

# College of Radiographers Approval and Accreditation Board

## Annual Education Report

1<sup>st</sup> September 2023 – 31<sup>st</sup> August 2024

### *Foreword*

The College of Radiographers (CoR) is pleased to present the Approval and Accreditation Board (AAB) Report for 2023-2024.

This academic year represents another year of growth and development in programmes following political demand to increase the size and capability of the healthcare workforce. There is year on year growth over the last three years of the number of new educational providers requesting programme approval and existing providers requesting approval of additional learning pathways into the profession at pre-registration level.

The AAB continues to use a blended model of approval to deliver strategic oversight. Supporting new educational providers with in-person programme and resource assessment, alongside desktop review activity for re-approval of programmes and new programmes at existing educational providers. Major programme changes such as new practice placement sites, continue to be allocated an in-person assessment as decided by the 'Programme Change Panel' which has governance membership which includes the chair and vice chair of the AAB and professional officers for education and accreditation.

The Education and Career Framework (4<sup>th</sup> Edition) which launched in November 2022 continues to be used as a seminal document in an updated programme approval process. Mapping to the appropriate level of practice in the ECF has ensured integration into the approval process and assured professional standards at both pre and post registration capabilities.

The AAB has worked to ensure a high standard of consistency when reviewing programmes that lead to eligibility to apply for professional registration as a radiographer, and when reviewing individual learning modules, CPD courses and short education courses. The involvement of the CoR in the programme approval space ensures a consistency of standards across a wide variety of programmes and education providers as well as a benchmark of quality and consistency of radiographic standards.

## Part 1: The position of pre-registration CoR Approved radiographic education within the UK

### *What is College of Radiographers Approval*

The CoR works in partnership with education providers, clinical departments, external organisations and individuals to ensure that programmes of education and training related to the clinical imaging and oncology radiographic workforce, maintain, and continue to develop the highest standards of clinical imaging and oncology practice and conduct. Providers are required to map for both pre-registration and post-registration programmes to the level of practice as indicated in the 'College of Radiographers Education and Career Framework (4<sup>th</sup> Edition) 2022'.

Wherever possible, the College's approval framework works within existing internal approval and quality assurance arrangements of education providers and clinical departments. It also aims to work collaboratively with external bodies to provide a streamlined and integrated process.

Through the approval framework the College:

- Secures consistency of standards of clinical imaging and oncology education.
- Aligns standards of clinical practice with the profession's Education and Career Framework (2022).
- Supports and encourages the development of programmes that are at, and remain at, the forefront of education and developing clinical imaging and oncology practice;
- Promotes and supports flexibility in the design and delivery of education and new roles in practice.
- Disseminates guidance on best practice in clinical imaging and oncology education and practice.

### **1.1 Number and distribution of Approved Pre-registration Programmes**

Currently there are 75 pre-registration programmes which hold CoR approval. There are a further four providers currently engaging with the college or actively seeking CoR approval (University of Hull, University of Huddersfield, York St. John University and Health Sciences University, Bournemouth (formally AECC)). A pre-registration programme enables learners successfully completing the programme of study to apply for registration with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) to work as a diagnostic or therapeutic radiographer. The HCPC programme directory include programmes which may or may not be discontinued and programmes which have regulatory approval but not yet CoR approval (see Table 1.1.1). This accounts for the discrepancy between the regulator data and that held by the CoR.

CoR approved programmes must undergo a 5 year approval cycle and are represented in Table 1.1.2.

There are currently three providers in the UK which do not hold any programmes at pre-registration with CoR approval, but do hold HCPC approval. Health Sciences University Bournemouth, the University of Huddersfield, and the University of Hull. York St. John University does not currently hold regulatory approval. Of these The University of Huddersfield is awaiting ratification of programme approval by the College Board of Trustees. The other education providers are engaging with the CoR to begin or resume the approval process. This represents a high compliance with the professional body programme approval scheme, given the rate of programme development, and continues to demonstrate educators willingness to align programmes to the professional body standards.

Education provision is available in all nations of the United Kingdom as evidenced in Table 1.1.3 with learners having the opportunity to access both Diagnostic and Therapeutic Radiography programmes in each nation. New education providers have developed programmes in England since the previous reporting period, there is no additional provider growth in the other nations of the UK. There is a single international provider holding CoR programme approval with no additional growth in this space and no new applications from international providers in this reporting period.

Learning pathway or mode of pre-registration learning continues to expand with more applications from education providers seeking programme approval in 'non-traditional' learning modes such as Degree Apprenticeships and Pre-Registration accelerated Masters programmes (see table 1.1.4)

1.1.1 Number of HCPC Pre-registration Programmes of Radiography in the UK (as of 14/11/2025)\*

Pre-registration programmes	Number of available programmes (From HCPC data including PT programmes) The HCPC figures include programmes which may or may not be discontinued.
Diagnostic Radiography	72
Therapeutic Radiography	27
Total	99

*\*This number is live figures from November 2025 and therefore will appear higher than the number of CoR approved programmes from the 23/24 academic year*

1.1.2 Number of CoR Pre-registration Programmes of Radiography in the UK as of academic year 23-24

Pre-registration programmes	Number of Educational Providers*	Number of Programmes holding CoR approval
Diagnostic Radiography	34	56
Therapeutic Radiography	13	18
Total	35	75*

\*Higher Education Institutions, Further Education Providers, other educational providers. UK and \*International

1.1.3 Number of Approved Pre-registration Programmes of Radiography education in each nation of the UK and Internationally

Pre-registration programmes	England	Scotland	Northern Ireland	Wales	International
Diagnostic Radiography	48	5	1	2	1
Therapeutic Radiography	13	3	1	1	0

1.1.4 Number of CoR Approved Programmes (leading to registration by study mode of Radiography in the UK) that hold current approval as of 15<sup>th</sup> August 2024

Programme modes*	Diagnostic Radiography	Therapeutic Radiography
Pre-registration Bachelor's Degree	32	12
Degree Apprenticeship	11	3
Pre-registration Integrated Master's Degree	14	3
Total	57	18

\*all programmes are full-time study or work-based

1.2 Return of annual monitoring survey

All but 2 educational provider with CoR approved provision returned the annual monitoring survey to the College of Radiographers. The following provider/s did not return a response:

- Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen.
- University of Leeds.

It should also be noted that some providers returned incomplete and/or inaccurate data. Changes have been made to simplify the survey. As part of an ongoing revision of the approval processes and operations further changes will be made to further refine the questions and clarity of the survey. Some providers did not return data for all programmes listed as approved. This may be due to programmes not being delivered during this reporting period and/or that data has not been returned on these programmes.

### 1.3 Admissions and Recruitment

#### 1.3.1 UCAS Tariff

From the responses returned via the annual monitoring survey, UCAS entry tariff points for entry onto CoR approved programmes are distributed (range) from a minimum of 102 points to a maximum of 128 points with a mean of 125.5 points. These figures represent a rise in mean admission UCAS tariff entry requirements of 20 points (from 108 to 125) from the previous annual report of 22/23.

#### 1.3.2. Applications to Pre-Registration programmes

Overall there was a small decrease to the total number of applications to Radiography programmes in this reporting period as understood in Table 1.3.2a comparatively to the last reporting period – a reduction of 5%. However, when further scrutinized this is understood as a moderate decrease in Diagnostic Radiography applications of 5% (see Table 1.3.2b) and a sizable increase in Therapeutic applications of 21% (see Table 1.3.2c).

The response to questions about the number of applications to programmes was incomplete for previous years and should be treated with caution as table key (\*). It is worth noting that a large educational provider of Therapeutic Radiography did not return data for the last reporting period and this may in part explain the return to a general upwards trend over the last six years of data return.

##### 1.3.2a Total number of applications: 13,108 applicants to Radiography ( 5% decrease)

Academic Year	2018-19*	2019-20*	2020-21*	2021-22	2022-23**	2023-24**
Applications	10598	10400	10375	13652	13794	13108

\*\*note apprenticeship applications were generally returned as Unknown as they were employer advertised and this should be understood when considering the 2022 -23 and 2023 -24 data.

##### 1.3.2b Diagnostic Radiography Applications: 11176 (8.4 % decrease)

Academic Year	2018-19*	2019-20*	2020-21*	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Applications	9178	8728	8703	11145	12194	11176

##### 1.3.2.c Therapeutic Radiography Applications: 1932 (21% increase)

Academic Year	2018-19*	2019-20*	2020-21*	2021-22	*2022-23	2023-24
Applications	1420	1672	1931	2507	1600	1932

\*noted as incomplete data - figures likely to be higher due to non-submission of approved providers

#### 1.3.3. Student intake

Applications to Radiography programmes have been variable but the data reflects a small decrease (5%).

Six education providers report insufficient applications for Diagnostic Radiography programmes, but seven reported increased applications. This somewhat balances the applications in the UK overall for Diagnostic Radiography and demonstrates a variable trend across the UK.

The picture was also variable for Therapeutic Radiography programmes. Five educational providers reported insufficient applications for Therapeutic Radiography programmes. Two reported increased applications. Therapeutic Radiography programmes continue to report insufficient applications overall to their programmes despite there being a large reported increase overall of number of applications.

Reasons provided for insufficient applications in both Diagnostic and Therapeutic programmes included;

- Fewer applicants achieved necessary grades than expected
- Fewer students expected as they opted for other pathways/programmes or to defer
- Drop in the offer to entry conversion rate/ didn't accept offer
- Students offered a place but did not enroll/begin the programme

Many educational providers reported an over-recruitment to their programmes, when new learner numbers were added to those repeating the year or re-joining for other reasons. Whilst the percentages were small, the accumulative over-recruitment is considerable on a national scale. Providers have been made aware of the programme change panel for approval of new/modifications to practice placement provision via the Heads of Radiography forum and the AAB. This will be scrutinised in the next annual report to review for a trend and any required further action. The limiting factor growth was reported as practice placement availability and limits on the number of practice placements available.

The total numbers of students starting a pre-registration programme increased for both Therapeutic and Diagnostic Radiography programmes. The number of students re-taking the initial year of the programme remains high and requires further review with educational leaders to ensure current Office for Students retention and attrition standards are met.

### 1.3.3a Total number of students starting a pre-registration programme in 2023-2024

Academic Year	2018-19*	2019-20*	2020-21*	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Number of starters into Year 1/Stage 1	1429	1525	1666	2522 (**46)	2384 (**132)	2432 (**131)

\*noted as incomplete data - figures likely to be higher due to non-submission by approved providers

\*\*Students undertaking a repeat of the Year 1/stage 1

### 1.3.3b Diagnostic Radiography students starting a pre-registration programme in 2023-2024

Academic Year	2018-19*	2019-20*	2020-21*	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Number of starters into Year 1/Stage 1	1180	1179	1299	1959 (**35)	1980 (**106)	1994 (**108)

\*noted as incomplete data - figures likely to be higher due to non-submission by approved providers

\*\*Students undertaking a repeat of the Year 1/stage 1

### 1.3.3c Therapeutic Radiography students starting a pre-registration programme in 2023-2024

Academic Year	2018-19*	2019-20*	2020-21*	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Number of starters into Year 1/Stage 1	298	355	422	483 (**11)	404 (**26)	438 (**23)

\*noted as incomplete data - figures likely to be higher due to non-submission by approved providers

\*\*Students undertaking a repeat of the Year 1/stage 1

### 1.3.4 International recruitment

International recruitment to pre-registration programmes has increased this academic year but remains lower than the number in the 2021-2022 academic year. Table 1.3.4 demonstrates the year on year growth of international students, but then a substantial decrease and a return to growth again. International recruitment remains a small proportion of the overall intake of students totaling 4% (105/2432) of the total student pre-registration intake.

#### 1.3.4 Number of international students starting a pre-registration programme in 2023 -2024

Academic Year	2018-19*	2019-20*	2020-21*	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Total number	24	31	44	137	77	105
Diagnostic Radiography	14	23	34	93	58	79
Therapeutic Radiography	10	8	10	44	19	26

\*noted as incomplete data - figures likely to be higher due to non-submission by approved providers

## 1.4 Student Attrition and Retention within Pre-registration programmes

### 1.4.1 Attrition

Attrition is understood in this report as; unsuccessful completion of the programme where an exit award/credits have been provided but a student is not eligible to apply to be professionally registered to work as a Radiographer.

Eleven education providers reported no attrition from their programmes for the academic year 2023-2024. The vast majority reported attrition from the programme.

Common factors noted for student attrition are listed as below ordered from most common to least common:

- Students did not meet the required academic standards (45% of programmes)
- Personal circumstances (36% of programmes)
- Wrong career choice (33% of programmes)
- Students did not meet the required clinical standards (24% of programmes)
- Health related reasons (24% of programmes)
- Financial reasons (12% of programmes)
- Fitness to practice/disciplinary/professional conduct issues (8% of programmes)
- Placement experiences (2% of programmes)

'Students failing to meet the required academic standard' has replaced 'personal circumstances' as the primary cause of attrition. Students leaving programmes due to personal circumstances has dropped significantly in this reporting period compared to the last reporting period, down 14%. The three common factors correspond to the main causes to the last three years of data collection, remaining consistent as a trend.

This year to note, as representative of past data, 'wrong career choice' features as an attrition issue in over a third of programmes. Of particular note is that in Therapeutic Radiography programmes attrition attributed to 'wrong career choice' persists with 67% of programmes reporting data. Highlighting again, the ongoing need for career guidance and information prior to enrolling and at open days and information events, particularly for Therapeutic Radiography programmes.

There were free text responses detailing other, more detailing reasons for attrition on programmes. Some examples of these included non-engagement, awaiting health and conduct hearings and institutional debt.

#### 1.4.2 Retention

Programme leaders were asked to share their most effective strategies to support student retention. For the purposes of analysis this is broadly delineated into;

- Successful retention strategies on-campus
- Successful retention strategies on practice placement
- Impact of retention activity within the programme

For each category a content frequency analysis was conducted to provide some thematic analysis of the data responses. The frequency limit was extended to include a minimum of four occurrences be included. Word cloud presentation was used to display the findings (see Figure 1 and Figure 2).

##### *1.4.2a Successful retention strategies on-campus*

Reviewing the themes for successful retention with learners, innovations following the pandemic have become more commonplace such as using technology to support flexible pedagogies. Flexibility remains a high priority for teaching staff along with high quality personal support mechanisms within teaching teams. This was reported for the majority of programmes returning data. It was clear that teaching teams are working with the wider support services in the University to ensure wrap around support for learners. This included embedded sessions in study skills, the personal tutor services, the wellbeing support teams and continuity of support in practice environments.

Wellbeing initiatives are common-pace as effective retention resources with teaching staff developing close and professional relationships with learners citing small classroom sizes as a driver for belonging and inclusion within learning communities. The wider university support services are highlighted more frequently in this reporting period. This may be a reflection of the continued closer working relationships within services following the pandemic period.

Despite an increase in technology supporting the pedagogy, practical 'hands-on' sessions are again highlighted as a helpful initiative in the retention of students. Teaching teams appear to be blending technology in the learning sessions through the use of simulation.





## 2.1 Support workforce accreditation

### 2.1.1 Assistant Practitioner

The Assistant Practitioner accreditation scheme continues to attract applications from members for both initial accreditation and reaccreditation.

A total of 41 Assistant Practitioners were accredited/re-accredited in the 2023-24 year. Accreditations at each level and route are delineated below:

- 2 new level 4 approved programme accreditations
- 1 new level 4 non-approved programme accreditation
- 2 new level 5 approved programme accreditations
- 3 new level 5 non-approved programme accreditations

#### **New Accreditations Total = 8**

- 19 level 4 re-accreditations
- 14 level 5 re-accreditations

#### **Re-accreditation Total = 33**

### 2.1.2 Mammography Associate

The newly launched accreditation scheme for Mammography Associates has attracted some applications following its pilot year.

#### **New Accreditations Total = 3**

- 3 new level 4 re-accreditations

#### **Re-accreditation Total = 0**

Marketing and an enhanced communication scheme may be helpful to ensure the visibility and success of this newly launched accreditation scheme.

## 2.2 Practice Educator accreditation scheme (PEAS)

The Practice Educator accreditation scheme (PEAS) continues to attract applications from members for both initial accreditation and reaccreditation. A total of 13 Practice Educators were accredited/re-accredited in the 2023-24 year. Accreditations at each level and route are delineated below:

A total of 11 new practice educators were accredited by PEAS (6 via the CoR approved programme route and 5 via the CPD/Non-approved programme route)

A total of 2 practice educators were re-accredited via the CoR PEAS.

#### **Accreditation Total = 13**

Marketing and support activities are planned for the next reporting period in the form of PEAS writing retreats to support practice educators develop their individual applications.

## Part 3 Acknowledgements

The College Board of Trustees wish to thank the members of the Approval and Accreditation Board and to all the Assessors who have worked on programme approvals on behalf of the College.