

Performance evaluation

The concepts

Definition of performance evaluation - it is a process that provides transparent and continuous feedback in a learning environment according to the three domains of learning (CNFS, 2004).

Keywords of the definition

Process: the notion of process implies continuity. In the case of performance evaluation, it consists of a series of steps that occur throughout the duration of the placement. Therefore, performance evaluation cannot simply be completed on one occasion such as at the end of the placement.

Transparency: Performance evaluation is transparent when there is continuous communication between the supervisor and the student. Consequently, the student knows from the start how he will be evaluated and according to which performance indicators. Also, he knows that he will be regularly informed of his learning progress and difficulties.

Learning environment: A clinical site that agrees to take a student also accepts to offer clinical situations that will allow the student to progress in his learning and to achieve his objectives. For example, it is the supervisor's responsibility to expose the student to learning experiences. For his part, the student must play an active role in the learning process by participating to daily activities, by asking questions and by regularly completing self-evaluations.

Domains of learning: Even though supervisors tend to place more emphasis on skills, performance evaluation is not limited to this type of learning. In fact, a complete evaluation includes the three domains of learning.

- Cognitive (*knowledge*) theoretical knowledge & clinical reasoning.
- Psychomotor (*skills*) clinical abilities, techniques and approaches.
- Affective (*attitude*) behaviour, relational abilities and communication skills.

According to Anthony & Gaipman (1993) and Villeneuve (1994), an evaluation that does not cover all three domains of learning is incomplete. For example, if a supervisor does not verify the clinical reasoning behind a decision and does not evaluate how the student comes to choose an appropriate course of action, the evaluation is incomplete. He must ask himself if the student would reach the same conclusion if he had to repeat the intervention in another context or with another client. The supervisor needs to assess if the student has the ability to consolidate his knowledge and to successfully complete the desired task.

Performance evaluation constitutes a way of **measuring** what knowledge, skills or attitude the student has acquired, and comparing them to the placement objectives. The following questions will help you better understand the evaluation components:

- What clinical skills did the student acquire?
- Does the student demonstrate appropriate clinical reasoning?
- Do his knowledge, skills and attitude correspond to standards of practice? The objectives of the placement?

A controlled activity

Performance evaluation is not a value judgement but rather, a judgement on the **gap** or the difference between the student's learning and the placement objectives. For performance evaluation to be constructive, communication between the supervisor and the student must be based on the objectives. According to Turgeon (1997), the evaluation is a controlled activity to help determine if the placement is progressing well and if the student is reaching the objectives. Bernard and Goodyear (1998) confirm that performance evaluation constitutes a central element in acquiring clinical skills.

A supervised activity

Performance evaluation is an integral part of clinical supervision. It should not be overlooked because without it, it is impossible to identify the strengths and weaknesses of a student and of the supervision experience as a whole. Furthermore, the clinical site will not be able to appreciate the effects of a student's performance on its mission and on the satisfaction of its clients.

An act of human relations

Evaluation is also an act of human relations as it relies on communication, feelings and observations. It is important that the supervisor shows a compassionate side when dealing with others and that his behaviour reflects that he has put some time and effort into evaluating the student's performance.

Types of performance evaluation

- 1) **Formative** evaluation aims to help a student reach the placement objectives, focuses on the improvement of knowledge, skills and attitude or serves to modify learning strategies.
- 2) **Summative** evaluation focuses on measuring the outcome of the clinical placement. This summary of the student's performance is an official account of the success or the failure of the clinical placement (Villeneuve, 1998).