

Clinical educator tip sheet: Enhancing student performance on placement

Queensland Health

Occupational Therapy Clinical
Education Program

What are clinical educator tip sheets?

The contribution of clinical educators to a student's learning and development while on placement is fundamental to the success of the placement and the overall outcomes for the student. This series of tip sheets aim to equip clinical educators with knowledge, information, processes and tools on key topics related to placement organisation and student learning.

Why is this topic relevant?

A student on placement is often in an unfamiliar environment and may face new challenges. The situation may cause the student to feel overwhelmed which could also hinder their ability to take on new information and to learn. This Tip Sheet aims to prompt the consideration of common barriers that may be experienced on placement and assist clinical educators and students to enhance their performance and take advantage of the varied learning opportunities they may experience.

Potential factors contributing to student performance difficulties

Clinical Educator-centred factors:

- Lack of feedback about performance
- Unclear expectations
- A supervisor that is not approachable
- Negative or preconceived attitudes of staff/supervisor
- Impact of other factors such as family, workplace changes or other relationships

Student-centred factors:

- Personal factors such as family, other relationships, finance
- Self-awareness and or management of stress/ personal resources
- Stress of other work and university deadlines
- Lack of confidence
- Not feeling prepared
- Poor quality of planning for placement
- Limited clinical experience
- Uncertainty of assessments used in the setting
- Uncertainty of therapy used in the setting

Caseload-centred factors:

- "Too-difficult" or the "First time" client
- Clients with whom previous sessions were unsuccessful

(The University of Queensland & Griffith University, 2008)

Ways to enhance performance and resilience

- Provide clear written expectations from the beginning of the placement
- Seek regular feedback from student about their understanding of expectations/ learning Goals and progress towards them
- Provide regular feedback and consider making a written record of this
- Provide a timetable for the first two weeks of the placement

- Be approachable and display a positive attitude
- Ask students about themselves
- Ensure students have the opportunity to plan for client sessions, practice assessments or interventions and have the opportunity to reflect on their performance eg have a structure for written reflections
- Ensure the student takes allocated breaks throughout the day and has the opportunity to leave the department/workspace

Students perform best when the following are present on the placement:

- There is a welcoming environment and a sense of belonging
- Quality supervision is provided (well prepared and balanced, timely feedback)
- The Clinical Educator is interested in the student
- Peers are available (ie. other students and perhaps exposure to the new graduates)
- Pre placement preparation has been supported by the clinical educator eg guidance provided such as likely diagnoses of clients or pre-reading.
- Interprofessional teams are included in the placement.

References:

The University of Queensland & Griffith University (2008). Interprofessional Workshop for Professional Practice Educators. Presented at Griffith University on 17th January 2008 by Anne Hill and Maria Constantinou.

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