**SCHOOL OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL WORK**

**Doctorate in**

**Clinical Psychology**

Small Scale Project Guide

*Version 1.6*

*22.2.2018*

Amendments incorporated in version 1.6

Reference to department changed to School of Health and Social Work.

Reference to SSPs on Community Placements removed.

Section 4 added information regarding feedback to services: Any delays with this must be communicated to the Research co-ordinator before the submission deadline

Title page requirements updated in section 4.3.

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# Introduction

The overall aim of conducting a Small Scale Project (SSP) is to allow development of competencies required to evaluate application of knowledge (e.g. evaluation or clinical audit) rather than generating new knowledge (research). BPS and HCPC criteria for the approval of Postgraduate Training Programmes in Clinical Psychology state clear objectives relating to key competencies that are developed by undertaking a SSP.

A SSP should give you experience of very practical clinical research within an applied clinical psychology setting. In undertaking a SSP you will be drawing on and developing many of the core competencies now required for clinical psychology training. SSP’s are conducted during year 4 of clinical training and can encompass a range of methods, models and/or skills and commonly have an evaluation aspect to them, e.g. the evaluation of client satisfaction. SSP’s are usually concerned with issues of key relevance to the local context. The collaborative involvement of key stakeholders in a service (clients, carers and staff) should be considered crucial in conducting your SSP and special attention should be given to the dissemination and implementation of the findings of your study.

Conducting the SSP needs to be incorporated into the overall aims and objectives of the first clinical placement. This will allow for appropriate goal setting, planning and monitoring of time and workload. If a project cannot be found on placement, another option is to find a project in a service external to the placement providing your placement supervisor is in agreement. Occasionally there are opportunities for projects within the department. In the vast majority of cases a project can usually be undertaken on the first clinical placement. Contact should be made with the Research co-ordinator in this event.

The findings of your SSP must be disseminated back to the service and all its stakeholders. Your SSP will be evaluated via 1) your written SSP report, and 2) the evaluation given by your supervisor(s) at the end of placement review. Feedback will relate to your progress in developing competencies in the areas of research, evaluation, services and organisations and communication and teaching.

The key stages of the SSP are outlined in Figure 1.

## Key stages of the SSP

Figure 1. Key stages of the Small Scale Project

## SSP Competencies

There are several competencies that will be drawn upon by completing and reporting a SSP, and will therefore be evaluated. These are outlined in Table 1.

Your final project report will be assessed to determine the extent to which you have demonstrated these competencies. The marking scheme outlined in Section 4.2 sets out the assessment criteria.

Table 1 - Key Competencies addressed by the process of conducting and reporting a SSP

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Competency Area** | **Specific Research Competency** | **Evaluation Method** |
| **Transferable skills:**  generalising and synthesising, applying knowledge and skills  thinking critically, reflectively and evaluatively  being a self-aware, reflective practitioner | engage in reflective practice and critical evaluation throughout the research process  synthesise research rationale and research findings with broader literature and clinical practice | introduction and discussion of SSP report  reflective statement in appendix of SSP report  feedback from supervisor on placement and end placement review evaluation (or feedback from SSP link person) |
| **Research:**  identifying and critically appraising research evidence relevant to practice | critically evaluate existing literature and service issues in a specific area of clinically relevant research  identifying gaps in literature | introduction and discussion of SSP report  reflective statement appendix of SSP report  feedback from supervisor on placement and end placement review evaluation (or SSP link person) |
| **Planning and conducting independent research** | design research project and use appropriate methodology  analyse data using appropriate methods  interpret, critically evaluate and integrate findings  disseminate and implement research findings | method, results and discussion sections of SSP  feedback from supervisor on placement and end placement review evaluation (PPAP) (or SSP link person) |
| **Conducting collaborative research** | effective use of supervision  creating and maintaining research relationships | feedback from supervisor on placement (or SSP link person)  reflective statement in appendix of SSP report |
| **Communication and teaching:**  effectively communicating information  adapting style of communication | Disseminating and implementing research findings | feedback from supervisor on placement and end placement review evaluation (or SSP link person) |
| **Personal and professional skills:**  working collaboratively and constructively with others  understanding and application of ethics | create and maintain research relationships  demonstrate a clear understanding of the application of ethical principles to clinical psychology research | feedback from supervisor on placement and end placement review evaluation (or SSP link person)  reflective statement in appendix of SSP report  feedback from supervisor on placement and end placement review evaluation (or SSP link person)  reflective statement in appendix of SSP report |

# Setting up a SSP within the year 4 clinical placement

Where possible, prior to starting on placement, possible SSP opportunities should be discussed between the trainee, supervisor and placement visitor. Conducting the SSP should be established as a major goal of placement. Examples of ‘excellent’ SSP reports from past trainees are available for information and guidance within the Department (see Research co-ordinator).

A ‘rolling programme’ of SSP’s can be used within clinical services that routinely take trainees. Sometimes projects build on the work carried out by trainees in previous years.

SSPs can be identified either on the first clinical placement. If you have any doubt as to the suitability of the project please contact the Research co-ordinator.

Commissioned projects can be offered to trainees if there is the requirement and this is acceptable to the trainee.

SSP reports may contain sensitive information and will be treated as confidential by the University.

## Resource implications

SSP’s have resource implications for a service - both positive (clinical audit, intervention evaluation etc.) and negative (less direct client-centred activity whilst on placement etc.) - these issues need to be considered and outlined in the placement agreement

Anticipated resources required to undertake the SSP may need to be considered at the initial placement meeting. For example - if undertaking evaluation of group intervention, what practical space is required for this and will it be available, is there a need for a significant amount of photocopying etc?

Consideration should be given as to how placement supervisors will be involved in the SSP; whether this will evolve as a process over the course of the placement or if independent working on the SSP is feasible from the start. **It is the trainees’ responsibility to ensure that supervisors are aware of and understand SSP requirements as ultimately, the placement supervisor and trainee are responsible for the design, development and dissemination of SSP outcome(s).**

Time to discuss SSP should be scheduled within formal supervision time to allow review and feedback.

Review of previous cases can provide an estimate of numbers of clients presenting with the particular problem to be evaluated/investigated via the SSP.

## Design and methodology

It is vital that clear research questions and the rationale, design and timeline for the project are developed as quickly as possible and are explicitly shared and agreed upon by trainee and supervisor(s). This should be achieved in the first 4-6 weeks of the placement. This is a very important way of making sure that expectations regarding the work and its timeframe are shared and understood and stress and confusion therefore do not arise later on.

Trainees are encouraged to explore a variety of methodological approaches, including qualitative methods, single case and small-N designs. Small sample sizes are acceptable if the SSP informs practice and/or service delivery.

## Feedback of findings

Specific agreement as to how and when SSP ‘results’ will be disseminated back to the service must also be agreed as part of the placement goals and evaluation process (PPAP). This can be included in the ‘Evaluation and Research’ and ‘Services and Organisations’ competency theme areas and specific goals around the dissemination and / or implementation of the findings of the SSP can be included as ‘Other goals’ on these pages of the PPAP.

You will be required to ensure that your placement supervisor completes a **“Confirmation of Feedback to Services”** form (see Appendix 1) to confirm that you have fed back the results of the SSP to the service in the agreed format and within the agreed timeframe.

# Submission of the SSP Proposal

The SSP proposal is submitted to ensure that your suggested Small Scale Project meets the requirements of the course and to make a judgement as to whether or not it requires approval from the local Research Ethics Committee (REC).

## Ethics Approval

Please note, you are encouraged **not** to take on a small scale project that requires REC approval as this may delay your progress. Most small scale service related projects are classified as audit or service evaluation and do not require ethical approval. If, however, your SSP meets the criteria of a research project it will have to go to the REC. The NHS guidance documents defining Research should help you to decide whether your project is audit, service evaluation or research. This is summarised in Table 2. If you are in any doubt please contact the Research Co-ordinator. ***Where the trainee and/or placement supervisor is unclear whether the proposed SSP falls within research or audit/evaluation remit, the TRAINEE is responsible for clarifying this.***

## Trust approval

NHS trusts usually maintain a register of audit or service evaluation projects and have a process of approval before projects commence. Check with your supervisor what this process is before commencing the project. It is essential that appropriate approvals are obtained before the small scale project commences. Trainees should liaise with the relevant Research and Development offices within the NHS trust they are working in to check which approvals if any are required. This process should be reported in the final report.

## Structure of Proposal

Your proposal should **not exceed** one side of A4, single line spacing is acceptable, minimum font size 11. It should briefly state your name and:

* + Placement and supervisor
  + Project title
  + Project aim
  + Background information i.e. what is the service and what aspect are you going to investigate.
  + The method including participants, design and procedure.
  + Approvals required – confirm whether ethical approval required and trust approval is required
  + The service related aspect of your project

**An electronic copy must be submitted electronically by 12 midday by the deadline date and in the Assignment section of the year 4 canvas site.**

## Feedback

Your proposal will be formatively assessed and you will receive written feedback. In cases where it is judged that REC approval is needed or that the project is unsuitable, we will make this clear on your form. You will need to relay this information to your supervisor and discuss whether suitable amendments can be made to your project or whether you need to consider an alternative project. A member of the research group will also contact the supervisor to discuss appropriate projects/amendments. Your amended or new proposal must then be resubmitted for approval before data collection can begin. This should be within 2 weeks of the original submission date.

## Timeline

SSP’s can be carried out on any placement in the first year of training. If you intend to carry out your SSP on your first placement, your proposal must be submitted in January of your first year.

Table 2. How to discriminate between Research, Service Evaluation and Clinical Audit.(from Defining Research leaflet, <http://www.nres.npsa.nhs.uk/home/>, 2009)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **RESEARCH** | **SERVICE EVALUATION** | **CLINICAL AUDIT** |
| The attempt to derive generalizable new knowledge  including studies that aim to generate hypotheses as  well as studies that aim to test them. | Designed and conducted  solely to define or judge  current care. | Designed and conducted  to produce information to  inform delivery of best  care |
| Quantitative research – designed to test a hypothesis.  Qualitative research – identifies/explores themes  following established methodology. | Designed to answer:  “What standard does this  service achieve?” | Designed to answer:  “Does this service reach a  predetermined  standard?” |
| Addresses clearly defined questions, aims and  objectives. | Measures current service  without reference to a  standard. | Measures against a  standard. |
| Quantitative research – may involve evaluating or  comparing interventions, particularly new ones.  Qualitative research – usually involves studying how  interventions and relationships are experienced. | Involves an intervention  in use only. The choice of  treatment is that of the  clinician and patient  according to guidance,  professional standards  and/or patient preference. | Involves an intervention  in use only. The choice of  treatment is that of the  clinician and patient  according to guidance,  professional standards  and/or patient preference. |
| Usually involves collecting data that are additional to  those for routine care but may include data collected  routinely. May involve treatments, samples or  investigations additional to routine care. | Usually involves analysis  of existing data but may  include administration of  interview or  questionnaire. | Usually involves analysis  of existing data but may  include administration of  simple interview or  questionnaire. |
| Quantitative research – study design may involve  allocating patients to intervention groups.  Qualitative research – uses a clearly defined sampling  framework underpinned by conceptual or theoretical  justifications.  L PRACTICE | No allocation to  intervention: the health  professional and patient  have chosen intervention  before service evaluation | No allocation to  intervention: the health  professional and patient  have chosen intervention  before audit. |
| May involve randomisation | No randomisation | No randomisation |
| **Normally requires REC review** | **Does not require**  **REC review** | **Does not require**  **REC review** |

# Guidelines for the SSP Report

An electronic copy should be by midday on specified deadline date via the Assignment section of the Year 5 canvas site. Standard formatting of written reports according to course guidelines should be followed (see Course handbook). Trainees should also hand in separately to the Research co-ordinator a Confirmation of Dissemination to Services form signed by their supervisor (see Appendix 1). **Any delays with this must be communicated to the Research co-ordinator before the submission deadline.**

SSP’s should not exceed **3500** words, excluding tables, figures and their legends, appendices, references and correspondence- Should be no more than 10% under or over the word limit (3150 - 3850).

SSP’s should have a question(s) and design that is small scale but still based on principles of systematic enquiry. Methodology should be determined by the question(s) asked. Numbers of participants – remember that SSP’s are small-scale service-related projects. Small sample sizes are acceptable if the SSP informs practice and/or service delivery.

## Evaluation of the SSP

The SSP report will be evaluated using a competency-based marking scheme as outlined in Section 5.2.

Supervisor(s)’ feedback and evaluation of the trainee by way of the PPAP will also be used to assess progress in competency areas related to research, communication, working with others, and understanding and contributing to service settings. These competency areas underpin the design and implementation of a SSP.

For SSP’s independent of placement, feedback on competencies will be sought from the SSP service link person.

***SSP reports may contain sensitive information and will be treated as confidential. Trainees should adopt usual guidelines regarding anonymity in writing the SSP (see section 4.2 also)***

## Feedback and corrections

Feedback will be given relating to each section of the report together with a list of any required corrections. The corrected report should be resubmitted by the required date together with a list of completed corrections in accordance with the course marking system detailed in the Course Handbook.

## Report Content and Marking Framework

**The required content and learning objectives for the report are set out in items 1 to 8. Assessment will be based on these criteria and on the additional requirements set out in items 9 to 12.**

1. **TITLE PAGE**

*Should include:*

1. *"School of Health and Social Work, Doctorate in Clinical Psychology Course, - Small-scale Project",*
2. *Title of the project*
3. *trainee number and Course year,*
4. *date of submission,*
5. *placement type (from which the case is drawn),*
6. *pseudonyms for patients*
7. *total word count.*
8. **ABSTRACT**

*Should include a summary of:*

*1. aims and objectives of the study*

*2. participants or sources of data*

*3. design and measures*

*4. major findings*

*5. how these components relate to background literature*

***Related Competency Areas****;* General Transferable skills- synthesizing the research rationale, findings and background literature.

***Learning Objectives***

*Here the trainee should;*

* Present an abstract that effectively and accurately summarises the rationale, method and findings of the study (abstracts should be no more than 300 words)
* Relate these findings to relevant themes and findings in background literature
* Do this to a standard equivalent to that found in a peer-reviewed psychology journal.

1. **INTRODUCTION**

*Should include:*

*1. a detailed description of the clinical context and the potential value of the project;*

*2. the clinical research question to be addressed;*

*3. discussion of previously published reports and any general issues emerging from the literature;*

***Related Competency Areas****; General Transferable Skills* (generalizing, synthesizing and applying knowledge and skills and thinking critically, reflectively and evaluatively) and *Research* (identifying and critically appraising research evidence relevant to practice)

***Learning Objectives***

*Here the trainee should;*

* Show an ability to write and present an introduction that clearly identifies and evaluates key service issues that provide the context for the present study.
* Be able to discuss how these issues support the potential clinical value of the study.
* Show the ability to offer a conceptual and methodological critique of previous relevant work in the area, which leads to the presentation of clear and credible research question(s) and rationale.

1. **METHOD**

*Should include:*

1. *a detailed description of how the research question was approached and design adopted;*
2. *Reference to approvals obtained for the project from relevant Research and Development offices.*
3. *the construction or choice of questionnaires or measures/datasets;*
4. *the method of sampling and/or data collection;*
5. *the method of data analysis;*
6. *a description of the difficulties encountered, how these were managed, and implications.*

***Related Competency Areas****; General Transferable Skills* (thinking critically, reflectively and evaluatively), *Research* (planning and conducting independent research; use of appropriate research design and methodology) and *Evaluation* (selection and implementation of methods of evaluation).

***Learning Objectives***

*Here the trainee should;*

* Show the ability to use a methodological critique of previous work to select a research design and methodology that is most appropriate to the research question(s) and the service context of the research.
* Show the ability to select and implement methods of evaluation and measurement that are the most appropriate to the service setting and the research question(s).

1. **RESULTS**

*Should include:*

*1. qualitative information;*

*2. quantitative information in graphical or tabular form*

*3. simple statistical analyses where appropriate*.

4. *how the results relate to the research question(s)*

***Related Competency Areas****; Research* (use of appropriate methods to analyse data)

***Learning Objectives***

*Here the trainee should;*

* Demonstrate the ability to analyse data using quantitative or qualitative methods most appropriate to the research question, the sample and the service context of the study.
* Present findings in written and graphical formats

1. **DISCUSSION**

*Should include:*

*1. interpretation of results;*

*2. implications and recommendations for the service;*

*3. organisational obstacles and general problems of implementation of the project;*

*4. a critical discussion of strengths and weaknesses, the limitations of the study; and*

*5. the conclusions that can be drawn.*

*6. clear outline of how findings have been disseminated back to the service*

***Related Competency Areas****; General Transferable Skills* (generalizing, synthesizing and applying knowledge and skills and thinking critically, reflectively and evaluatively); *Evaluation* (using information to inform and shape practice); *Research* (reporting outcomes and identifying appropriate pathways for dissemination).

***Learning Objectives***

*Here the trainee should;*

* Demonstrate the ability to accurately interpret and then integrate the findings of the study with previous empirical work in the area.
* The trainee should be able to discuss the extent to which research questions have been answered validly.
* Show the ability to reflect critically on the study’s methodology and findings, including the nature and implications of the difficulties encountered during the research.
* Critically discuss the potential clinical and service implications of the study’s findings.

1. **REFERENCES**

*References should be presented in a clear and standard format (e.g. British Journal of Clinical Psychology) and should be complete. More than 2 missing references will be deemed unacceptable.*

1. **APPENDICES**

**Reflective statement**

*Should include;*

*- a succinct personal commentary showing evidence of personal reflection regarding the process of the research from conception to dissemination and implementation of findings, which relates to methodological / conceptual issues in psychological research.*

*- A discussion of the role of the researcher in the research process and generation of findings which should show a keen critical and reflexive awareness of the role of the researcher at all stages of the research process and how they felt about it.*

*- A critical appraisal of the impact of limitations on the research with suggestions about what would be done differently in the future*

*- A discussion of the collaborative process of the research and show evidence of the trainee’s ability to engage in collaborative research and make use of supervision in the research process*

***Related Competency Areas****; General Transferable Skills* (generalizing, synthesizing and applying knowledge and skills and thinking critically, reflectively and evaluatively) and *Research ­*(conducting collaborative research, creating and maintaining research relationships).

***Learning objectives***

*Here the trainee should;*

* Show the ability to think critically, reflectively and evaluatively about their personal experience of the research process and discuss what they have learnt personally and professionally from doing the research
* Link observations about their experience to wider methodological and conceptual issues in clinical / service related research.
* Discuss alternative approaches that could be taken in future research of this type, based on their experience of the research.
* Discuss their use of supervision in relation to the research process.
* Discuss the strengths and limitations they perceived in the process of creating and maintaining research relationships.

**Examples of additional items to be included in the Appendices:**

* Questionnaires
* Data extraction pro-formas
* Letters to participants

This list is not exhaustive – any documentation that is deemed relevant to the report should be included

1. **OVERALL CLINICAL APPROACH**

***Related Competency Areas****; General Transferable Skills* (generalizing, synthesizing and applying knowledge and skills and thinking critically, reflectively and evaluatively).

***Learning Objectives***

*Here the trainee should;*

* Show the ability to generalize knowledge and skills and think critically and reflectively throughout the whole research and evaluation process, in a way that is highly consistent with the background literature and recognised clinical practice in the area.

1. **QUALITY OF WRITING STYLE AND PRESENTATION**

***Related Competency Areas****; Communication*

***Learning objectives***

*Here the trainee should;*

* Show the ability to communicate clinical and research information effectively and concisely with a non-academic professional readership in mind.
* Keep within the structure of the report
* Show evidence of an ability to engage in a reflective discussion of research and clinical issues that is objective and balanced, rather than being dogmatic or biased.
* Present a review that is legible, grammatically accurate and presented professionally throughout.

1. **ANONYMITY**

*There should be no direct (e.g. client’s personal details) or indirect (e.g. names of other professionals involved) identifiers. Pseudonyms should be used. The anonymity of the service where the study was conducted should be preserved by referring to the service in general terms e.g. a local CAMHS service, an older adult service.* ***Breaches of confidentiality will be classified as requiring Major Corrections.***

1. **WORD LENGTH**

**3,500** word limit excluding tables, figures and their legends, appendices, references and correspondence - Should be no more than 10% under or over the word limit (3150 - 3850)

1. **GENERAL FEEDBACK**

Overall impression of the piece of work

**Recommended grade subject to corrections required:**

A grade in accordance with the course marking system will be given together with any corrections required.

Appendix 1

Confirmation of Feedback to Services Form

**School of Health and Social Work**

**Doctorate in Clinical Psychology**

**University of Hull**

**Small Scale Project**

**Confirmation of Feedback to Services**

(v1.2 updated 16.9.2015)

Trainee Name…………………………………

Supervisor Name……………………………..

Service…………………………………………

Title of Small Scale Project:……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Date(s) project carried out (*please provide a timeframe in which the SSP was conducted)*………………………………………………............................................

Date feedback given/planned to be given to services..................................................

Please indicate what form this feedback took/will take (please tick appropriate box)

Poster 🞎

Oral Presentation 🞎

(i.e., at staff meeting or similar)

Informal feedback 🞎

(i.e. informal meeting with supervisor)

Dear Supervisor

I would be grateful if you could complete and sign the form below.

I confirm that ..............................(trainee) carried out the above SSP

for ......................................................(name of service) Yes/No

I confirm that the aforementioned trainee provided appropriate and Yes/No

timely feedback regarding the results of the SSP to relevant parties\*

I confirm that the aforementioned trainee has arranged to provide Yes/No

appropriate and timely feedback regarding the results of the SSP

to relevant parties\*

Signed..................................................Date............................