

# EARLY CAREER SUPERVISION FACT SHEET

## INTRODUCTION

Professional supervision is a formal process, fostering the development of knowledge, competence, and a sense of responsibility for one's practice and ensuring public protection and safety (Occupational Therapy Board of Australia, 2014, p.2). Grounded in principles including reflective practice, self-directed learning, and critical feedback, professional supervision empowers supervisees to take control of their own learning and development, and provides a platform for self-directed growth, skill development, problem solving and wellbeing. Quality supervision is vital for upholding service excellence, client safety, and ethical care.

Embedded in the OTA Scope of Practice Framework (2017) is the responsibility for all occupational therapists, regardless of career stage and experience, to "ensure currency of practice, registration, and contemporary professional knowledge by seeking appropriate professional supervision, training and professional development to maintain practice within the scope of practice" (p.6).

*Professional supervision offers a tailored approach to learning and support for occupational therapists and is strongly recommended across all career stages.*



Occupational Therapy Australia recommends that practitioners engage in a range of professional development strategies to foster learning throughout their career. Professional supervision offers a tailored approach to learning and support for occupational therapists and is recommended across all career stages.

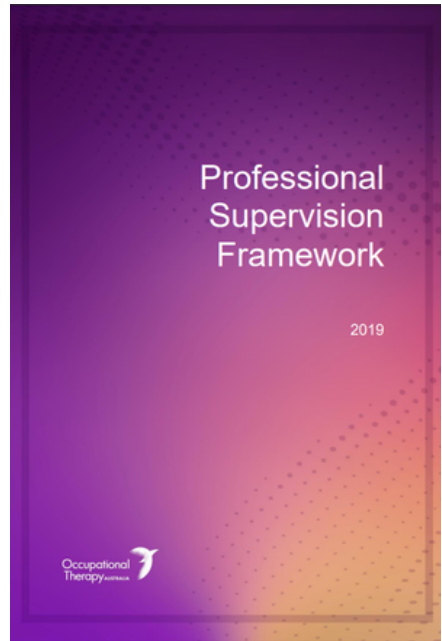


# OTA Professional Supervision Framework

OTA Professional Supervision Framework (2019) outlines the professional and regulatory expectations of professional supervision for occupational therapists.

This framework:

- Outlines the expectations of professional supervision of qualified occupational therapists.
- Identifies 'best practice' professional supervision models, processes, and practices within the contemporary Australian, international, and related disciplinary contexts.
- Establishes the basis for the development of advanced and extended scopes of OT professional supervision practices.
- Recommends strategies to evaluate professional supervision practices for the purpose of quality improvement and service development.



[FIND THE PROFESSIONAL SUPERVISION FRAMEWORK HERE](#)

## FREE E-LEARNING

OTA has developed a free online module for early career OT's outlining some key information in the OTA Supervision Framework. You can find the module on the Early Career Launchpad. This includes practical information to help you set up and participate in supervision sessions and what to do if you are not receiving adequate supervision in your workplace.

[COMPLETE THE EARLY CAREER LAUNCHPAD SUPERVISION ONLINE LEARNING HERE](#)

# PROFESSIONAL SUPERVISION FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## What does quality supervision look like?

The supervision process typically involves regular meetings between the supervisor and supervisee during a “protected” time, free from interruptions and workplace distractions. These sessions may occur one-on-one, in groups, or through a combination of both. The supervision structure will vary based on individual needs, but it often includes contracting or agreement of expectations, goal setting, collaborative discussions, self-directed learning, and reflective practice. Quality supervision is developmental and progressive.

Written records of supervision promote further reflection and learning outside of the session, support decision making, identify actions, and promote accountability. Good supervision is supported by explicit policies and guidelines in the workplace that recognise and promote the value of professional development, safe and ethical practice, quality care, registration compliance, and wellbeing of professional staff. Quality supervision is delivered by supervisors who both engage in their own professional supervision and who have completed specific training in the provision of professional supervision. Professional supervision is more effective when provided by someone other than the supervisee’s manager.

## What are the benefits of professional supervision?

Professional supervision offers benefits to the supervisee (OT), to service users, and to employers/organisations. For supervisees, benefits include improved clinical skills, enhanced self-awareness, increased confidence, reduced burnout, and a culture of continuous learning and development. Research has linked quality supervision with better problem-solving skills, decreased burn-out, enhanced work performance, and increased job satisfaction (Allbutt et al., 2017; Dawson et al., 2013; Koivu et al., 2012; Kumar et al., 2015; Social Care Institute for Excellence, 2017).

For service users, benefits include improved outcomes, engagement in safe and ethical care, access to best practice and high standards of care. For employers/organisations, benefits include increased motivation and commitment to the organisation, a culture of continuous learning and development, reduced risk, and increased job satisfaction. A meta-analysis of 27 studies around the world found that effective supervision was also positively associated with lower staff turnover (Mor Barak et al., 2009).



# PROFESSIONAL SUPERVISION FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## How is supervision different to other forms of support such as line management or mentoring?

While mentoring, coaching, and line management also provide support, professional supervision differs in its focus on self-directed learning, significant use of reflective practice, critical feedback, and professional development. Professional supervision is built around individualised goals, tailored to the individual's professional needs and growth. Supervision can be differentiated from line management which is focused more on organisational outcomes and operational oversight.

Supervision can be differentiated from mentoring which is focused more on guidance and advice to support broader career and personal goals.

The terms professional supervision and clinical supervision may be used interchangeably.

## What are the expectations of supervision for occupational therapists in Australia?

For occupational therapists in Australia the expectations of supervision are reinforced by the following National standards:

- OTA Supervision Framework (2019)
- OT Scope of Practice Framework (2019)
- OT Competency Standards (2018)
- OTA Code of Ethics.pdf (2014)
- AHPRA Code of Conduct (2022)
- The National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards (2017)

In addition to the National standards there are several state/territory specific guidelines that also guide allied health professional supervision.

OTA strongly recommends supervision for all early career occupational therapists.

## What is psychological safety and why is it important for professional supervision?

Psychological safety is crucial for effective professional supervision. It fosters an environment where individuals feel secure to express thoughts, concerns, and uncertainties without fear, judgment or retribution. Psychological safety cultivates open communication, trust, and collaboration, essential for supporting professional development.

Key principles for fostering psychological safety during professional supervision include:

- Focus on learning rather than problem solving
- Lead by example, model being a learner, being vulnerable, being empathetic
- Establish open and respectful communication
- Develop interpersonal trust
- Use reflective practices