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Learning and Teaching Conference 2025



Applying a Threshold Concepts Lens to Occupational Therapy Simulation Placements

Valerie Marshall

Susie Wilson

Kate Crawford

Session Content

1. Simulated practice-based learning in Occupational Therapy at UoC
2. Threshold Concepts theory- its application to Occupational Therapy and individual reflection during simulated practice-based learning
3. Learner feedback- impact on confidence levels
4. Universal Design for Learning Guidelines and the LTA plan influence on the simulation placement design
5. Future developments





Simulated practice-based learning (SPL)

“Artificially constructed environments designed to represent realistic scenarios that provide opportunities for learners to practise clinical and decision-making skills within a safe environment”

(RCOT, 2019, p. 16).

Aim of the SPL Module



To support preparation for face-to-face practice



To consider different types of communication needed within practice settings



To introduce core practical skills



SPL Intended Learning Outcomes



On successful completion, you will be able to:

1. Demonstrate attainment of foundational standards of personal and professional conduct
2. Demonstrate emerging verbal and written communication skills
3. Discuss the importance of and demonstrate basic practical skills required for practice

Simulated practice-based learning (SPL)- what we did:

- 20 hours SPL at level 4 over one week with an assessment at the end of the week (RCOT, 2019; WFOT, 2016)
- Co-produced with practice partners who contributed to the design of the SPL and supported with its delivery
- Case studies and clinical scenarios to replicate practice within an acute physical health setting, covering admission and discharge planning
- Asynchronous pre-learning to prepare for each day, as well as resources to supplement the SPL activities during the day



Simulated practice-based learning (SPL)- what we did:

- **Day one** - first meeting with the client on the ward
- **Day two**- telephone call to the client's next-of-kin
- **Day three** - second meeting with the client on the ward (mental health element)
- **Day four** - home environment assessment and discharge planning
- **Day five** - assessment: A first contact with a new client and completion of a brief written record





Reflection on learning and threshold concepts theory

- The use of reflection to underpin learning was incorporated into the design and delivery of each day on the SPL placement
- Learners were encouraged and supported to share their key learning and reflections at the end of each day
- Learners were asked to identify which of the threshold concept themes aligned most closely to their reflection

(Binjamin, 2018; Nicola-Richmond, Pepin & Larkin, 2018; Tanner, 2011)

Threshold Concepts

- *A threshold concept can be considered as akin to a portal, opening up a new and previously inaccessible way of thinking about something. It represents a transformed way of understanding, or interpreting, or viewing something without which the learner cannot progress'*
- (Meyer & Land, 2003, p1)





Occupational Therapy & Threshold Concepts

- Understanding and applying occupational therapy theories & practice
- Evidence-based practice
- Clinical reasoning
- Discipline specific skills & knowledge
- Practising in the real world
- Client-centred practice
- Occupation
- The occupational therapist role
- Reflective practice
- Holistic approach





Would SPL influence confidence levels?

- We wanted to measure confidence levels in relation to undertaking practice placements to ascertain the impact of SPL on this
- JISC survey circulated at the beginning of the SPL week and then again at the end
- Questions were formulated based on the threshold concept themes
- 10 questions on day 1 and day 4 based on the 10 threshold concepts
- Students rated their confidence level from 1-10 (with 10 being high confidence)



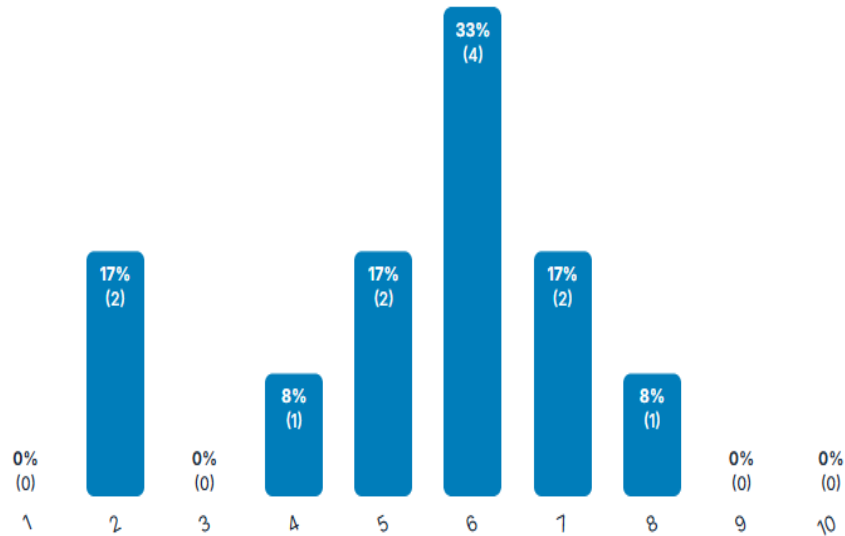
Learner feedback: JISC survey results

- Overall, confidence levels for both the BSc and MSc cohorts improved from day 1 to day 4
- This was also reflected in the “Your Voice” module feedback survey from the learners
- Informal feedback from learners after their first external practice placement also reflected the benefit of SPL on their confidence whilst on placement

Practicing in the real world- BSc

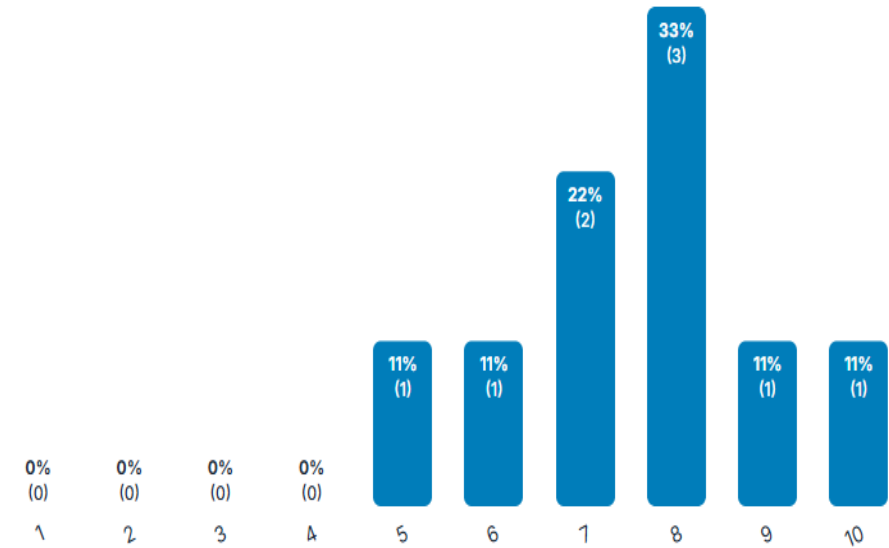
Day 1 - How confident do you feel about what 'practicing in the real world' means?

How confident do you feel about what 'practicing in the real world' means?



Day 4 - How confident do you feel about what 'practicing in the real world' means?

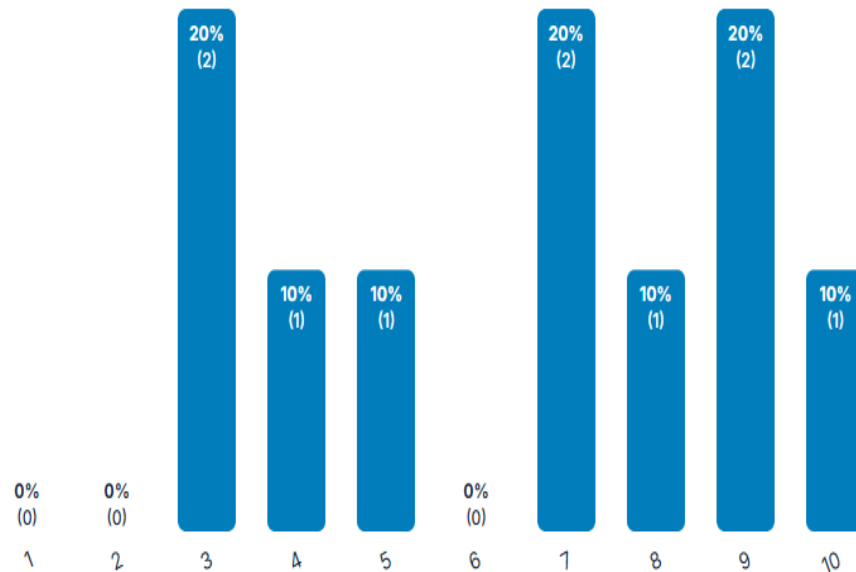
How confident do you feel about what 'practicing in the real world' means?



Practicing in the real world-MSc

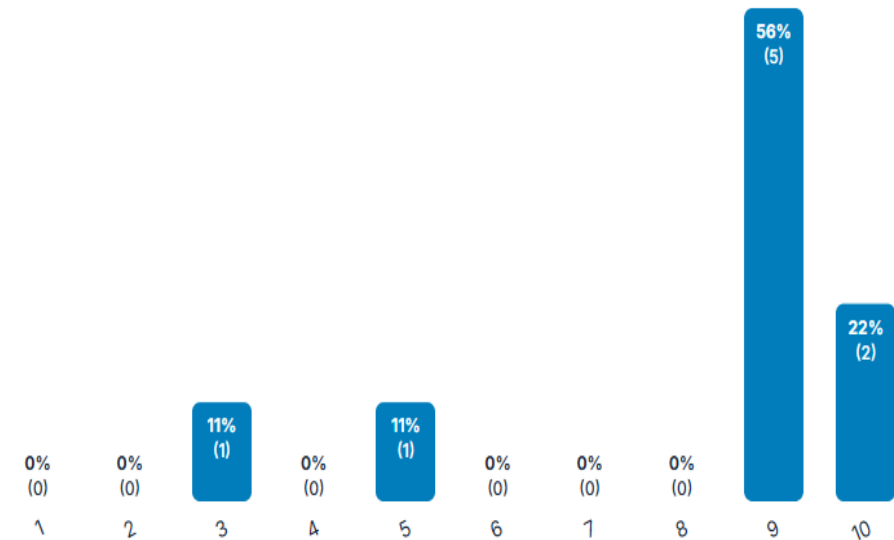
Day 1 - How confident do you feel about what 'practicing in the real world' means?

How confident do you feel about what 'practicing in the real world' means?



Day 4 - How confident do you feel about what 'practicing in the real world' means?

How confident do you feel about what 'practicing in the real world' means?





Learning, Teaching and Assessment plan (LTA) influence

- **Place-Based Engaged Learning AND Authentic Assessment-** realistic learning and assessment design, co-produced and delivered with practice partners
- **Graduate Attributes-** encouraging critical reflection and preparing learners for practice
- **Universal Design for Learning-** Supporting engagement by including active participation and active learning within the module design, and utilising a varied range of asynchronous and synchronous learning opportunities

(Center for Applied Special Technology, 2024; University of Cumbria, 2024)

- **Learning Optimisation AND Digital Augmentation-** ensuring inclusivity by using a blended approach to learning and utilising digital resources such as Thinglink
- **Belonging Through Partnership-** fostering a sense of community by encouraging shared learning, reflection, and working together during the week
- **Evaluation and Recognition-** seeking feedback from the learners and reviewing content and delivery for continual improvement



What's next for SPL within Occupational Therapy?

Future developments:

- Currently designing level 6 SPL with practice partners
- As part of PGCAP, the work described today is to be developed further and formally evaluated as part of a research project
- Option to build on research even further....

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Thank you for listening!



Any questions?