

First Contact Practitioner (Musculoskeletal) PGCert Programme Specification

Academic Year:	2026/2027
Degree Awarding Body:	The University of Bradford
Main Location:	City Campus
Qualifications Framework:	HE Qualifications of UK Degree Awarding Bodies (FHEQ: QAA 2014)
Target Degree Award:	Postgraduate Certificate (PGC) [FHEQ Level 7]
Programme Admissions:	UK and home students
Programme Start Dates:	September
Course Mode of Study:	12 months part-time (blended learning)

Please note: The University has a set of terms and conditions for all students accepting an offer to study on a course here at Bradford. This is called the Student Contract. This document sets out the Terms and Conditions which apply when an offer of a place on a programme of study at the University of Bradford is accepted. [View our Student Contract for further details](#). Information about this programme and its modules has been published in advance of the academic year to which it applies. Every effort has been made to ensure that the information is accurate at the time of publication, but changes may occur given the interval between publishing and commencement of teaching. Any change which impacts the terms and conditions of an applicant's offer will be communicated to them.

Minor Modifications Schedule

1. July 2025: Annual Changes for the 2025 academic year, including changes to academic regulation.
2. May 2026: Annual changes for 2026 entry including update to FCP2

Programme Overview

Experienced healthcare practitioners now have the opportunity to take on challenging roles, working across professional, organisational and system boundaries to meet diverse patient needs (Francis 2013, Cavendish 2013, HEE 2013). Musculoskeletal clinicians working towards these roles, often at the forefront of innovative practice, are expected to undertake postgraduate education (Department of Health, 2010). This programme will prepare the student for the demands of the role of First Contact Practitioner by supporting and assisting the development of the student in the skills required specifically for this role, over and above more conventional postgraduate MSK (musculoskeletal) study.

The demands of this role require the clinician to show capabilities within new pathways of patient assessment and management. There is therefore a need for appropriate training and governance to support staff moving into this practice. We recognise this and therefore are focusing on delivering

safe and effective MSK specific practice using firstly simulation within the scope of these new pathways and secondly through practice in a primary care setting.

The programme is designed to develop the skills in complex reasoning, critical thinking and analysis required to undertake the role of a first contact practitioner in adult musculoskeletal practice. This will involve students using a wide range of career experience, applying it and integrating with the current evidence-based practice to improve patient management.

There are two routes within this programme to achieve the programme learning outcomes and exit with a Postgraduate Certificate First Contact Practitioner (Musculoskeletal). The first route is by undertaking the taught modules, the second by completing the supported ePortfolio. Suitability of route will be determined by completion of the learning needs analysis undertaken at the point of application. The programme will offer students the opportunity to develop knowledge and skills to a range of information, data, tools and techniques to improve the quality of care and improved access and outcomes with patients presenting with musculoskeletal conditions.

Students will learn through their experience in the practice-based learning environment, developing enhanced knowledge in musculoskeletal practice and using critical reflection to draw together the evidence-based theory and their professional practice. The programme will support students through a partnership between the learner, the clinical supervisor and the University of Bradford academic mentor.

The programme closely aligns with current thinking around musculoskeletal career frameworks and could lead to NHS Agenda for Change Band 7 First Contact Practitioner roles in Primary Care and onward to NHS Agenda for Change Band 8a as part of an advanced practice portfolio.

The Faculty of Health and Social Care is a major provider of education and training for individuals working within the health, social, independent and community/voluntary sector organisations across the Yorkshire and Humber Region. The physiotherapy and sport teaching team have won numerous university teaching excellence awards and this work has been recognised nationally with an AdvanceHE Collaborative Award for Teaching Excellence (2019). The Faculty focus on excellence though knowledge, practice, research, leadership and management aims to support the future sustainability of the individuals, through lifelong learning and improved employability and thereby influencing the future adaptability of individual organisations and service delivery to promote change.

Programme Aims

The programme is intended to:

- A1 Provide programme that is vocationally relevant, which meets the student's professional development needs in a first contact setting, as well as the organisational needs of employers.
- A2 Provide opportunities in the clinical setting for inter-professional learning to share the professional knowledge, skills and experience common to a range of different health and social care disciplines.
- A3 Stimulate the student to become autonomous, self-directed learners who are motivated to sustain and advance their own continuous professional development.
- A4 Develop students' clinical skills, knowledge, and critical understanding to an advanced level, applicable to your own field of musculoskeletal practice.

- A5 Further develop cognitive and practical skills to undertake data synthesis, complex problem solving and risk assessment.
- A6 Prepare the student, to work in advanced and specialist roles with high levels of accountability.
- A7 Develop the student as a practitioner who will innovate, promote evidence informed practice, and improve service user outcomes.
- A8 Develop the student as a leader with skills and confidence, to act as a role model, supporting the professional development of colleagues and the work of the organisation within local governance framework.
- A9 Develop the student as a critically reflective, competent leader who will manage service development towards effective, sustainable, inclusive, fair, and ethically sensitive service provision.

Programme Learning Outcomes

1. Develop a detailed knowledge, critically analyse and apply the research evidence that informs the development of policy and service delivery in First Contact Practice (Musculoskeletal).
2. Demonstrate mastery of clinical or practical skills for the management of complex issues in First Contact Practice (Musculoskeletal).
3. Apply knowledge of anatomy and physiology to undertake advanced assessment, diagnosis, complex care planning, health promotion and evaluation appropriate to First Contact Practice (Musculoskeletal).
4. Reflect upon and demonstrate knowledge of values, ethical thinking, equality awareness, inclusive practice within First Contact Practice (Musculoskeletal).
5. Develop and demonstrate the ability to articulate sound arguments and justify decisions using a variety of formats including written and oral communication skills.
6. Demonstrate advanced communication skills, problem solving and risk assessment in First Contact Practice (Musculoskeletal).
7. Demonstrate the ability to use IT skills to gather and synthesise information, to access programme materials.
8. Critically reflect on your leadership skills and apply your professional knowledge to support the development of colleagues and the work of your organisation.
9. Critically analyse clinical governance issues, service improvement and patient safety issues in First Contact Practice (Musculoskeletal).

Assessment Strategy

Your learning will be assessed against the learning outcomes and programme aims through the use of a range of different assessment techniques which may include one or more of the following approaches:

- Online training packages

- Objective structured clinical examination (OSCE)
- The development of a reflective ePortfolio
- Capability/Competency ePortfolio document

Learning and Teaching Strategy

The aims of the blended learning and teaching strategies have been designed so that the student will be given the opportunity to develop theoretical understanding, practical application, research informed knowledge and critical thinking, to develop a range of skills appropriate to the students professional field, organisation and workplace setting. The student will also develop skills and knowledge of research and application to their own practice area.

Taught Route Teaching and Learning Strategy

Whilst following this route through the programme, students will engage with learning through a range of blended teaching methods using online delivery that will be synchronous ('synchronous' meaning 'live' session, not pre-recorded). However, student-centred approaches to learning are a feature of the modules and students will be expected to take responsibility for their own learning as they develop their academic skills. Teaching methods will include keynote lectures, enquiry-based learning, online learning, peer discussion and debate, the use of case studies and specific reflective activities.

The course of study will expose the student to a range of different teaching, learning and assessment strategies required to achieve the learning outcomes. The teaching approaches that are used across the Faculty of Health and Social Care are informed by the University and Faculty core values which are for teaching and learning to be: *Research informed, Reflective, Adaptable, Inclusive, Supportive, Ethical* and *Sustainable*. Therefore, the programme delivery includes the following:

- Lectures (online): to a group of students where information will be presented and discussed whilst informed by the core values.
- Work-based learning: where learning is directed within the work environment (some of which may be delivered online) and is reflected upon and then reported on.
- Use of virtual learning environments, to access information and to interact with other students. Delivery will be synchronous (live).
- Directed reading: where set reading may be recommended.
- Self-Directed learning: Where students are expected to develop their own learning by identifying areas of interest and areas in which knowledge needs to be developed.

Portfolio Route Teaching and Learning Strategy

Whilst following this route through the programme, students will engage with University Academic mentors through one-to-one supervision sessions and seminars. Students will also have access to learning materials and directed study materials on the virtual learning environment. However, student-centred approaches to learning are a feature of the modules and students will be expected to take responsibility for their own learning as they develop their academic skills.

Curriculum Routes

The First Contact Practitioner (Musculoskeletal) PGCert programme is made up of two 30-credit core modules. The modules are required to be completed successfully in sequence as Module 1 addresses the clinical knowledge and theory required to undertake successful completion of Module 2 in a first contact clinical environment.

Modules at Bradford on this programme can be delivered in the autumn ("Semester 1"), spring ("Semester 2"), both ("Ac Year") or spring and summer ("Ns Year").

Taught route

First Contact Practitioner 1 – Advanced Musculoskeletal Practice (PAR7017-C) is a module that allows students to explore recent advances, theoretical knowledge, and current musculoskeletal practice applicable to First Contact Practitioner settings and to demonstrate these skills and knowledge to be developed in a simulated environment. This module aligns to Stage 1 of the First Contact Practitioners & Advanced Clinical Practitioners in Primary Care: (Musculoskeletal) A Roadmap to Practice (NHS England, 2021).

First Contact Practitioner 2 – Working in Primary Care (PAR7022-C) is a module that (upon successful completion of First Contact Practitioner 1) gives students the opportunity to apply and demonstrate recent advances and knowledge to deliver innovative FCP (MSK) services working with other members of the healthcare team to improve patient care and their access to high quality health services. This module aligns to Stage 2 of the First Contact Practitioners & Advanced Clinical Practitioners in Primary Care: (Musculoskeletal) A Roadmap to Practice (NHS England, 2021).

Table 1: Taught route (both modules core for this route)

Code	Module Title	Credit	Level	Period
PAR7017-C	First Contact Practitioner 1 – Advanced Musculoskeletal Practice	30	FHEQ 7	Sem. 1
PAR7022-C	First Contact Practitioner 2 – Working in Primary Care	30	FHEQ 7	Non Standard Year

Portfolio route

First Contact Practitioner (MSK) -Supported ePortfolio route stage 1 (PAR7019-C) is a module that allows students to demonstrate compliance with the requirements of Stage 1 of the First Contact Practitioners & Advanced Clinical Practitioners in Primary Care: (Musculoskeletal) A Roadmap to Practice (NHS England, 2021).

First Contact Practitioner (MSK) – Advanced Musculoskeletal Practice Supported ePortfolio route stage 2 (PAR7020-C) is a module that allows students to demonstrate compliance with the requirements of Stage 2 of the First Contact Practitioners & Advanced Clinical Practitioners in Primary Care: (Musculoskeletal) A Roadmap to Practice (NHS England, 2021).

Table 2: ePortfolio route (both modules core for this route)

Code	Module Title	Credit	Level	Period
PAR7019-C	First Contact Practitioner (MSK) -Supported ePortfolio route stage 1	30	FHEQ 7	Academic Year
PAR7020-C	First Contact Practitioner (MSK) – Advanced Musculoskeletal Practice Supported ePortfolio route stage 2	30	FHEQ 7	Non-Standard Year

Assessment, Continuation and Award Regulations

This programme follows the Assessment, Continuation and Award regulations for postgraduate taught courses published on the University's Website ([Regulation 9](#)), with variance from the regulations as outlined below and documented in the Variance Register:

- **Variance from 4.2** - Students must achieve at least the pass mark stated in the module descriptor for all individual components within each module, to pass all modules on the programme.
- **Variance from 6.1.1** - Students completing the programme taking a single portfolio route module (either PAR7019- C or PAR7020-C) will have their calculation based on module marks based on 30 credits where marks are available. Students that have taken both portfolio modules (PAR7019-C and PAR7020-C) will not receive a weighted mean average and therefore will not receive a classification

Admission Requirements

We are proud to be [one of the most inclusive universities in the UK](#). All our students have potential, and we believe that as many people as possible should have the chance to benefit from higher education, no matter what their background or circumstances.

We take the time to understand the background of our applicants, understand their journey to education, and make decisions based on an applicant's potential to thrive at university and beyond.

To this end, there is a requirement to undertake a Learning Needs Analysis (LNA) process where a suggested route of study for each applicant will be made by the programme team. The programme team will signpost to the appropriate agreed route to completion of Stage 1 and/or Stage 2 requirements of the Roadmap to Practice. The programme team will verify completion of Stage 1 and/or Stage 2 to allow learners to complete the requirements as laid out by the Centre for Advancing Practice, regardless of the route to Roadmap to Practice completion i.e. blended, portfolio or HEI taught. Individuals who meet Stage 1 and 2 through will have the opportunity to build academic credit towards an MSc Advancing Practice.

If the HEI taught route or the supported portfolio route has been suggested, through the completion of a Placement and Supervision Agreement, you will be required to identify a nominated appropriately trained supervisor to support you for the 75-hour practice placement component as part of the second module on the PG Cert (FCP2 - Working in Primary Care) or completion of the Roadmap to Practice requirements in Primary Care. The supervisor must agree to a minimum level of clinical supervision meeting the criteria of:

- Minimum of 30 min debrief at end of every 3-hour clinical session.

- Supervision content is negotiated between the clinical supervisor and the supervisee according to the learning needs of the FCP learner.
- Supervisor or nominated person will be available to the student for contact during clinical session as required.

The sourcing of a suitable supervisor and practice placement remains the sole responsibility of the applicant.

Criteria for a suitable Roadmap Supervisor includes:

- A GP Trainer – Educational Supervisor (ES's do not need to complete the 2 day course but have an optional top-up session available as an e-lfh video.)
- A GP
- A Clinician who has a post registration Masters degree (Pre-registration Masters degrees DO NOT qualify)
- Are a full MACP member
- A First Contact Practitioner who has completed the requirements of the Roadmap to Practice.
- An Advanced Practitioner who is recognised by the NHS England Centre for Advancing Practice (CfAP).

Your local Primary Care Training Hub may be able to support you in finding a supervisor should you encounter difficulties.

The minimum academic entry requirement for this programme is to demonstrate the ability to work at postgraduate level, this assessment will be undertaken through the Learning Needs Analysis (LNA) process. Students will usually have a minimum of 5 years post qualification experience with significant experience in a Musculoskeletal setting or a closely related area, but applications are welcome from motivated students with significant relevant clinical experience.

UK students applying without a Master's degree will require either a UK Bachelor's degree or GCSE English at Grade 4 (Grade C). Examples of other equivalent international qualifications are provided on the [University of Bradford page for a country or region](#).

Professional Entry Requirements

The current professional entry requirements for the programme are:

- Current registration with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) or British Association of Sport Rehabilitators and Trainers (BaSRAT) or Society of Sports Therapists. (SST) or General Osteopathic Council (GOC),
- Usually, 5 years of post-registration experience ideally in a musculoskeletal setting.
- To be currently employed as a registered practitioner with a professional or regulatory body including; Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), British Association of Sport Rehabilitators and Trainers (BaSRAT), Society of Sports Therapists. (SST), General Osteopathic Council (GOC) and will either be operating in a First Contact role or planning to enter this field.

- To have your application supported by your employer agreeing to release you to attend the taught content and practice placement. If you are self-employed, we are not able to offer reimbursement for lost earnings to attend the taught content and practice placement.
- To appropriately source and attend the 75 hours practice placement, regardless of your current working arrangement.
- To identify a suitable clinical supervisor (see above for requirements) for either route of study at the point of application.

Accredited Recognition of Prior Learning

If applicants have prior certificated learning or professional experience which may be equivalent to parts of this programme, the University of Bradford has procedures to evaluate and recognise this learning to provide applicants with exemptions from specified modules or parts of the programme. Find more information about [recognition of prior learning decisions](#) on the University website.

Applicants who believe they have evidence of prior learning they wish to be considered in standing for programme credits are encouraged to discuss their prior learning with the academic programme team at interview.

International and English Language Entry Requirements

This programme is open to international students **only if** you meet the requirements for being HCPC registered as a physiotherapist in the UK and to be practicing in FCP.

Applicants whose first language is not English will be expected to possess a University approved English Language qualification at **IELTS 7.0** with no sub-test score below 6.5, or equivalent. The score required in alternative acceptable tests is listed on the [University of Bradford English language requirements website](#). Applicants who do not have the IELTS requirement can take a [University of Bradford pre-sessional English course](#).

Information in this document is for the contemporary recruitment cycle and was accurate at time of publication. The current tariff and accepted qualifications for entry onto the programme is published at the online course page:

<https://www.bradford.ac.uk/courses/pg/first-contact-physiotherapy/>