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Recruitment and selection - strategy, quality and diversity.

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Selection and recruitment processes for undergraduate Occupational Therapy programmes vary across higher education institutions depending on the target population for applicants, and the specific processes employed by Universities. Within the UK, applications for undergraduate programmes of study are received via the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). Further to receipt of these applications, selections are made in a range of ways including the use of interviews, review of qualifications, and evaluation of relevant experiences.

This paper aims to review and evaluate the rationale for changing the selection processes for one undergraduate Occupational Therapy programme from an interview based process to one based on selection via UCAS applications only. The paper seeks to address the question of whether the removal of interviewing is a positive strategic direction for the organisation, a mechanism to address quality assurance, or whether it is an efficiency saving exercise. The issue of widening access and flexible entry is discussed, with particular reference to considerations for the diversity of future Occupational Therapy workforces.

Local admissions processes are described before moving on to consider the strategic drivers for change from both macro and micro perspectives. Internal and external environments are examined in relation to the perceived impact upon the organisation, applicants, admissions staff and employers. Issues relating to culture and tradition are also explored with specific reference to the expectations of prospective students, staff and employers.

An overview of the implications relating to the removal of interviewing will then be used to contextualise the actions and activities which are planned to monitor and maintain the quality of current and future recruitment and selection processes. The paper concludes by considering how the nature of changes made to selection processes is of importance not only to individual higher education institutions but also to the future of Occupational Therapy as a whole.