



Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

Discipline of Occupational Therapy

Practice Education

Targeted Competency Pathway

Overview

This targeted competency pathway has been designed as a suggested framework to use with students who are perceived to be experiencing competency-related challenges on placement. The pathway is intended to assist Practice Educators (PEs) and students in their management of such challenges with the aim of effectively supporting the student to achieve a competency grade in his/her placement.

It is intended that this pathway will be used in tandem with the standard teaching and learning supports provided to the PE and students by the university-based Practice Education Team (PET).

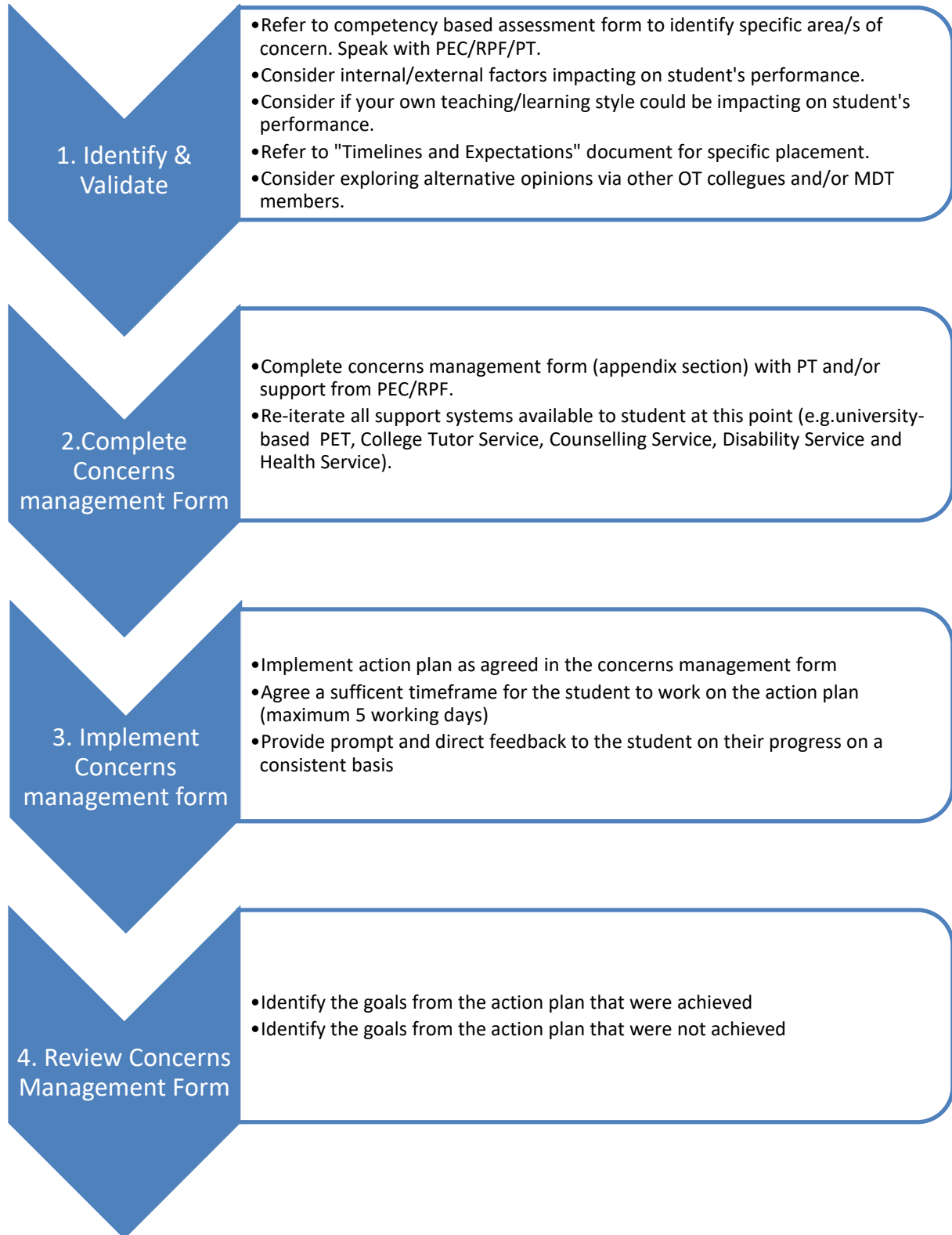
PEs and students on practice education sites where a Practice Tutor (PT) is available will be supported by the PT to assist with the implementation of this pathway. PEs and students on practice education sites where there is no PT available will be supported by either the Practice Education Co-ordinator (PEC) and/or the Regional Placement Facilitator (RPF) to assist with the implementation of this pathway.

In all cases whereby there are to competency-related challenges, PEs and students should be reminded that in addition to the university-based PET there are other support services available to students (e.g. College Tutor Service, Counselling Service, Disability Service and Health Service).

Important note: *In cases whereby there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate that a student's action, inaction and/or decision-making whilst on placement is negatively impacting on the quality of client care and/or service delivery of the placement site and/or in cases whereby the student's support requirements is encroaching on the Practice Educator's clinical and personal commitments on a consistent basis, the placement site and/or the Discipline of Occupational Therapy reserve the right to override the processes outlined in the pathways below and to terminate the placement in advance of the completion date. In such cases, sufficient evidence/documentation must be made available to support this decision-making and all relevant stakeholders must be involved. Please refer to protocol 28 in section 4.25 of the Occupational Therapy Practice Education handbook for further details relating to such circumstances.*

The following figure outlines the first four steps (phase 1) of the targeted competency pathway and the actions that should be taken by the Practice Educator.

Phase 1



If all of the goals that were defined in the action plan (as per the concerns management form) have been **achieved to a satisfactory level**, then this pathway is now **complete**.

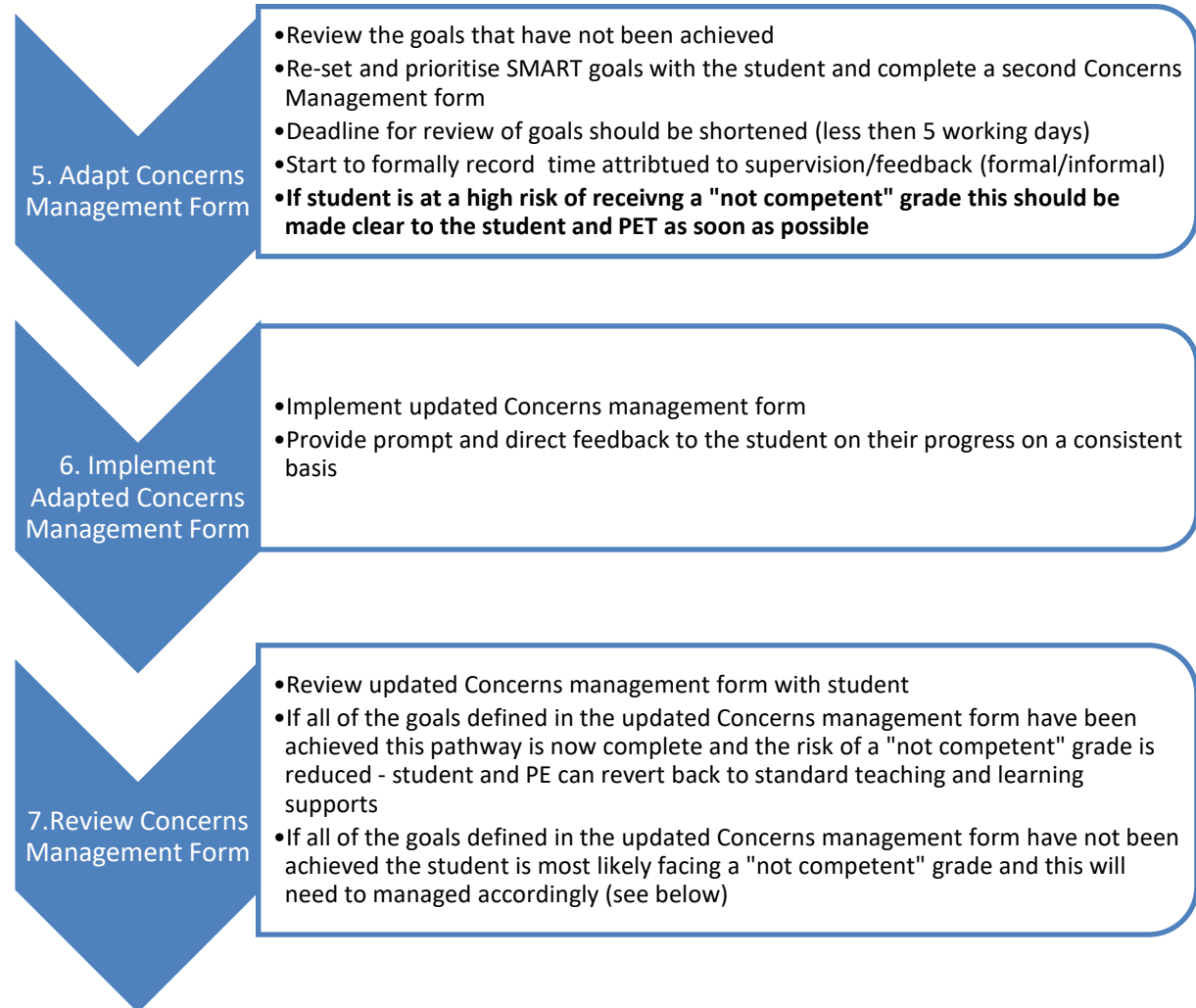
If any of the goals that were defined in the action plan (as per the concerns management form) have **not been achieved** the student is now at a higher risk of achieving an overall **“not competent”** grade. At this point, the PE needs to consider whether the student has progressed from a **“struggling”** to **“failing”** student.

This is a very difficult decision-making process. The PE should be liaising closely with the university-based Practice Education Team for support with this. The following is a list of useful strategies/resources that can assist the PE at this stage of the pathway:

- Revert back to the strategies used during the validation process in step 1 to seek clarity and reassurance. This will involve re-referring to the competency-based assessment form; the “timelines and expectations” documentation; consulting with other colleagues etc.
- Review supervision records/other documentation to provide an overview of the student’s progress to date.
- Refer to the **“Performance Warning Signs”** (see below). This list is intended to provide the PE with examples of circumstances/incidents which can often be associated with “not competent” outcomes. It is a basic reference point for all PEs requiring further guidance and/or support in their decision-making processes regarding students who are at risk of a “not competent” grade. While this may prove to be a useful resource to PEs this resource should not be used in isolation. The university-based Practice Education Team must be involved in the decision-making process and there must be concrete and consistent evidence to support all concerns put forward by the PE. The Practice Education Coordinator and/or Regional Placement Facilitator will support and guide the PE and student through the pathway as and when required.

Please refer to the extended pathway (phase 2) below, which provides guidance on how to proceed if all of the goals that were defined in the first action plan (as per the concerns management form) are not achieved.

Phase 2



***Note:** If the student reaches step 5 of the targeted competency pathway whereby the action plan on the concern's management form is being completed for a 2nd time, the practice educator and student should be aware that the student is **now at a high risk of failing**. At step 5, it is essential that the Practice Education Coordinator and/or Regional Placement Facilitator are heavily involved in the management of the case to support both the student and the practice educator.

Performance Warning Signs

The following are some examples of circumstances/incidents which can often be associated with “not competent” outcomes. Please note that this is not an exhaustive list.

- Consistent non-compliance with feedback provided by practice educator despite regular reinforcement and encouragement
- Consistent demonstration of lack of insight which impacts on student’s personal and professional development
- Recurrent feedback of a negative nature from other Occupational Therapy staff and/or members of the Multidisciplinary team regarding the student’s behaviour and/or actions in a professional context
- Student’s support requirements encroaching on Practice Educator’s clinical and personal commitments on a consistent basis.
- Constant supervision required during all patient contact despite expectations of enhanced performance according to the “Timelines and Expectations” document. This level of supervision may be required due to well-founded concerns regarding:
 1. The student’s interactions with and/or handling of patients and/or
 2. The reliability of the student’s observational/evaluation skills
- The occurrence of one or more critical incidents (*see definition below) despite prompt and direct feedback following each incident

*Critical incident:

A critical incident is defined as “any action or decision that has an ethical, legal and/or safety implication for patients, staff or visitors to a service”.

While this may prove to be a useful reference point for PEs this list should not be used in isolation and/or without concrete and consistent evidence to support concerns.

The circumstances/incidents listed above are examples only. Should similar circumstance/incidents/indicators be apparent in the case of a student experiencing competency-related challenges this does not automatically imply that he/she should receive a “not competent” grade. Each case is highly individual and should be managed on a case-by-case basis with the ongoing support of the Practice Education Team. The decision making regarding a “not competent” grade is highly complex and all support networks available to the PE and student should be utilised.

How to Communicate and manage a “not competent” grade

Informing the student of a ‘not competent’ grade is extremely difficult and should be done in the most sensitive way possible.

The PE must be well prepared for this discussion and he/she must be clear on the reasons for and evidence behind the “not competent” grade. All relevant documentation MUST be completed at the time in which the “not competent” grade is being delivered. Such documentation includes: completed final assessment form (all sections to be finalised and signatures inputted); completed supervision forms; completed concerns management forms; summary of relevant correspondence between student and PE relating to competency development etc.

Both the PE and the student will be offered the opportunity to debrief with their Practice Tutor (PT) and/or Practice Education Co-ordinator (PEC) and/or Regional Placement Facilitator (RPF) after the placement is finished. These debriefing sessions are a useful way of reflecting on the practice education experience, identifying and acknowledging new learning achieved during the practice education experience, and planning for new learning required prior to and/or during future practice education experiences.

Key points regarding the management of a student experiencing competency-related difficulties

Case-by-Case: Cases where a student is struggling to reach competency are very often complex and sensitive and should be managed on a **case-by-case** basis using an individualised and holistic approach at all times.

Early Communication: Once initial concern/s regarding the student's competency is raised the Practice Tutor or Practice Education Coordinator and/or Regional Placement Facilitator should be informed immediately. This contact should be maintained over the course of the placement with regular updates being provided by all parties involved.

Consistent feedback: Providing prompt and direct feedback to a struggling student on a consistent basis is extremely important for maximising insight/student learning. This feedback can be provided in an informal or formal manner. It is important to maximise the use of formal supervision sessions to discuss and address concerns. The Practice Education Coordinator and Regional Placement Facilitator recommends that the specific Trinity supervision forms are used in the case of students experiencing competency related difficulties.

Clarifying student's understanding of feedback provided: When providing important feedback to students experiencing competency related difficulties it is crucial that the practice educator clarifies that the student has accurately interpreted the feedback provided. You can do this by directly asking the student "what have you taken from the feedback I have given you?"

Clear Documentation: Students and practice educators are encouraged to document and co-sign all relevant discussions using the appropriate the Practice Education documents. This includes supervision forms; concerns management form etc. - all of which are listed in the appendix section of this handbook.

Decision making: Please remember that it is the practice educator's decision whether or not the student is "competent" or "not competent". The practice educator will be supported in this decision-making process, but the final decision must be made and signed off on by the student's allocated practice educator.

Meeting times: If the practice educator is using this pathway with his/her student it is important that the times in which supervision and/or discussion regarding the student's progress with this pathway is completed earlier rather than later in the working week. We would recommend that supervision and/or discussion with such students takes place midweek so that the student is allowed time to process the information received and to ask all relevant questions prior to the student breaking for the weekend.

Appendix:



Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

Discipline of Occupational Practice Education Team – Concerns Management Form

This form provides a record that a concern has been raised regarding the student's competency and that the management of such concern/s has commenced in solution-focused and supportive manner. The aim of this form is to assist the PE and the student in identifying and understanding the concern/s which have been raised and formulating a comprehensive action plan to address such concern/s. Concerns raised in this form can be of any nature and utilisation of this form does not automatically imply that the student will receive a "not competent" grade. It is a simple, assistive tool which is used by the PE and the student in collaboration to ensure that all concerns regarding the student's competency are managed in the most appropriate and fairest way possible, as per the targeted competency pathway.

Date of meeting:	
Student name:	
Academic year:	
Placement site:	
Practice Educator name:	

PART 1: SUMMARY OF CONCERNS (to be completed by practice educator and student):

Competency area in which the concern/s has been raised - please circle.	Specific components of competency area in which concern has been raised (as per assessment form) - please list.	Examples –please list concrete examples of behaviours/actions observed which support concern
Occupation		

Communication		
Occupational Therapy Process		
Professional Behaviour		
Professional Development		

PART 2: STUDENT

POTENTIAL CAUSES of difficulties encountered?

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES to address such difficulties?

Other comments:

PART 3: PRACTICE EDUCATOR

POTENTIAL CAUSES of difficulties encountered:

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES to address such difficulties:

Other comments:

PART 2: ACTION PLAN (to be completed by practice educator and student)

Competency Area and Concern identified	Short term goal (SMART) – relating to concern	Strategies/resources identified to target goal	Review date

--	--	--	--

PART 3: GENERAL COMMENTS/SUPPORTING INFORMATION

PART 4: REVIEW

Both _____ (practice educator) and _____ (student) agree that a review of all of the above will be completed on _____ (date).

Please note that if sufficient improvements have been made by the date specified above the student will revert back to standard teaching and learning supports. If sufficient improvements have not been made a meeting will be arranged with the Practice Educator Coordinator/Regional Placement Facilitator as promptly as possible to discuss further management of specific concerns.

Practice educator signature: _____

Student signature: _____