

The Master of Physical Therapy (MPT) program, within the School of Rehabilitation Science, values the important clinical teaching work of physiotherapy clinical instructors in the delivery of a high quality clinical education program. Fostering and maintaining relationships between the MPT program and all affiliated clinical sites and clinical instructors (CI's) is a critical role of the Clinical Education Unit, and involves a great deal of communication.

The Clinical Education Unit consists of: the Academic Lead Clinical Education & Community Affairs and 2 Clinical Coordinators. They shall regularly and effectively communicate with Coordinators of clinical sites, preceptors, and students and in order to establish, develop, obtain, maintain, coordinate and evaluate clinical placement experiences for physical therapy students in a range of diverse experience areas and settings (in Saskatchewan and beyond).

Establishing a new clinical site

Once a potential new site has been identified (either by the MPT program or by the site themselves) a discussion is initiated in regards to the responsibilities and expectations of clinical facilities. If the site wishes to proceed with taking students, then a site review process is initiated by the Clinical Education Unit. The STUDENT PLACEMENT SITE PROFILE is completed by the site, and submitted to a member of the Clinical Education Unit in advance of a site visit. Generally, an actual site visit is done in order to verify the contents of the site profile, and also to explain the clinical education program and to negotiate a fit with the MPT program. On occasion, geographical distance prohibits a site visit, and this review is conducted remotely. If the site is deemed acceptable, they are invited to sign an Affiliation Agreement with the University of Saskatchewan, and automatically become a member of the Clinical Education Advisory Committee (CEAC). The School of Rehabilitation Science keeps a copy of the completed Site Profile and the signed Affiliation Agreement on file.

Developing capacity and preceptor skills at all clinical sites

The Clinical Education Unit offers training and support to all clinical instructors active in our program, including:

- Orientation Workshops for new and refreshing clinical instructors offered in Regina and Saskatoon, and by videoconference
- Advanced Clinical Education workshops periodically
- Website materials (course information, tips for preceptors, etc.)
- Telephone and email response by Clinical Education Unit members in the MPT program to any inquiries or issues arising

Obtaining clinical placements to meet the requisite mix for all students

The Clinical Education Unit has a responsibility to ensure the requisite mix of clinical experience for all graduates from the MPT program. Toward this end, the Clinical Education Unit staff are continuously evaluating the range of clinical experiences and settings in order to ensure that adequate numbers of all types of clinical placements are available. The Clinical Education Unit is well connected in the clinical community, and follows up with new programs, units, managers, etc. to discuss any new or emerging clinical education opportunities.

Maintaining and supporting clinical sites

Most of the clinical sites in Saskatchewan have been active sites for many years, which is a testament to the strong relationship that exist. Our relationship with each clinical site is very important and communication with these sites is a critical function of our unit. Examples of regular communication include:

- Biannual Clinical Education Advisory Committee meetings, held in Regina and Saskatoon as well as via videoconference with minutes circulated to all members
- Newsletters and announcements
- Consultation and collaboration with clinical stakeholders via discussion papers, inviting input on policy development, etc.
- Promotion and circulation of important clinical education policies and procedures
- Invitation to provide feedback on development of clinical courses, sit on committees, etc.

Coordinating clinical placements

Physical therapy student clinical placement schedules are generally drawn up well in advance of the start date as “DRAFT ONE” and circulated to all clinical sites involved. The sites are invited to provide feedback on the first draft, in order to confirm or deny the placement(s) being requested. Subsequent drafts are then circulated until a final draft of clinical placements is confirmed for any given clinical course.

Information packages for each student placement are housed on the Clinical Education section of the School of Rehabilitation Science website. That location is circulated to all clinical sites approximately two weeks in advance of the placement start date. This information normally includes:

- Proof of student professional liability insurance coverage through U of S
- Clinical course ‘Expectations’ document
- Any additional relevant educational materials or documents

Any communication from the clinical site or preceptor regarding a student during a clinical placement is followed up immediately with a phone call by a member of the MPT Clinical Education Unit.

Upon conclusion of all clinical placements, the Clinical Education Unit ensures that all important documentation is completed by the clinical site and submitted as required to the MPT program.

Evaluating Clinical Instructors and Clinical Placements

During the final week of each clinical placement, each student is strongly advised to complete a Student Evaluation of Clinical Placement. This information is used by the Clinical Education Unit to help evaluate CI's and placements, and is shared with the clinical site involved.