

An introduction to Disorders of Consciousness for Education Staff

A prolonged disorder of consciousness (PDOC) refers to a state of reduced or absent awareness of oneself and the environment, following sudden onset acquired brain injury (Royal College of Physicians, 2020).

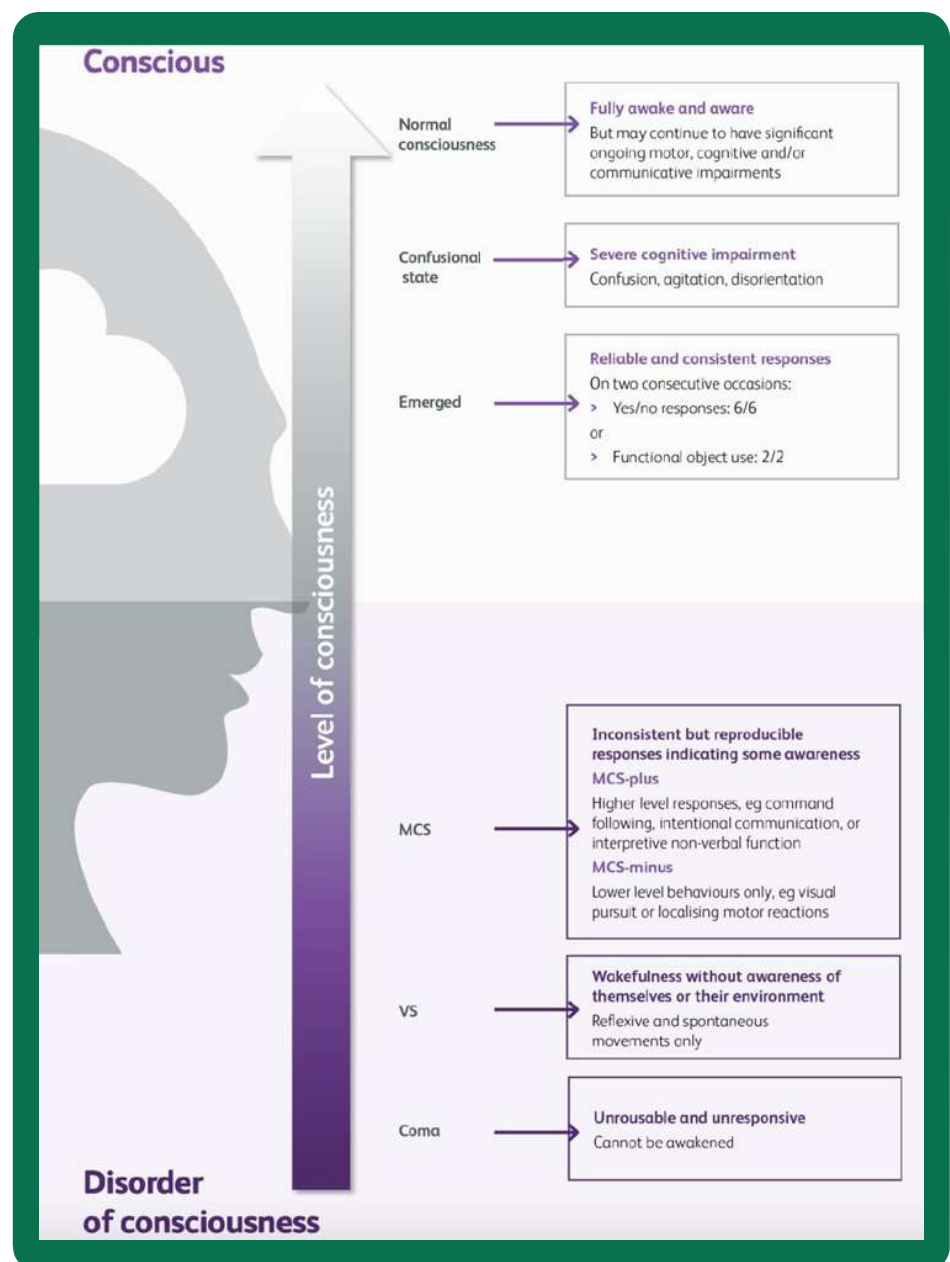
This terminology should only be used to describe an individual's presentation following diagnosis (and regular review) by a suitably qualified clinician.

More information:

- [Royal College of Physicians – Guidelines](#)
- [RHN PDOC Education and Research](#)
- [Headway Resources](#)

Definition and Image Reference:

Royal College of Physicians. Prolonged disorders of consciousness following sudden onset brain injury: National clinical guidelines. London: RCP; 2020



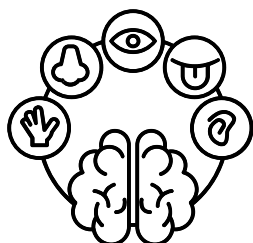
An introduction to Disorders of Consciousness for Education Staff

Pupils in a Disorder of Consciousness may have very limited, inconsistent or difficult-to-detect responses to their environment.

Learning may look different to traditional classroom learning and progress is often slow, subtle and highly individual.

Learning may look like:

- Increased alertness or wakefulness
- Brief visual fixation or tracking
- Changes in facial expression
- Turning towards a familiar voice or sound
- Changes in breathing, heart rate or body movement
- Increased tolerance of sensory experiences
- More consistent responses to familiar people, objects or activities
- Emerging anticipation of familiar routines
- Small changes can be highly significant and should be carefully observed, recorded and shared across the learner's multidisciplinary team



For more information about teaching learners in early recovery (including disorders of consciousness) please see our additional resources on 'Sensory strategies to support learning and engagement'.