



Source: Competency Based Fieldwork Evaluation for Occupational Therapists, (Bossers, Miller, Polatajko & Hartley, 2002)



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Entry-Level Student

Entry-level or beginning students are introduced to basic concepts of professional practice in the classroom and to the clinical environment during fieldwork placements. Initially, they may approach these areas as separate domains of learning. Students on their first placement are often occupied with becoming familiar with the dynamics of a fieldwork setting. They have not had time to develop the knowledge and problem-solving skills necessary for independent action within the fieldwork environment. Consider the analogy of novice drivers. Learning the rules of the road and learning to physically drive a car are separate activities; a person can become competent in one of these areas without becoming competent in the other. Developing the competence of a licensed driver is the process of learning to apply the rules of the road while driving the car.

Early on, student's fieldwork may focus on the application of academic knowledge without simultaneous consideration of environmental feedback (Neistadt, 1996). Entry-level students may be uncomfortable with the idea that there could be more than one solution to a problem. Entry-level students who have been prepared for the complexities of the fieldwork environment during coursework are motivated to learn, have developed learning abilities and a clear conception of what is required of them, are able to identify the need for further information and ask appropriate questions, and can identify and reflect upon personal strengths and weaknesses.

With most students, at any stage of development, there is an initial period of adaptation as students enter new areas of practice.



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Knowledge Application

Soon after entry level, students begin the task of acquiring the body of knowledge and repertoire of skills necessary for professional practice. As they move through the curriculum and gain experience in the clinical environment, students learn the principles of practice and become familiar with the role of their discipline. During this stage of development, students need to observe, practice skills, and reflect on their performance.

Providing direct evaluation and feedback is useful for beginning students with little or no fieldwork experience or for students who are inexperienced in a specific area of practice (Anderson, 1998). Students need an opportunity to take an active role working with clients to apply their knowledge, and to develop and practice interaction, assessment, intervention, and professional reasoning skills. They are becoming familiar with the roles of the therapists (Sullivan & Roberts, 1998).

Transition

Transition (Anderson, 1988) is a developmental stage between knowledge application and consolidation. Although students at this stage interact with their fieldwork educator to varying degrees to solve problems or make decisions, they are able to make meaningful contributions as members of a health care team.

The emphasis during this developmental stage is on practice and experience in problem-solving, assessment, and intervention. Students begin to share and assume responsibility for all components of practice. Students should be encouraged to try to develop their own ideas and insights regarding clients, engage in discussion of solutions to clinical problems, and begin to make decisions about the



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most viable course of action. Students should be encouraged to engage in self-analysis and reflection and to share and integrate previous learning experiences into their practice (Sullivan & Bossers, 1998).

The Coaching Supervision Strategy (Hagler & McFarlane, 1991) is appropriate for students in the process of developing autonomy and independence. A coach is a highly supportive role model who intercedes in difficult situations to collaboratively solve problems while gradually increasing a student's responsibility for professional decision-making (Gaipman & Anthony, 1993).

Consolidation

Consolidation (Sullivan & Bossers, 1998) is the final stage of student development. It is expected that students near the end of the curriculum will have already internalised the core body of specialised knowledge, skills, and values that form the basis of professional practice. They should be able to accurately analyse and appropriately alter their own behaviour, solve problems independently, and function effectively in the fieldwork environment without continuous observation or evaluation. However, students in the consolidation stage continue to interact with experienced clinicians to further their development as professionals.

The Consultation Supervision Strategy is appropriate for students who have reached the consolidation stage. Consolidation is essentially “helping process that emerges out of a need to solve a problem” (Anderson, 1998). The fieldwork educator assists a student with a specific problem by collaborating as a peer to generate potential solutions.

Entry-Level Clinician

An entry-level clinician is a graduate from an accredited program who is entering practice as a therapist.