

Managing Internship Rotations: Sequential, Cumulative, and Graded Complexity Training

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Presentation Goals

1. Identifying intern competencies with consistency across multiple rotations, tied to overarching goals of internship
2. Identifying competency benchmarks with faculty agreement and development of interrater reliability
3. Critical role of regular discussion by full faculty to ensure consistent increase in intern learning challenges and monitoring of intern growth in competence
4. Critical role of training director in oversight of multiple rotations, negotiating faculty difference

Pertinent Accreditation Standard

Domain B: Program philosophy, objectives, and training plan

B.1. Program publicly states a philosophy and model of training consistent with the sponsoring institution's mission that emphasizes:

- integration of science and practice
- *training that is sequential, cumulative, and graded in complexity*

Naval Medical Center, San Diego Internship (as an example)

Goals:

1. Train good early career psychologists
2. Train good early career *Navy* psychologists

Goal #2 requires goal #1, plus a good deal of Navy-specific knowledge and skills

Structure:

- 5 rotations, 10 weeks each, all interns do all rotations:
 1. Adult Outpatient Mental Health
 2. Health Psychology/Consult Liaison
 3. Inpatient Mental Health
 4. Navy Fleet Mental Health
 5. Marine Corps Recruit Center Mental Health

So why in the world would we saddle ourselves with an internship program this complex?

Challenges with Multiple Rotations

- Rotations may differ greatly in details, yet each must build on prior learning for training to be *sequential* and *cumulative*
- Must identify competencies defined as important across rotations, based on ties to overall internship philosophy and goals
- Faculty must be more flexible with competency expectations and training at beginning of year than at end (particularly true with high variability in pre-internship practicum)
- Faculty must develop trust in assessments and recommendations of colleagues on preceding rotations in order for interns to build on prior learning

Identifying Overarching Competencies

- Recommend that faculty develop, discuss, and concur on a framework of competencies impacting all rotations (*this can take a LOT of time*)
- Use these as a basis for intern performance evaluation on each rotation
- Expect increasing competence over course of year; each rotation is NOT a “new start”
- Each individual rotation will also likely have competencies specific only to that rotation – that’s fine, so long as overarching framework is in place

Identifying Benchmarks for Competency

- For overarching competencies, faculty should also agree on benchmarks defining level of competence
- Recommend use of clear behavioral anchors
- Recommend at least 2 or 3 levels of “acceptable performance”, both to reflect variance between acceptable to great interns, and to allow room for growth over course of internship even for high performing interns

Example of Competencies/Benchmarks from NMC – San Diego

- Figure out these competencies the best you can to fit that specific program
 - o for example, Therapeutic Interventions – in the NMC program, interns should demonstrate an understanding of how the demands of military service and military life impact the patient’s functioning, diagnoses, and treatment options
 - o no matter how many published papers, or practicum hours an intern enters the program with, each intern must move from entering the program with an E on this competency (Entry Level) and meet the minimum level of achievement (benchmark) as set by the program in order to be successful

Faculty Challenges with Multiple Rotations

- “Can’t cover everything in a year”. How does each rotation contribute to internship’s overall goals and training philosophy? Does that require each rotation to “give something up”? What about when overarching sequential, cumulative goals change? – *Example –Health Psychology/Consult Liaison.*
 - o competencies should be based on what interns should be expected to do at the end of 1 year, not on competencies that would be expected at the end of 5 years
- Interrater reliability – faculty not only agreeing on benchmarks, but applying them with a good degree of consistency. – *Example – “tough guys” vs. “nice guys”*
- Trusting intern ratings by faculty on previous rotations, particularly when concerns identified on one rotation lead to changes in training plan on next rotation. – *Examples – when Dr. Mather’s program did a good job, vs. when his program did a bad job handling these issues*

Addressing Competency Issues Across Rotations

- Faculty must talk **a lot**, and discussions should be focused and organized
- Regular faculty meetings should be in place, with regular focused review of interns’ progress, learning needs, and strategies to meet needs
- Formal “hand offs” between rotations. *Strengths, limitations, and recommendations should be provided.* Full faculty discussion.
- For overarching competencies, new rotation picks up where previous left off; again, new rotation is not starting over!
- Addressing significant competency deficits – extend one rotation (in essence, formal remediation) or modify training plan on next rotation

Training Director as “Air Traffic Controller”

- Everyone looks to you as though you understand everything, have all the answers, etc. You are the “Chief Cat Herder”
- Negotiate differences between faculty members over goals, competencies, what’s important, etc.
- Make sure the perspective of the interns is fully represented and carefully considered. They are “almost” our colleagues – give them that respect
- Step in when problems are not resolving at the rotation level
- Make decisions and implement changes – you are the CEO, not the group therapist
- Keep the “30,000 foot” perspective

Dr. Alexander then provided a document looking at global professional competencies across the training year, a sample intern evaluation form from her training program, and a handout exercise in creating goals, objectives and competencies that are sequential, cumulative, and of increasing complexity