

Occupational Therapy Clinical Education Program

Clinical Educator Tip Sheet

“Learning Contracts / Plans”

Why do we need one?

- Provides mechanism for students to take responsibility for their own learning
- Tool for monitoring progress and to facilitate communication between student and clinical educator (CE)
- Literature reports that it is a valuable part of learning during placement experience as learning which is deeper and more permanent is likely to be achieved when adult learners use initiative
- World Federation of Occupational Therapy (WFOT) guidelines support their use
- Important skill for practicing OT's to complete as clinical educators and supervisors
- Helps to orientate the student to the setting and review their current knowledge
- Helps to commence development of the student / CE relationship

When should we complete it?

- Guidelines for completing learning contracts are usually set by the individual university and will be outlined in their manuals. As a general guideline for placements longer than 5 weeks, a draft is usually completed by end of week 1 and finalised by end of week 2
- Reviews are then completed in supervision and at half-way evaluations

Student role:

- To come to placement prepared to reflect on the components of the placement and the case load
- Be prepared to develop their personal skill set whilst on placement
- Establish a process with the CE of ongoing review and evaluation of progress towards goals
- At end of placement reflect on goal achievement and begin making goals for the next placement
- Send a copy of the learning contract to the university

The Clinical Educator role:

- Utilise placement tools eg: weekly placement objectives, skills check list etc, to identify the key components of the role, to use as a foundation in developing and refining the students' goals so that they are practical and realistic.
- Discuss the student learning style to enable the student to identify how they may need to develop their personal skill set to meet the needs of the placement
- Utilise a format such as SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and have a timeframe) or Action, Item, Conditions, Standard
- Help students to link the learning contract / plan with the SPEF-R domains and items
- Review goals in regular supervision, at half way and end of placement
- Recommend learning resources to assist student to develop appropriate goals eg. Textbooks, library, journals, other people, websites, services / agencies, databases etc

University role:

- Prepare students in the process of developing personal learning goals
- Provide examples of learning goals to clinical educators
- Support students and clinical educators as required

Goal development includes:

- An **action** word (complete, assess, give, develop, present, manage, document, write, identify)
- The **item** (a report, an assessment, a literature review, a presentation, a case study)
- The **conditions** (without CE support, using available resources, with CE supervision)
- The **standard** (within the first 3 weeks of placement, at week 7 during the in-service time) (QOTFC 2007)

Examples of learning goals:

- To document one therapy sessions directly into the medical record without a draft by the end of week 4
- To complete an MMSE without error on one client in week 2
- To contribute appropriate information related to two clients at case conference in week 3

For more information:

- Refer to university supplied manuals

References:

The above content has been adapted from:

- Dunwoodie, R., Fitzgerald, C., Hill, A., Patane, A.. (2006, June). In *Queensland Occupational Therapy Fieldwork Collaborative (QOTFC) Clinical Educator's Kit*, 2007 Part Two: Setting up and sustaining a positive student clinical placement, 67.
- Knowles, M. S. (1996). *Using Learning Contracts*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Queensland Occupational Therapy Fieldwork Collaborative (QOTFC). (2007) Review the Student Learning Plan. In *Clinical Educator's Resource Kit*. Part Two: Setting up and sustaining a positive student clinical placement, 66 – 76.
- The University of Queensland and Griffith University. (2008). *Interprofessional Workshop for Professional Practice Educators*. Presented at Griffith University Gold Coast, 17th January 2008 by Anne Hill and Maria Constantinou.

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