



**World
Physiotherapy**

World Physiotherapy briefing paper

**WORLD PHYSIOTHERAPY MEMBER ORGANISATIONS
AND STUDENT PHYSIOTHERAPISTS
- MODELS OF ENGAGEMENT**

World Physiotherapy briefing papers

World Physiotherapy briefing papers inform our member organisations and others about topics that affect the physiotherapy profession.

Acknowledgement

This paper has been produced with the contribution of the World Physiotherapy Future Network and our member organisations that responded to a survey.

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Key messages

Thirty-eight (38) member organisations (MOs), from all of World Physiotherapy's five regions, completed a survey to better understand the relationship between MOs and the physiotherapy students in their country/territory.

These key messages reflect the findings from the survey.



- A close relationship with students via appropriate structures has the potential to encourage member growth.
- Different models are used globally to engage with student physiotherapists:
 - free membership
 - fee paying membership
 - student association within the MO
 - independent external student association with or without a link to the MO
- Promoting membership directly to students and via universities are the strategies commonly used to recruit student members.
- Member value for students is most often provided via:
 - discounted access to services eg conference attendance
 - opportunities to contribute to your association's committees/working groups
 - access to learning resources and events specifically for students

➤ Introduction

The World Physiotherapy [Future Network](#) is a network for physiotherapist students and early career professionals, who have been qualified less than five years. It was established to connect students and early career professionals worldwide and to gain insights from their experiences.

The aim of the network is to:

- engage physiotherapist students and early career professionals with World Physiotherapy and their member organisations; and
- encourage, promote and facilitate the interchange of ideas and activities of common interest.

World Physiotherapy supports the development of strong member organisations (MOs). One area of activity enables this is early engagement between student physiotherapists and the MO to facilitate conversion to full membership on qualification. To better understand strategies in support of this a global survey was used. The information gathered, and case studies presented, will hopefully be useful to MOs in reviewing their own activities in this area.

This survey predominantly focused on the relationship MOs have with students rather than early career professionals, as students are a clearly definable group. A student in this context is defined as a person enrolled on a physiotherapy professional entry level programme (ELP).

Not all MOs have an ELP in their country and there is huge variation in those that do from 1 programme in 22 countries/territories to 999 in Brazil.

➤ Respondents

World Physiotherapy designed a survey with input from the Future Network and distributed it to all MOs (n=125) in July 2021. However, only 109 (87%) members have physiotherapist ELPs in their country/territory.

There were 38 responses, equating to 35% of members with ELPs. There were four additional incomplete responses from MOs who did not have an ELP so could not complete the survey.

Table 1 Response rate

Region	Number of MOs with ELPs	Respondents
Africa	23	9 (39%)
Asia Western Pacific	27	8 (30%)
Europe	41	13 (32%)
North America Caribbean	9	5 (56%)
South America	9	3 (33%)
TOTAL	109	38

Of the MOs that participated in the survey, 68% were aware of the World Physiotherapy Future Network.

➤ Student membership benefits

From the MOs that responded to the survey 66% of them reported having a student membership category. The student membership comes with a fee for 63% of these MOs, whilst for the others it is free.

The size of the student membership reported ranged from 1 to 7,500 members.

All MOs responding offer benefits to students if they become members of their association. The table below shows the percentage of MOs that offer each benefit.

Table 2 Student member benefits

Benefits offered to student members	Percentage of MOs
Discounted access to services eg conference attendance	88%
Opportunities to contribute to your association's committees/working groups	76%
Access to learning resources	64%
Events specifically for students	64%
Careers advice	52%
Community platform for engagement	48%
Member-only website resource	40%
Magazine/newsletter	36%
Journal	32%
Access to funding to support educational opportunities	20%
Insurance	8%

The most popular benefits for attracting students to membership are discounts on services and the ability to participate in the association.

Recruiting student members

The most common method used by MOs to increase their student membership is to actively promote themselves and the benefits directly to student groups. Over 50% of responding MOs have a direct relationship with universities to promote membership, but the students have to register themselves. There is a very small portion (8%) of MOs that automatically enroll students via their university.

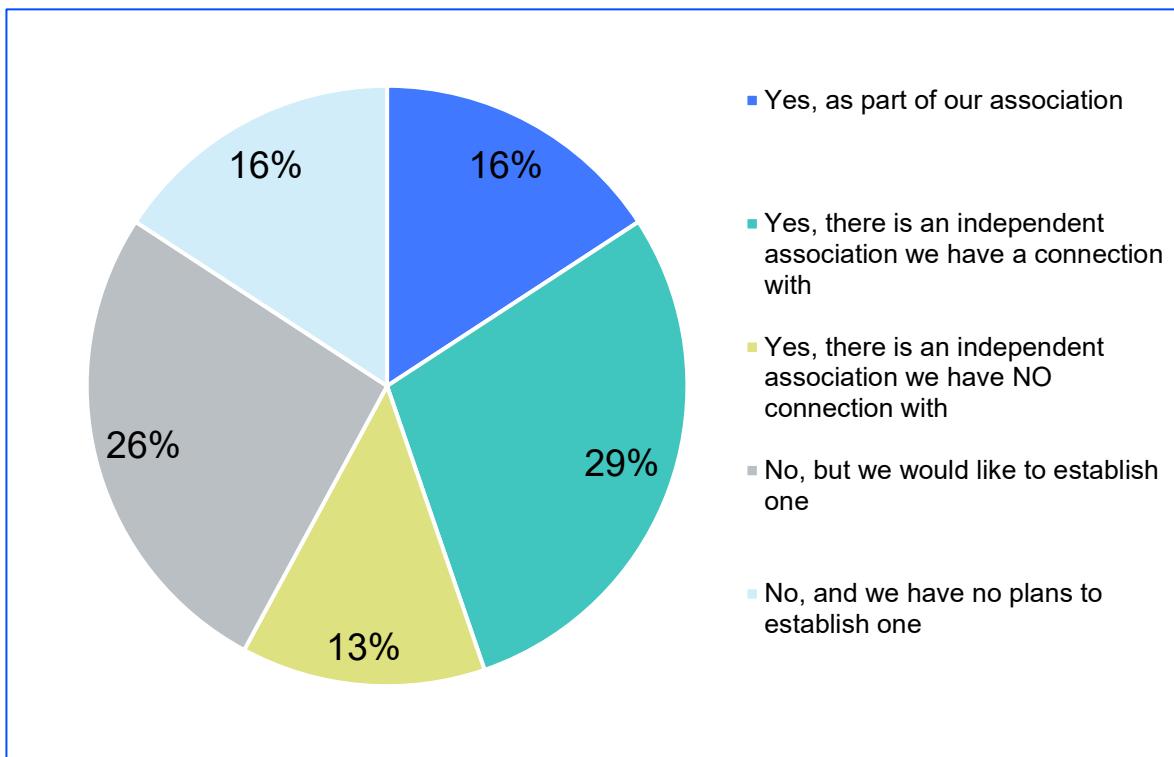
Converting student members to qualified members

Once a student has qualified 48% (12/25) of MOs that responded offer newly qualified physiotherapists (early career professionals) with full membership at the standard member rate, while 52% (13/25) of MOs provide a discounted rate for a defined period. Sometimes the reduced membership fees were associated with reduced benefits.

➤ National student association

Aside from direct student membership, a number of MOs have connections to the future generation of physiotherapists through student associations, some of these are part of the MO and others are independent. Those that have independent student associations in their country/territory report that they may or may not have a connection with them (figure 1).

Figure 1 Student associations



The results show that 45% (n=17) of respondents have a good set up with a student association either as part of their organisation or closely associated with it. There is the potential for greater connections where student associations exist without any relationship to an MO, and a good level of interest in developing a student association across regions.

Of those MOs with a student association within their governance structures 83% of them include students in their committees, including positions on their executive board. Whereas only 36% of MOs with a connection to an independent student association provide them with opportunities to be a part of their association's committees.

Information and tools to support the development of student associations

We asked the MOs who had indicated that they do not have a student association (n=16), what information or tools they would find helpful to fulfill this goal. The following were identified:

- regional engagement models
- webinar series for sharing experiences
- access to student association contacts
- country/territory engagement models
- case studies
- mentorship

➤ Regional trends and case studies

Europe

Of 13 respondents 77% indicated they had a student membership category, of these seven have a fee to join and three are free. The most common benefits are discounts and opportunities to contribute to MO work. Europe is the only region to have some members offer insurance as a benefit. The most common route to attract student members is via targeted promotion to students. Three MOs have their own student association, three have an independent association they are connected with, four would like to establish one and three have no plans to set anything up.

Case study 1: Sweden

The [Swedish Association of Physiotherapists](#) (SAP) has over 11,000 members and 633 student members from eight ELPs. Like most MOs who responded from the Europe region, there is a student membership fee and SAP promotes membership to the students.

The SAP offers a large range of benefits with membership:

- events specifically for students
- discounted access to services eg conference attendance
- careers advice
- a magazine/newsletter along with a journal
- opportunities to contribute to their work
- access to learning resources
- discounted access to services
- member-only website resources

After students graduate and become early career professionals SAP offers a reduced membership rate for their first year.

SAP have their own student association called "Studentsektionen" and they have representation on committees within the association. The chair of the student subgroup has an adjunct position to the executive committee, providing the opportunity for the student voice to be heard at the highest level.

Case study 2: France

The [French National Council of Physiotherapists](#) (FNCP) has 97,421 members and is an institution whose functions are defined by law. Thus, only licensed physical therapists can belong to the order, and they are required to join after graduation to be allowed to practice. Thus, the law does not allow for students to be included in the order's membership, although close ties are forged with the national student association, particularly in the context of financial assistance, medical-psychological support, or support for student training and lobbying actions. This independent association, the [Fédération Nationale de Etudiants en Kinésithérapie](#) has 12,000 members, a well-structured resources website and a social media presence.

After students graduate they pay to become full members of the Order, FNCP.

Africa

Of the nine MOs completing the survey 56% have a student membership category, with only one charging a fee and the other four being free to join as a student. The most common benefits are careers advice and a community platform for engagement.

The most common engagement model for MOs in Africa is to have a connection with an independent student association. No MOs who took part in the survey have one as part of their association.

Case study 3: Nigeria

The [Nigeria Society of Physiotherapy](#) (NSP) has 790 members and 140 student members from 16 ELPs. It is free for students to join their membership, like other MOs within the Africa region.

The NSP offers a number of benefits with membership:

- student only events
- discounted access to services
- careers advice
- member-only website resources
- access to learning resources
- access to funding to support educational opportunities
- financial support
- mentorship

The NSP has links to universities within Nigeria to attract students to membership and also does its own promotion to students.

Once students have qualified, they are offered a graduate membership with their provisional board license, however this is not full membership.

Like other MOs from the Africa region that took part in the study, the NSP does not have a student association of its own but has connections to an independent association, the [Nigerian Association of Physiotherapy Students](#).

Asia western pacific

Of the eight MOs taking part in the survey four have a student membership category, three of which have a fee to join and one that is free. The most common benefits are discounted access to services, student events, access to learning resources and magazines/newsletters.

The most common strategy to recruit student members is via the MO relationship with universities to advertise the opportunity.

It is common for there to be an independent student association with the majority having no connection to the MO, so they work independently to the association.

Case study 4: Vietnam

The [Vietnam Physical Therapy Association](#) (VPTA) has 442 members and 130 student members from 16 ELPs. It only became a member of World Physiotherapy in 2021. Students are offered an associate membership with 25% membership fee, then they will be transferred to a full membership (with their permission) once they graduate. However, they are offered a one-year membership for free once graduated.

The VPTA offers a number of benefits with membership:

- community platform for engagement
- student only events
- discounted access to services
- careers advice
- magazine/newsletter
- opportunities to contribute to the work of the association
- access to learning resources
- access to funding to support educational opportunities

The VPTA has links to universities within Vietnam to attract students to membership and also does its own promotion.

Like other MOs from the World Physiotherapy AWP region, Vietnam is aware of an independent student association, the [Vietnamese student association](#), but has no connection with it and it is not specific for physiotherapy students.

North America Caribbean

Five MOs with ELPs participated in the survey and of these four have a student membership category with one providing free membership and the others charging a fee. The most common benefits are discounts, opportunities to contribute to MO work and access to learning resources.

The most common strategy to encourage student members is done via targeted promotion to students. Two of the MOs have their own student association and the others have no student association.

Case study 5: Canada

The [Canadian Physiotherapy Association](#) (CPA) has 12,315 members and 2,700 student members from 15 ELPs. It has one of the largest student membership numbers of all MOs that participated in the survey. It is free for students to join.

As well as free membership, students are attracted to the CPA with the following benefits:

- student only events
- discounted access to services
- careers advice
- magazine/newsletter
- journal
- opportunities to contribute to the work of the association
- member-only website resource
- access to learning resources

Canada is the only MO that responded indicating they automatically register students into membership via their universities, upon receipt of student consent. They also actively promote membership themselves and have links to universities to promote for them.

The CPA has the [National Student Assembly](#), a student association within their membership. They have representation on committees including the Divisions Chairs Committee.

South America

Three MOs completed the survey with two of them having a student membership category that is free. The most common benefits are discounts, opportunities to contribute to MO work and access to learning resources. Targeted promotion to students is used to recruit members.

None of the MOs have student associations within their MO. In two there are independent associations with one having a relationship to the MO and one working independently. The other MO has no student association but would like to establish one.

Case study 6: Uruguay

The [Physiotherapists' Association of Uruguay](#) (PAU) has 393 members and 20 student members from three ELPs. There is a fee to join.

The PAU offers a number of benefits with membership:

- access to learning resources
- community platform for engagement
- discounted access to services
- opportunities to contribute to the work of the association

The PAU does its own promotion to students.

There is an independent student association that the MO has no connection with.

➤ Guidance for member organisations

This study has shown that 26% of the MOs that took part do not have a student association but aspire to create one of their own.

A membership model that includes options for students is a way to engage with students and include the student voice in the work of the association, as well as grow membership hopefully converting students to full members on qualification.

To attract students to become members, it is recommended that MOs consider the benefits that can be provided. Each MO will offer different benefits according to the resources available to them.

Suggestions include:

- free membership if financially viable
- discounted student membership rates
- financial discounts to MO services and events
- provide opportunities for the student voice to be heard on organisational matters
- provide access to learning resources
- plan student only events
- create connections with universities with entry level education programmes to promote MO membership through them
- staggered membership rates after qualification

Where there is student membership but no association, MOs are encouraged to explore the potential to establish a more formal structure for ongoing sustainability and engagement.

Where an independent student association exists, but there is no established connection with the

World Physiotherapy MO, the MO is encouraged to explore the opportunities to build connections and collaboration as part of a strategy to gain insights, inform the work of the MO and to create opportunities for member growth and engagement.

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