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Occupational Therapy Education: using Enquiry Based Learning as an educational philosophy for Masters (post registration/qualifying) programmes

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The Masters of Science (MSc) in Occupational Therapy at Queen Margaret University, Scotland, UK, is a post registration MSc (or Second Cycle) programme for qualified occupational therapists. The programme is suitable for international, UK and local occupational therapists who complete their first degree (first cycle) at a WFOT recognised education programme. These students develop knowledge of the evidence base in practice and further develop critical thinking, clinical reasoning and research knowledge. They are also consumers of research and will generate evidence for practice.

Enquiry Based Learning is an environment in which learning is driven by a process of enquiry owned by the student. Starting with a 'scenario' and with the guidance of a facilitator, students identify their own issues and questions. They then examine the resources they need to research the topic, thereby acquiring the requisite knowledge. Enquiry Based Learning covers a spectrum of approaches, for example Problem Based Learning, Small Scale Investigations / Projects and Research.

This paper will explore Enquiry Based Learning as an educational philosophy for an MSc in Occupational Therapy programme, for qualified/post registered occupational therapists.

The main body of the paper will critique Enquiry Based Learning by exploring its characteristics, benefits and limitations. It will then go on to discuss Enquiry Based Learning in relation to the MSc in Occupational Therapy programme at Queen Margaret University and also to the wider context of occupational therapy education

Conclusions will be drawn in relation to the contribution of Enquiry Based Learning to the education of occupational therapists.