

Roles and Responsibilities of Supervisors and Mentors

Awareness of ethical practice

Supervisors and mentors should ensure that their trainees are aware of relevant professional practice guidelines and of the importance of observing these in their practice. Any coaching or mentoring should ensure that ethical issues are addressed with the code of conduct in our profession.

Trainees should be informed that as trainees they are individually responsible for their conduct with clients and the extent to which responsibility for work is shared with the supervisor or mentor. It is the responsibility of the supervisor or mentor to establish and maintain appropriate boundaries. They should ensure that trainees inform clients of their training status and that they will be discussing information about them with the supervisor/mentor in confidence and that information about them may be used anonymously for examination purposes. They should ensure that the trainee's work does not exceed their competence, whilst enabling new learning to take place at an appropriate pace.

Boundary issues

When acting as supervisors and mentors, psychologists should be aware of the importance of boundary and power issues within supervisory relationships. Dual personal and supervisory relationships should be avoided, so that any potential abuse of power is minimized. Supervisors or mentors must not exploit the trainee's vulnerability in being dependent upon reports of competence, or the relationship of trust, for improper personal or financial gain.

Competence of trainees

If the needs of a client exceed the competence of a trainee, the supervisor or mentor must consider whether to work with the client themselves or to refer elsewhere, and any such decision will need to be balanced with other factors such as the consequences of terminating the relationship. The accurate monitoring of competence needs to include some level of observation, either by direct or indirect means.

Where the supervisor/mentor believes the trainee is inappropriately placing the client at risk of harm they must act to prevent this.

Different perspectives

Supervisors/mentors and trainees should respect each other's perspectives which involve differences of opinion and professional practice. Trainees should be guided by the supervisor/mentor's advice, and supervisors/mentors should respect the right of trainees to develop an individual orientation to their work. Trainees have the right to refuse to undertake certain actions

on ethical or other legitimate grounds. In case of disagreement the supervisor/trainee may need to seek the mediation of the Teaching Consultants at the University.

Additional supervision

Supervisors/mentors should arrange for additional supervision by another practitioner where the needs of supervision exceed their abilities. Assessment of trainees' competence should not be influenced by personal differences, including those relating to gender, race, religion, or culture.

Feedback

Accurate, constructive and objective feedback should be provided on performance. Both supervisors/mentors and trainees should recognise the importance of personal development and its relationship to professional development.

Confidentiality

When using case material in training sessions, principles of confidentiality should be adhered to and trainees must ensure that client personal details are anonymous. Materials of all case studies should be held in a secure place.

When writing client details for their case studies, trainees should be informed not to include information that would enable their clients to be identified by those reading their studies. Client names should be altered or not used and the names of all other professionals involved and indication of the location should also be removed.

Both supervisor or mentor should observe confidentiality. These include:

1. Responsibility to the trainee to keep supervision sessions confidential.
2. Responsibility to clients discussed to keep their details confidential.
3. Responsibility to an organisation or regulatory body of which the supervisee/mentee is a member to break confidentiality if the trainee is acting unethically so as to prevent harm to the client.

The supervisor/mentor should use professional judgement in assessing whether it is necessary to breach confidentiality for the purpose of resolving any immediate crisis relating to a client.

Other Professional Guidelines for references:

Some relevant excerpts from different professional bodies are highlighted here. Supervisors and mentors are encouraged to click on the link provided to consult the complete documents.

I. HKPS Code of Professional Conduct (HKPS, 2012), Chapter 7

<http://www.hkps.org.hk/index.php?fi=code>

II. NASP Position Statement on Supervision in School Psychology (NASP, 2011)

http://www.nasponline.org/about_nasp/positionpapers/Supervision_in_School.pdf

Definitions: Supervision

Supervision in school psychology includes both professional and administrative supervision. It is provided through an ongoing, positive, systematic, collaborative process between the school psychologist and the school psychology supervisor. This process focuses on promoting effective growth and exemplary professional practice leading to improved performance by all, including the school psychologist, supervisor, students, and the entire school community.

Supervision Methods and Structures

Professional supervision techniques vary based on the supervisor's ability to intervene and assist the supervisee or client, the reliance on technology, the amount of the supervisor's time required, the level of supervisee skill required, and the intrusion on the client. Supervisory techniques may include didactic instruction and assigned readings; modeling; role-playing; direct observation; collaborative counseling, assessment, and consultation; reviewing audiotapes along with a typed transcript and analysis; reviewing audiotapes of sessions without transcripts; reviewing of psychological reports and protocols; and reviewing case process notes.