Advanced Training in Addiction Psychiatry

1. Rationale and Learning Objectives

The Research Project requirement is premised on the following principles:

- All specialists need to take a leadership role in research and evaluation of their practice
- The practical experience of scholarship is a fundamental part of post-graduate training and this necessarily entails a critique and assimilation of scientific evidence as it applies to practice
- Psychiatrists need to demonstrate a certain minimum level of skill in scholarship prior to entering independent practice – anticipating that these skills will grow and develop throughout their professional lives.

1.1 The specific learning objectives are the ability to:

1. Scientific analysis of psychiatric literature in relation to substance users and gamblers
2. The application of this approach to research, including formulation of hypothesis formulation, clinical trial design, sample selection, statistical techniques, literature review and outcome assessment.
3. The ethical and legal implications of research in addiction psychiatry.

The trainee is expected to complete a report of approximately 3000 words. The report is expected to describe one of the options as listed below.

The written submission is of the form currently used in English language institutions of higher education relevant to psychiatry, namely it is to be soft-bound, printed (not hand-written) with double-spaced font, wide page margins, and using the APA, Harvard or Vancouver referencing system. Acknowledgments of others’ contributions may be included, and appendices are allowed, but the latter are not be included in the word limit. It is expected that the written submission is of a standard and style which would be suitable for publication in a journal such as Australasian Psychiatry.

2. Options for the Research Project

There are a number of acceptable options in terms of format:

1. A systematic literature review
2. Original and empirical research – quantitative or qualitative
3. A series of cases illustrating a common theme
4. A theoretical discussion on a topic of relevance to the scientific basis of psychiatry or clinical practice

A Systematic Literature Review
Suggested Content: Systematic Literature Review

- Title page.
- Statement of trainee contribution & acknowledgment(s) of supervisor role and other's role.
- Structured synopsis using the headings: background, method, results, and conclusion(s).
- The remaining text is presented under the following headings:
  - Background and objectives
  - Method
  - Results
  - Discussion (including the strengths and limitations of the review)
  - Conclusions
  - References
  - Tables in numbered order
  - Appendices (if applicable).

2.2.2 Background
In this section the scene will be set for the questions to be asked in the review. The topic area will be introduced and the context of the question presented. This will usually include summary statements (supported by references). For example, if the topic is drug use in prison settings, the current epidemiology, burden and outcome of drug use in prisons will be summarized.
The background will refer to current and relevant literature and critical appraisal of the same, such that deficiencies in the present state of knowledge leading to the objectives and specific aims of the review are clear to the reader.
Trainees should ensure their question is focused, concise, and specific.

2.2.3 Method
Search strategy: This comprises the search terms, search dates and databases (minimum of two e.g. MEDLINE and PSYCHLIT.)
Selection criteria: The quality and content criteria by which studies are selected for inclusion.
Data collection & analysis: Outcomes or end-points are specified. The entry of data and quality control of this (e.g. double-entry) is specified and what statistical analyses are used.
Data includes that pertaining to quality appraisal of studies and outcomes.

2.2.4 Results
The search: A descriptive of the included studies and excluded studies is presented with the reasons for exclusion. Each study identified in the search is accounted for. Where there are multiple exclusions, for example over 100 trials excluded, the trainee may choose to present this in full in an Appendix.
Quality of included studies: Quality rating data (critical appraisal) of the included studies is presented.
Outcomes relevant to the question: Outcomes may be presented in simple tabular form supported by explanatory text and/or utilizing more complex statistical analyses such as meta-analyses.

2.2.5 Discussion
The main findings of the review are reiterated, followed by a discussion in the context of relevant background literature. Limitations and strengths of the review are reported.

2.2.6 Conclusions
This comprises comments integrating the findings of the review, clinical and research
implications and (where applicable) directions for further research or inquiry.

2.2.7 References
Presented using APA, Vancouver or Harvard style.

2.2.8 Table(s)
Presented in numbered (arabic) order (as in the text with a cross-reference in the text). Each table should be on a separate page. Use of lines and boxing is encouraged for clarity, but these should not solely comprise ‘cut and paste’ reproductions of tables as produced by statistical packages such as SPSS.

2.2.9 Appendice(s)
These might include a detailed list of excluded trials and reason for exclusion.

2.2.10 Further reading
Trainees may find the following helpful in designing their review.
The Cochrane Library and Databases of controlled trials and systematic reviews.
www.cochrane.com

2.3 An Original and Empirical Research Project
2.3.1 Overview and Expectations.
This is the more formal research option, and could involve undertaking either a quantitative or qualitative research project. The candidate can complete this alone or as part of a larger team. It is expected that the candidates supervisor will account for their role in the project.

Regardless of whether the project is quantitative or qualitative, it is essential for the discussion to include a thorough examination of the strengths and limitations of the research. It is not expected that the research should necessarily result in a paper of a standard likely to be accepted for publication in a peer review journal, however obviously that would be a desirable objective. Rather, the trainee needs to demonstrate that their knowledge of the realities of undertaking research has been significantly improved by conducting the project.

2.3.2 Quantitative Research Project
A quantitative research project would normally involve a series of steps as follows:

1) Review of relevant literature leading to development of one or more hypotheses.

2) Development of an appropriate research methodology.

3) Data collection for either a pilot or more definitive study.

4) Data analysis yielding a set of results.

5) Discussion and conclusion.

2.3.3 Qualitative Research Project
A qualitative research project is usually aimed at exploration of an area where there is insufficient knowledge to allow generation of testable hypotheses. Typically, “in-depth” data are collected from a small number of subjects, often using recorded interviews. Data analysis often involves the identification and elucidation of recurring themes. This can be done manually or, in more sophisticated studies, by computerized analysis of transcribed interviews. Results and discussion focus on how these recurring themes (which may include emotions, cognitions, attitudes, beliefs etc) further our understanding of the topic under study. Trainees need to be mindful that supervisors may have a more limited knowledge of qualitative methodologies, and seeking co-supervision may warrant consideration.

2.4 A Series of Cases Illustrating a Common Theme
2.4.1 Suggested Content

- Title page.

- Statement of trainee contribution & acknowledgment(s) of supervisor role.
and other’s role.

- Statement of consent and confidentiality and de-identification
- Synopsis including main conclusion(s).

The remaining text is presented under the following headings:

- Introduction
- Case History(ies)
- Discussion
- Conclusions
- References
- Appendices (if applicable).

2.4.2 Introduction
The scene should be set for the main themes of the case discussion, the setting in which the case(s) was (were) selected, and the scientific context around issues pertaining to the case(s). Examples of themes are diagnostic dilemma(s), evidence base of treatment, ethical challenge(s) in management, and unusual, new or rare presentations.

2.4.3 Case History(ies)
The main features of the case(s) should be described. This is not a full presentation of all aspects as required in the case histories submitted for Basic Training assessment. It is a distillation of the key aspects that support the ideas and themes which the trainee will then critically discuss. No more than a third of the project should comprise this section. There is no limit on number of cases but more than three may take the form of a case series and may be submitted under option 2.1.3, an original and empirical research project.

2.4.4 Discussion
This should comprise about half the project and should include a critical evaluation of literature as it pertains to the themes of the case(s). It must make reference to the case(s); that is, should not be merely a ‘topic’ discussion that is generated by a case(s) - for example, having critically reviewed the evidence base for treatment, what further options in management can now be explored for this case(s)?

2.4.5 Conclusions
This comprises comments integrating the features of case histories, clinical and research implications and (where applicable) directions for further research or inquiry.

2.4.6 References
Presented using APA, Vancouver or Harvard style.

2.4.7 Appendices
Data germane to the case history such as test results may be placed here. This should be supporting data that is of relevance, but is not essential to the reading of the main scientific argument.

2.5 A Theoretical Discussion of a Topic of Relevance to the Practice of Addiction Psychiatry
This option may be regarded as a scholarly project which does not fit neatly into the other categories, that is, a scholarly work which is neither a systematic literature review, nor a piece of primary research, nor a clinical audit. However, it might better be defined as a process which helps us answer such questions as “How do we know what we know in psychiatry?” and “How can I be sure that I am treating my patient optimally, rationally, and consistent with scientifically-established best practice?”

This option allows the candidate to consider in depth a topic which is less amenable to empirical research and may therefore be somewhat more speculative in its approach.

It would be expected that the author:
1. Clearly defines the topic of the project

2. Specifies the relevance to Addiction psychiatry

3. Demonstrates an understanding of the current literature relevant to the topic and references the literature in a standard format.

4. Highlights a conclusion or summary.

3. Developing the Research Project

This section provides practical advice to the trainee about the process of developing the scholarly project.

3.1 Selection of a Research Project

Trainees are encouraged to select a project based on their own interests. There may be opportunities within particular training rotations for a project related to these rotations, but ultimately the choice of research subject lies with the trainee.

3.2 Selection of a Supervisor

A supervisor for the scholarly project should be selected at the earliest possible stage. Trainees may find that their rotation supervisor is able to supervise their scholarly project, but it is expected that often trainees will need to locate a supervisor with an interest in the project topic and research, in general. Trainees may therefore have a clinical supervisor, and an additional scholarly project Supervisor. Some trainees may additionally seek a project co-supervisor, who has a particular expertise in the project subject. The research co-supervisor need not be local to the trainee, and would offer supervision additional to that of the primary project supervisor. The principal supervisor should be a College fellow, however co-supervision from a non-college fellow is permitted for projects where this is appropriate (e.g. qualitative research).

3.3 Selection of a Scholarly Project Format

Trainees should consider each of the scholarly project options described above. Selection of the most appropriate format will require the trainee to clarify:

- The question being posed
- The resources available to them in performing this project, most particularly, time available
- The particular research skills they would like to develop
- Their understanding of the relevant literature.

The scholarly project supervisor must be involved in considering the most appropriate option for the project.

4. Supervision of the Scholarly Project

Supervision of the scholarly project will take the form of regular meetings and discussions with the trainee, at the beginning to support the trainee in the area selected for study, advice and supervision of the literature to be reviewed, development of hypotheses and/or themes. The supervisor(s) will provide advice and guidance in the conduct of the project and its writing up. Supervision will be regular but may vary in intensity (e.g. between weekly and monthly) and it is anticipated will be most intense in the initial and final stages of the project. In some instances group supervision may be possible and desirable. The supervisor may assist the trainee in the project in practical ways e.g. with data collection and/or analyses, but should not undertake or subsume the project tasks for the trainee. Such assistance and other assistance should be acknowledged.