

Technician to apprentice. Personal reflection and the importance of apprenticeships.



UNIVERSITY OF
DERBY



Peacocks
MEDICAL

Introduction

Reflective presentation on the authors journey within the P&O apprenticeship. Highlighting the potential benefits alternative forms of education can offer to P&O and wider healthcare.

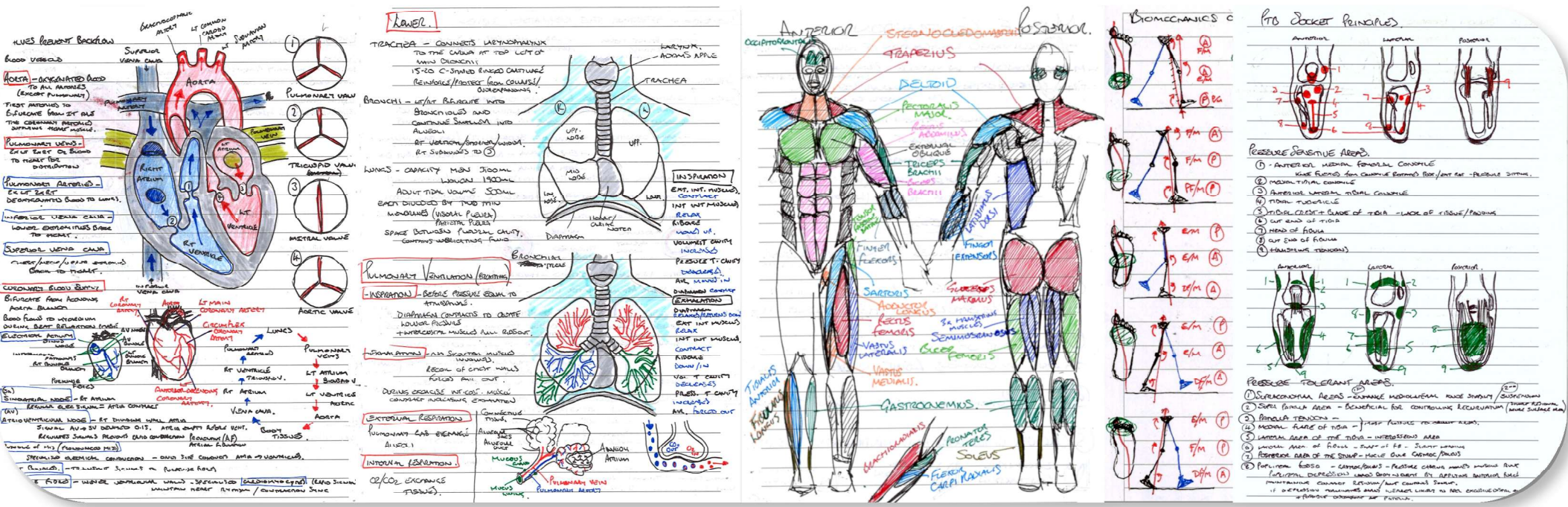
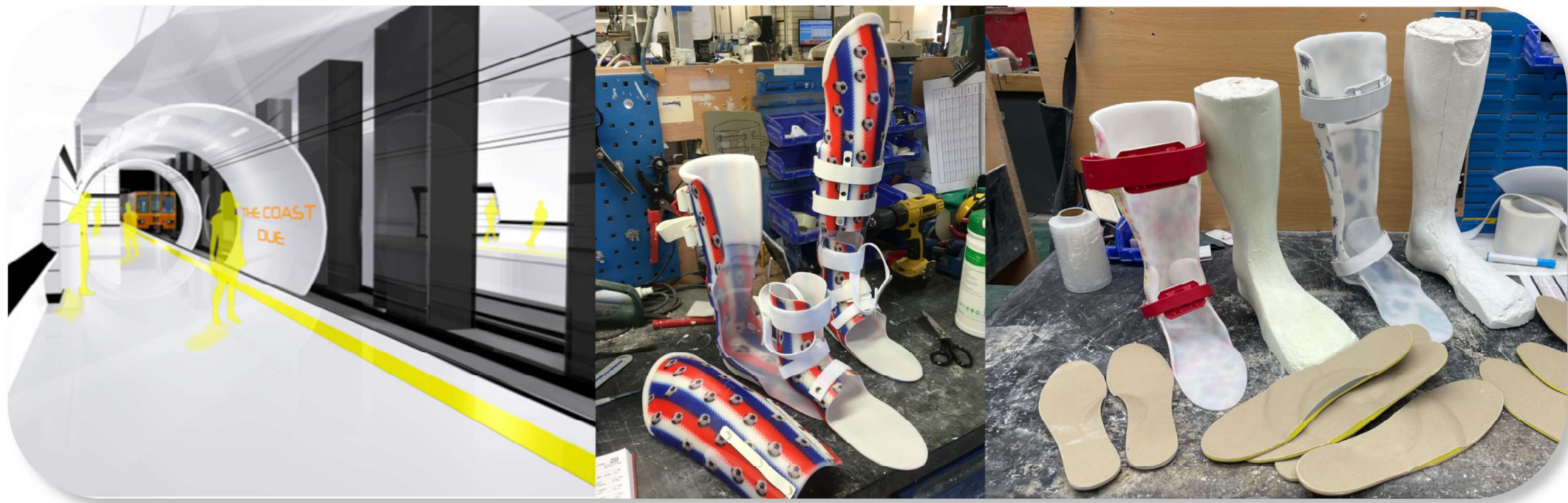
Own journey to the apprenticeship

- 2010 - BA(Hons) Interior design – Northumbria University
- 2013 – Joined Peacocks Medical Group as an orthotics technician
Plastics - device manufacture - specialist wheelchair seating -
bespoke footwear CAD/CAM design
- 2024 – Enrolled on P&O degree apprenticeship with University of Derby

BSc (Hons) Prosthetics and Orthotics Degree Apprenticeship

Format

- 3 Year course with on the job training
- 4 Days in clinic and 1 study day per week
- Online lectures and portal for learning materials
- Student activity and discussion boards
- Online library access and support services
- 20 Weeks minimum placement in non-dominant discipline
- 1 week per year on campus for Clinical Skills Week
- Regular practice educator and academic tutor reviews
- Practice educator and student portal for progress assessment and reflection



My own experience

I developed stronger clinical reasoning skills and a deeper understanding of prosthetic and orthotic devices, recognising the unique impact each prescription has on individual patients.

I gained valuable insight into clinical assessment, measurement techniques, and the challenges of achieving consistency in practice while drawing on my previous experience as a orthotic technician.

I also recognised the cognitive demands of clinical practice, balancing new and existing knowledge, effective patient communication and sound clinical decision-making.

Additionally, I stepped outside my comfort zone by undertaking a prosthetics placement with Blatchford at the Freeman hospital in Newcastle.

Beyond the device

Prosthetics and orthotics has the potential to introduce broader skill sets into healthcare, expand professional knowledge and enhance patient outcomes. With shifting healthcare demands brought by an aging population, P&O can help reduce pressure on acute care services and surgical waiting lists. Most importantly, it can improve patients' mobility, independence, and overall quality of life.



Benefits of the education pathway

Prolonged clinical exposure provides students with a broader range of experiences, allowing greater opportunity to apply academic knowledge and develop practical skills. Over time, this supports the development of interpersonal skills, adaptability and the ability to become well-rounded practitioners.

Colleague mentorship provides apprentices with access to a wealth of clinical experience, diverse approaches and professional insight. Equally, students contribute their own skills, perspectives and previous experiences, enriching the learning environment for both themselves and their colleagues.

Opportunities for potential long term workforce and succession planning while providing internal progression routes within companies.

Personal impact

As a mature student, my journey has been shaped by previous higher education, life experience, and resilience while balancing study alongside work and family responsibilities. Transitioning from a design background to anatomy, biomechanics and evidence based practice challenged me to develop new ways of learning and thinking.

A diagnosis of temporal lobe epilepsy following a tonic-clonic seizure in July 2025 tested my adaptability and determination, strengthening my appreciation of the importance of perseverance. Encouragement offered by family, friends, university staff, practice educators, and colleagues has highlighted the value of compassion, collaboration, and support.

As I enter my final year, I look forward to continuing my development, helping patients, and becoming a member of the prosthetics and orthotics profession.

Apprenticeships and alternative forms of education

Apprenticeships provide accessible pathways into healthcare professions for individuals who may not be able to follow traditional educational routes, enabling a wider range of potential clinicians to enter healthcare roles.

They introduce diverse skill sets, backgrounds and life experiences into healthcare, enriching professional practice and service provision. Apprenticeships also provide opportunities for experienced clinicians to mentor others, expand their own knowledge and reflect on their clinical practice and teaching approaches.

By integrating academic learning with practical experience, these pathways can support the continued development of care standards beyond the foundational biomechanics and device knowledge typically introduced through undergraduate education.

