26th February 2018

Dear Lord Trefgarne,

I am writing to highlight the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy’s concern to ensure that current regulations for students enrolling on a postgraduate pre-registration programme in physiotherapy are annulled. Student enrolling on these programmes from 2018/19 need to be enabled to access standard student loan funding, and to have assurance at the earliest opportunity that this will be the case.

Putting in place revised funding arrangements is essential. This is for the reasons set out below.

- 20 per cent of physiotherapy students currently enter the profession via a Master’s degree route. Without access to standard student loan arrangements, this key pipeline for producing the physiotherapy profession is at risk of imploding. This will impact on physiotherapy workforce supply by 2020, when the profession is already in shortage.
- Continued uncertainty about funding arrangements for postgraduate pre-registration physiotherapy students is unsustainable both for applicants and universities. This uncertainty has existed since 2016. Interim NHS funding arrangements for students entering programmes in 2017/18 have provided a temporary but unsatisfactory solution, with inadequate numbers of students supported through this mechanism.
- Graduates from postgraduate pre-registration programmes are a valued and established part of the physiotherapy workforce, and their continued supply cannot be put at risk. Master’s degree routes into the profession have existed for over twenty years and equip new graduates with high-level critical thinking, problem-solving and research and leadership skills that they draw on to deliver high-quality physiotherapy services to patients.
Postgraduate pre-registration students need access to the same finance arrangements as undergraduate pre-registration students on healthcare degrees (recognising that the precise nature of future arrangements for all students is now subject to the student finance review). The introduction of tuition fees and student loans for undergraduate pre-registration physiotherapy students enrolling in programmes in 2017/18 has enabled an expansion of student places by 15 per cent, compared with the number of NHS-commissioned student places.

I hope this information is helpful to the Committee in reviewing annulment of the current statutory instrument relating to healthcare student support.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Professor Karen Middleton CBE FCSP MA
Chief Executive
Chartered Society of Physiotherapy