more widely and fully where possible”*.

3.3 Feedback from the occupational therapy interns.

Former occupational therapy interns who had undertaken an internship with Alzheimer Scotland between 2013 and 2019, were also asked for their retrospective reflections. Six interns responded and provided written feedback connected to their experiences of the internship, the extent to which this prepared them for graduate employment and reflections on the future development of the programme.

Two themes were identified, ‘working with people living with dementia’ and ‘enhanced employability’.

Working with people living with dementia

The internship was seen as an invaluable opportunity in which to work with, and learn from, people living with dementia. This included *“gaining the perspectives of those with lived experiences”* to allow for *“uninterrupted, quality opportunities to make those connections and to explore relationships in depth”*. This involved taking time to gain an understanding of the *“complexities people living with dementia are faced with”*, as well as *“listening to unique stories and experiences”* that could illustrate what those complexities.

A legacy of the programme was highlighted in that the experiences and skills gained through the internship *“stayed with me”* as part of existing graduate practice. For example, the ability to *“develop a critical lens to challenge societal misconceptions”* about dementia, that *“allowed me to understand and advocate for their rights”*. In addition, the ability to develop *“tailored communication approaches”* was identified as a specific learning outcome which had subsequently been used with a *“wide range of people”*. Further, the value and importance of the relationship between AHP dementia policy influencing practice was highlighted as *“vital knowledge”* as *“my career has progressed”*.

Enhanced employability

For those interns who wished to enter graduate employment in the field of dementia, the internship was seen as a conduit to enhanced employability, for example,

"As a result of my internship experience, I was offered a job in an in-patient dementia assessment unit".

Whilst another intern noted the internship had *"allowed me to gain employment and work alongside people with dementia – a population I feel most passionate about"*. More broadly the opportunity to work as an intern provided *"a unique selling point as a candidate for graduate employment"* with recognition of the alternative career paths available to graduates in the third sector. Employability skills were also considered to have progressed because of the programme, including the ability to *"network with a wide range of professionals"*, *"presenting and sharing findings at conferences"*, advance *"writing skills"* and lastly, irrespective of practice destination *"I had training in dementia care"*.

"Thank you for your continued support over the past nine weeks, it has been such and enjoyable experience. The words in the hearts represent the things that the SDWG have taught me of over the past 9 weeks."

Intern 2019



Section 04

Conclusion

This report has shared the occupational therapy academic internship programme between 2013 and 2019, in partnership with Santander University UK, Division of Occupational Therapy & Arts Therapies, QMU, Edinburgh and Alzheimer Scotland, employing a total of 12 occupational therapy interns. The funding criteria by Santander changed in 2020, bringing this current academic internship programme to an end. This also coincided with the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. This report provides an opportunity to reflect and review the way forward in 2023 and beyond.

4.1 Critical Success Factors

The academic occupational therapy internship offered an innovative and creative approach to dementia education to support a skilled and confident occupational therapy workforce in Scotland. It was successful in widening educational opportunity to influence understanding of dementia practice with occupational therapy students, beyond the classroom. This enabled interns to value and further understand the lived experiences of those with dementia, as part of local communities. The success factors identified, of use in future internship programmes, are highlighted below.





Lived experience	Key to the internship programme was the opportunity to learn with and from people with dementia. Where projects were co-created and co-designed with members of the SDWG to promote outcomes of relevance.
Higher Education Institute	The value and importance of partnership working, to include Higher Education. In part to support the development and implementation of process underpinning the internship programme, also to guide and enable knowledge translation activities.
Third sector	The opportunity to work in partnership with Scotland's leading dementia charity, Alzheimer Scotland. This offered unique insight into the extensive network of diverse services offered, including their role in representation, influencing and policy development in the context of dementia in Scotland. The intern programme built on a well-established AHP practice placement programme, Building Bridges.
The interns	The demonstrable relevance and value of occupational therapy with those living with dementia, their families, caregivers and supporters, promoted via the commitment and engagement of those interns who were employed in the area of dementia care or the influence of how they work on graduation.

4.2 The Way Forward

Since this academic occupational therapy internship programme began there have been new and developing policies that are relevant and integral to the way forward. The Health and Care Professional Council (2023) have introduced new standards about promoting public health and preventing ill-health which are particularly relevant to the role of occupational therapy in promoting lifelong brain health (Fullerton et al 2023). There is a 4th dementia strategy in Scotland (Scottish Government 2023) that continues to acknowledge the importance of supporting policy into practice through education and training with a continued need to “profile, educate the workforce and unpaid carers and make better use of the wide variety of tools available to drive impact such as Connecting People, Connecting Support Framework (Scottish Government 2023:66)

The occupational therapy internship programme offered a unique opportunity through which students and recent graduates acquired knowledge and skills designed to empower people living with dementia, their families and care givers to sustain positive lives for longer. In parallel, the programme enhanced graduate employability and promoted dementia practice as a career path of value in the profession.

Finally, recommendations for the future are identified.

	Disseminate the learning from this impact report both locally and nationally with key stakeholders including the Scottish Dementia Working Group and Scottish Government
	Work with Scottish Higher Education Institutes to further embed internships to continue to grow a skilled and confident occupational therapy graduate workforce.
	Where possible, pre-registration occupational therapy education should embed wider initiatives from beyond the classroom to support and enhance authentic learning about dementia and the ways through which the profession is positioned to respond.
	Review the funding model for the sustainability of the occupational therapy academic internship programme.

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