

Faculty of Science and Health



Faculty Research Committee

Undergraduate Summer Research Internship Scheme 2019

Project Title: Supervisory Dyads Study

Principal Investigator: Dr Aisling McMahon

School/Research Centre: School of Nursing and Human Sciences

Description of PI's research

Supervisory Dyads study: This research study involves a longitudinal study of clinical supervision in a community-based mental health service. The research team involves Dr. Aisling McMahon (PI, Assistant Professor in Psychotherapy), Dr. Ciaran Jennings (part-time Research Assistant, February to November 2019), and two DCU BSc in Psychology students working part-time as student research assistants (all research assistant work is funded by the mental health service). Data collection has just been completed, involving clinicians in an Irish mental health service audio-recording their clinical supervision meetings over a 6-month period. Data analysis, and preparation of study reports for the mental health service and preparation of articles for peer-reviewed publications will comprise the work of the research team over the next nine months.

There are a number of sub-studies incorporated within this study as six months of audio-recordings of naturalistic clinical supervision practice involve rich, complex data that will be analysed in a number of ways to interrogate and illuminate practice. There have been consistent calls for research regarding the impact of clinical supervision on practitioner competency and client outcomes, as well as studies to illuminate the interpersonal processes of supervisory work. Longitudinal studies, and the use of recording or observation, have been recently recommended to advance understanding and practice in this area (Bernard & Luke, 2015; Goodyear et al., 2016; Watkins, 2014). Such studies are rare and the results of this Irish study will have international repute as this is developmental research area in this field.

Aisling has over 25 years' clinical and practice-based supervision experience. Since taking up employment in DCU since 2015, she has been supervising Doctorate in Psychotherapy, MSc in Psychotherapy and PhD students, as well as SNHS student research interns each summer (she is currently supervising 5 doctorate students, 4 MSc students, and the research assistants noted above).

Project descriptor

The undergraduate student intern will work on one sub-study within the Supervisory Dyads study, assisting in deductive analysis of the study data according to one theoretical template regarding clinical supervision practice. In addition, the intern will be involved in literature review work,

preparation of a study report, and preparation of an article for submission to a peer-reviewed journal. The intern will report to the PI but will also work closely with the project Research Assistant - both will provide mentoring and support for the intern. The intern will gain skills in deductive coding and analysis, literature review work, writing for communication of study results to a service partner and for a peer-reviewed academic journal, on both of which the intern will be included as a co-author. This project has both national and international significance. It is an Irish public health sector policy objective that: "all health and social care professionals should participate in regular, high quality, consistent and effective supervision" (Health Service Executive, 2015, p.5). However, supervisory work has only recently been recognised as a distinct professional competency (as opposed to experience as a helping professional being adequate to supervise other professionals) and international knowledge about effective practice is at an early stage (Falender & Shafranske, 2014). Thus, this study has international appeal as it involves a developmental field of research.

Job descriptor

This research internship offers an opportunity to work with Dr. Aisling McMahon, Assistant Professor in Psychotherapy and Chartered Clinical Psychologist, on a study of clinical supervision in a community-based mental health service. For this study, health practitioners have audio-recorded their clinical supervision meetings over a 6-month period so that their practice can be analysed to develop national and international knowledge regarding this professional practice. It is an Irish public health sector policy objective that: "all health and social care professionals should participate in regular, high quality, consistent and effective supervision" (Health Service Executive, 2015, p.5). However, supervisory work has only recently been recognised as a distinct professional competency and international knowledge about effective practice is at an early stage (Falender & Shafranske, 2014). The successful intern will assist in deductive analysis of study recordings, will be involved in literature review work, preparation of a study report for the service partner, and preparation of an article for submission to a peer-reviewed journal.