The vignette-matching procedure: an innovative approach to assess competencies in psychology and clinical practicum

This project, involving collaboration among six universities, systematically examined field supervisors’ assessments of clinical psychology competencies attained by students at mid and end placement.

The project demonstrated that the use of competency rating forms, currently employed widely within psychology and other disciplines, is flawed; being vulnerable to leniency and halo rating biases. The project team has generated a catalogue of 41 vignettes representing nine domains of competence across developmental stages. The vignettes have been subjected to a rigorous process of peer-review, revision and calibration.

The team compared assessment outcomes from conventional ratings and the new vignette-matching method. Field supervisors completed assessments using both instruments for a cohort of 73 trainees from five universities. The vignette method yielded better results, including reduced halo and leniency effects. The calibration scores associated with standardised vignettes across developmental stages and competency domains provide a matrix of stable anchor points against which competence may be graded for individuals and groups.

The use of vignettes is an innovative procedure that has excellent potential to generate systemic improvements in assessment outcomes for psychology and other disciplines. Resources produced by the project, including the assessment instruments and the vignette-matching instrument, are available through the project’s website.

uow.edu.au/health/limh/vignette-matching