

Similarities and Differences between current CASE accredited

BSc (Hons) Medical Ultrasound programmes:

Working together with Innovation

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Background

Innovative new BSc (Hons) undergraduate level education can benefit the sonography workforce. There are currently two CASE accredited BSc programmes in the UK (one apprenticeship and one direct entry route). There are similarities and differences between these educational routes, however both aim to produce a graduate sonographer, who will be a safe ultrasound practitioner prepared to undertake preceptorship and postgraduate education.

Methods and Results

A collaborative comparative study of UK BSc (Hons) Medical Ultrasound programmes was undertaken. Thematic analysis of the courses’ definitive documents identified two overarching themes of similarities and differences with associated sub-themes (See Table 1 and 2).

Table 1 Differences		
Theme	BSc (Hons) Medical Ultrasound (Direct Entry)	BSc (Hons) Medical Ultrasound (Degree apprenticeship)
Admissions	UCAS Interview	Employer led Joint employer and university interviews
Admission criteria	5 GCSE -C/4 or above to include maths, English and science. 3 A levels BBB to include one science Equivalents accepted excluding T levels	96 UCAS points from three A levels (including at least 40 points from either Biology, Chemistry, Physics or Mathematics) Equivalent or other qualifications (including T levels) may be considered by the University
Funding	Not eligible for NHS bursary Not eligible for Student finance if second degree	Employed for duration of study Course fees funded by Apprenticeship Levy
Standard	CASE Standards of proficiency for a sonographer (2022)	Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education – Sonography Apprenticeship Standard (2019) CASE Standards of proficiency for a sonographer (2022)
Quality Assurance	Institute for Students UoL quality processes CASE	OfSTED SHU Quality processes CASE
Attendance pattern	3 years – full time Block release: 60% university, 40% clinical	3 years – Full time Block delivery: 80% on the job learning – 20% University
Assessment and credits	Varied approaches Clinical competence 360 credits (120 each year)	Varied approaches Clinical competencies 363 credits (121 each year)

Table 2	Similarities
Standards and Mapping	Consortium for Sonographic Education (CASE) Standards for Ultrasound Education (2022, Level 6) National Occupational Standards (sonographer) (Skills for Health, 2019) Sonographer career framework (BMUS 2022)
Curriculum	Spiral curriculum. Modular delivery. Content: e.g. Ultrasound Science & Technology, Anatomy, physiology and pathophysiology, General Medical, Gynaecological and Obstetric ultrasound, Communication and professional issues, Research project.
Exit award	BSc (Hons) Medical Ultrasound
Clinical competencies	Graduate clinical competences all align with National Occupational Standards (CASE Level 6) Both meet standards and the requirements of the Sonographer Career Framework.

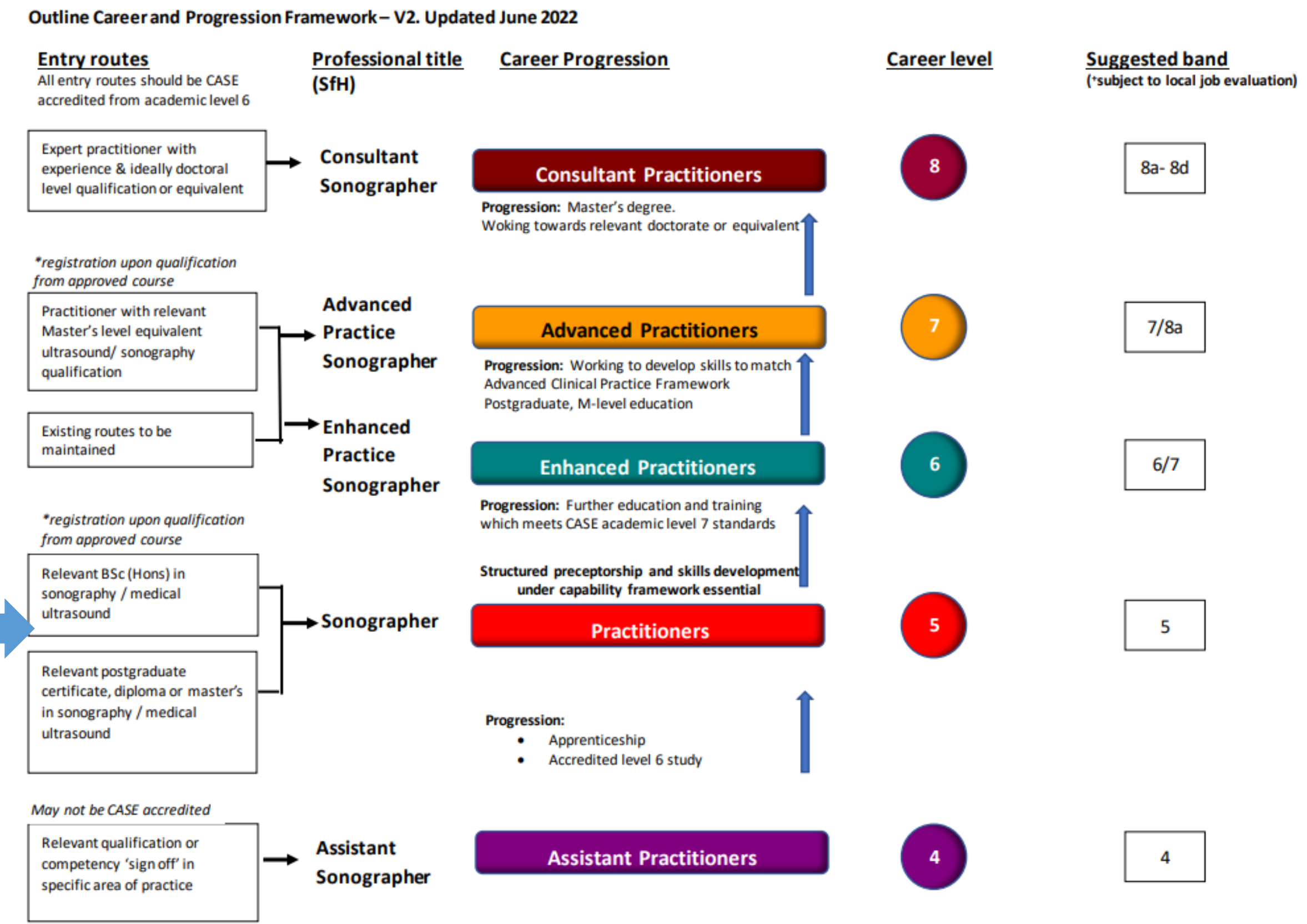


Figure 1: Sonographer Career Framework (HEE, 2022)

Conclusion

Whilst there are operational differences between the two training models, the key similarities of learned content and clinical competence assessment are evident in both. Each programme aligns with the Sonographer Career Framework (2022), and the NHS priorities for workforce capability development (NHS England, 2024) (See Figure 1).

CASE accreditation of both programmes ensures that competent graduate sonographers will enter the workforce with the equitable knowledge, behaviours and clinical skills.

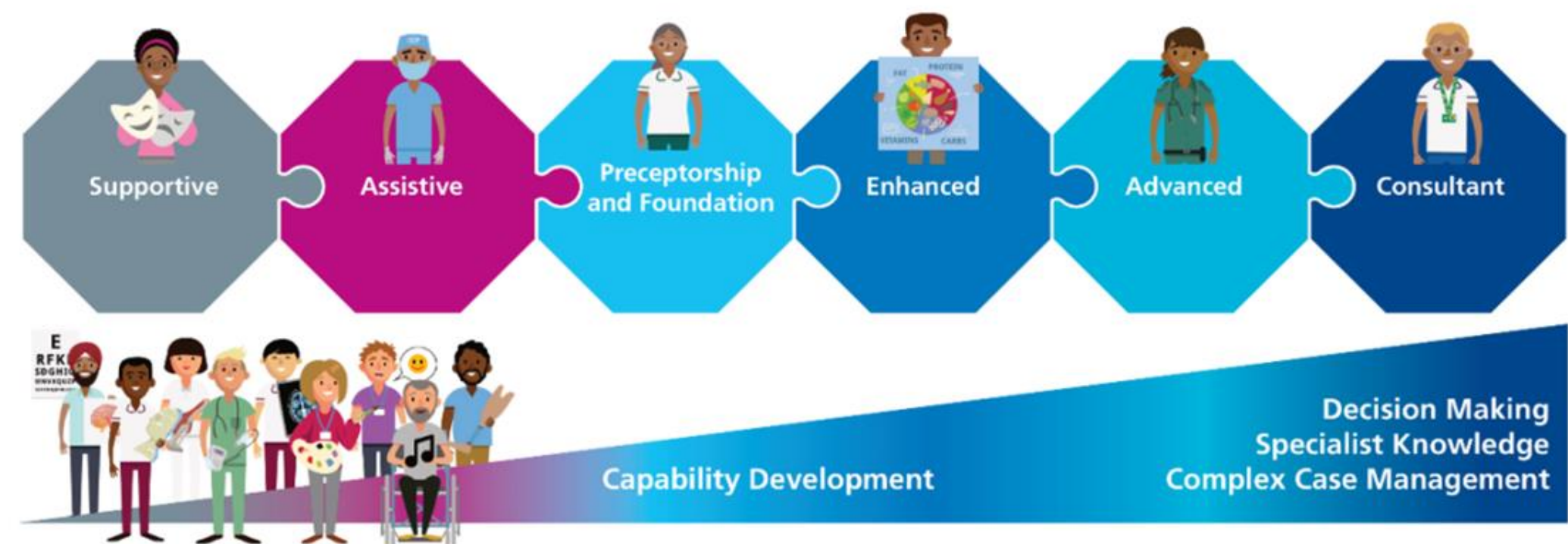


Figure 2: AHP capability development (NHS England, 2024)

Train
Retain
Reform

References

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