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# **Bridging the gap: Understanding why assistant practitioners choose a radiography UDip pathway**

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## **Abstract**

**Background:** The UDip Radiography Assistant Practitioner bridging course is designed to allow current Assistant Practitioners (APs) in the UK's National Health Service (NHS) to emulate the level of educational and clinical attainment of a BSc. Diagnostic Radiography student finishing their second undergraduate year. This is with a view to the AP then progressing into the third year of the BSc programme and ultimately qualifying as a state-registered radiographer. Little is known about UDip registrants' rationales for choosing to bridge this gap between AP and qualified radiographer. This exploratory paper therefore qualitatively reports detailed self-reflections on pathways taken and choices made by APs in the early stages of a recently validated UDip programme at a single UK university.

**Method:** Semi-structured interviews were conducted with N=6 UDip registrants ( $f=4$ ;  $m=2$ ). Transcribed data were investigated in line with the Reflexive Thematic Analysis approach detailed by Braun and Clarke (2021).

**Results:** Analysis revealed four global themes: (1) A funded opportunity to study - a pathway without incurring tuition fees; (2) Prior level of knowledge and skill - the need to be recognised for clinical experience and skills; (3) Limited scope of practice - frustration and the inability to progress; (4) Impact on the future - the personal and professional impact of progression.

**Conclusions:** It is contended that the findings provide a stronger understanding of registrants' backgrounds and motivations, and the links between them, and will help to more effectively tailor UDip pedagogical provision and personal tuition in the future.

## References

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2021) "One size fits all? What counts as quality practice in (reflexive) thematic analysis?," *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 18(3), pp. 328–352.