

# Motivations for internationally qualified physiotherapists to study Masters' degrees in the United Kingdom

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## Background

- ◆ The financial benefits to universities of international fee-paying students are evident alongside the additional benefits of multicultural learning that a diverse post-graduate community offers.
- ◆ There are also wider benefits as internationally qualified Masters students are often securing work within the UK physiotherapy workforce post-course completion.
- ◆ With financial challenges faced worldwide by universities, and competition to attract international students to the UK increasing, it is important to further understand what motivates internationally qualified physiotherapists to study postgraduate Masters degrees in the UK.

## Methods

Thirteen internationally qualified physiotherapists (one male and 12 females) registered on a post-graduate physiotherapy masters programme were recruited from one UK university.

Participant country of domicile included 5 from China, 5 from India, 1 from Saudi Arabia and 2 from Europe (Hungary and Turkey).

Online, semi-structured interviews were performed between August and November 2021 and were conducted in English. Reflexive thematic analysis was employed.

## Discussion

- ◆ The themes and sub-themes illustrate the **individualised and contextual nature** of the motivations. **External influences** exemplified the impact of requirements from employer; family and cultural factors; and political factors.
- ◆ There were also **perceived personal gains**, including development of specialist knowledge and skills; cultural diversity and multicultural learning.
- ◆ The **opportunity to work in the UK after course completion** was also viewed by those self-funding as an important return on investment.
- ◆ There were also **university and programme specific** elements, alongside the **geographical location** and other **social factors**; the **entry criteria**, including English language requirements, that also influenced why students selected the UK for their Masters study.

## Implications

Through improved understanding of why internationally qualified physiotherapists select to complete a Masters degree in the UK, it can better support Universities in tailoring their marketing, recruitment and student experience strategies accordingly.

The findings may also be of interest to the wider stakeholders to postgraduate physiotherapy education, including UK physiotherapy workforce employers, as these may help to better inform recruitment, on-boarding and retention activities.

## Findings

### Theme 1: External influences

#### Requirements from employer:

"....so, the requirement is not just for a master's degree, but it has to be overseas. This was dictated to me by my sponsor".

#### Family & cultural factors:

"... a very good friend of my mom had come to the UK. He's a First Contact practitioner now..".

#### Political factors:

"....with the new visa we get up to two years to stay back and find a job".

### Theme 2: Perceived personal gains

#### Professional & career development:

".....UK degrees are accepted worldwide. They have a very high position. Even when somebody is considering someone for a job, ..... UK degrees are given a very high place".

#### Personal opportunities:

"....if I have the chance I want to find a job in the UK to learn more clinical skills or more research skills".

### Theme 3: Perceived benefits of place of study

#### Specific University & Programme factors:

".....we just need one and a half years to get a masters degree, but you know in [home country], we need two to three years. So, I think it saves me a lot of time".

#### Culture & Environment in the UK:

"...I really love the British accent, I really like it. I really like the UK as a country and I like it from Sherlock Holmes, and I like the buildings and the coffee and everything here is really different".