

BAA Higher Training Scheme – What Audiologists Want

Sarah Murphy
HTS Training Co-ordinator

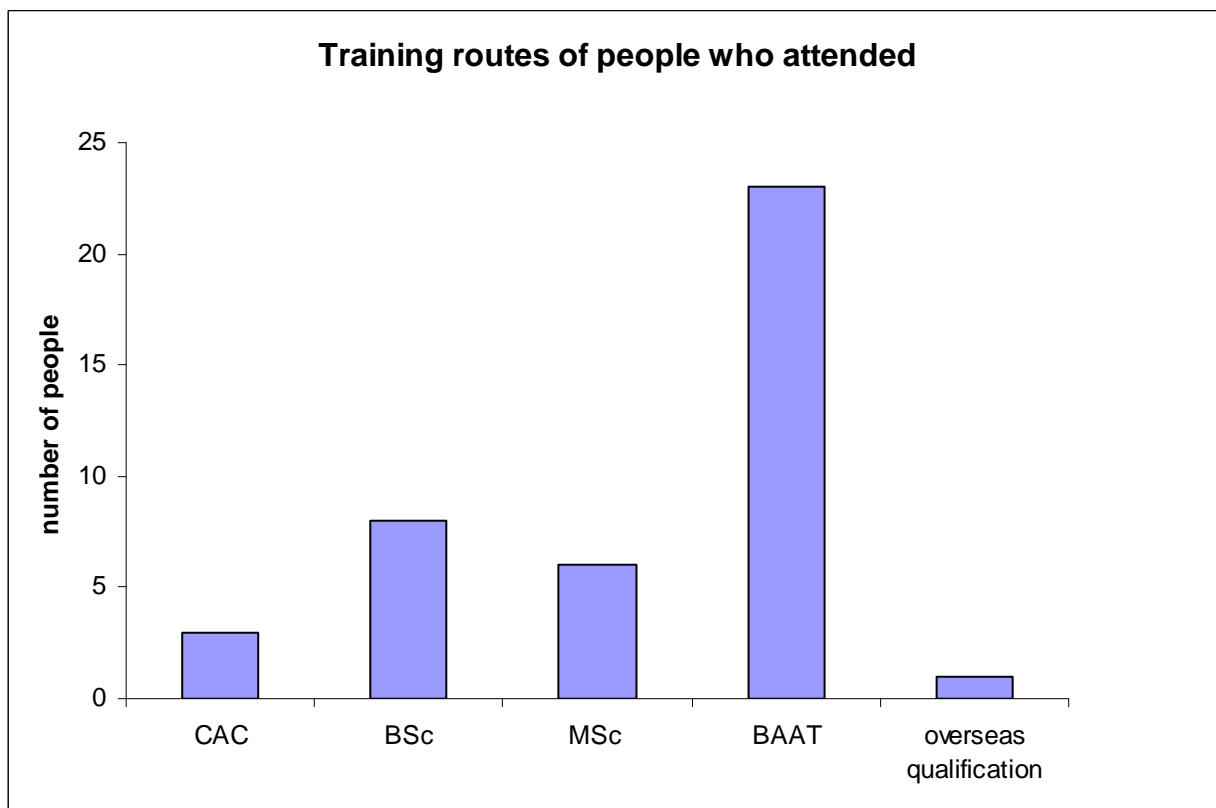
Penny Hill
HTS Publicity

Mel Ferguson
Chair – HTS sub-committee

The Higher Training Scheme (HTS) sub-committee has held three Information Days over the last twelve months. This has been a chance for Audiology professionals to come and find out more about the newly developed training scheme. The days have been well attended (121 registrants in total) and feedback suggests that participants have gained a greater understanding of the scheme, and over 90% of people felt their training needs from the information days had been met.

At the recent London and Middlesbrough training days held in April we gave attendees detailed questionnaires to feedback on their views and requirements of the scheme. This showed that the majority of people who attended came from the BAAt training route (see Fig. 1) although there was also plenty of interest from those who had undergone training via the BSc and MSc Audiology routes.

Fig.1. Training routes of people who attended the information days



Attendees were also asked what the training needs are in their departments. Fig 2 shows the perceived need for individual clinical modules by current clinicians. This indicates that both Paediatric modules are shown as being in the most demand, closely followed by the Balance Assessment and Rehabilitation module. This trend was also seen in a group of 32 BSc and MSc Audiology students who attended a student day at the MRC Institute of Hearing Research in April (Fig. 3). The Paediatric Assessment and Balance Assessment and Rehabilitation modules were rated the highest, which follows the traditional areas where further clinical experience is sought post-basic training. It also suggests the sub-committee correctly released the most appropriate modules first! However, it is important to note that although some modules were more in demand than others, across the board, all of the modules were perceived to be useful and of relevance in the clinical setting. This indicates that all the modules meet the real needs of audiology departments today, and are important in training and equipping the audiology workforce appropriately.

Fig. 2 Perceived service need of clinical modules by current clinicians

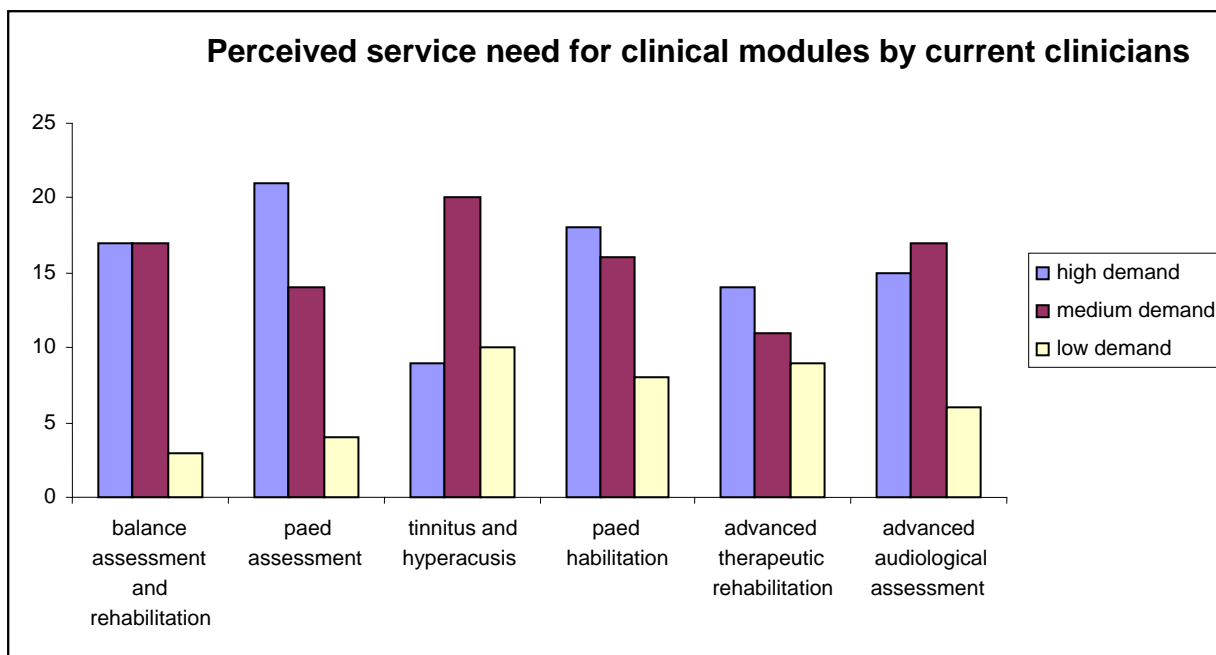
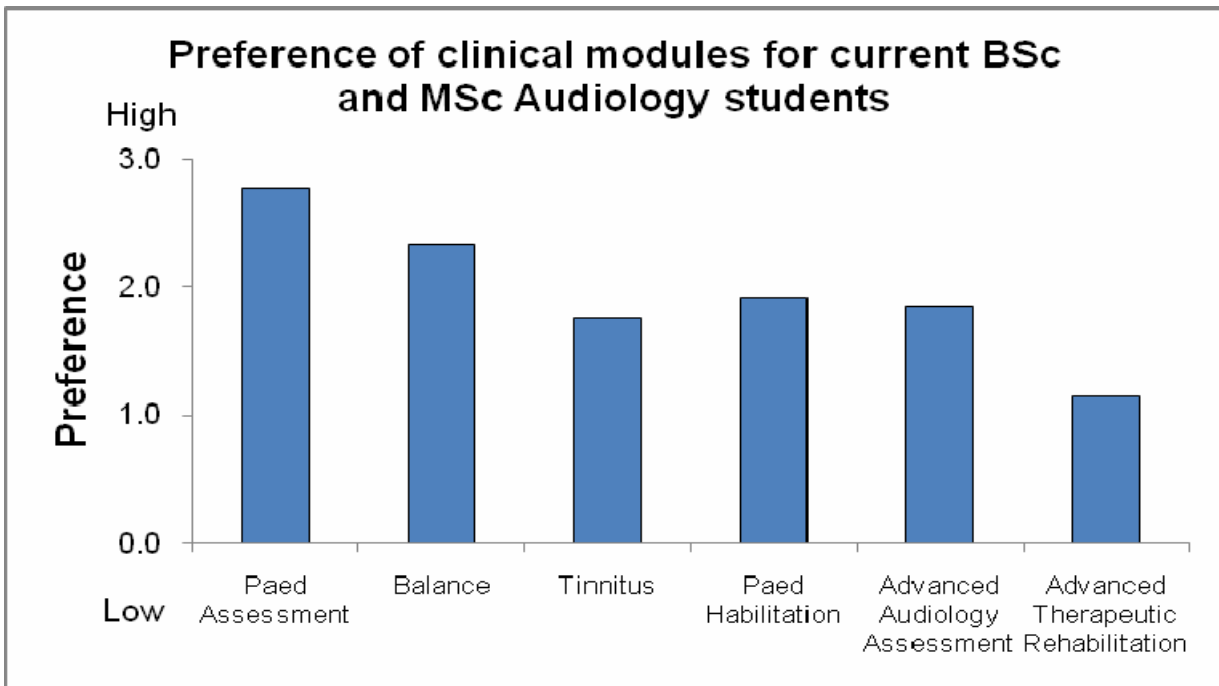


Fig. 3 Preference of clinical modules for current BSc and MSc Audiology students



The results for the non-clinical modules highlighted the Service Development and Teaching and Learning modules as most useful in the qualified staff's current clinical setting (Fig. 4). In contrast, students rated the Research Methods module most highly, closely followed by the Service Development module, with much less interest for the Teaching and Learning module (Fig. 5). This shows a clear distinction in the perception of module needs between current and future clinicians. This may be due, in part, to some BSc and MSc courses containing modules on clinical education, or the fact that teaching and learning has become a higher priority for qualified staff since the introduction of BSc placement. Furthermore, research is more prominent in current training routes than it has been in past and so may result in a desire for current students to pursue this area, particularly now when there is a specified training module to complete.

Fig. 4. Perceived service need for the non-clinical modules by current clinicians

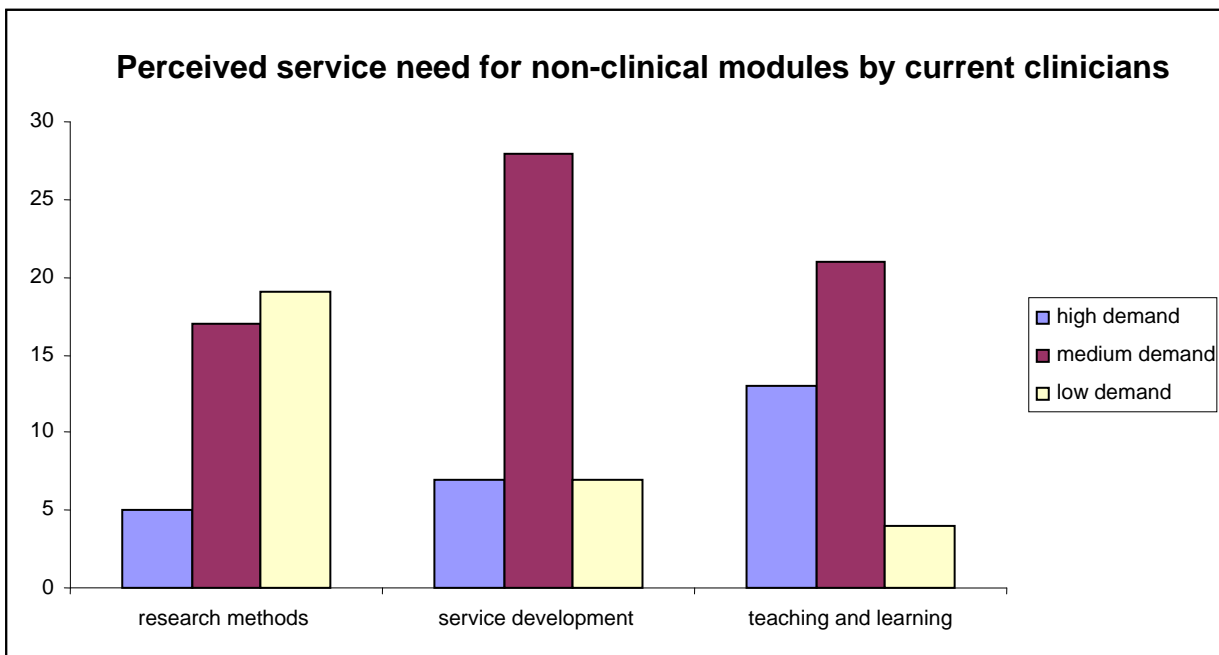
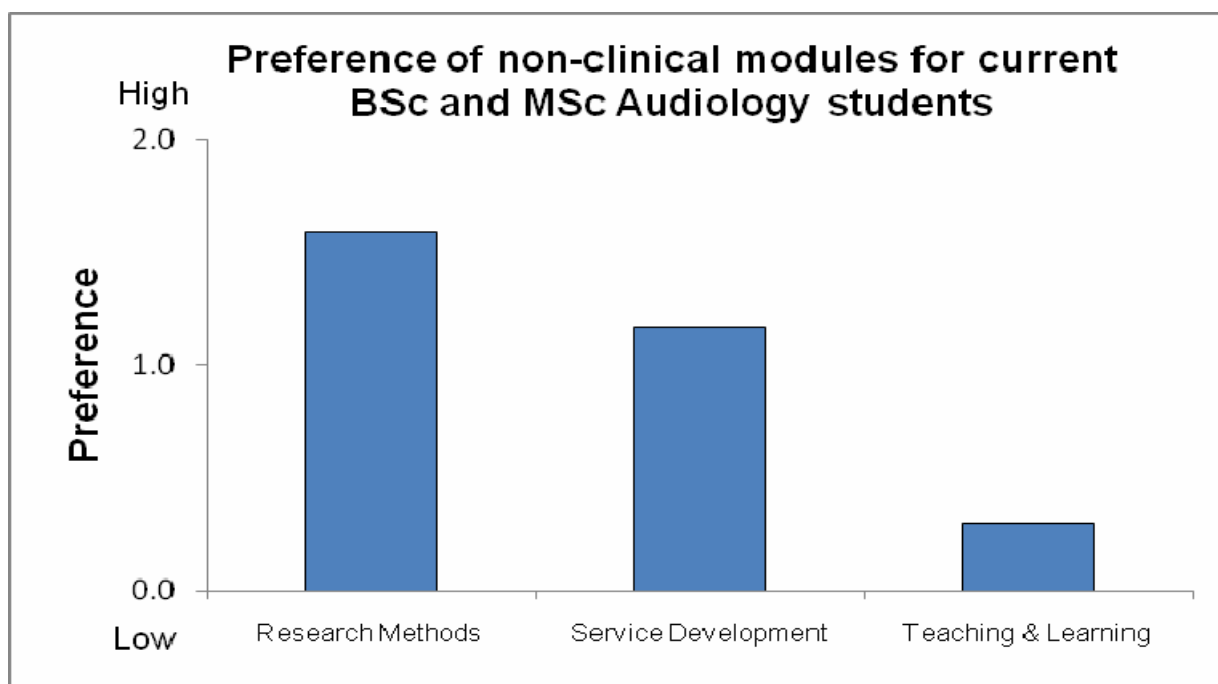


Fig. 5. Preference of non-clinical modules for current BSc and MSc Audiology students



As well as many positive comments about the existing scheme, including many stating how the information days had clarified how the scheme would be run, some people also suggested that a new module that we might wish to develop would be on implantable devices, including both cochlear implants and BAHAs. This module has already been proposed as the next module that will be developed, once those undergoing development have all been finalised and are available. By the time this article is published two new modules, Paediatric Habilitation and Tinnitus and Hyperacusis, will have been released. Two further modules are in the pipeline, Advanced Adult Audiology and Advanced Therapeutic Rehabilitation. These will be launched later this year as we wish to stagger the availability of the 'new' modules to give the launched modules time to bed down.

A lot of work has been done on the HTS by the sub-committee in the last twelve months to ensure that the scheme fits well with the Healthcare Scientist Career Framework (HSCF) and Agenda for Change, so it is now easier to see where the scheme fits in with Audiologist's career development. There are now over 30 training centres that have been or are in the process of being accredited. The BAA website has lots of information about the scheme on the HTS webpage including a comprehensive list of courses that provide knowledge base to the current modules, training centres and a set of FAQs – new questions raised are being incorporated into the FAQs - so please visit the website to view the available information (see Training and CPD section, then Higher Training Scheme sub-section of the BAA website). Although the feedback from the most recent information sessions showed less questions relating to the more basic infrastructural elements of the scheme, suggesting the scheme is becoming clearer to audiologists, there are still a number of questions that keep cropping up.

A few key questions are answered here:

- How does the HTS serve non graduate/established audiologists?
- How does the scheme fit in with the CAC?

The HTS is accessible to all audiology practitioners at HSCF level 5 (broadly equivalent to AFC band 5) or above – including those who trained via BAAT, hearing therapy, BSc or MSc Audiology routes. It is a modular scheme allowing individuals to choose relevant modules

dependent on personal interests and service needs and, importantly, it is accessible to all audiologists, irrespective of their background, not just those with, say, an MSc.

It is anticipated that the HTS will shortly (December 2009) replace the Certificate of Audiological Certificate (CAC) in-service training scheme used by current trainee clinical scientists (Audiology). The Association of Clinical Scientists (ACS) endorsed the HTS as a replacement for the CAC last November. The CAC replacement will comprise specific HTS modules (Balance Assessment and Rehabilitation, Paediatric Assessment, Adult Rehabilitation and First line diagnostic assessment, Research Methods and either Service Development or Teaching and Learning).

- How will people obtain M-level credits as no universities do part-time MSc's?
- Are there lists of courses to provide the underpinning theoretical knowledge?
- What proof will be required of self directed learning being done and at what level is it at?

HEIs are currently developing M-level courses including short courses, stand alone modules and distance learning, which will meet the needs of the HTS. We are currently undertaking a survey of all the HEIs that provide Audiology education to establish their future plans and to actively engage with them. These are the people who are best qualified to provide and assess the knowledge base required for Audiologists to develop clinically and professionally beyond their basic training. A number of courses are already available and are listed on the HTS website. If you do a course listed on the website, it is already accepted that this course meets the learning outcomes required for specific modules. If you undertake learning in another way (short course, self study, tutorials etc), you will be required to sit a written exam that will be set equivalent to M-level to assess that your underpinning knowledge is at the appropriate level. It is anticipated that if the HEIs develop relevant courses that provide the required knowledge base for HTS modules, the need for a written exam will become redundant. This is what we are aiming for – it will make life simpler all round!

- Who can be an HTS examiner?

The HTS sub-committee, in particular the Chief Examiner John Day, are currently looking at the issue of exams and examiners. If you are interested in becoming an examiner for the HTS or wish to nominate someone please contact John Day (john.day@new-tr.wales.nhs.uk). Further information will be available shortly.

- When will examinations/practicals be held?

The HTS sub-committee will be looking at the exam schedule in due course. It is anticipated that examinations will be held once or twice a year at nominated exam centres, dependent on demand.

- What is the time scale for undertaking the scheme?

There is no time scale for completion – however, all knowledge and skills must be up-to-date at the time of the assessment.

For further information please visit the BAA website. A whole session focussing on the HTS has been included at the BAA Conference at Liverpool in November where members of the HTS sub-committee will be happy to discuss any burning issues and answer any questions.

In order to become a registered training centre for the HTS, please contact Rakesh Patel at Rkpatel@dmu.ac.uk. If you wish to register on any of the modules, please contact Darren Whelan at Darren.Whelan@stees.nhs.uk