Introduction to the University College of Osteopathy

The University College of Osteopathy (UCO) is a higher education institution providing education and clinical training in its specialist area of osteopathy. The UCO has a central role in delivering osteopathic education in the UK and has played a key part in expanding the impact of osteopathy; 42% of current UK osteopaths were educated at the UCO, and it has the largest student population of any of the UK osteopathic educational institutions. The UCO's main source of income is from students on its M.Ost degree, a 480 credit integrated Masters course delivered over 4 years full time and 5 years part time.

The UCO runs its own outpatient osteopathic clinic offering osteopathic health care to the local and wider community where students on our osteopathic courses train and complete their required clinical hours. It is the largest teaching clinic for osteopathy in the UK, delivering approximately 40,000 supervised, student-led osteopathic appointments annually in its own dedicated facilities as well as a range of off-site settings which extend access for patients. These off-site specialist and community clinics are mainly free of charge to the patients, and include a clinic for people living with HIV infection, a clinic to treat the homeless and a clinic in a GP practice ensuring extensive and varied clinical experience for all students. We deliver approximately 4,500 free appointments within our community outreach clinics each year.

Recent Developments

In 2016 the UCO was designated as a direct HEFCE-funded institution and granted Taught Degree Awarding Powers. As a result, the UCO now approves its own courses and had its first graduating cohort in November 2017. The culmination of this was the granting of University College title in 2017.

The Future

Since its establishment in 1917, the UCO has been a leading provider of osteopathic education and training, with a strong reputation for quality and excellence both nationally and internationally. The UCO's strategy continues to focus on the further growth of HE provision within the institution's specialist area of health education, training and research. While undergraduate osteopathic education remains at the UCO's core, it is envisaged that the institution will also look to deliver a range of other health-related undergraduate and postgraduate courses as it moves forward.

Our mission:

"Continually provide the highest quality education and research for all and the very best care, for each patient, on every occasion".

We interpret our mission with a renewed focus on excellence in learning, teaching, research and sustainability. Faithful to our founding principles, we remain committed to delivering education and healthcare to our communities. We will ensure that we remain accessible to all students with the potential to succeed.

Our vision:

"By 2027, the University College of Osteopathy will be an internationally recognised university for both education and research in osteopathy and associated health care subjects; a vibrant community of staff and students keen to explore and exploit new ideas

and challenge existing views, whose work will positively influence the quality of health care and shape future clinical practice locally, nationally and internationally."

To date, the UCO's undergraduate provision remains entirely osteopathic education and training, and as such the metrics provided as part of the UCO's TEF Year Three Award submission are based entirely on students studying osteopathy. This is in marked contrast to the majority of HEIs where metrics are based not on a single course, but rather on multiple courses and with this a diverse range of students. As shown in the TEF contextual data return, all UCO students are included in the 'Subjects allied to medicine' category.

The UCO's osteopathic education and training is accredited by the General Osteopathic Council (GOsC), the osteopathic professional and regulatory statutory body. Thus, the UCO's osteopathic course must not only meet the required quality standards assessed as part of our own approval process, but also the professional requirements that ensure the graduates can practice safely and competently as osteopaths in the UK.

The TEF contextual data metrics show that the majority of UCO students are studying the M.Ost full-time, with 35% studying the M.Ost qualification on a part-time basis. The total headcount of students is relatively low (headcount osteopathic students = 320), as compared with most other HEIs. The gender split shows a roughly equal number of male and female students similar to current trends in medicine and dentistry. In keeping with vocational courses a relatively high proportion (72%) of students are categorized as mature (>21 years).

Osteopathy is a relatively small profession in the UK (just over 5,000 registered practitioners) with the majority of osteopaths working in private practice. The size of the profession and the limited availability of osteopathic treatment on the NHS means that osteopathy remains relatively unknown to a high proportion of the population, in particular to those from lower socio-economic backgrounds and low participation neighborhoods. As with many vocational degrees, for example medicine, widening access to osteopathy is particularly challenging given the high academic standards required to successfully complete the course as well as the extended length of the course.

Across Europe and internationally, osteopathic regulation is variable, with several countries providing no regulation at all. The TEF metrics provided reflect this, showing that the majority of UCO students are from the UK. Unsurprisingly therefore, the student population at the UCO is mostly White.

There are a number of students at the UCO with disabilities. However, manual handling skills are very important in the osteopathic treatment of patients, and to ensure patient safety all UCO graduates must demonstrate that they are physically capable, safe and competent to practice as an osteopath. Applicants who declare a physical disability, be that permanent or temporary, are invited to discuss this prior to interview with the course leader to ensure that the issue would not preclude them from being able to achieve the competences required as an osteopath. In the majority of cases encountered to date the UCO has been able to make reasonable adjustments and provide specific support to enable the student to succeed on the course, which have included deaf and visually impaired students.

Osteopathic training requires participation in practical training classes to ensure graduates are safe and competent to practice and it is often necessary for students to remove some clothing when acting as patients, which can act as a barrier to some students. In addition, as a result of religious beliefs, some students may express a preference to only work with patients of a particular sex. The UCO makes a number of reasonable adjustments such as

adjustments to dress codes where there is an issue related to religious beliefs or faith, but still faces a number of challenges in widening participation to ethnic groups.
The UCO recruits students from mainly POLAR 3 – POLAR 5 and, as noted above, recruiting students from disadvantaged backgrounds is harder due to a lack of access to and knowledge about osteopathy. The low numbers of students in these groups mean that the split metrics for the UCO are not significantly different from the core metrics.

In the following sections, the UCO's performance against each of the assessment criteria is addressed. For each of these criteria that assess teaching excellence, first we use the evidence provided in the form of the core and split metrics, and second we provide additional evidence supporting our case.

The UCO are on the whole very proud of the core metric data. For the Full Time course the UCO performed better or equal to the weighted sector average in 5 out of the 6 metrics. Most notably with an impressive 98.8% graduates in highly skilled employment or further study and also a very strong continuation rate for the part time course (83.9 %). The UCO were aware of the issues raised by students in the areas of assessment and feedback and academic support for part time students and have demonstrated in this report that these are being addressed.

TEACHING QUALITY

Teaching quality focuses on student learning through contact with academic and professional support staff and includes course design and delivery, assessment and feedback, recognition and reward for excellence in teaching, and student engagement.

Evidence from core and split metrics

The student satisfaction score relating to 'the teaching on my course' was higher than the weighted sector average. This indicates that students at the UCO are very happy with the standard of teaching on their courses. The UCO consistently scores highly in this area due to the fact that we have a rigorous staff recruitment procedure and only employ staff that are well qualified and are committed to delivering a quality education to all of our students.

In contrast, student satisfaction with 'assessment and feedback' was below the sector average. The students on the whole are happy with the timing of the feedback they receive and the helpful comments on that feedback. But they are concerned about the 'criteria used in marking have been clear in advance' and most concerning are least satisfied with 'marking and assessment has been fair'. From the comments in the NSS data we can see that this dissatisfaction is mainly with regard to practical assessments.

The osteopathic course team has worked together with students consistently over the period covered by the metrics attempting to clarify the issues, and devise strategies and actions for improvement in student satisfaction in this area. This has resulted in a number of initiatives including the circulation of information and a presentation at the beginning of each year to each year group explaining the different ways in which feedback can be given to students, how it can be used effectively and, importantly, that feedback does not only relate to teaching staff's comments on written work.

The osteopathic course team also discussed with students the quality procedures the UCO puts in place to ensure fairness. Students were on the whole unclear of the UCO's double marking policy and the role the external examiners play in the assessment process. The issues relating to fairness tended to be around the clinical competency assessments (CCA),

which have been running at the UCO since the M.Ost was first approved in 2007. There are two three-hour assessments with students assessed on an individual basis with 'real' patients in the clinical environment by a variety of different tutors. There is a wide variation in the students' experience of this type of assessment due to the variability of the patients, and students have reported differences with regard to the different tutors examining them. The UCO have responded to this by introducing new clinical assessments which are shorter, more frequent and assessed by the pre-existing clinical teaching team. The UCO has also undertaken further development and training for staff involved in assessments. Examiners must attend a pre-exam meeting, and for the assessment itself a moderator is always present plus the external examiner. There is also a post exam meeting where moderation and peer feedback is given to the examiners.

The UCO accepts that more must be done to improve students' satisfaction with fairness and the clarity of marking criteria and to continue the good work to improve the feedback they receive in their studies. This issue has been addressed recently in staff development events and will continue to be so. Further work will be done with students through discussions in seeking ways to improve in this area. Undoubtedly this is a high priority area for the UCO and one that will continue to be addressed at every appropriate opportunity.

Additional Evidence

The practice of osteopathy and pre-registration osteopathic education is regulated by the General Osteopathic Council (GOsC), the Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB). This regulatory model is similar to that for medicine. The Osteopaths Act (1993) restricts the practice of osteopathy to registered osteopaths; only graduates of courses recognised by the GOsC are eligible to register. The mandatory criteria for 'Recognised Qualification' status for an osteopathic teaching course are based on the GOsC's Osteopathic Practice Standards (OPS).

The GOsC contracts the QAA to conduct Recognised Qualification (RQ) inspections and institutional inspections on its behalf. The UCO has now undergone five inspections since 2006, the last occurring in May 2016 which covered renewal of the RQ for the full-time and part-time M.Ost courses, and the two year MSc Osteopathy (Pre-Registration) course. The inspection team identified seven areas of strength and five of good practice. As evidence of the UCO's quality of osteopathic education and training, the GOsC recognised the UCO pre-registration degrees for a period of 5 years without conditions.

The visitors identified "the innovative approach to learning and teaching engages students with research and evidence-informed practice" (GOsC Report Nov 2016) and noted that "the wide variety of assessment formats, including the script concordance tests, and mini clinical examination performance assessments, allow specific competencies to be tested in a non-burdensome way as strengths." (GOsC Report Nov 2016). They also identified the development of student autonomy, responsibility and accountability, which builds students' capacity for leadership and which is embedded in the ethos and activities of the UCO as good practice.

The M.Ost course is very demanding, with students undertaking 43 summative assessments on the M.Ost Full-Time course. Due to the professional nature of the course and the competences set out in the Osteopathic Practice Standards by the GOsC, the UCO does not offer any compensation in these assessments; in order to progress to the next year on the M.Ost all assessments and examinations must be passed.

The UCO has demonstrated its high quality as a provider of Higher Education over the last 4 years; it has been subject to intense scrutiny as part of its applications for TDAP, HEFCE-designation and most recently, University College title.

The UCO faculty is made up of a mix of full-time and part-time teaching staff, with a range of experience in osteopathy and in teaching. The UCO makes use of associate and honorary members of staff, mainly practicing osteopaths who bring current experience with patients into their courses on a flexible basis. The UCO recognises that the student learning experience is significantly enhanced by the fact that most of its teaching faculty are also working in private practice; these osteopaths bring their considerable experience and expertise into the learning environment.

The UCO designed and delivers the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic and Clinical Education, a unique teaching qualification for educators of manual therapy. All newly recruited teaching staff without a formal teaching qualification are offered this course and are expected to begin this or another teacher training course within two years of being employed. Almost 75% of contracted teaching staff have a teaching qualification and/or are Fellows of the Higher Education Academy.

"Putting students at the centre of our activities by ensuring you receive support every step of the way, is our priority" (UCO Student Charter). We aim to help all our students to develop the attributes and skills they need to fulfil their potential.

The UCO actively encourages student engagement and welcomes student input on ways to enhance learning and teaching and the student experience.

Students are provided with a range of mechanisms for giving their views and engaging with the assessment of teaching quality; their opinions are valued across the institution as an important aspect of monitoring quality. Engagement is encouraged and the channels of communication are regularly reviewed and enhanced to ensure they are relevant and constructive for students and the institution. The UCO's provision in this area has been commended as good practice by both the University of Bedfordshire and the General Osteopathic Council and builds on previously acknowledged strengths.

Student Voice Mechanisms:

- Student Representative System
- Student Members of Committees.
- Student-Staff Liaison Consultation Groups
- Open Door Policy
- Student Voice E-Forum
- Student Evaluation Questionnaires
- Steering Groups and Working Parties
- Focus Groups
- Review and Approval Events
- Appeals and Complaints Procedures

The UCO promotes an open-door policy to ensure that students have access to staff and to foster the sense of community of learning. Student engagement is a strong feature of the UCO's approach to teaching and learning. There are student representative roles on a range of UCO committees including Course Teams, the Education Enhancement and Strategy Committee, the Widening Participation and Admissions Strategy Group, the Student Staff Liaison and Consultation Groups, Academic Council and the Board of Directors. The roles enable students to engage in committee work at a range of levels and subject areas across

the UCO giving the students valuable transferable skills to take on leadership roles in the profession. UCO graduates currently contribute to the profession by taking leadership roles at the Institute of Osteopathy (the osteopathic professional association), the General Osteopathic Council (PSRB) and roles within the osteopathic regional societies. Over this last year this has proved indispensable in the improvement of the VLE where learners have brought a wealth of advice and good practice from business and from previous education.

Senior students are mentoring others in clinic and where they show a particular expertise in the course they are encouraged to deliver optional tutorials for junior students. These have been of great benefit to all involved and were a particular success in the academic year 2016/2017. Another key initiative for engagement driven by students with UCO support is a summer course run in partnership with The London School of Sports Massage. This upskills year one and two learners and gives them a qualification that allows them to work in a field related to osteopathy. This year we have also started a project where students are involved in writing the NSS action plan and a focus group of fifteen final year students have given valuable advice that has directly informed this key instrument for the improvement of their academic and social experience. A similar project is now being initiated to help structure a new package of pre degree materials where current students will advise how best we can support and prepare those due to start the course. We also have student members on all course review and development panels. Those that study at the UCO are strongly encouraged to engage with the institution and with one another to benefit everyone as they work toward graduation. This level of student engagement highlights that the UCO values student engagement in more than just the curriculum, and is woven into the fabric of the whole student experience.

The M.Ost is a challenging course of 480 credits across 4 years full-time (or 5 years part-time) with approximately 25 hours in classroom-based activities each week in addition to assessments and self-study time of 10-15 hours per week for 32 weeks of the year, plus extra weeks in the holidays working in the osteopathic outpatients clinic. The in-class time includes practical sessions in groups of approximately 30 students. The UCO operates these osteopathic practical technique classes with a staff to student ratio of 1:10. Clinical education is delivered with a staff to student ratio of 1:4, in the UCO clinic. Students learn to manage their own patients using the clinical process of examination, diagnosis and treatment. This clinical environment presents students with a unique learning experience; their progress is closely monitored through intensive one-to-one sessions with osteopathic clinicians, allowing time to discuss individual patients in detail, with students exploring the treatment options and arriving at a diagnosis.

The UCO has a Teaching, Learning and Assessment strategy; the underpinning philosophy of all teaching, learning and assessments at the UCO is based on critical self-reflective practice, involving self-directed learning, problem based learning and case based learning. Teaching staff are encouraged to utilise innovative teaching methods whilst ensuring that the student experience is paramount. Students are fully supported but are expected to take responsibility for their own learning to ensure they develop into autonomous contemporary healthcare practitioners. The autonomy is very important as graduate osteopaths do not normally work in a supervised environment, unlike medical students, whereby new graduates work under supervision in a hospital environment.

The UCO recognises that all students are stretched when they are attempting to reach the goal of becoming an osteopath. The UCO acknowledges that all students will require support and guidance to achieve this goal. There are several ways in which the UCO offers this support to its students. One of the ways that the UCO enables students to reach their full potential is by the classroom experiences it offers. For many of the social, biological and

clinical sciences within the curriculum class sizes are comparable with those on other science degree course comprising of some whole-year lectures accompanied by smaller group seminars and tutorials. However, in practical osteopathic skills, group sizes are determined by the need for tutors to spend time working with individual students for hands-on learning activities. These activities include students working on each other as models and learning patient examination, case history taking, use of medical equipment, palpation and osteopathic treatment approaches. The students work in pairs and staff work with a maximum of five pairs of students allowing for a significant amount of time to be spent in very small group learning.

The other practical aspect of the M.Ost course is the clinical education component where students spend approximately 1,200 hours within our own self-funded teaching clinic. Within each clinical encounter a student will typically take a case history from a new patient, carry out a full examination and then discuss their findings, evaluation and management plan with the supervising osteopath. This takes place on a one-to-one basis. The supervising osteopath will then monitor the treatment and progress of the patient by the student, sometimes remaining in the room to observe, advise and assist, and at times leaving a student to continue autonomously with an agreed treatment as appropriate. Where a student osteopath requires further support in a particular situation the supervising tutor osteopath will demonstrate treatment or guide the student in modifying their treatment and management of the patient. Taking into account the number of hours students spend observing in the clinic, the clinical education of an osteopath involves up to 1,000 hours of one-to-four tuition and up to 240 hours of one-to-one tuition over the duration of the M.Ost course. This high staff: student ratio enables the staff to be very aware of each student's abilities and to work with them and support them according to their individual requirements. This one-to-one teaching in clinic and small group working in practical classes coupled with the considerable amount of contact time and the small size of the UCO leads to a highly personalised student experience allowing for considerable time spent with each student.

The Student Support department offers information, advice and guidance to all students through a specialist Student Learning Advisor. The Student Learning Advisor provides general academic support to all students through one-to-one drop-in sessions and appointments, as well as offering group workshops and email/phone assistance. They assist students by providing them with skills and resources they need to develop their own learning. Students are referred to and from the Student Learning Advisor service by tutors at all levels to ensure the best academic support is provided across the UCO. Use of these support services is recorded and reported on in the Annual Student Support Report.

Another of the UCO's strengths, which demonstrates its commitment to producing students who can work independently at Masters level, is that we are committed to supporting students in learning how to conduct primary research, rather than reducing the remit to secondary research as some other healthcare educational institutions have decided to do. We also try to ensure that students are undertaking research which is aligned with clinical and research expertise with staff already immersed in research in particular subject areas, so that they are exposed to up-to-date research literature. Assessment of practical and clinical education has to be a rigorous process since the student must demonstrate beyond question that their performance is both safe and effective before they are permitted to proceed to the next stage of the course or, indeed, to graduate. In these assessments the lowest ratio of staff to students will be one-to-one. In a number of instances it will be higher, for example in the final year Clinical Competence Assessments (CCAs). In the CCAs each student will undertake three four-hour examinations where they assess and manage three patients; the student is assessed by two trained examiners and a trained moderator whose role is to oversee the parity of the process and provide additional feedback if needed.

At each stage of their course, students will be examined in practical osteopathic skills. Clinical skills will also be formally assessed by qualified osteopaths several times before the CCAs are taken in the final year. Formative assessments of practical skills will generally involve at least one examiner per student, and summative assessments will require two or three depending on the nature of the assessment. The total time spent in one-to-one assessments per student is approximately 15 hours per student throughout the degree course. The students are provided with feedback following each practical assessment.

For summative practical and clinical assessments the UCO require that external examiners and moderators are physically present at the examinations to ensure academic standards are maintained.

“The UCO delivers an impressive portfolio of undergraduate and postgraduate course s as well as CPD courses for the professional community. The wide ranging nature of these programmes, which draw on the expertise of staff and external stakeholders is a real strength to the community of academic practice at the BSO and the students.” M.Ost External Examiner 2016-2017

The UCO publishes an assessment schedule for each year group at the beginning of the academic year which includes details of what feedback they can expect and its timing. Additionally, course assessment briefs are published at the beginning of the first term which include details of the assessment task, the learning outcomes being assessed, the weighting of the assessment and deadline dates and times. Unit Information Forms (UIFs) are made available on the UCOs VLE, together with sample exam papers and additional assessment information/resources. Tutors give a verbal Unit Induction at the beginning of each unit, providing information on assessments and where Unit Information Forms and assessment briefs can be found. These activities are designed to ensure that all students have access to all of the information, feedback and support to enable them to reach their full potential.

There is a range of evidence of the UCO’s success in managing and reviewing its assessment and feedback procedures, thereby contributing to the setting and maintenance of academic standards. This includes: the outcomes of external reviews, feedback from external examiners, and the UCOs award of Taught Degree Awarding Powers and Institutional Designation.

The UCO’s Student Charter sets out the responsibilities of both staff and students in terms of giving, receiving and using feedback. Students receive feedback on all assessments, both summative and formative, in a variety of formats including verbal and written; the majority of written feedback is delivered electronically at the same time as the grade.

Academic Tutors are encouraged to discuss students’ grade profiles with them to help them achieve their full potential. All Academic Tutors have access to their tutees’ assessment grades directly from the UCO’s Unit4’s Agresso Campus for Higher Education student database system (QL) thus enabling them to be more responsive to students’ requests and allowing them to monitor their tutees’ progress more effectively. Additionally, support is available from the Student Learning Advisor and the Counsellor who runs regular Exam Stress Workshops.

The UCO has developed two handbooks to provide students and faculty with guidance about feedback. The handbooks were developed in response to a request from students for the UCO to be more explicit with regard to what constitutes feedback. Student

Representatives were involved in the development of these handbooks and they have been used each year since and are updated regularly to reflect any changes.

One of the benefits of the style of teaching at the UCO in the practical classes and the clinical teaching is that feedback to students occurs on a daily basis. Feedback is therefore more than just part of the assessment process - it is an important teaching and learning tool. The UCO is aware that in order for students to make effective use of feedback they need to be able to reflect on it and think about changes they can make as a result of the comments. The UCO delivers formal sessions on reflection to allow students to discuss this and to help them develop the skills of independent and reflective learning.

Academic Tutors also play a key role in providing guidance about feedback. Students are encouraged to meet with their academic tutor at the beginning of each year to reflect holistically on all of the feedback they have received from the last academic cycle, rather than this being limited to one assessment. Academic tutors therefore work with students to explore feedback from across the course, highlight what the student is doing well, and identify what they can do to improve as a result of the comments.

In addition to feedback for students, academic staff use student evaluations of their unit as a means of assessment and feedback. This provides the opportunity to look at what students have said about the unit and allows staff to modify it so that learning outcomes are more explicit in response to evaluation. This is one way of closing the feedback loop as it shows staff are utilising the feedback from students to improve teaching.

The UCO appointed its own External Examiners in 2016. For the full time M.Ost course the UCO has three External Examiners. It appoints osteopaths to the clinical and practical external examining roles but looks to other subject's disciplines for the more theoretical external examiner roles. The external examiners have been complimentary about the levels of attainment expected of UCO students, their achievement and the UCO's infrastructure for managing assessment. Over the years, there have been no persisting areas of concern raised by the external examiners.

"Overall, the quality of the course is very good due to the breadth of tutors and lecturers. The individual departments of research, technique and clinic are very strong and are constantly working to improve within their own settings."
External Examiner 2016-2017

The UCO rewards and recognises excellence in teaching in several ways; a new strategic Dean of Academic Development ole was implemented to ensure that the leadership of teaching and learning was represented at the senior management level of the UCO. Excellent teaching is rewarded by the teaching 'Starr' awards with nominations from staff and students to recognise staffs that have made an exceptional impact on students learning.

As demonstrated in the report on grade inflation there have been no significant changes in the numbers of distinctions awarded across the osteopathic course. The course is designed to stretch students and they have to pass all elements on the course and to be awarded the degree.

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT
The UCO's learning environment provides a support which enables the students to be successful on the M.Ost course.

Evidence from core and split metrics

Academic support, as measured by the NSS, student satisfaction with the advice and support they receive, the ability to contact staff when needed and availability of good advice when needed was not significantly different from the weighted sector average for the full-time course. Again this indicates that full-time students at the UCO are aligned in their views of the availability of academic support with those of students with similar characteristics in the sector. However, part-time students were less satisfied than the weighted sector average. Following investigation, this was found to be due to the time allowed for part-time students to access support when they are physically in the building. The part-time students are fully timetabled when at the UCO, and whilst there are other ways of accessing the support available e.g. via email, skype or by appointment where support staff will come in at a mutually agreed time, the UCO will look to review the part-time timetables to see if flexibility could be introduced.

The metric concerning continuation for full-time was higher (UCO 89%) than the weighted sector benchmark (87.5%), indicating that the UCO levels are above other HE institutions. However, for the part-time course it was significantly better (UCO 84%) than the weighted sector benchmark (64%). Given the duration and academic challenges of the osteopathic courses the continuation rates for full- and part-time are very positive and the UCO will continue to support all students who start the course to become osteopaths.

The majority of students at the UCO enter the course with the clear goal to become an osteopath. Osteopathy is still relatively unknown to large proportions of the population (Ref POLAR 1 and POLAR 2 data), and most applicants, when asked how they found out about osteopathy, have usually been treated by an osteopath or a member of their family has received treatment. They arrive on the whole well-informed about osteopathy as a career and are driven to achieve this. The courses are demanding and intensive with 4 years (FT) and 5 years (PT) of study and over 1,200 hours of clinical education in addition to the hours in classes and practical sessions. Students are informed at interview about the demands of the course and the high levels of commitment required. The lowest rates of continuation, as might be expected, occur in the early years of the course and are mainly due to personal reasons and not reaching the academic standards to progress to year 2. Once into year 2 of the course the continuation rates improve. For those students who leave the course exit interviews are offered to fully understand the issues the student might be facing and if possible strategies put in place for the student to remain on course.

Additional evidence

The UCO recognises that the way in which students learn is changing, in part due to advances in technology and how society adapts to these developments. The UCO seeks to ensure students are provided with high quality physical and digital resources to enhance their learning. The UCO is a monotechnic; therefore the majority of its resources are used to support students on our M.Ost. The UCO's spend on the M.Ost course for 2016/17 was £4.42m. Therefore the investment made into these courses and the infrastructure is a significant proportion of the UCO's income.

The M.Ost in an expensive course to deliver as a result of the high levels of contact time, the personalised experience and the high-quality resources, in addition to the normal requirements for delivery of any higher education course (e.g. lecture theatres, seminar and tutorial rooms, computer rooms, library, staff rooms, offices, common rooms, student union facilities). The nature of the teaching and learning process for osteopathy also requires substantial specialist accommodation and equipment, such as dedicated rooms with plinths, clinical skills equipment, and anatomical models. The UCO has also invested in its own purpose designed clinical facility. Unlike physiotherapy, nursing or midwifery, none of the

clinical costs are borne by the NHS. The expenditure on clinical education in 2016/17 was £1.01m

The UCO is also proud to have the largest osteopathic library in Europe. The library provides access to the resources that support the teaching, learning and research strategies of the UCO, and its collection is constantly updated by the library team in line with course team planning each year. The resources include books, journals, DVDs, anatomical models, theses, reference tools, library catalogues, databases, and internet-based search tools and resources. Student satisfaction for learning resources provided by the UCO have been consistently outstanding and of the highest quality as indicated by average NSS scores: 96% in 2017, 92% in 2016, and 97% in 2015.

The library and computer rooms at the UCO provide a range of individual and group study spaces for students, as well as affording access to the UCOs virtual learning environment (BONE), incorporating email, internet access and a range of software packages.

The UCO recognises that in the last 10 years, education has benefited from the use of e-learning. The UCO introduced its own Moodle VLE – "BONE" in 2009.

BONE is used for;

- Communication – it's used for discussions with students, and provides instant feedback in formative assessments.
- Producing work – students do not physically have to find their tutor to hand in work due to secure virtual 'hand-in' folders that have time windows.
- Resource hub – tutors have infinite online storage space for PowerPoint slides, docs, worksheets etc. that can either be secure or shared with students
- Dynamic home pages – tutors have the opportunity to create a virtual space to represent their subject.
- Links to outside sources – pathways to all other online learning spaces are linked via BONE
- Embedded content – YouTube, links to articles can all be embedded
- Podcasts & videos – currently only the tutors can upload podcasts and videos.

The teaching of practical skills requires facilities for demonstrations and for students to view and evaluate their own and peer performances. In recognition of this the UCO provides video recording, editing and playback facilities, entailing the purchase of specialist video equipment and the employment of an audio-visual technician.

The human neuromusculoskeletal system is a focus for osteopathic education. Students on osteopathy degree programs and their tutors need access to model skeletons and to a wide range of bones, joints and anatomical and pathological specimens. The UCO has invested in Anatomy TV which features the most comprehensive, accurate and detailed 3D models of the human body online today.

Feedback from graduates and employers is important to the UCO. Recent graduates have been invited to take part in the internal approval of new courses, strategic planning days, and curriculum development project groups and as part of review panels for existing courses. They are specifically asked to contribute to areas that will enhance the student experience. The students involved in a recent approval event requested that the business development of the course be enhanced in the new course and this was then actioned by the course team.

Feedback on the employability of UCO graduates is largely provided by teaching staff currently working at the UCO, many of whom are part-time practicing osteopaths who employ new graduates within their practices.

All staff are asked to contribute to the review of current courses and they inform the development of existing and new courses. The UCO is therefore confident that for osteopathic courses it has direct input from current and future employers into course reviews and development.

Research and scholarship activities at the UCO support the institution's educational provision and contribute to the development of the osteopathic profession. The research infrastructure and the associated research and scholarship provide a strong foundation that underpins an evidence-informed learning environment, and supports the development, implementation and evaluation of the M.Ost courses. In the wider context of the profession as a whole, the UCO's research and scholarship activities enable its graduates to develop the capabilities required to contribute to, and promote, an evidence-informed culture, and to facilitate the development and growth of the osteopathic profession.

The UCO benefits from being small and specialised, enabling all staff, both teaching and support staff, to know the students they are working with. The UCO prides itself on treating all students on an individual basis starting from recruitment and admissions events.

The UCO is aware that the start of a student's engagement in higher education is a critical and sensitive period. The UCO provides a fully tailored induction programme which aims to ease the transition and helps prepare students for their academic and social experiences. Induction for all new students includes: a welcome to the UCO by the Vice-Chancellor; introduction to key personnel including the Academic Registrar, Course Leader, student support team, and academic tutors; and sessions from osteopaths in practice to excite students about the courses they are about to embark upon. There are also sessions from the library and ICT teams to introduce learning resources. This is complemented by social events, a fresher's fair and a welcome party hosted by the Vice-Chancellor.

Part-time students on the M.Ost are also invited to similar induction events to ensure a parity of experience and to ensure they can engage socially with the full time students. These students are also provided with bespoke sessions that cover topics such as: returning to study, in recognition that some of these students have often been out of education for a number of years; an introduction to higher education; and how to study on a part-time course.

One important feature of the induction is an interview with the Student Support team. These interviews take place in the first two weeks, and seek to ascertain how the students are settling in, clarify any issues and are an opportunity for the students to explore the support networks available to them and to flag any concerns they have about studying on the course. At the end of student induction feedback is taken on an annual basis and in response to recent feedback the induction has been shortened to allow students to begin studying the core subjects sooner.

Continuing students also have a modified induction programme, which introduces them to the next phase of the course they are undertaking. It covers issues such as regulatory changes, changes to support, and also a session on how the UCO responded to the feedback from students in the last academic cycle. The UCO believes that it is very important to 'close the feedback loop' with the students, so they can see what actions the UCO has taken in response to the issues raised. For example, part-time students requested

greater availability of student support at contact weekends. In response the UCO employed two dedicated Academic Tutors to be available for appointments with part-time students when they are at the UCO. Part-time students have reported that this is a welcome enhancement. In addition, students reported that they felt that the library and Student Union (SU) areas required refurbishment. Subsequently the UCO undertook works to refresh these areas with addition plug sockets in the library and new furniture in the SU area, both of which have been well-received by students in terms of study and social environments, respectively.

The management and support of students' progression is the responsibility of the Student Attendance and Retention Group (SARG) Chaired by the Registrar and attended by Course Leaders, Heads of Area and Student Support representatives. This group uses specific learner analytics such as attendance, formative and summative assessment results in order to highlight students at risk. Measures can then be put in place to support the student. Support may include appointments with the student's Academic Tutor, Student Learning Advisor, Student Counsellor, Student Support Manager or Course Leader as appropriate. The SARG also facilitates extra support for those students returning from a period away from study, and to those transferring from other higher education institutions. The SARG aims to resolve minor problems quickly and easily where a student may not have independently sought help from a member of UCO staff. The SARG also considers all students who are TIER 4 to ensure that they are attending and also to ensure that they are adequately supported.

Students are given academic guidance and support from a range of inter-related sources. One of the advantages of studying at the UCO, and an aspect much valued by the students, is its size. The relationships between students and staff are close and supportive and development of students' learning is actively encouraged by teaching staff. At course level, Unit Leaders and Course Leaders and other tutors provide comprehensive documentation on the units and assessments, supplemented by advice in person. All students are allocated an Academic Tutor on arrival at the UCO. The Academic Tutor role is clearly defined and made more appropriate for the different stages of the M.Ost courses. An Academic Tutor Handbook has been produced and the Academic Tutor service is kept under review by the Student Support Manager. Generally, the UCO operates an open door policy so that all academic staff are easily accessible to provide subject specific feedback and support. The majority of staff are practicing osteopaths who are sensitive to the demands of clinical osteopathic work.

The Student Support department at the UCO caters for all students, providing personal welfare and disability advice and support, equality advice, a counselling service and learning advice and support. All of these areas interlink in order to support students' academic performance and communication between the Student Support department and teaching staff is very important. For a small, specialist institution the UCO is confident that the level of support it offers to its students is of a high standard.

When students choose to leave the UCO they are asked to attend an Exit Interview with the Student Support department. Students leaving the UCO do so mainly for personal reasons, including financial.

At the Examination Board in July the UCO considers each student on an individual basis, and any student with referral work is offered an interview with the Unit Leader and support throughout the summer to prepare for the referral assessments. The majority of non-continuation due to assessment fails are in the first year and on interview the students often report it is due to lack of understanding of the work required to be successful in the

theoretical assessments. The Unlit Leaders attempt to pre-empt this with formative assessments, practice papers, and online testing to prepare the students for the assessments.

The M.Ost course attracts a lot of career changing students with busy family lives outside of the UCO and the UCO aims, as best as it can, to offer as flexible an approach as possible.

STUDENT OUTCOMES AND LEARNING GAIN

Evidence from core and split metrics

The metrics show a very high proportion of graduates entering highly-skilled employment or further study for both the full-time and part-time courses. The proportion of graduates (98.8%) entering highly-skilled employment is consistently outstanding and significantly above the weighted sector average. Almost all of these graduates will enter private osteopathic practice, either as sole practitioners or more usually in practices with other osteopaths.

Additional evidence

The UCO prepares its students for employment in many ways: the study of osteopathy and the interactions that students have with patients, tutors and other students contributes to the broader experiences that students have while on their course.

The UCO aims to ensure that the students are equipped to make a smooth transition to work, but equally gives them the opportunity for intellectual and personal development and to be effective and adaptable within a rapidly changing economy and society. It does this by providing students with skills to enable them to be successful both in setting up their own practices as self-employed osteopaths but also as employers of others.

The UCO hosts an annual Career day, where osteopaths, who practice in diverse settings such as in sports or in secondary or primary NHS care roles, are invited into the UCO to give presentations and display information about their practices and to meet with prospective employees, talks are provided about setting up a business and also how to write CVs and interview techniques. The UCO also encourages all students to undertake work experience visits to osteopaths who currently run clinics.

As a professionally focused course the M.Ost equips all students with essential transferable skills, developing autonomous working in a reflective manner committed to continuing professional development and lifelong learning. The course equips students with problem-solving skills who are able to assess, implement, and evaluate a given situation. It instils in graduates an ethical approach with excellent interpersonal and communication skills. It also equips graduates with the ability to investigate and apply research evidence, leadership and management skills and information technology skills.

The UCO consistently achieves outstanding outcomes for its students. The UCO's graduates excel in enterprise, some setting up their own businesses on completion of the course. Time spent in the UCO's general and specialist clinics ensures a breadth of experience with a wide variety of patients that would not be available in any other osteopathic centre. To support new graduates, the UCO offers positions working with mentors in its Associate Clinic, thereby ensuring a smooth transition from study to professional practice. The UCO's pre-registration osteopathic courses also provide a sound academic foundation from which to develop further professional, practical and research skills through the UCO's postgraduate and continuing professional development courses.

The UCO has a long-standing commitment to widening participation and fair access as set out in the UCO's Access agreement for 2018/19. It very much endorses the view that higher education should be made accessible to all, regardless of background or financial status, to promote social justice and economic competitiveness.

As noted above, the general lack of knowledge about osteopathy presents a particular challenge to the widening participation agenda of the UCO. In recognition of the need to widen participation, the UCO also designed an Access to Higher Education Diploma course, accredited by Laser Learning Awards (LASER), specifically for students who wish to study osteopathy. On successful completion of this course, students are guaranteed a place on the M.Ost course at the UCO.

Conclusion

The UCO over the last century has established itself as a consistently outstanding leader in the field of osteopathic education, providing high quality education to a wide range of students. UCO supports its students through a very demanding course onto successful completion, with 98.8% of its graduates entering highly skilled employment as registered osteopaths contributing to the improved health of society.