

SUGGESTION SHEET – Setting up & Managing a Project Placement

The Project-focused Placement Model

Project focused placements refer to placements where the primary focus of the placement is for the student/s to undertake one or more prescribed projects relevant to occupational therapy practice that the host facility has nominated in negotiation with the occupational therapy clinical educator and university. The host facility may or may not already employ an occupational therapist. For instance, a project may be incorporated into a clinical placement setting where the workload is likely to fluctuate such as in private practice, or may be assigned as a group student project in the multiple mentoring or collaborative clinical placement models.

Examples of suitable projects include, but are not limited to:

- development and/or evaluation of a new or existing individual or group program for clients;
- development and/or evaluation of a new or existing resource kit, educational handout, or education package. For example, a de-sensitization kit for patients with hypersensitivity; development of a proforma for neurological assessment of CVA patients; guidelines for cognitive re-training activities.
- a research and literature review of a certain topic;
- an audit or survey;
- specific task analyses or workplace assessments.

(Queensland Occupational Therapy Fieldwork Collaborative [OTFC], 2007)

Supervision Arrangements

Where there is an occupational therapist employed within the facility, supervision would be provided by the occupational therapist/s as per any other placement, according to the respective placement model ie. traditional, multiple-mentoring or collaborative models.

Where no occupational therapist is employed within the facility, the student is supervised on-site by a suitably qualified non-occupational therapist within the facility, and by a qualified off-site occupational therapist (either from a related facility or the university) on a regular basis (usually weekly).

The role of the occupational therapy clinical educator is to provide support, guidance, advice and assistance in developing the project, as well as guiding the student to focus on the occupational therapy role within the facility.

Liaison between the on-site supervisor and the occupational therapy clinical educator is essential for the success of the project placement (Bossers, Cook, Polatajko & Laine, 1997).

Tips for Developing and Managing a Project Focused Placement

- Contact the University clinical education liaison team to discuss your ideas for potential projects
- Liaise with the Manager/Director of the host facility you have identified as benefiting from an OT student about your ideas for a project within that facility.
- Be organised! Define the scope of the project (with the on-site supervisor as appropriate) or discuss the range of project options available for students to choose from **prior** to the start of the placement.
- In the first day or two of the placement, if not before the placement starts, include the student in discussions about the scope of the project or in selecting an appropriate project option that is of interest to them.
- Determine timeframes for the project, as well as appropriate times for supervision throughout the placement.
 - Provide explicit expectations regarding the student's role and tasks in the project. For instance, to conduct a needs assessment/analysis; to prepare a submission and proposal; to provide a timeline and reporting process for the project; to perform a literature review; to select and/or implement an outcome measure; or to prepare an evaluation or summaritive report on findings.
- Encourage the student to experience a variety of activities within the organisation other than those related to the defined project. For example, by providing assistance with the manual handling, handwriting, mobility or dressing program for a student in a special school.

"It is important to provide the student with explicit instructions regarding your expectations [of the project]. For instance, show them an example of a similar existing resource or provide a proforma. If you don't say what you want, you don't get what you want students can't read your mind." S. Bartholomai, OT clinical educator, collaborative placement model (personal communication, May 31, 2007)

(S. Bartholomai, personal communication, May 31, 2007; QOTFC, 2007).

For the off-site Occupational Therapy clinical educator:

- Maintain open lines of communication by:
 - Discussing learning opportunities and expectations of the student with both the student and the on-site supervisor.
 - Regular liaison with the on-site supervisor about student progress and professional behaviour so that their input is included when you are engaged in supervision sessions with the student, and when you are evaluating student performance.

- When possible, arrange to observe the student within the facility or within the context of the project, 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 OT role to others within the host facility and to focus on the specific Occupational Therapy skills and knowledge that would be of benefit.

References:

Bossers, A., Cook, J., Polatajko, H & Laine, C (1997) Understanding the role emerging fieldwork placement. *Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 64(1): 70-81.

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

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