



The College of Practical Homeopathy (UK) Ltd

760, High Road, North Finchley
London N12 9QH
Tel 020 8445 6123
Fax 020 8445 3784

email: admin@collegeofpracticalhomeopathy.com
website: www.collegeofpracticalhomeopathy.com

CPH Guide 2

Choosing the right Homeopathic Course

Having read **CPH Guide 1 'Choosing Homeopathy as a Career'** and decided you feel you have an interest in **studying homeopathy, the next question is which course should you choose?** We hope that the information provided in this guide will serve as a good starting point and lead you to making the right choice the first time.

With so many different courses available – part time, full time, correspondence courses, academic or vocational, university courses, and courses run by private colleges - it's hard to know which one will be right for you. Please be clear that **each course is unique in its leadership, approach, philosophy, teaching standards and resources. Do not assume that one course is the same as another!**

What's right for you?

Just as in homeopathy we give an individual prescription to match each patient's needs, so in pursuing your homeopathic education you should find a course that meets your needs. If you're considering studying homeopathy, it's important to bear in mind that the provision of homeopathic training in the UK covers a broad spectrum. The main qualification courses offer is either a **licentiate diploma** or a **degree** in homeopathy, which are of equal value to the graduate wanting to practice as a homeopath in the UK.

We would advise students from overseas who are intending to study in the UK to first check what qualifications for practice are required in their own countries, if they are considering returning home to practice after their training. (Check out the www.Boiron.com website to help with this).

Why so many people get it wrong.

Our experience is that students make choices that are based on **secondary factors** rather than **primary factors** that lead them to get it wrong. The problem is people think all colleges are basically the same and therefore base their decisions on secondary factors such as **location, venue, reputation, cost, individual tutors, friends etc.**

Remember that choosing the wrong college and having to change can be expensive – training to be a homeopath can cost in excess of £10,000 and wasting a year on the wrong course will not only demotivate you but be expensive as well.

We will look at these secondary factors in more depth once we have clarified the Primary Factors.

Our suggestion is that you use the following guide to help you to shortlist the colleges that you think will suit you. They will assist you in being clear what **your primary motivation** is and then look at the secondary factors to help you decide between specific colleges.

1) **There are three primary questions you should be asking yourself.** The first is:

'Do I want to be Homeopath'

or

'Do I want to get a degree and homeopathy looks interesting?'

If you answered yes to the question **'Do I want to get a degree and homeopathy looks interesting?'** then you should consider a degree based course as your first option.

In addition if you:

- are under 21, a University degree is probably a better bet as you can get a student loan, it will give you time to mature and explore a range of alternative and complementary medicines (but do not expect that there will be a job waiting for you on graduation – something to bear in mind when you have a loan to repay)

or

- have any severe learning difficulties or physical disabilities you should definitely consider a degree course as they have much better support systems in place than the small private providers who will not be able to match the extra support systems the Universities have access to. (Not being a confident learner is not a severe learning disability and a good course will help learn in a way that suits you best).

2) **The second primary question, if you answered yes to 'I want to be a homeopath' is) Will a degree help me become one?**

Some colleges are telling prospective students that a degree will be compulsory in a few years time but this is manifestly not true. (If a college tells you this – be aware – their other promises are as likely to be of the same value!). **There is no intention to make a degree a requirement for entry onto a Professional Register.** Indeed the sector is more concerned with whether degree based courses are capable of producing successful working homeopaths. A Degree will not lead to employment as a homeopath as there are almost no job opportunities as such for graduates in homeopathy. This is because the profession is 98% self employment – there are a few jobs in the NHS and these are normally reserved for medically qualified Doctor and Nurses with homeopathic training.

At CPH our experience of degree level courses is that they do not give the skills necessary to set up and maintain a practice. (Increasingly we are finding students who want to practice give up those courses and apply to join our courses but are at least a year behind our students).

So if your vision /dream is:

- to become a successful professional homeopath and/or
- you already have a degree and/or
- you do not want to have to take an academic course

then **your first option** should be to look at a **vocational course.**

3) The third primary factor should be the course itself. You should check out the following:

- **Class size** – some colleges have very large classes – some students prefer this as they can hide at the back, are not challenged and they will not be missed if they find the lecturer dull. (This will not help to build a firm foundation on which to base a career, particularly in the first year when it is important to get a grasp of the basics). Small classes are much friendlier, give time to ask questions, get to know other students and tutors well, but are also more challenging as it is less easy to hide or avoid issues. Remember you will learn as much from other students as you will from lectures and tutors over the duration of a training and so it is vital to join a course that recognises this and supports interaction between students.
- **Integrated teaching programme** – Explore this in depth as many courses claim they provide an integrated programme but in reality just run a timetable of different subjects based on tutor availability – ask final year students how integrated the course is - not the tutors!
- **High quality written handouts** – look for decent written support material - avoid those courses that rely on you to record or take notes during lectures as this is a poor form of learning (about 3 -7% of information is retained and often some of this is wrong). Also look for colleges that make use of electronic transfer of material as this means you end up with a comprehensive set of notes that you can fit to your learning needs and that will be a source of reference and comfort for the rest of your career.
- **Tutors** – Almost all colleges use sessional tutors –This is a more difficult area to assess as you will also not get too much of an opportunity to test them before joining a course so it is a question you should be asking existing students. Remember we all have very different ideas and prejudices around Tutors – the standard of tutoring varies drastically – **a good tutor should make you think, not tell you what to think!** Try and get an overview of the teaching rather than just comments on one or two tutors as these can be very subjective.
- **Clinical training** – homeopathy is best learnt ‘hands on’ – some colleges do not allow students near patients until third or fourth year – others have a much more open attitude and aim to get students seeing patient/taking cases and prescribing as early on as part of the course.
- **Practitioner Development Module** – At the end of the day you can be extremely knowledgeable about homeopathy but not be able to run a practice, or you can be an average homeopath and be very successful. This is because in order to be successful you need to have a range of personal skills, drive, personality, understanding of you own boundaries etc, as well as business skills above and beyond homeopathy – planning, marketing and financial management skills.
- **Drop out rates** – look at how many started a course and how many actually graduated – do not take verbal assurances for this but ask for evidence – talk to graduate year students

By this point you should be shortlisting colleges in the same category .i.e degree course with other degree courses. For example If you find you are comparing CPH with a degree course then you are probably making your decision on secondary factors and not primary ones

4) Having clarified your answers to the above you can now bring in the secondary factors to help you make the final choice. These are:

a) **location** – students often opt to go to a local college because traveling it is easier but if the course is not right for you then it can be an expensive mistake in the longer term.

b) **venue** – similarly many students make the mistake of choosing a course because they like the venue. It is the course itself that should be the key factor!

c) **reputation** and **recommendation** – these can often be historical and therefore out of date – courses change over time so it is worth spending time with current final year (and if possible) graduates to see what they think of the course.

f) **registration/accreditation** – At present there is only one externally assessed registration system and only about a third of colleges are registered. See FAQ's on Accreditation and registration for further details.

g) **cost** – this varies from college to college – be clear that you are comparing like with like – e.g. full time may be two or three year. In addition check what extras you have to pay for as some colleges provide clinical practice as part of a course, others require you to take (and pay) for Anatomy and Physiology Modules as an extra. You should look at the **overall cost, including all extras and not just the annual cost**, and then divide by number of years to get a true comparison.

e) **other supporting factors** – you may like to consider:

- whether the college has offices, clinics and teaching rooms in one building or is spread around as this can affect the feel of belonging to a college. Does it provide a base for a 'community' of student homeopaths?
- openness to new communications technology – both with providing and accessing resource materials and to taking cases by phone and by email
- Graduate and alumni programmes after graduation

Researching Course providers

Now you have clarified your needs the next step is to check out the course providers – the **ARH 'Which Course Guide'** will give you a base to start from, as will the **Society of Homeopaths 'Register of Course Providers'**. Then, if you can do the leg work by internet – visit the websites of individual course providers – ask for a prospectus etc and shortlist those you consider might meet your needs.

Now visit your short listed college/s when it's in action, to observe how things work and talk to the students – particularly those in their the Graduation Year. If you find yourself motivated, enthusiastic and challenged then it's probably the course for you!

NB: If after joining a course you feel you have got it wrong do not be afraid to change. It is better than wasting three or four years on the wrong course and never ending up practicing!

Further reading

If you have found this Guide useful download **Guide No.1 – [Choosing Homeopathy as a Career](http://www.collegeofpracticalhomeopathy.com)** from our website: <http://www.collegeofpracticalhomeopathy.com>

or contact Pauline or Tony email on: admin@collegeofpracticalhomeopathy.com
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