

Higher National Certificate - HNC Validation Process - Success

10th November 2009 saw the culmination of over 6 year work to deliver an academic qualification for Technical and Support staff in the field of Prosthetics and Orthotics. A diverse sector panel along with the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) were happy to validate this award.

The new HNC Allied Health Profession: Rehabilitation Technologies has been developed to help support managers and staff to meet many of the challenges encountered in delivering Rehabilitation Services in the United Kingdom and Internationally. With a growing aging population with associated long term conditions, advances in medical interventions improving survival rates for patients with complex conditions and advances in assisted technologies demand for rehabilitation services is increasing. To meet this growing demand role development is necessary across all levels of the career framework.

The overarching aims of the HNC programmes which have been developed for AHP support staff and technicians are to provide candidates with the information that will enable them to develop the knowledge and skills that they require to carry out their role with patients in a variety of health care settings. In general terms the HNC AHP qualifications provide a basis for future career and personal development, build on previously acquired transferable skills, develop key Core Skills, encourage good practice by developing a culture of continuing professional development which provides a high quality learning experience and environment that will encourage support staff and technicians to develop a commitment to lifelong learning.

The **general aims** for the HNC AHP: Rehabilitation Technologies are as follows:

1. To improve the quality of patient care and patient experience
2. To develop transferable skills including core skills to the levels demanded by employers and for progression
3. To develop study and research skills
4. To enable progression within the SCQF framework
5. To develop candidate's knowledge and skills such as planning, analysis and synthesising
6. To prepare candidates in specialist skills for progression to further studies

The **specific aims** of the HNC AHP: Rehabilitation Technologies are as follows:

7. To support the employment of Technical staff in a range of health care rehabilitation settings (i.e. prosthetic and orthotic, and appliance departments as well as separate companies that supply NHS contracted services for rehabilitation and external medical devices of prostheses and orthoses, including orthopaedic footwear)
8. To provide a qualification which supplies and accredits the knowledge and skills required for the role of technical staff working in the above settings.

9. To enable candidates to understand the role, responsibilities and values expected of a Rehabilitation Technician.
10. To develop employment skills for a range of careers in the Rehabilitation sector and Health Care environment.
11. To complete project work involving planning, integration and application of a variety of technical skills within a determined time scale
12. To develop specialist vocational skills for the Rehabilitation sector of prosthetics, orthotics and related medical devices and appliances.

The programme will be delivered starting in 2010 on a part-time basis over two academic years using a blended learning approach. It would be expected that the class group would come together for 6 individual weeks throughout each year. This would be mainly for teaching and learning, as well as technical workshop training and instruction at The University of Strathclyde including visiting speakers, group tutorial support, and core skills training in each specialist optional module, and time to access Strathclyde University library facilities.

The proposed weeks would be in March/April, June, September and December. This could be reviewed with other partners who are involved in delivery of the common mandatory modules from the rest of the suite of Allied Health Professionals HNC qualifications and those delivering engineering skills and safety modules provided in similar or day release modes at FE Colleges. This will afford greater sustainability and offer a more local access for some candidates.

Flexible delivery modes are an integral part of the course due to the geographical distribution of the students. Course materials will be available on-line via a virtual learning environment Online support would be available for the class group out with these times and individual tutorials at The University of Strathclyde or by web link could be arranged if required.

It is anticipated that teaching and learning materials for the HNC in rehabilitation technologies will be available on Web CT as the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), which would enable students to access the materials when not at the University as well as maintaining contact with their peers and tutors through a virtual chat room.

I would like to thank and congratulate my colleagues who have worked with me on this project; I think we can be quite proud of what we have achieved in the qualification.
In my first presentation in 2004 I titled it "shaping the future"...we now have a toolbox to do just that.

Colin Martin, Chief Technician – National Centre
On behalf of the Qualification Design Team (QDT)

(Further announcements will follow shortly regarding costing and application processes etc)