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Ashleigh Allen qualified as an **occupational therapist** in 2011, from the University of Derby, but decided to follow her passion for overseas travel rather than start her career straight away.

“I began by going to Turkey and then to Austria where I worked in a ski resort for two years. When I returned to the UK in 2013, I got a role as a support worker for adults with Learning Disabilities, whilst I was looking for Occupational Therapy vacancies, but I then found out I was pregnant and decided to wait until my baby was a year old before beginning my career.

As I had trained at the University of Derby, they were an obvious choice once I was ready to return to practice (RtP). As it was 5 years since I qualified, I needed to do 60 days of updating, including 30 days of study – all juggled around my childcare!

I was accepted on the University of Derby Return to Occupational Therapy course and did the 30 days of study through distance learning, with the support of a named lecturer. I did find the academic side difficult to begin, but with perseverance I was able to complete the course and pass the assignment.

In addition to the course I did 30 days of supervised practice on the neurological rehabilitation ward at Lincoln County Hospital. This really updated my core skills and gave me experience working on a ward.

At first it felt very overwhelming but within a couple of days I was settled and felt like a part of the team. The staff were extremely supportive and allowed me to identify my own learning needs and gaps in my experience. They were very understanding and offered endless opportunity to further my skills.

Being an Occupational Therapist is wonderful, we get to help individuals to overcome barriers preventing them from carrying out the meaningful activities in their daily lives. If you are thinking about RtP, research all the possible routes available to you; Health Education East Midlands were a great help to me in working out where to start. Then, don't be too hard on yourself; if you have been out of practice for a while it can be overwhelming and sometimes feel like you are a fish out of water, but if you persevere and embrace the journey, it can be extremely rewarding at the finish line.

For me it was well worth the journey and the feeling of accomplishment is arguably greater than when I graduated university, simply because of the juggling act of home/study life. I feel very proud to be able to say I am now a practising Occupational Therapist.”

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ready to
return?

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