Course outline for Junior Sophister Occupational Therapy

The focus of the third year is on the analysis and synthesis of knowledge gained in the first two years. The student integrates this knowledge base with theories guiding occupational therapy practice to evaluate performance difficulties and to formulate and justify possible occupational therapy interventions. More emphasis is placed on evidence supporting practice interventions and application of theory and interventions in a wider variety of practice contexts. The student continues to develop reflective and learning skills and begins to give serious consideration to the research process and to consider the role of research in informing occupational therapy practice. Students become involved in a piece of empirical research which is submitted in the fourth year as part of the final degree. Students are also introduced to social and health policies which underpin the services they engage with. The student completes the second large block of practice education placement during the second semester of the third year.

Junior Sophister Modules

Health Psychology

To provide a brief overview of the emerging discipline of health psychology and to address a variety of health-related topics to which psychological and sociological approaches are fundamental – whether from an analytic, preventative or therapeutic point of view. There is an emphasis throughout on the biopsychosocial model and students are encouraged to develop an integrative approach that pays due regard to the importance of all levels of analysis and the continuous interactions between levels.

Research Methods

This course recognises the need for graduates to achieve competence in applying research skills to occupational therapy practice. This course builds on the knowledge obtained in the senior freshmen year to provide students with the skills necessary to undertake a project of empirical research. It aims to increase students’ understanding of principles and methodologies of research that are applicable to occupational therapy practice. To prepare students to apply research skills appropriate to practice the course emphasis is on formulating a research proposal – identifying a feasible and manageable research question together with the appropriate data collection and analysis methodologies. Identifying a project that is within the limits of students’ capabilities is essential to the course in order to ensure high standards of student-conduct in research practice.

Evaluative Practice

Competency to practice requires that the entry-level graduate performs in an evidence based, effective and efficient manner that is fitting with the contemporary
healthcare context and climate. This course is taught in both third and fourth year. The third year component aims to first equip the student with the knowledge and skills to apply the principles of evidence-based practice to occupational therapy and second, to ensure quality standards in service delivery. The course encourages the students to take an objective approach to their future practice and develop the skills in evidence gathering, evaluating and reporting, while also being client-centred and practicing in the best interest of service users. The course helps students understand evidence in terms of its levels and varied forms (e.g. RCTs, service user feedback, clinical guidelines, audit outcomes etc.) and how this may be used to improve practice. The fourth year component focuses on bringing evidence to practice and requires students to bring course work to publication standard.

Study of Occupation

The purpose of this module in the third year is to integrate and relate theories of occupation studied in earlier years to practice issues in supporting occupational engagement, while on practice education placement.

Occupational Therapy for Adults-Physical

The overall aim of this module is for students to develop knowledge and skills in occupational therapy practice for clients with neurology and oncology-related conditions. It builds on knowledge gained in ‘Medical and Orthopaedic Conditions in Occupational Therapy’ (SF year). This module will cover conceptual and practice models, and assessment and intervention strategies, commonly used both nationally and internationally in these areas of practice. It will also examine the research evidence for assessment and treatment strategies currently used in occupational therapy practice.

Occupational Therapy with Older Adults

The overall aim is to develop a knowledge base around older adults which reflects current thinking and best practice in occupational therapy with this client group. It will cover a range of content applying theoretical frameworks to the occupational therapy process with particular emphasis on cognitive impairment and dementia, falls, mobility and transportation, assistive technology, primary and community care services, end of life ageing, and support agencies.

Occupational Therapy for Mental Health Adults

This module aims to build upon the Senior Freshman module on Adult Mental Health Conditions and to explore the evidenced and practice of how conceptual models and frames of reference can be applied to adults with mental health difficulties in a range of practice contexts from community to long term facilities. It will examine the main approaches utilized within the wider mental health arena as well as political directions for mental health care in Ireland.
Professional Development Group Theory and Facilitation

Group theory and skills is a one semester course taken by Junior Sophister students in order to equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills to carry out group facilitation aspects of their programme. This course aims to explore the theories surrounding group work in occupational therapy as well as examining the empirical evidence on group processes, the therapeutic value of group work and the facilitation of groups in the therapeutic context. As part of this course students are offered the opportunity to practice the skills necessary for group work through the facilitation of one of three groups with their peers. The aim of this assignment is to acquire professional skills and attitudes necessary to carry out group activity. Students are required to function independently and as part of a team, and by so doing, to become self-directive and reflective.

Occupational Therapy for Children

This course builds on the children’s component of the Conditions in Occupational Therapy module in the Senior Freshman year. It is designed to facilitate the student’s to explore the occupations of childhood, occupational development and facilitate the student to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for working with children and their families in a variety of practice areas. During the module, students will explore typical development and children’s occupation and participation. The occupational therapy process will be studied in relation to specific cases in the context of conceptual and practice models. The module aims to prepare students to develop skills in cultural competence.

Practice Education

“Practice education is a process which involves a partnership between the practice educator and the student in the practice setting. It offers an opportunity for "rehearsal of, and reflection on, practice." (Alsop & Ryan, 1996, p 3). It facilitates the integration of theory based learning with practice in graded developmental stages throughout the course. This is based on the Guidelines for good practice in practice education (Therapy Project Office, 2008). This module accounts for 364 hours of practice education and includes eleven weeks of placement in a practice education site.

Social Policy Concepts

The purpose of the module is to introduce students to the study of social policy and to the concepts that underpin social policy in practice.