



## Doctoral Study 2026

This study will investigate how coaching supports the development of professional identity, and employment readiness among healthcare students, as they transition through their final year

### BACKGROUND

Higher education institutions (HEIs) are required to support students by offering access to a range of resources, designed to help them navigate through various challenges including anxiety and neurodivergence, and ultimately achieve graduate status, enabling successful transition into the workforce. (Chatterjee, 2022, Meehan and Howells 2018).

The formation of professional identity, emphasizing values, behaviours, and aspirations aligned with a profession, is a key goal of professional healthcare education (Valerie Isobel Rae et al, 2024).

It is important to examine how healthcare students perceive themselves as future clinicians (Vabo., Slettebøn. and Fossum, 2021). A strong personal and professional identity is essential for students to transition successfully into their new role and career (van Ede et al, 2023).

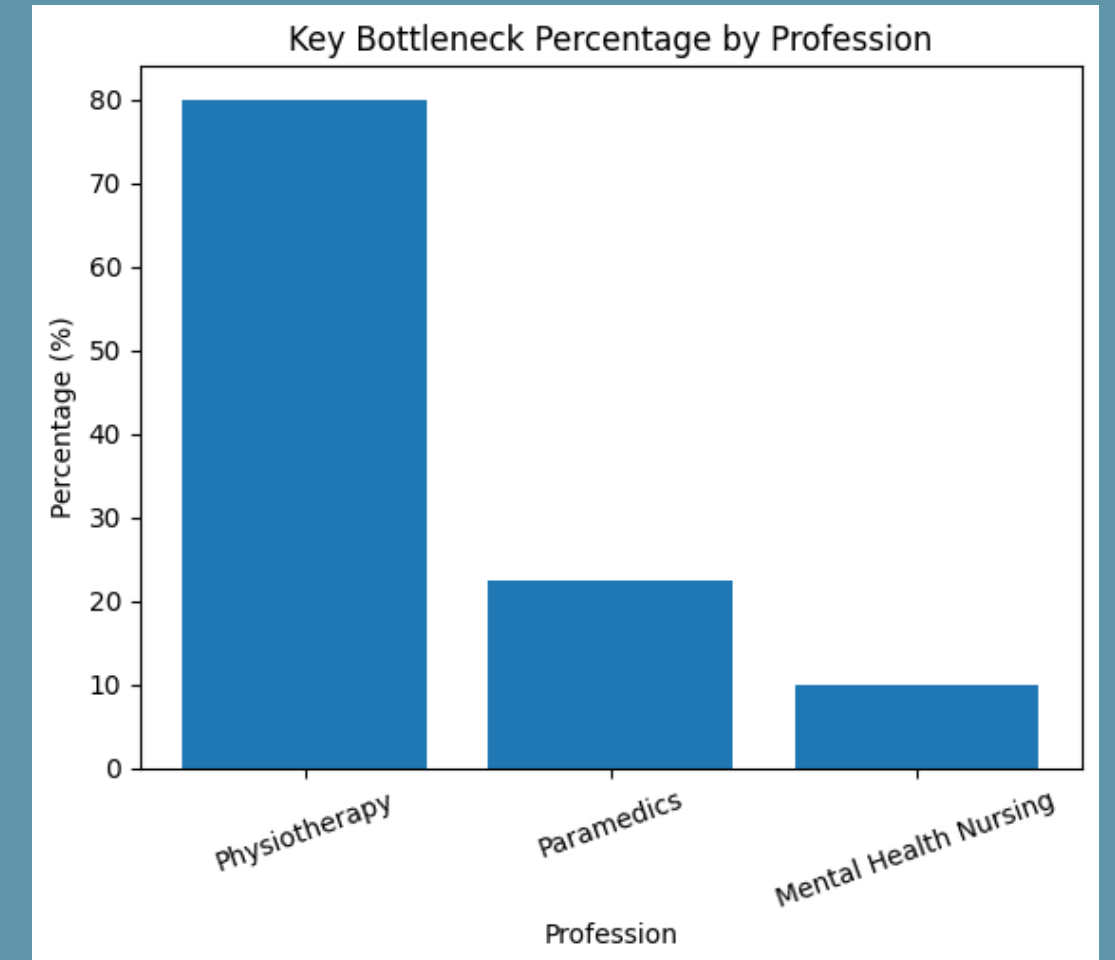
Whilst coaching has proven successful in supporting some healthcare professions, it remains an underutilised resource for most undergraduate healthcare student groups. The literature highlights a notable gap in identifying the most effective point for coaching within healthcare education. The final year of study, a crucial transitional phase, appears to be an optimal yet underexamined stage for such interventions (Sawatsky et al., 2019).



Paramedic, Mental Health Nursing and Physiotherapy students who have accessed four 60-minute coaching sessions over three months, (empowering a growth-mindset), are invited to participate in a semi-structured interview (60-90 minutes), at the end of their university healthcare programme.



### Current vacancy statistics for physiotherapy, paramedic and mental health nursing graduates



Data sources: NHS Workforce Statistics, British Medical Association, 2025; Welsh Government employment data, 2025)

**Increasing transitional stress**  
**Need for psychologically prepared clinicians**  
**Workforce shortages**  
**Graduate Job freezes**  
**Explore**

How do structured coaching enhance professional identity?

How does coaching influence growth mindset?

How does coaching improve and enhance perceived readiness for employment

**“Have we prepared you to think, act and feel like a resilient, competent and competitive practitioner?”**

### Methodology

This research will use Constructivist Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2006), to explore and extrapolate themes relating to professional identity, based on the participants' feedback of the coaching they have received.

In depth, semi-structured interviews empowering a reflective narrative, will be conducted with students from the three different healthcare disciplines, who have received coaching. Between fourteen and twenty students in total (participants) from Oxford Brookes University will be interviewed, forming a convenience sample.

### Data Analysis

The data from the interviews will be analysed using initial coding, focused coding, and theoretical sampling, which aligns with the grounded theory methodology. It is anticipated that the findings regarding the effectiveness of coaching in enhancing professional identity and readiness for employment, within these cohorts, will generate new insights to support the integration of a theoretically informed coaching pedagogy within the university's healthcare curriculum. In doing so, the researcher also aims to contribute meaningfully to the wider body of knowledge on coaching as a pedagogical approach for student development.

### Some quotes that the students have expressed relating to the challenges of completing their final year.

*“I don't feel ready to qualify”* · *“I am not as good as other students”*

*“I am lacking in confidence.”* · *“I need another year to feel ready.”*

*“It is too hard.”* · *“I keep forgetting everything”*

*“There are too many things to think about.”*

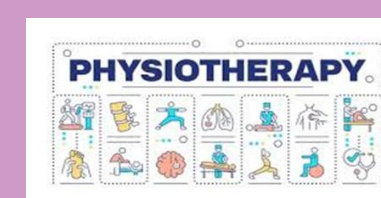
*“The deadlines are getting in the way”* · *“I procrastinate and stop myself”*

*“Why didn't I ask for help before now”*

*“I think I have a fixed mindset?”* · *“I need to improve my time management.”*

### Next Actions

- Coaching sessions to be completed before July 2026
- Send out the recruitment invites to the student participants
- Schedule the interviews
- Data collection (conduct the interviews) in April 2026
- Data Analysis to start October 2026
- Secure focused time for planning and writing
- Start revising the Methodology and Literature chapters for supervisory guidance and feedback
- Engagement and networking across academic, professional, and policy forums to ensure wider awareness of the study and its emerging focus.



### References

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