

SUGGESTION SHEET – Setting up & Managing Role Emerging Placements

The Role Emerging Model

A role emerging placement model is when the placement is undertaken by one or more students without on-site occupational therapy supervision in a setting where occupational therapy services are not currently provided but where potential exists for an occupational therapy role to emerge – for example within a school special education unit, a community day respite centre or a psycho-social day recovery program.

These placements promote autonomous and self-directed learning, professional growth, and life-long learning. Supervision is provided by a member of the staff team at the facility. Formal supervision and assessment is carried out by an occupational therapist arranged by the facility or University.

Role emerging placements may be merged with an inter-agency model of placement so that the student gains the benefits of role modelling and mentorship directly from a clinical educator in a more traditional setting, whilst also gaining skills involved with developing new roles alongside other professions (Thomas, Penman & Williamson, 2005)

The main focus of a role emerging placement is to develop, implement, pilot and evaluate occupational therapy services in an area and setting of identified need. Occupational therapy services may include assessment, interventions, client education in preventative and health promoting group programs (such as falls prevention, community daily living skills, health living skills, psycho-social skills or even equipment maintenance), linking with community resources or education of site staff on specific techniques to assist clients (Queensland Occupational Therapy Fieldwork Collaborative [QOTFC], 2007)

Development of the role-emerging placement must include sufficient hands-on experience to be valued by students, and must address specific learning and performance objectives that are clearly linked to academic theory and learning (Fortune et al 2006).

Students may be assigned to multiple projects during the course of the placement, rather than one main project (QOTFC,2007). Examples may include: to have input into development of a program or resources on a range of functional, healthy living and preventative issues, that complement existing client programs or activities offered at the centre by contributing a focus on enabling occupation (Fortune et al 2006).

Supervision Arrangements

Day to day supervision would be provided by an on-site, non-occupational therapy worker, whilst the occupational therapy clinical educator would in a mentoring capacity, provide regular support, advice and assistance, either through organised site visits or by phone, to guide the student to focus on the role of occupational therapist and to develop that role within the facility. It may be arranged that a university-based occupational therapist clinical educator or occupational therapy clinical education liaison person provide support to the student by way of phone support, provision of tools and resources, or periodical site visits. This can be arranged in either individual or group student supervision formats.

Effective communication, collaboration and liaison between the student/s, the on-site supervisor and the occupational therapy clinical educator/s involved, and the establishment of an infrastructure within the host facility that supports clinical education is integral to the success of the role-emerging placement and for ensuring a learning environment that is positive, effective and responsive to students' learning needs (Fisher & Savin-Badin, 2002; QOTFC, 2007)

Where have role-emerging placements have been developed before?

Both nationally and overseas, role-emerging placements (sometimes referred to as Independent Community Placements overseas) have been successfully developed in the following types of settings:

Inner city shelters; group homes and day programs, church –run services such as transitional housing, women's emergency accommodation centres; non- profit agencies serving people with specific needs or disabilities, non- government mental health recovery-focused day programs, Council project- teams focusing on preventative or health promotion issues such as falls prevention; aged and disability respite centres and residential facilities and more (University of Alberta (n.d); Fortune et al. 2006).

Tips for Developing a Role-emerging Placement

- Contact the university fieldwork team to discuss any identified needs for potential occupational therapy input within a familiar host facility, or encourage the host facility to contact the university fieldwork team. (You may already have limited services in place with that facility, but could see the benefit of having more intensive input from an occupational therapy student under your guidance – community centres, SEDU's, Special schools for example).
- Discuss with the host facility's manager the potential role for occupational therapy within that facility and ensure they are also enthusiastic for the services that a student could provide, given that placements are only for defined time periods.
- In the first few days of placement, and after there has been some time to absorb the focus and purpose of the facility, discuss with the student and on- site supervisor the potential for occupational therapy services, and encourage the student to be active in this discussion.
- Collaborate with the student and the on-site supervisor to:
 - Determine time-frames for the placement, and any projects that are to be completed, as well as appropriate times for supervision throughout the placement, and
 - Discuss learning opportunities and expectations of the student
 - Promote a settling in time for the student, in which they can spend some time searching and sourcing information relevant to the clientele of the service, the activities of the service, the local community and other services/resources it offers, and to explore the role of occupational therapy with a similar population and context or in other contexts, in order to gain a feel for their role, goal and purpose.

- Liaise regularly with the on-site supervisor about the student's progress and professional behaviour so that their input is included when engaging in supervision sessions with the student, and when evaluating student performance.
- When possible, arrange to observe the student within the facility, whether that be while they are running a group session, interacting with clients, or giving a presentation to staff.
- Encourage the student to explain and define the occupational therapy role to others within the host facility, and to focus on the specific occupational therapy skills and knowledge that would be of benefit.
- Provide regular and timely support and facilitate the student's access to useful resources and learning material. Provide explicit detail as to your accessibility in terms of contact times and methods. Students will benefit more from this model when they feel supported and when the clinical educator, although off-site demonstrates approachability and accessibility. (QOTFC,2007; Thomas et al, 2005)

Reference List:

Fisher, A. Savin-Baden, M. 2002. *Modernising fieldwork, part 2: Realising the new agenda*. British Journal of Occupational Therapy 65(6) pp. 275 -277.

Fortune, T. Farnworth, L. McKinstry, C. 2006. Project-focussed fieldwork: Core business or fieldwork fillers? Australian Occupational Therapy Journal. 53 (3) pp.233 – 236

Queensland Occupational Therapy Fieldwork Collaborative [QOTFC] (2007) Fact Sheet. How to develop and manage a role-emerging placement. *Clinical Supervisor's Toolkit*. Available from http://www.otqld.org.au/ot_links/clinical_supervisors_tool_kit/index.aspx

Thomas, Y., Penman & Williamson (2005) Australian and New Zealand fieldwork: Charting the territory for future practice. Australian Occupational Therapy Journal. 52: 78-81.

University of Alberta website (n.d): *Independent Community Placements Overview*. Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine, Occupational Therapy Clinical Education. Retrieved 24th May 2007 from: http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/rehabmed/icp_overview.cfm.

For more information about role emerging placements, in addition to a wide range of OT practice education resources, visit our website at: otpecq.group.uq.edu.au