



**STATEMENT DEFINING THE EQUIVALENCE OF THE DIPLOMA OF THE COLLEGE OF
OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS TO A DEGREE AWARD**

(Revised Statement July 2009; Original Statement November 1992)

The degree in occupational therapy as the professional qualification in the United Kingdom (UK) for registration with the regulatory body was first introduced in 1986. Today, the basic qualification is a bachelor's degree with honours.

Prior to 1986, the only recognised qualification for students who qualified in the UK was the Diploma of the College of Occupational Therapists (DipCOT). The education programme was delivered at schools of occupational therapy in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland that were recognised by the College of Occupational Therapists (COT).

There has been recognition for some considerable time that the Diploma of the College of Occupational Therapists* was equivalent to a degree in all but name. In the Report of the Independent Commission published in 1989, which was chaired by Louis (now Sir Louis) Blom-Cooper QC, it is stated:

"We are convinced that the academic level attained by those who gain the Diploma of Occupational Therapy – the profession's basic qualification – is at least as high as that achieved by students taking an ordinary degree in English or Scottish universities and polytechnics."

Further acknowledgement of the equivalence came in the statement published by the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) in February 1990 for the purposes of its Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme (CATS), where courses and awards are given a points rating. In the statement, all paramedical diplomas – including physiotherapy and radiography – were rated at 240 points, which is equivalent to the award of an unclassified degree. The DipCOT award attracts 240 points at levels 1 and 2 or 360 points at levels 1, 2 and 3 in the Scottish system of SCOTCATS*. (A degree with honours attracts a further 120 credit points at level 3 or 120 points at level 4 within SCOTCATS).

The degree equivalent value of the Diploma is recognised by higher education institutions, which readily offer to diplomates, access to study for higher degrees at Master's level. It is the College's advice that this professional development route should be taken, and many practitioners have successfully pursued and achieved these higher qualifications.

The experience of all the Allied Health Professions is similar, and this is practically recognised by the fact that there was no differentiation by employers in the salary paid to the qualified professional at the point of first post employment merely on grounds of having a diploma or a degree.

The UK professional and regulatory bodies regard all their qualified practitioners – diplomates and graduates – on a basis of complete parity and treat them all fairly and equitably. The achievement of qualified professional status and eligibility to apply for registration with the regulatory body was the goal, and whether this was by diploma or degree course route was according to the development of a particular programme and an accident of time.

*applies to DipCOT qualifications awarded from 1983 (Diploma 81 syllabus).

Reference

Blom-Cooper L (1990) Occupational Therapy. An emerging profession in health care. Report of a Commission of Inquiry 1989. London: Duckworth.