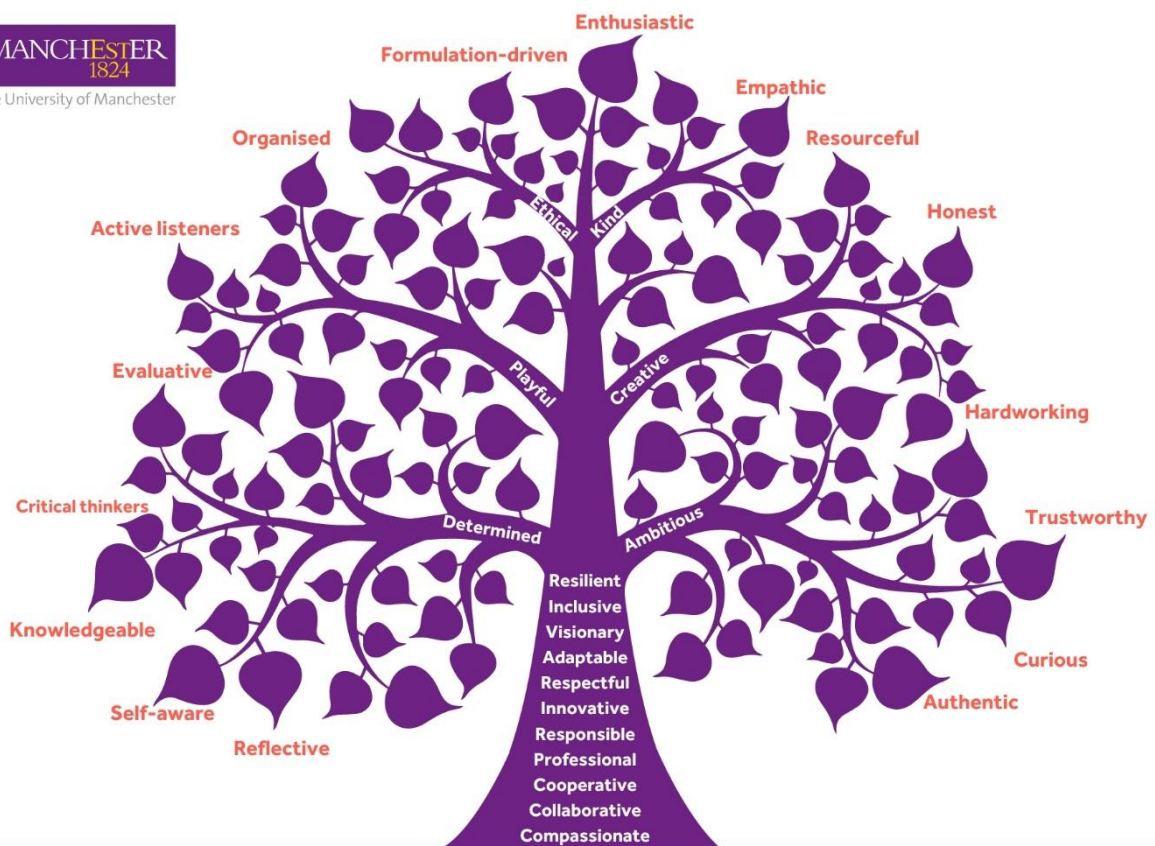


Clinical Psychology Doctorate (ClinPsyD)



KNOWLEDGE | WISDOM | HUMANITY | ACADEMIC FREEDOM | COURAGE | PIONEERING SPIRIT

An Academic Engagement Guide for Trainees 2024/5

Maximising Learning Through Clinical Psychology Training

As a clinical psychology trainee, you are stepping into a challenging training experience that will develop your skills, knowledge, and professional identity. To maximise your learning, it is essential to adopt strategies tailored to being an adult learner aspiring to become a competent and compassionate future leader in clinical psychology practice and research. This guide has been designed to help you make the most of your learning experience throughout the ClinPsyD, with practical tips and strategies to support your success. On the final page of this document, you will find a summary table of how to apply our programme's strategies for learning to your own professional development.

Embracing the challenges and opportunities that come your way through training will enrich your training experience and professional development, preparing you in *how* to manage professional challenges post-qualification. Remember, the skills, knowledge, and relationships you develop during your training will serve you throughout your career, so time learning helpful strategies is time well spent.

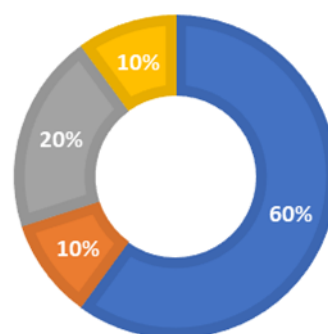
By working together to create a culture of learning that is enriching, supportive, and empowering, we can more effectively promote wellbeing and equality. Prioritising *how* we learn, as well as *what* we learn, can enhance learning experiences and develop the skills necessary to excel in your future career. Embrace the challenge with enthusiasm and confidence, knowing that you have the potential to become a compassionate, innovative, and effective clinical psychologist, making a difference to the lives of others and the profession, as a whole.

Aligning with BPS 2023 Standards for the Accreditation of Doctoral Programmes for Clinical Psychology, over 50% of the total programme time is allocated to supervised clinical experience (60%), 10% of time is available to trainees for self-directed study, a further 10% of working time is dedicated to the doctoral research project, and 20% of training time is allocated for in-person training.

Following BPS guidance, "There is an expectation that attendance at all teaching sessions is mandatory, with a minimum requirement of 95% attendance" (p30), excluding periods of approved leave (maximum of four teaching days of annual leave per year). This expectation underpins our attendance monitoring protocol and data collection procedures.

LEARNING STRUCTURE

■ Placement ■ Research ■ In person training ■ Self-directed study

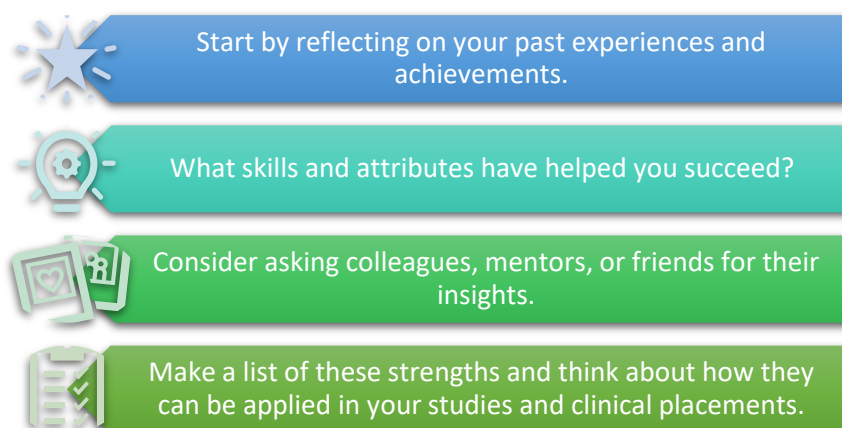


Preparation for Learning

1. Set Clear Goals

Begin by setting clear, achievable goals for yourself. Reflect on your motivations for entering clinical psychology and what you aim to accomplish throughout your training. For example, set goals such as mastering specific therapeutic techniques, developing specific research skills, or improving your ability to work with diverse populations. These objectives will provide a roadmap for your learning journey and help you stay focused.

2. Understand Your Learning Strengths and Areas for Development



Once you have identified your strengths, actively look for opportunities to use and develop them further. For instance, if you excel at organisation, harness this skill through planning and developing a training Gantt chart. This may be helpful to share with peers. If you excel in verbal communication and confident public speaking, volunteer for roles in group work that benefit from these skills, playing to your strengths and supporting peers who may be less confident to find their voice with your support.

Reflecting further upon your previous experiences of being a learner in educational and professional settings, consider the areas where you have struggled, strategies that have helped, and areas for continued development. This might be through self-reflection, supervision, feedback, or performance review. Identifying these areas is the first step towards development.

Don't hesitate to ask for help. Whether it's through formal channels (e.g., supervision, the [Disability Advisory and Support Service](#), the [Student Wellbeing Hub](#)), peer support groups, additional online training (e.g., library workshops), or externally sought support, accessing support can provide you with the guidance and resources needed to overcome your difficulties. Additionally, engaging collaboratively with your peers and supervisors regularly can support reflection, encouragement, and onward planning. Collaboration not only helps you learn from others but also allows you to share your strengths and support others in areas where they might struggle, creating a reciprocal learning environment. Finally, create a detailed plan to address the areas for development you have identified.

Set specific, achievable goals and outline the steps you need to take. Stay committed to continued learning as new strengths and challenges arise through training to keep your knowledge and skills up to date¹.

3. Reflective Practice

Maintain a reflective journal to document your learning experiences, thoughts, and feelings. This practice not only enhances self-awareness but also prepares you for discussions during synchronous sessions. Reflect on questions like, "What did I learn today?" and "How can I apply this knowledge in my clinical practice?"

Summary

- Setting clear goals enhances motivation and focus.
- Understanding your learning style optimises learning efficiency.
- Engaging with pre-class materials prepares you for deeper learning during synchronous sessions.
- Reflective practice fosters self-awareness, helps consolidate learning, and supports continuous improvement.

Asynchronous Learning

Getting started

Engage with pre-class materials, such as reading, lecture videos, and interactive content in an environment conducive to your learning, making sure your weekly work plan accommodates necessary time for asynchronous learning. These resources are designed to build your foundational knowledge and prepare you for active participation in synchronous sessions. Utilize self-assessment alongside feedback from supervisors and peers to gauge your understanding of the material. Revise your weekly schedule if you find you are struggling to make sufficient time for asynchronous learning (e.g., changing the time or day of the week dedicated for this task).

Synchronous Learning

1. Active Participation

During synchronous sessions, actively participate in discussions, role-plays, and simulations. Activities are designed to be dynamic and interactive, providing you with immediate feedback and real-time problem-solving experience. These activities should help you develop in skills and confidence, preparing you with transferable and flexible tools for the uncertainties and challenges you may face in

¹ Knowles, M. S., Holton, E. F., & Swanson, R. A. (2015). *The adult learner: The definitive classic in adult education and human resource development* (8th ed.). Routledge.

clinical research and practice. If teaching is being delivered online, cameras should be turned on at all times, so that you participate as you would in person.

2. Group Work

Working in teams helps develop your ability to think critically and solve complex problems collaboratively, whilst simultaneously learning from the perspectives, skills and experiences of others. It is often through group work and experiential learning that the most transformational learning happens to take you from *becoming* to *being* a competent clinical psychologist.

3. Real-Time Feedback

Take advantage of real-time feedback from trainers and peers. This immediate feedback is invaluable for correcting misunderstandings and reinforcing correct practices. Seeking out additional feedback from peers during or after synchronous team learning can also help shape your approach to learning and engagement in shared tasks.

4. Reflective Discussions

Participate in reflective discussions to deepen your understanding of the material. These discussions encourage you to examine your assumptions and beliefs, fostering personal and professional growth. For example, engage in a reflective discussion on the ethical dilemmas faced in clinical practice and how to navigate them.

Summary

- Active participation in activities enhances learning and skill development, as well as positively contributing to the overall learning culture of your cohort.
- Group work fosters teamwork and collaborative problem-solving, alongside the ability to learn from one another as adult learners.
- Real-time feedback provides immediate opportunities for improvement.
- Reflective discussions promote critical thinking and self-awareness.

Consolidation of Learning

1. Continuous Reflection: Maintain your reflective journal, integrating insights gained from both asynchronous and synchronous activities. For example, reflect on how your understanding of a particular therapeutic approach has evolved over time and how you can or have applied it in practice, what you have learnt through the process, and what future developmental priorities may be.

2. Peer Review: Engage in peer review sessions where you can discuss your reflections on learning experiences and receive constructive feedback. This process not only reinforces your learning but also builds a supportive community. For example, sparing an hour on a study day or over lunch on a teaching day to share your reflective journal entries with a peer and provide feedback on each other's insights.

3. Application to Practice: Reflect upon your application of theory in practice through synchronous learning and supervision. Discussing these experiences with your peers and supervisors to gain different perspectives and insights can help consolidate existing learning and think through options for future work.

4. Continuous Improvement: Seek continuous feedback and be open to adapting your learning strategies. Stay engaged with additional learning opportunities and professional development activities to enhance your skills and knowledge. For example, attend workshops, seminars, and conferences to stay updated on the latest developments in your emerging specialist areas.

Additional Sources of Academic Support

- [Academic Support](#) Overview
- [Good Study Skills](#), The University of Manchester
- [My Learning Essentials](#)
- [Study Skills - Student Mental Health Forum](#)
- [Skills for learning, DASS](#)
- methods@manchester

Promoting an Inclusive and Supportive Learning Environment

1. *Embrace Diversity:* Recognize and respect the diverse backgrounds and experiences of your peers. An inclusive environment where all voices are heard enriches the learning experience for everyone.
2. *Foster a Culture of Support:* Support your peers and contribute to a collaborative learning environment. Share your experiences and insights and be open to learning from others.
3. *Address Sensitive Topics with Care:* Be mindful of the emotional impact of sensitive topics, which may affect some trainees more than others, depending upon personal experiences and the timing of the session. For example, it may be helpful in group discussions to discuss the process of the task, before diving into case material or a debate. Similarly, checking in on how people feel about a task before starting a task may help lay supportive foundations.
4. *Reflective and Trauma-Informed Practice:* Incorporate trauma-informed principles into your learning. This approach prioritizes emotional safety, empowering both yourself and your peers to engage fully in the learning process. For example, creating a safe space for sharing personal experiences in relation to a topic may help inform how the group may engage in a task and support each other through tackling challenging topics.

Individual and Collective Responsibility for Success

Taking responsibility for your training

- Be proactive in your learning by setting goals, comprehensively engaging with materials, and seeking feedback.
- Maintain professionalism – arrive in good time, ready to engage, reduce distractions for yourself and others, and do your best.
- Reflect regularly on your learning and professional development.
- Apply theoretical knowledge in practice through placements and synchronous sessions and seek out further opportunities for growth.
- Support your peers by sharing knowledge, providing feedback, and fostering a positive learning environment.
- Your trainer will finish teaching five minutes ahead of the final close of the session. This provides you with five minutes to complete the programme feedback online for each training session. This is essential to help us monitor the quality and strategic alignment of each session.

Collective Responsibility

- Collaborate with your peers and facilitators to create an inclusive and supportive learning community.
- Engage in group activities and discussions with respect and openness.

- Share perspectives and experiences with sensitivity to the people involved, to enrich collective learning and hold in mind the impact of some topics for members of the group.
- Work together to address challenges and celebrate successes, fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose.
- Complete feedback promptly and raise key issues at Programme Liaison Meetings to contribute to the ongoing quality appraisal of training on the programme.

Managing Emotional Responses within Teaching Sessions

Preparation

Trainees: Inform the facilitator privately if you have personal circumstances that may affect your participation. You can choose not to participate in specific sessions, such as a bereavement workshop if recently bereaved, although you should try to discuss this with your clinical tutor beforehand. If this is not possible, please contact your clinical tutor as soon as possible after the session.

During Sessions

Time out: Trainees can opt-out of exercises they find distressing due to personal circumstances where necessary. However, trainees should avoid frequent avoidance of distressing material as learning opportunities will be limited and it is important to find ways to manage challenging topics prior to direct experiences with clients on placement. Learning how to manage emotional distress is also an essential skill throughout one's career as a clinical psychologist.

Emotional Monitoring: Trainees should monitor their emotional responses and take action if distressed, informing the facilitator afterward. Actions may include asking for a short break, taking some time for themselves outside of the teaching space, or requesting a short pause in the teaching to process the information discussed. Facilitators should provide space and discuss the cause of distress privately if necessary.

Post-Session

Trainees can provide feedback on the appropriateness of material presented and delivery style of training to improve training quality and engagement. Serious concerns should be reported in writing to the Academic Director as soon as possible. Trainees who leave a session due to distress should inform the programme administrator or their clinical tutor the same day. Discussions about distress are confidential, with exceptions for serious welfare concerns.

Summary

- Emotional responses are a natural part of clinical psychology training.
- Both trainees and facilitators share the responsibility for managing these responses and should follow the guidance provided.
- Open communication, self-care, and appropriate support systems are essential.
- Ensure feedback mechanisms are used to improve the teaching environment.

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Theoretical Framework for Learning

- **Adult Learning Model (Andragogy)** emphasises the importance of drawing on your prior experiences. Actively integrate your personal and professional experiences into your learning process by sharing relevant experiences during discussions or group activities and relating new information to your past knowledge and practice. Additionally, take charge of your learning by setting personal learning goals and seeking out resources and opportunities that align with your interests and career aspirations.
- **Transformational Learning Theory** encourages you to engage in activities that foster critical analysis of your assumptions and beliefs. Reflect on your professional roles and responsibilities, and participate in discussions and reflective exercises that challenge your perspectives, leading to a deeper understanding of your impact on others in therapeutic and working relationships.
- **Team-Based Learning** can help you develop your communication and teamwork skills by collaborating with your peers to solve problems. Engage in knowledge acquisition, problem-based learning tasks, and activity-based activities to enhance your ability to work effectively in both learning and professional environments.
- **Experiential Learning Theory** focuses on *learning by doing* and *reflecting upon your actions*. Engage in meaningful practice that challenges and rewards you, helping to advance your skills, adaptability, flexibility, and responsiveness to future situations. This approach will expand your professional competence and prepare you for various scenarios you may encounter in your career as a clinical psychologist.

Creating our Learning Culture

Values-Based Learning

To embed ethical awareness and critical perspective-taking into your clinical training, regularly reflect on and tune your personal and professional values. This involves engaging in discussions and activities that challenge you to consider ethical dilemmas and the impact of your values on your practice. By doing so, you ensure that your development is guided by a strong ethical foundation.

Reflective Learning

Foster self-reflection and reflexive practice throughout your training to enhance your self-awareness and capacity to become an agent of change. Make it a habit to regularly reflect on your experiences, decisions, and actions. This continuous reflection will contribute to your professional growth, helping you understand your strengths and areas for improvement, and how you can better serve your clients.

Intersectional Awareness

Recognise the importance and collective responsibility of identifying and tackling structural and intersectional inequalities in our profession. Engage in learning activities that highlight these issues and sensitively promote discussions on diversity and inclusion. By doing so, you contribute to creating a safe and inclusive learning environment and are better prepared to advocate for improvements within the profession.

Trauma-Informed Learning

Acknowledge that training can be challenging and that working with sensitive material and clients' trauma can be distressing. Recognise the emotional availability of practitioners as precious, requiring support. Take proactive steps to seek support when needed and participate in activities that promote your well-being. This approach ensures that you remain emotionally resilient and capable of providing effective care to your clients.