

Art Therapy Northern Programme

MA Art Psychotherapy Practice

Notes for the Guidance of Intending Applicants

The following notes are intended to answer those questions we are most often asked about the course, and provide additional background information on possible sources of funding.

Pre-Course Experience

A degree in fine art, one of the new arts therapies degrees, or one of the humanities, is the usual requirement. However, it is also possible to offer a science degree providing there is evidence of a commitment to art making. Some applicants come to study with the programme from other professional backgrounds: there have been medics; nurses; and other therapists, but again all are asked to show a portfolio of their own art work. This is because all students will need to be able to demonstrate their continued commitment to their art making by presenting a portfolio of art at interview.

In addition to this, pre-course experience is also considered to be vital by the course staff and should include a variety of work in settings related to the caring professions. This pre-course experience need not be in paid employment, but should be of a kind which will familiarise intending applicants with caring work emphasising the importance of inter-personal relationships and relationships with colleagues. Ideally, this could also include some group or individual experience involving working with images – however it is recognised that this may not be possible.

The range of pre-course experience which art therapy students bring to the course varies, but it can include counselling, nursing, teaching, social service work, medicine and experience gained in the voluntary sector through such organisations as MIND, CRUSE, or RELATE, for example. This experience may be gained in an equally wide variety of settings, but frequently includes work in mental health settings, in special education, residential social work, and day centres serving a range of service users. We should also indicate that some knowledge of the field of the art therapy will help at interview.

It is helpful for applicants to have some personal experience, and theoretical understanding of the therapeutic uses of art prior to undertaking training such as that offered by the MA in Art Psychotherapy Practice. Although they are not a pre-requisite for training, an increasing number of introductory or foundation courses in art therapy are being run throughout the UK. For example, the Art Therapy Northern Programme offers a Foundation Course which meets over a series of days in January and February. Details of one-day and one-week introductory courses can also be found on the British Association of Art Therapists' web pages <http://www.baat.org/shortcourses>.

Employment Prospects

There has been art therapy training in Sheffield for more than thirty years and consequently many aspects of its practice are accepted here. Approximately 45% of graduates from art therapy courses find relevant employment within a year. This does not necessarily mean that they find full time work or work with the title art therapist, but they combine work that helps them pay bills with gradually establishing a portfolio of art therapy work. Former students tend to build up relevant pieces of work over time. People have found different strategies to be successful in finding or creating work, the course provides employment workshops which try to keep employment strategies up to

date. Additionally some students have found experience and work with NGO organisations abroad. A good proportion of international students have created full-time work and helped establish the profession in their respective countries.

Qualified art therapists do need to have a 'pioneering' spirit in order to gain employment. While the protected titles 'art therapist' or 'art psychotherapist' are most often recognised in the NHS where the profession has been established longest, former students do find employment in other settings where they may practice as art therapists though not necessarily in posts designated as such.

The State Registration of the profession with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC, formerly Health Professions Council, HPC) has enhanced employment prospects.

Funding

In the past the majority of students training obtained Discretionary Awards from their Local Education Authority. In recent years this source of funding has become much less available, and many of our students have funded their own training through taking out Professional Career Development Loans such as those offered by the banking sector. Occasionally, students are able to obtain grants from charitable trusts, although these rarely cover all the fees and costs involved.

However, the current government has extended student loans to include post-graduate students. This has made the process of funding the course easier. Details of the Postgraduate Student Loan are available at: <<https://www.gov.uk/funding-for-postgraduate-study>

Additional Necessary Costs

Please keep in mind that for all Arts Therapies Courses (and counselling and psychotherapy courses) there is a national requirement (from the HCPC and professional bodies) for students to be in therapy during the taught part of their course.

Although course staff with the Northern Programme are committed to this part of the training because it provides a personal opportunity for a student to learn about therapy, we recognise that the additional costs that this entails are not easy. Students need to budget for therapy costs in individual or group therapy for at least twenty four weeks of each academic year.

The content of this therapeutic work is not shared with course staff. However, the course require written confirmation from the therapist that the student is in therapy. The therapist concerned will also need to provide evidence to the course of their qualification, professional registration and insurance.

Course staff help students think about how to find an appropriate therapist and how to be a little street-wise about the therapy provision they are offered.

Visits to the Course

We are often asked whether it is possible for intending applicants to visit the course and meet staff. We very much regret that this is not currently possible. However, applicants offered interviews will have the opportunity to meet some of the staff and visit our premises then.