



Support for Fieldwork (FW) Students Facing Challenges

The goal of fieldwork in occupational therapy is to progress a student to entry-level status. Student underperformance may lead to fieldwork dismissal or failure and therefore is not to be taken lightly. The ramifications of a failed fieldwork placement may include postponed graduation or incomplete fulfillment of degree requirements. It is common for programs to allow for one failed placement with dismissal from the program upon an additional failure. All relevant parties should receive prompt notification when student remediation and support are needed.

Common areas of difficulty that arise during fieldwork include diminished professional behaviors, lagging executive functioning skills in areas such as planning, initiation, organization, and time management, delayed clinical reasoning and safety awareness skills, and limited self-confidence. The root causes of poor performance should be targeted during remediation planning with student learning objectives and supportive resources. Utilizing weekly progress forms and learning contracts can help produce positive student outcomes (Deluliis & Hanson, 2023, p. 308). For additional information regarding supplemental materials including learning contract samples to implement in practice, please refer to the citations below.

Weekly Forms

Weekly goal sheets are collaborative documents that can establish weaknesses and strengths, promote goal development, and support problem areas. They can also provide data tracking for weekly objectives.

Learning Contracts

Learning contracts are beneficial for all students, but may become a necessity when students do not achieve their weekly objectives and/or demonstrate continued skill difficulties that inhibit learning progress.

Feedback

When student challenges arise, clear and timely feedback is required from the site educator. Adaptations to teaching strategies and resources may be necessary to meet diverse student learning needs.

Process for Supporting Students

It is imperative to contact and update the Academic Fieldwork Coordinator (AFWC) and clinical educator site coordinator when concerns with student performance arise. The AFWC can help clarify the site and university expectations with the student and provide supplemental resources. Should the need to develop a learning contract occur, the AFWC can create and share a drafted version with all contributing members (Deluliis & Hanson, 2023, p. 280). The Fieldwork Performance Evaluation (FWPE) tool can serve as a guide to develop student goals on weekly forms and learning contracts. These documents are ideally collaborative and should be viewed optimally as a means of supporting student growth. They are regarded as living documents to be revised as needed to promote continuous skill acquisition and successful fieldwork completion.

Learning Contract Features

- Document date(s) of meeting(s) and participants
- Define students strengths and areas to improve
- Use the FWPE form to establish objective goals that reflect growth areas
- Establish evaluation methods, data collection, and the timeline(s) for achievement (Costa, 2007, p. 136; Deluliis & Hanson, 2023, pp. 280-283, 309)
- Determine appropriate learning strategies and procedures to achieve goals
- Clearly explain the implications of not meeting established goals
- Obtain signatures of all participants (in agreement) to the learning contract
- Students have the right to contest a fieldwork termination

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Costa, D. (2007). The process of clinical supervision: Tools of the trade. *Clinical supervision in occupational therapy: A guide for fieldwork and practice* (pp. 133-163). AOTA Press.

Deluliis, E. D. & Hanson, D. (2023). Supporting the at-risk fieldwork student. In B. Trivinia & C. R. Johnson (Eds.), *Fieldwork educator's guide to level II fieldwork* (pp. 277-317). SLACK Incorporated.