

Observation Feedback Form: adult session

Scoring

ABSENT:	was not included by student
INAPPROPRIATE:	applied, but done so poorly/mistimed/without rationale
BASIC:	competent, but lacked some elements
GOOD:	competent, and all core elements included
VERY GOOD:	competent, at level of skilled and experienced practitioner
EXCELLENT:	skilful and effective, even in the face of difficulty
N/A:	not an expected feature of session

Criterion	Rating	Comments
Agenda setting <i>collaboratively sets a clear agenda</i>		
Feedback <i>checks in & adjusts practice accordingly</i>		
Understanding <i>identifies central issues effectively</i>		
Interpersonal effectiveness <i>is warm, reflective, boundaried & calm</i>		
Pacing & efficient use of time <i>is goal focused, attentive & empathic</i>		
Use of guided discovery <i>avoids lecturing & persuasion</i>		
Theory driven focus <i>session uses coherent theoretical framework</i>		
Theory-driven strategies for change <i>strategies are theoretically coherent</i>		
Collaboration <i>goals are jointly set, & working as a team</i>		
Conceptual integration <i>uses theoretically coherent formulations</i>		
Use of homework <i>reviews & sets appropriately explained tasks</i>		
Use of measurement-based care strategies and tools <i>systematically & objectively reviews progress</i>		

Adult psychological therapy session

Criterion explanations

Agenda setting

The majority of the interventions used by students whilst on placement will be time limited. Whilst an overarching reason for this is the time limited nature of the placement itself, it is also highly likely that the student is using a version of cognitive, cognitive behavioural or a third wave cognitive behavioural intervention. Because cognitive (including 3rd wave interventions such as ACT and DBT) and cognitive behavioural interventions are a relatively short-term, problem-solving therapy, the limited time available for each session must be used carefully. At the beginning of each session, the psychologist and the client should together establish an agenda with specific target problems to focus on for the session. It is important that this is done collaboratively, and that ideas for the agenda are based on client preference, and thoughtfully included. The agenda helps ensure that the most pertinent issues are addressed in an efficient manner.

Feedback

Research has shown that psychologists who seek regular feedback from their clients have better outcomes. Whilst there is no formula for exactly when a psychologist should seek feedback from their clients, it seems sensible for psychologists to seek feedback at the beginning of a session to gauge the response of the client to the previous session now that they have had time to reflect on it, and then at some point further on in the current session to gauge whether the client is responding well to the strategies being discussed and the overall session in general. Psychologists should modify their practise if they receive feedback from clients indicating that they are finding some of the material difficult, hard to understand or are struggling to engage because of the approach taken by the psychologist.

Understanding

An extension of basic counselling skills, this criterion attempts to assess the ability of the psychologist to use techniques such as summarising and paraphrasing to accurately convey and communicate an understanding of the client's thoughts and feelings back to them. Understanding refers to how well the psychologist can step into the client's world, see and experience life the way the client does, and convey the essence of this understanding back to the client. Understanding involves two critical elements - the ability to accurately use empathy, and communication skills.

Interpersonal effectiveness

This criterion is designed to assess the ability of the psychologist to display optimal levels of warmth, concern, genuineness and professionalism. This should be communicated both verbally and nonverbally, and carefully assessed by the observer.

Pacing and efficient use of time

The psychologist and the client should accomplish as much as possible in the time available to them during the session. The way in which this is operationalized by the psychologist needs to consider the present capacity of the client to absorb new information, their level of distress, and the extent to which the client is able to intuitively understand the main aspects of the psychological model being used in psychological treatment. To make the most of the available time, the psychologist should maintain sufficient control, limit discussion of peripheral issues, interrupt unproductive discussions in a sophisticated and gentle way, and pace the session appropriately so that the session can be drawn to a close having covered all the material listed on the agenda.

Use of guided discovery

The overall principles of collaborative empiricism and guided discovery apply to most cognitive, cognitive behavioural, short time and third wave cognitive therapies, such that it can be considered a fundamentally important strategy to use in most evidence-based psychological therapy approaches. The psychologist should be able to use exploration and questioning that assists the client to see new perspectives and approaches to problem solving without resorting to the use of debating or lecturing techniques. A psychologist who is skilled in these techniques attempts to avoid putting the client in a position where they become defensive, and instead assists the client to slowly achieve their own independent realisations about their difficulties, and the relationship between those difficulties and the psychological model being used in the treatment.

Theory-driven focus

Once the psychologist and the client have agreed on a central target problem for the session, it is important that the psychologist approach the exploration of these issues from a clear theoretical perspective. This will likely differ depending on the specific therapeutic approach that the psychologist and the client have agreed upon. For example, the way in which the psychologist and the client tackle issues when using a piece of prototypical cognitive behavioural therapy will differ from those of the psychologist and client who are using Acceptance And Commitment therapy or Interpersonal Psychotherapy. Importantly, the differences between theoretical models applied by the psychologist and the client should be obvious, and to the observer there should be a clear indication of the theoretical model that the psychologist and the client have chosen to work from. Whilst a planned and overt transdiagnostic approach is appropriate in some cases, eclecticism is rarely appropriate.

Theory-driven strategies for change

Different theoretical approaches to the resolution of psychological problems employ different psychological tools. Furthermore, the ways used to describe, conceptualise and address psychological problems attract different language and semantics and different theoretical approaches. Different theoretical approaches also make use of specific strategies to bring about psychological and behavioural change. The aim of this criteria is to be able to assess the extent to which the psychologist is able to use specific, theory- specific strategies, tools and language to address the issue that they and the client have agreed to work on. It should be clear to the observer that the psychologist and the client are using theory-specific tools to accomplish their goals.

Collaboration

A fundamental principle of most time limited psychological therapies is collaboration. In order for the psychological therapy to be effective, there should be a collaborative relationship between the psychologist and the client. This collaboration should take the form of a good therapeutic alliance in which the psychologist and the client work together to fight a common enemy: the client's distress. More advanced aspects of collaboration are also dealt with in the *guided discovery* criterion.

Conceptual integration

Psychologists should have a clear formulation of the client's current presenting difficulties. The formulation should be clearly linked to a theoretical approach to understanding human psychological problems and should be clearly articulated to the client in a way that allows the client to consider their own perspectives. The use of case conceptualisation strategies in a session will differ depending on the point during the overall course of psychological therapy that the observer is witnessing. It is also important to note that the way in which formulations are collaboratively explored with clients will differ depending on the theoretical orientation of the work being undertaken. For example, formulation approaches using cognitive behaviour therapy are somewhat different to those using EMDR. Regardless of differences in language and content, a collaboratively explored theoretical formulation that encapsulates the client's presenting issues in a way that is understandable and meaningful to the client is important. During early sessions, this may take the form of a more general case formulation that describes several of the client symptoms in a way that begins to help the client understand how future psychological therapy may unfold. In subsequent sessions the observer may see formulation examples of a smaller kind, whereby the psychologists and the client apply their chosen theoretical model to understanding specific issues that have occurred during the previous week, or during the session itself.

Use of Homework

Research indicates that psychological therapies that use homework strategies are more successful for behavioural change than those that do not use homework strategies. Furthermore, the research indicates the clients who engage in homework strategies are more likely to improve than those who choose not to engage in homework strategies, or who struggle for other reasons to engage in homework strategies. It is important that psychologists are able to carefully judge the kind of homework exercise that will be a value to a client, explain it in a way that integrates the material covered in the session or previous sessions into the homework exercise, and leave sufficient time for the client to ask questions about the forthcoming homework exercise. It is also important that psychologists review previously completed homework during the session. Whilst this is commonly done at the beginning of a session, there is no requirement that this be the case, as long as the psychologist is respecting the efforts of a client to practise strategies outside of the session by reviewing their progress since the previous session. The observer should be able to clearly delineate conversations about homework, and there should be conversations about previous homework tasks that have been completed by the client and future homework tasks to be completed by the client. Ample time should be left for both activities, and they should be carefully and thoroughly explain to the client in such a way as to link them to material covered in the session and their shared formulation or conceptualisation of the clients current presenting difficulties.

Use of measurement-based care strategies and tools

The phrase 'measurement-based care' describes the approach of a scientist practitioner to using a methodical and systematic approach to understanding changes in the client's presentation. Commonly, this will use a combination of standardised assessment tools, collateral information and self-ratings by the client using scales such as a subjective units of distress scaling. The client and the psychologist may also choose to measure more general wellbeing factors on a session-by-session basis and may also choose to assess process-related variables using some of the common measures available. Regardless of their approach, it should be clear to the observer assessing this criterion that the psychologist and the client have engaged in a clearly scientific approach to assessing the progress that the client is making, and integrating this information into both the current session and changes to future sessions in order to optimise care.