

## Introduction

Diagnostic Radiography is currently listed as a shortage occupation by the UK government, with vacancy rates across the UK at between 15-20%<sup>1,2</sup>. This shortage has led to renewed interest in encouraging qualified radiographers whose registration with the HCPC has lapsed, to return to the profession<sup>3</sup>. Guidance and support to help radiographers return to practice is available from both the regulatory body (HCPC) and professional body (Society of Radiographers)<sup>4,5</sup>. However, recent changes in technology, such as the move to digital radiography, and changes to the role of the diagnostic radiographer, such as image commenting, have anecdotally been barriers to returnees. The 'Return to Practice in Diagnostic Radiography' programme at one UK university provides a structured way for returnees to meet the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) return to practice requirements. The programme is the first of its kind to be approved by the College of Radiographers, and at present there are no other academic institutions offering such a programme in the UK. The programme therefore attracts returnees from across the UK.

## Aim

This poster aims to share the experience of one UK university in setting up and running a Return to Practice programme for Diagnostic Radiography.

## Programme Structure

The programme is designed to support returnees to re-establish clinical competency in a range of radiographic techniques and diagnostic imaging procedures within their scope of practice. The programme includes scheduled learning and teaching activities, simulation in the clinical skills suite and problem based scenarios (Fig. 2). Guided independent study is utilised to support individual learning needs identified in a 'gaps analysis' exercise. Placement learning provides the opportunity for returnees to apply underpinning theory into current clinical practice, and demonstrate professional and radiographic skills.

## Experience of Returnees

*"Fantastic, I wouldn't have been able to re-enter the profession without this course. It is the **only** course of its nature in the country and is an invaluable option to those wishing to re-enter the radiography workforce."* Returnee in Sept 2016 cohort

*"Retraining to gain HCPC registration will be life changing for me."* Returnee in Sept 2016 cohort

*"I doubt I would have returned without the support of this course as it provided all the requirements I needed in a structured environment. I would recommend anyone wishing to return to radiography to consider this course."* Returnee in Jan 2017 cohort

*"I feel like I have a second chance to begin my life again. I cannot recommend this course enough."* Returnee in Jan 2017 cohort

## Feedback from Clinical Partners and Health Education England

*"It can be a big leap for people returning to practice after many years out, but with the support of the University and the department, [our returnee] was able to take this leap and return to practice as a diagnostic radiographer. From a recruitment perspective, it has opened up another avenue of recruitment of radiographers in what is a difficult time to recruit and retain staff across the NHS."* Practice Educator, Kettering General Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

*"We need to get these radiographic skills back in the NHS and this course does just that."* Superintendent Radiographer, University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust

*"By supporting local Diagnostic Radiographer returnees to regain HCPC registration, local East Midland providers have benefited from experienced trained healthcare professionals being able to seek employment and address local recruitment issues."* Regional Project Lead for RTP, Health Education England

## Programme Leader feedback

*"It's fantastic to meet such a diverse range of radiographers and to support them back into practice, and to re-gain their HCPC registration. I feel privileged to be part of their return to practice journey."*

## Conclusions

We have now supported three cohorts of returnees through the programme, with a fourth due to start in September 2017. All of the returnees from the first two cohorts have now successfully regained their HCPC registration. The third cohort is due to submit their coursework shortly. The programme has evaluated outstandingly well in all aspects, demonstrating that it is highly valued by the returnees. Returnees found it wholly relevant to their return to practice; stating that the programme has been 'life-changing' for them by enabling them to return to their profession. Areas that they identified as especially positive included the quality of teaching, support and encouragement, and support in arranging placements near to the homes of returnees based outside the vicinity of the University's usual placement area.

## References

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3. Helping allied health professionals return to practice (2016) Health Education England. Available at: <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/hee-your-area/east-midlands/our-work/attracting-developing-our-workforce/allied-health-professionals/helping-allied-health-professionals-return>
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# Return to Practice: supporting diagnostic radiographers back into the workforce

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Fig 1 – The March 2016 cohort

Typically, for a radiographer returning to 'plain film radiography' the module will take on the following structure –

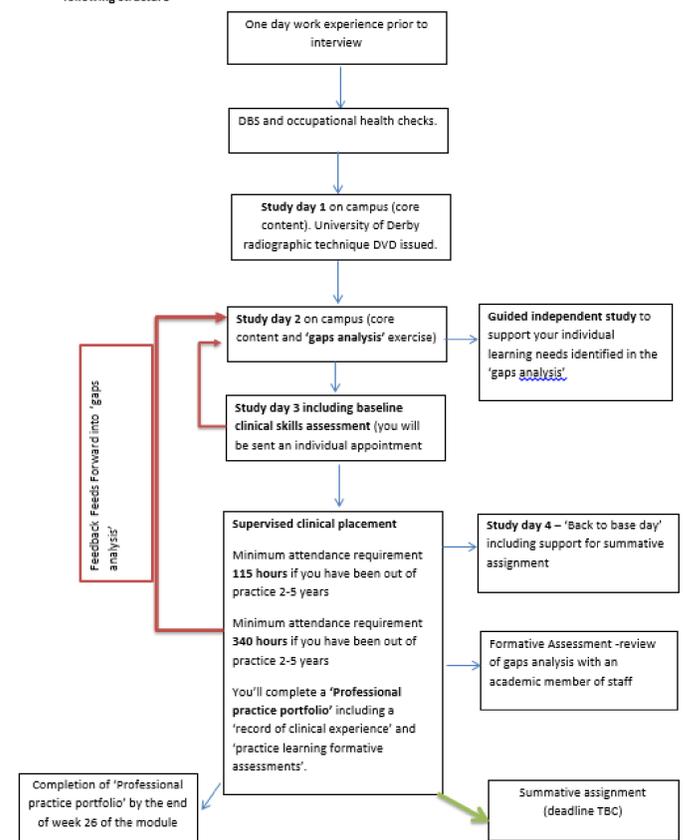


Fig 2 - Programme structure