

## Appendix 26: Struggling Student Pathway (including 'Concerns Management Tool' and 'Failing Student Indicators')



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

### Discipline of Occupational Therapy

#### Practice Education

#### Struggling Student Pathway

##### Overview

This struggling student pathway has been designed as a suggested framework to use with students who are perceived to be struggling on placement. The pathway is intended to assist practice educators with their management of students who are struggling to achieve competency at any point during the placement.

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

Students and practice educators at clinical sites where a Practice Tutor (PT) is available will be supported by the PT to assist with the implementation of this pathway.

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

Students and practice educators should also be reminded that in addition to the university-based PET there are other support services available to students throughout the course of the placement (e.g. College Tutor Service, Counselling Service, Disability Service and Health Service).

## Pathway

### 1. Identify & Validate

- Refer to competency based assessment form to identify specific area/s of concern. Speak with PEC/RPF.
- Consider internal/external factors impacting on student's performance.
- Consider if your own teaching/learning style could be impacting on student's performance.
- Refer to "Timelines and Expectations" document (Appendix 1,2,3,4).
- Consider exploring alternative opinions via other OT colleagues and/or MDT members.

### 2. Manage Concerns

- Complete a concerns management form with support of PEC/RPF
- PEC/RPF will support with this
- Re-iterate all support systems available to student at this point (e.g. university-based PET, College Tutor Service, Counselling Service, Disability Service and Health Service).

### 3. Implement Concerns Management Form

- Implement action plan as agreed in concerns management form
- Allow one full week for the student to work on the action plan
- Provide prompt and direct feedback to the student on their progress on a consistent basis

### 4. Review Concerns Management Form

- Identify the goals from the action plan that were achieved
- Identify the goals from the action plan that were not achieved

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

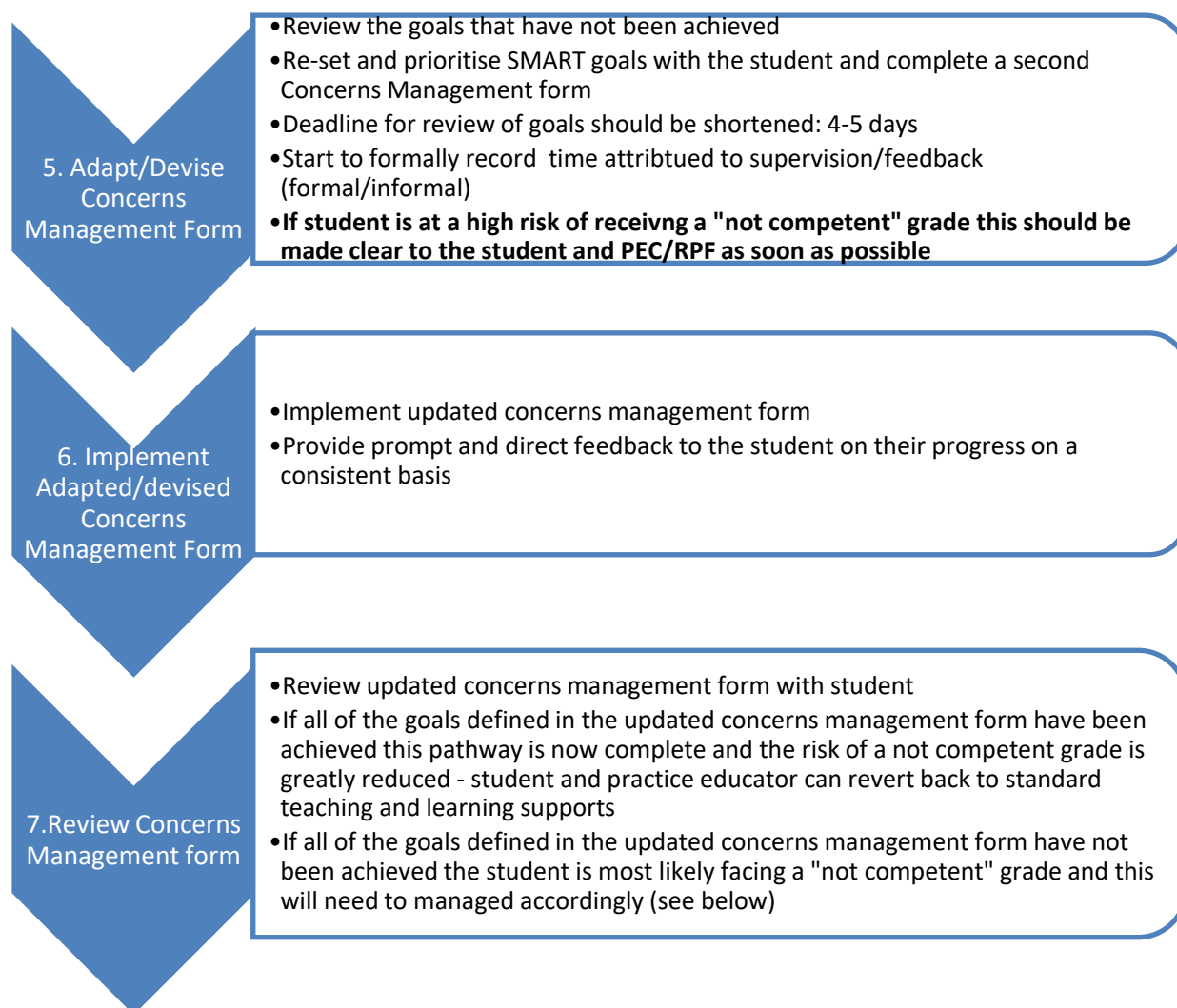
If any of the goals that were defined in the action plan (as per concerns management form) have **not been achieved** the student is now at a higher risk of achieving an overall **“not competent”** grade. At this point the practice educator needs to consider whether the student has progressed from a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

This is a very difficult decision making process. The practice educator should/will 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 practice educator 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 **“Failing student – Indicators”**. This is intended to provide the practice educator with examples of circumstances/incidents which can often be associated with “not competent” outcomes. It is a basic reference point for all practice educators 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 practice educators 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 practice educator. The Practice Education Coordinator and/or Regional Placement Facilitator will support and guide the practice educator and student through the pathway.

Please refer to the extended pathway; phase 2 in figure 9 below, which provides guidance on how to proceed if all of the goals that were defined in the first action plan (as per concerns management form) are not achieved.



## 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 practice educator must be well prepared for this discussion and he/she must be clear on the reasons for and evidence behind the “not competent” grade. The Practice Education Coordinator and/or the Regional Placement Facilitator should be present to support both the practice educator and the student. The environment in which this information is disclosed and discussed should be private and comfortable.

Both the student and the practice educator will be offered the opportunity to debrief with their Practice Tutor (PT) 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 experience.



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## 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. The aim of this form is to assist the student and the practice educator 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 student and practice educator 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 Struggling Student Pathway.

<b>Date of meeting:</b>	
<b>Student name:</b>	
<b>Academic year:</b>	
<b>Placement site:</b>	
<b>Practice Educator name:</b>	

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

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

<b>Occupational Therapy Process</b>		
<b>Professional Behaviour</b>		
<b>Professional Development</b>		

**PART 2: STUDENT**

POTENTIAL CAUSES of difficulties encountered?

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POTENTIAL STRATEGIES to address such difficulties?

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Other comments:

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**PART 3: PRACTICE EDUCATOR**

POTENTIAL CAUSES of difficulties encountered:

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POTENTIAL STRATEGIES to address such difficulties:

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Other comments:

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**PART 3: 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 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:** \_\_\_\_\_

### “Failing Students – Indicators”

The following are some examples of circumstances/indicators/incidents which can often be associated with ‘failing students’ and “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 resource to practice educators this resource should not be used in isolation and/or without concrete and consistent evidence to support your concerns.

The circumstances/incidents listed above are examples only. Should similar circumstance/incidents be apparent in the case of a struggling student 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 practice educator should be utilised.