

## Project proposal on Outcome-Based Education

### Project title:

Investigating the alignment of intended learning outcomes and expected professional competence of undergraduate education of Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy students

### Project team (Department of Rehabilitation Sciences):

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### Background

The healthcare system of Hong Kong has been moving from hospital-based services to community / home-based services, from secondary healthcare to primary healthcare. The consultation paper titled 'Building for a Healthy Tomorrow' (2006) further stated that future healthcare professionals should view health promotion and preventive care as priorities; elderly, long-term and rehabilitation care services should encourage and facilitate home care with community outreach and professional support; and the public and private sectors should be well integrated to promote quality service and provide a choice for the public.

Over the past few years, there saw a growing trend of occupational therapy (OT) and physiotherapy (PT) graduates working in community settings and private organizations rather than public hospitals. Being the sole provider of OT and PT education in Hong Kong, the Department of Rehabilitation Sciences feels a strong need to be proactive in preparing our graduates to be able to work competently in existing, new, and emerging service sectors.

### Project Objectives

The overall goal of this proposed project is to examine the alignment of the intended learning outcomes of the BSc (Hons) OT program and the BSc (Hons) PT program with the expected professional competence of potential employers. Specific study objectives include:

1. to examine the scopes of rehabilitation services provided by beginning therapists of the past three years, and respective professional competence expected from the graduates
2. to project and identify new service areas to be provided by OT and PT, and expected professional competence
3. to review the intended learning outcomes, both professional and generic, of the two BSc programs with respect to the information collected from objective (1) and (2)

## Project Significance

This proposed project denotes the first phase of an overall development and implementation of outcome-based education of beginning occupational therapists and physiotherapists in meeting the future needs and challenges of the healthcare system of Hong Kong.

Based on the findings obtained in this proposed project, phase 2 aims to revise the program outcomes, the intended learning outcomes, the corresponding learning-teaching strategies and assessment methods in such a way that they are aligned with the expected professional competence of OT and PT graduates. Moreover, the proposed project will inform the preparation of the 3-3-4 curriculum design of undergraduate OT and PT educations.

## Action Plans

A one-year study period is suggested for this proposed project. Three major tasks will be covered in this study period:

1. Collect information, via semi-structured focus group interviews, from existing employers regarding the scope of services provided by and level of professional competence expected from beginning OT and PT. Broadly speaking, employers of OT and PT graduates are of three categories – those working in public hospitals, in non-governmental service organizations, and in private organizations. Focus group interviews will be arranged for respective categories of employers. Besides, graduates of the past three years will be interviewed to gain their perspectives of how the educational programs prepare them to practice as beginning therapists.
2. Observational study will be conducted to identify the scope and nature of services provided by beginning therapists. Data collected from this method will be used to complement / triangulate information obtained from focus group interviews.
3. Interactive forums will be arranged for both the BSc (Hons) OT program and BSc (Hons) PT programs to review the intended program outcomes and learning outcomes against the information / data collected from focused group interviews and the observation study. Areas of learning outcomes not meeting / matching with the current scope of rehabilitation services and level of professional competence will be identified and discussed.

## Budget

A one-year project associate, with knowledge in education and qualitative research, is requested for this project. Reasons for requesting a project associate because s/he needs to be experienced in educational research, be good at qualitative research, and be independent during the project period. S/he is expected to assist the project team to develop the construct guiding the focus group interviews and the observational study, to liaise with and to gain access to the employers, to conduct focus group interviews with employers (approximately 10) and graduates (approximately 10), to carry out on-site observations (approximately 12) of beginning therapists at work, to analyze qualitative interview data and observational data, to draft a report on the findings of both interviews and observational study, to organize interactive forums for teaching colleagues to deliberate and review on the intended program / learning outcomes against the expected professional competence identified from employers and graduates.

Part-time project assistants are needed to assist the project associate in liaising and getting access to employers and graduates, and to perform data entry of both interviews and observational data.

General expenses:

- Travelling expenses of project associate and project assistants for focus group interviews and on-site observational study
- Notebook computer & software for interviews and survey analysis
- Tape recorders, tapes, batteries
- Small souvenirs for participating employers and graduates

Timeframe of the project

1 <sup>st</sup> month	Literature review  Develop guides for focus group interviews and observational study  Determine on the sampling frame and liaise with employers and graduates for access.
2 <sup>nd</sup> – 7 <sup>th</sup> month	Focus group interviews with employers and graduates  On-site observational study of beginning therapists at work
8 <sup>th</sup> – 9 <sup>th</sup> month	Data analysis and drafting of a short report
10 <sup>th</sup> – 12 <sup>th</sup> month	Interactive forum on the review of program / learning outcomes  Report writing on the program / curriculum review