

Children's Therapy Centre

External Examiner Report 2014-2015

1. The Evidence Considered

This was my first visit as External Examiner at CTC. I was given a thorough orientation to the organisation and given access to all relevant written and creative examples of student materials as well as other information throughout my visit. This included Student Handbooks, Assessment Criteria, Marking Schemes and Programme Evaluation Reports. As a practitioner and academic, I found the environment of CTC to be highly conducive to the purpose and ethos of the programme and was deeply impressed by the consistently high standard of materials prepared by staff and of the student work. I selected samples of student work from each year at low, average and high marks as well as reading and exploring in depth representative samples of student work across the breadth of the programme.

2. Minimum Intended Programme Learning Outcomes

The Masters in Play Therapy training at CTC meets national and international standards relevant to the level, learning objectives and outcomes set in terms of academic theory, play therapy practice and personal development. I make this observation grounded in my years of experience of teaching and assessing learning programmes at community, Bachelors, Masters and Ph'D levels at Queens University Belfast, Dublin Business School, the Open University and other community based providers.

3. Actual Attainment of Learners

The actual attainment of learners at CTC is of a high standard. The core elements of learning and professional training are evidenced through a wide range of appropriate methods, showing an overall high standard of competence and integration. I found the experience of sampling Students work demonstrated the core competences required for this challenging and vitally important work with children, work that indicates one way of making real the cherishing of all of our children.

4. The Programme

The strength of the programme is highlighted from the beginning, through each level that builds a solid foundation for the next year, culminating in the MA Dissertation. The evidence clearly demonstrates the quality of learning at each level with several modalities of learning appropriate to the year. For example, Personal Logs of learning reflecting the personal qualities and capacities evolved throughout the training.

5. Assessment Procedures

As stated under 'The Programme', the personal logs demonstrate the individual learning over time and the shift in inner working models in the students and their clients. I was particularly moved by the students' honesty and integrity in their reflections and what this quietly demonstrates about the quality, integrity and coherence of the overall programme and staff-student relationships. Child Observations in year one showed the development of observation as a core skill in noticing values, beliefs, thoughts, feelings, personal triggers, etc. The play resources developed by students in year two demonstrated the creativity of the programme and of the students. The setting up of a Market Stall situation allowed all the Students to learn from one another, amplifying the resourcefulness of the group. As one Student stated, quoting Jung: 'hands will solve a mystery intellect has struggled with in vain'. Self Assessment is a feature of the programme at each level and the Assessments by staff are offered with exceptionally clear and detailed criteria at each level. Feedback from staff is provided that clearly match the criteria established by the Programme. My overall strong sense as evidenced by the External Examiners visit is that CTC demonstrates fair, consistent and authentic assessment procedures that are reliable and fit for purpose.

6. Trends

It is clear to me that CTC is a highly professional organization that reviews the feedback from External Examiners reports and makes progress on the basis of this. I witnessed this occurring in relation to last years report and the changes had been incorporated into the Programme that included other relevant organisational learning.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

I have approached the evidence and data systematically following the in depth orientation to the programme as a first time External Examiner to CTC. I was impressed by the excellence of the structure and systematic nature of each level of training provided and by the evidence from the programme. In particular, I observed the students evidence as competent in offering children methods for restoring self regulation via exploratory and play systems, enhancing connection. At the higher levels of the training, reduced and transformed trauma, loss and other interruptions to their development.

My recommendations are:

- i. That the first year criteria is simplified for first year students. This recommendation emerges from the data offered from noticing the extensive criteria, from written or verbal feedback from Students and Programme Staff.
- ii. That those Students interested in publication (online or in other forms) could use their final year Dissertations to make the learning from the high standard of practice of Play Therapy more available within Ireland and internationally.
- iii. That the work is of a standard as demonstrated by the high end of the Dissertations to support CTC to consider over time and subject to resources the possibility of creating a Ph'D in Play Therapy in Ireland.



18th August 2015

External examiners' signature, date