Evaluation of Objective Structured Professional Assessments (OSPAs) for Training Educational Psychologists

Dr Sandra Dunsmuir,
University College London

Dr Cathy Atkinson,
University of Manchester

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São Paulo
Project aim

To look at to what extent Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCEs) from medical sciences could be used as a model for assessing practice competence.

To develop Objective Structured Professional Assessments (OSPAs) for assessing professional practice for trainee educational psychologists (TEPs) working with young people aged 16-25.
Supervisors’ assessments are key to professional supervision; and help measure the effectiveness of the training programme and provide quality assurance.

Scrutiny of 291 end of placement reports for trainee clinical psychologists over 12 years indicated few average and below average judgements.

Supervisors tended to make similar judgements about different trainees. Judgements between supervisors were less similar.

Difficult for trainees to develop competence.

Relationship factors influential (halo or leniency bias) or poor assessment instrument?
Assessment of competence (Miller, 1990)

Performance assessment in vivo (in practice; in real life professional contexts)
Performance assessment in vitro (e.g. OSPAs, simulation, role play)
Context based assessments (e.g. PBL)
Factual assessments (e.g. Exams; timed tests)

What is an OSPA?

• **Objective**
• **Structured**
• **Professional**
• **Assessment**

Involve multiple stations, each with a different professional task
OSPAs Information

• Trainees received the briefing/stimulus materials one working day beforehand
• The task lasted exactly 10 minutes
• Actors received written and oral briefings
• The assessment marksheet was developed by University tutors to be consistent across all stations and scenarios but different skills were assessed at each station
Trainee EP 4

Station 4
Communication and Ethics
10 minutes

Trainee EP 1

Station 1
Initial Consultation
10 minutes

Trainee EP 2

Station 2
Assessment and Explanation
10 minutes

Trainee EP 3

Station 3
Action Planning
10 minutes

The OSPA Carousel
Please record your judgement for this trainee’s performance on each of the professional skills noted below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional Skill</th>
<th>Competent</th>
<th>Area to develop</th>
<th>SUPPORTING EVIDENCE</th>
<th>Improvement suggestions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Strengths</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1. Communication Skills</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Clarity of purpose/structure.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Encourages and listens to client contribution and</td>
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<td>elicits important information.</td>
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<td>• Uses appropriate language and explains key terms</td>
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<td>if necessary.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Summarises.</td>
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<td><strong>2. Perspective Taking</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Demonstrates awareness of client’s perspective.</td>
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<td>• Seeks, detects, acknowledges and attempts to</td>
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<td>address concerns.</td>
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<td>• Shows appropriate empathy.</td>
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<td><strong>3. Information gathering and synthesis</strong></td>
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<td>• Obtains sufficient information to make decisions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Rapid assimilation and synthesis of information.</td>
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<td>• Presents synthesis of new and existing information.</td>
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<td><strong>4. Management</strong></td>
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<td>• Demonstrates relevant knowledge.</td>
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<td>• Works in partnership to develop a shared plan.</td>
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<td>• Suggests next steps.</td>
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<td>• Manages client’s emotions and expectations.</td>
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<td><strong>5. Professional Integrity</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Explains rationale for any actions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Specifies limits of knowledge, competence and</td>
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<td>role.</td>
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<td>• Where appropriate, challenges assumptions and</td>
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<tr>
<td>perspectives.</td>
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<td>• Does not collude.</td>
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Methods of data collection

- Inter-rater reliability between in situ and remote assessors
- Online questionnaire for students from three universities (n=34)
- Questionnaire completed by programme tutors at three universities (n=12)
- Questionnaire completed by placement supervisors (n=43)
Research and Evaluation Unit, Hampshire Educational Psychology Service

EVALUATION OF CURRENT METHODS OF ASSESSMENT OF COMPETENCE
What methods do experienced local authority supervisors (n=43) use to assess competence?

- Observation (n=33)
- Supervision and joint reflection with their supervisor (n=29)
- Written work (n=24)
- Client feedback (n=20)
- Colleague feedback (n=16)
- Trainee self-reflection (n=4)
Local Authority Supervisor responses (n=43):

- How useful do you perceive existing guidance to be in supporting supervisors in the assessment of trainee competence?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all useful</th>
<th>Not very useful</th>
<th>Neither useful nor useless</th>
<th>Somewhat useful</th>
<th>Extremely useful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>5 (12%)</td>
<td>4 (9%)</td>
<td>28 (65%)</td>
<td>6 (14%)</td>
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</table>

- How consistently do you perceive the assessment criteria to be applied by different supervisors?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No response</th>
<th>Not consistent</th>
<th>Not very consistent</th>
<th>Neither consistent nor inconsistent</th>
<th>Quite consistent</th>
<th>Extremely consistent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 (12%)</td>
<td>1 (2.5%)</td>
<td>10 (23%)</td>
<td>13 (30%)</td>
<td>13 (30%)</td>
<td>1 (2.5%)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
What, if any, changes to existing assessment arrangements do you think would be desirable?

- Changes to the assessment criteria (n=30; 70%)
- More support for supervisors (n=14; 33%)
- Changes to the fieldwork supervisor role (n=9; 21%)
- More support for trainees (n=6; 14%)
EVALUATION OF THE OSPA PROCESS
Course tutor/OSPA assessor responses (n=12):

• How well do you consider the OSPA exercise worked as an assessment approach?

Mean rating of 4.0 (SD = 1.2)
(where 1 is not at all and 5 is extremely well).

• What positive features did you observe?
  - Authenticity of the situation (n=12)
  - Practical arrangements (n=6)
  - Opportunity for assessment and feedback (n=3)
  - Well developed scenario (n=2)
  - Authentic trainee behaviour (n=2)
  - Opportunity to see communications skills (n=1)
  - Time to think about the question (n=2)
  - Scenario challenged trainee (n=1)
  - Opportunities for trainee to reflect (n=1)
  - Guidance notes for assessor were helpful (n=1)
Course tutors – perceived limitations

- Time – 10 minutes is not enough (n=5)
- Actor’s skill, knowledge and interpretation (n=5)
- Time – too much to think about as assessor in time given (n=4)
- Marking schemes don’t work (n=3)
- TEP nerves (n=3)
- Scenarios are artificial (n=2)
Feedback from students (n=34) in 2014

**Question 1**
The OSPAs appeared to be a valid assessment of:

- a. skills in communication
- b. skills in perspective taking
- c. skills in information gathering and synthesis
- d. case management skills
- e. professional integrity

Full report at [http://www.ucl.ac.uk/ospa-project/resources/OSPA%20Opinion%20Questionnaire%20Feedback%2020110215.pdf](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/ospa-project/resources/OSPA%20Opinion%20Questionnaire%20Feedback%2020110215.pdf)
**Question 2**
The content of the stations was relevant to the programme:

**Question 3**
The role players were realistic:
**Question 5**
The OSPAs were a good learning experience:

**Question 6**
The OSPAs made me feel excessively anxious:
Current phase and future developments
Future plans

1. National scenario development committee – scenarios authored by experts so that they have currency and are authentic

2. Informed peer review

- Calibration of OSPA scenarios by assessors
- Two assessors in the room (University tutor and practitioner)
- Improvements to assessment form to reduce variance between assessors (tightening of competency-based criteria)
For more information, see OSPA project web-site
https://www.ucl.ac.uk/ospa-project/

Or contact Jane Lang (OSPA project co-ordinator)
ospaproject@ucl.ac.uk