

# Sport & Exercise Psychology Accreditation Route Practice Placement Handbook<sup>1</sup>

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# 1. Placement introduction and objectives

## Placement introduction

During the SEPAR process it is expected that candidates will undertake work-based activities that are placement based. These are defined as activities that could be with, for example, an individual, a team, or an organisation where the candidate operates over a medium/long-term period in that environment. To evidence an acceptable level of fitness to practice, candidates need to meet the HCPC standards of proficiency (SoPs) for sport and exercise psychology and the associated BASES competence requirements. Hence, the practice placement work completed by candidates must meet HCPC standards for education and training (SETs).

This document provides candidates with an overview of the placement(s) expectations, associated learning outcomes, roles and responsibilities of a candidate and supervisor, and to communicate the importance of ethical, health and safety, and safeguarding issues. As outlined within the Qualification handbook, SEPAR candidates are required to use the label Sport and Exercise Psychologist in Training (SEPiT) until the point that they are admitted to the HCPC register.

## Placement objectives

The practice placement(s) is intended to provide candidates with the opportunity to develop core competencies within a professional and evidence-based framework. The placement(s) will also enable SEPiTs to apply their psychological knowledge and skills in ways that are informed by sensitive understandings of the complex worlds of sport and exercise. As such, there are a range of placement learning outcomes that derive from the broader SEPAR aims and learning outcomes that are to be assessed using a variety of assessment strategies as outlined within the SEPAR Candidate Handbook.

The learning outcomes for the practice placement are:

1. Demonstrate full and satisfactory attainment of the HCPC Standards of Proficiency;
2. Demonstrate the establishment, and sustained implementation, of required systems for legal, ethical and professional standards in applied psychology;
3. Demonstrate adequate responses to unpredictable contexts and events professionally and ethically;
4. Assess requests for, plan, and implement consultancy which contributes to the continuing development of self as a professional applied psychologist;
5. Establish, develop and maintain good working relationships with clients;
6. Monitor and critically evaluate the implementation and impact of consultancy;
7. Understand, critically analyse, evaluate, and apply psychological research;
8. Competently communicate psychological principles, practices, services, and benefits as part of the delivery of sport and/or exercise psychology consultancy activities;
9. Provide competent psychological advice and feedback to others;
10. Prepare and present evidence in formal settings.

## 2.0 How to gain relevant applied experience

To develop requisite knowledge and demonstrate an acceptable level of attainment in each of the competencies, candidates will be expected to undertake a number of placements. Collectively, time spent on these placements will be expected to meet the required number of hours of supervised experience as laid out in the competency documents, currently noted as 900 actual hours.

### **NOTE TO CANDIDATES:**

Within the field of Sport and Exercise Psychology, paid permanent placements are limited. Given some of the obvious differences to other psychology domains, it is also commonplace for candidates to have multiple placements. However, all placement opportunities should be reviewed by your supervisor for their appropriateness. It is possible that you will have additional supervisor(s) who are HCPC Practitioner Psychologists when on placement, however, given the nuanced nature of Sport and Exercise Psychology in the UK, you should retain a close working relationship with your main supervisor where this additional supervision is not present

Candidates are reminded to approach potential placement providers (e.g. clubs, teams, individuals) in a courteous and professional manner and ensure they inform potential placement providers of their trainee status and supervision arrangements.

### 2.1 Gaining experience

Some candidates may be fortunate to secure a placement or internship with a team, but similar experience could be gained by offering sport psychology support to a team or a squad of individuals for a season or exercise psychology support to a service/organisation, initially for free. Candidates may wish to start with local academies and clubs and aim for your services to be offered over the course of a number of months so that you can build rapport with the stakeholders (e.g. athletes, coaches, parents, exercisers etc.). There are plenty of settings (e.g., youth to senior sport, community to primary care) for candidates to develop their experiences and to challenge them outside of their comfort zone. However, placements may initially comprise one or two settings with which they may be more familiar. From the second half of their programme onwards candidates may have a little more scope to select the sports/settings and the levels and type of clients with which they wish to work.

### 2.2 Essential information

Candidates must familiarise themselves with the following documents in preparation for placements and should check with supervisors as to whether there are any particular expectations with respect to ethical and good practice guidelines that pertain in their own practice settings.

#### 2.2.1 Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC)

**<http://www.HCPC-uk.org/index.asp>**

The HCPC sets standards for registrants in the following areas: health, proficiency, conduct, performance and ethics, and continuing professional development. These standards determine the registrant's fitness to practice. Candidates must familiarise themselves with these standards, which can be found on the HCPC website.

### 2.2.2 Fitness for Practise

The HCPC defines “fitness for practise” in terms of the practitioner having the skills, knowledge, character, and health to practice their profession safely and effectively.

Overall, candidates must meet the standards expected by the HCPC and BASES as set out in the HCPC Code of Ethics and Conduct and the BASES Code of Conduct, and failure to do so will be regarded as a serious professional issue. Candidates registered on the SEPAR are bound by the HCPC’s Fitness to Practice Regulations, and it is essential that all candidates should be persons of integrity and not have committed criminal acts which bring into question their sport and exercise reputation. Failure to disclose any criminal convictions will be regarded as a serious professional issue. Individuals are expected to conduct themselves at all times in a responsible and professional manner and are expected to dress in an appropriate manner commensurate with current practice of professionals within the service setting.

BASES are very supportive of candidates with disabilities and health needs, and it is important that these are disclosed on application to ensure that any relevant support and/or reasonable adjustments can be considered. Candidates must let their supervisor know if they are concerned about whether their ability to work professionally may be affected by any serious physical or mental health problem, and BASES will offer support and advice about appropriate actions or reasonable adjustments that may be needed.

In terms of self-care and support, candidates are expected to keep their supervisor informed about personal circumstances that may affect their fitness to work effectively.

#### **Health and Care Professions Council ([HCPC](#))**

Health and Care Professions Council (2015) Standards of Proficiency: Practitioner Psychologists. London: Health and Care Professions Council.

Health and Care Professions Council (2012) Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics. London: Health and Care Professions Council.

Health and Care Professions Council (2012) Guidance on Conduct and Ethics for Students. London: Health and Care Professions Council.

#### **BASES Documents**

Code of Ethics and Conduct

Individuals registered on the SEPAR should check the Department of Health, BASES and HCPC websites regularly to find out about new or revised policies and key documents.

### 2.3 Service/Client User Perspectives

All candidates on the SEPAR are expected to understand, respect and respond to the strengths, needs, concerns and values of service receivers. The following is a suggested list of some of the qualities that have been identified within the relevant literature as being important for Sport and Exercise Psychologists:

- friendliness and human qualities such as humour, warmth and genuineness;
- equality (recognise people’s strengths and be open to learning from the client);
- honesty (if you don’t know, say so!);
- ability to really listen and communicate (including good eye contact);
- courteousness e.g. being on time or let people know if you are running late;
- awareness that their initial approach/contact is central in building trust;

- sensitivity to clients' needs and recognition of peoples' strengths in a non-patronising way;
- ability to be reflective, transparent, honest and trustworthy;
- not promising anything you can't deliver;
- treats clients like a person and not a 'case';
- understands the constraints of a person's situation;
- aim to be credible in your profession, with relevant experience and track record of having dealt with people with similar conditions;
- do your homework between sessions and liaise with other professionals before and after work with clients;
- when you know you are leaving, tell people so that they can prepare for the ending;
- be sensitive to client expectations and professional standards in terms of dress code (e.g. gender, age group etc.);
- flexibility (e.g. in where you might be seen or timing of sessions);
- seek service receiver and multidisciplinary feedback within placement and service settings.

It may come as something of a relief to realise that clients do not expect practitioner psychologists to have all the answers, and that it is quite acceptable to have to do our homework between sessions; client advice is in accord with the literature on therapeutic relationships. It is imperative for candidates to make sure that during their practice placement they ask and do not assume that they know what it is that client(s) really want and need, and of course, it is essential for candidates to be mindful and appreciative of cultural differences in expectations and assumptions.

### **3.0 Role of the ‘Sport and Exercise Psychologist in Training (SEPIT)’ on Placement**

The role of the candidate on placement is primarily as learner and secondly as provider of a service, under supervision. The candidate must negotiate with their supervisor/s and placement provider regarding taking of annual leave and must inform both supervisor and placement provider of days of absence for annual leave or sick leave. Candidates, as is the case with all student health professionals, must have as their priority to protect the public and therefore if a candidate witnesses poor practice, they must report this to their supervisor who will provide advice and support.

All candidates are expected to prepare for, attend, and record key decisions generated in regular supervision. They should observe their supervisor and placement provider in practice and must have their own practice observed by their supervisor (there are specific observation reflection sheets to record such activities). As reflective practitioners, candidates have an obligation to share with their supervisor and placement provider any concerns or issues that may impact upon their performance on placement (e.g., personal or family crises, health issues), and to work to find ways of managing these issues. Such issues might be raised informally face-to-face, via email or telephone, or within supervision meetings.

#### **3.1 Title to be adopted**

Candidates must always use the title ‘Sport and Exercise Psychologist in Training’ (SEPIT) and are reminded of their responsibility not to mislead the public; the appropriate title must be clearly stated on any written documentation.

#### **3.2 Scope of Practice**

Practitioners in sport and exercise psychology typically tend to work in either sport psychology or in exercise psychology – although this may not always be the case. It is expected that all candidates will identify whether they intend to operate as a ‘sport’, ‘exercise’ or ‘sport and exercise’ psychologist at the point of application; this will influence the boundaries of practice.

## 4. Role of the supervisor on placement

As outlined in the SEPAR Candidate Handbook, all candidates on the SEPAR are required to engage the services of one or more appropriately qualified psychologists who will undertake to support them in their training. All supervisors on the SEPAR will be registered with the HCPC as Sport and Exercise Psychologists and will have completed all of the necessary 'SEPAR Supervisor training'.

For SEPAR, it is expected that the Supervisor assumes responsibility for the entire supervision process, including any necessary training in key skills, the completion of documentation and the assembly of evidence regarding candidate development of the required competencies. Supervisor's may also advise candidates to engage the services of one or more additional supervisors to help guide you through some aspects of your training.

With the above in mind, supervisors are encouraged to maintain a thorough and effective system for approving and monitoring all placements. Included within this, supervisors need to ensure that placement providers have equality and diversity policies in relation to students, together with an indication of how these will be implemented and monitored. Guidance to how this is to be achieved is within the mandatory supervision training.

For the placement, the Supervisor has several complex roles in relation to the candidate, including trainer, facilitator, and evaluator of practice. Some of the supervisory functions include:

- ensure that the SEPiT undertakes the necessary induction into the placement area and meets other team members and learners in practice;
- oversee and guide the SEPiT work;
- facilitate his or her professional development;
- try to ensure that the SEPiT has access to adequate resources at placement;
- observe, and be observed by the SEPiT and share constructive criticism;
- enable the SEPiT to gain increasing autonomy in his/her work as he/she progress through placement rotations;
- ensure that the SEPiT has opportunities to gain a wide range of relevant experiences;
- evaluate the SEPiT competence development.

Prior to placement, the Supervisor will support the identification of theory-practice links to encourage evidence-based practice, appraise progress during supervision meetings, appraise development and progression, and pastoral needs. During placements, the Supervisor role will include: checking the development of competence and availability of relevant experiences on placement via supervision meetings; observation (where appropriate); and providing regular tutorials.

### 4.1 Placement Mentor

It is recognised that candidates will most likely engage in more informal day-to-day contact with a suitable mentor on placement. The mentor is likely to be situated in the context of applied practice and therefore be available on-site to the candidate to facilitate specific areas of training. A mentor may provide further breadth of experience and foster a multidisciplinary perspective. Supervisors may find it useful to maintain discussions with a candidate's mentor as is necessary given that they retain responsibility for the candidates practice, work, progression, and support.

## 5. Key Requirements during Practice Placements

### 5.1 What to Expect at Placement

Supervised practice is the experiential process designed to develop candidate knowledge and skills so that he or she is competent to practise independently as a Sport and Exercise Psychologist. The placement approach provides a platform for candidates to build upon the underpinning knowledge components by requiring the development and demonstration of practical skills in applied settings.

The principle of practice under supervision has a strong tradition in professional training in many fields. With support and guidance from the Supervisor(s), candidates gain direct experience of the realities of professional working in relevant contexts, and develop practical skills and the ability to integrate theory into practice. Practice under supervision should be an integral part of a candidate's preparation for independent practice.

### 5.2 Key requirements

The key requirements of candidates during practice placements are:

- the acquisition and demonstration of generic and specific core competencies as a practitioner;
- undertake action in line with your plan of training toward achievement of the HCPC SoPs;
- engage with supervision from experienced professionals;
- support competency development via a range of training and development activities;
- record and collect of evidence of experiences via a practice log;
- submit a practice log for ratification;
- attend supervision meetings.



## 6. Ethical considerations

All candidates should adhere to the [HCPC Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics](#), the [HCPC Guidance on conduct and ethics for students](#), and the [BASES Code of Conduct and all policies of BASES](#). Candidates should only practice in the areas in which they have gained or are gaining competence. With this in mind, with the support of their supervisor(s), candidates are advised to develop and mobilise appropriate referral networks in line with their scope of practice. They should also develop proficiencies in working with and through other individuals (e.g., GPs, exercise practitioners, coaches, officials).

### 6.1 Professional Conduct

It is an expectation of BASES that any member, irrespective to whether they are enrolled on an SEPAR or not, upholds the professional standards of the organisation and works to the *BASES Code of Conduct*. In essence, members are required to ensure that they demonstrate professional standards in all that they do. Given that the SEPAR is a regulated training programme delivered by BASES and approved by the HCPC, members are also required to take full responsibility for their training and development, be aware of and adhere to the *HCPC Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics*, and the *HCPC Standards for Continuing Professional Development*. Should individuals fail to adhere to the necessary professional standards, this may lead to their enrolment on the SEPAR being removed.

### 6.2 Informed Consent/Assent and Confidentiality

All health professionals, including sport and exercise psychologists, must obtain client voluntary consent/assent before treating or caring for them. This requires the professional to provide as much information (in a form that the person can understand) about the likely risks and benefits of the care, and about what it is likely to involve, as the client reasonably needs in order to make a decision.

There are particular issues to take into account when obtaining consent from children/young people, and supervisors are expected to prepare candidates appropriately; it is expected that parental/guardian assent will be obtained. Adults are always assumed to be competent to give consent unless demonstrated otherwise. If in doubt the question to ask is “can this person understand and weigh up the information needed to make the decision?” No one can give consent on behalf of an incompetent adult but such a person may be treated if the treatment would be in the client’s best interests; people close to the person such as carers, family and friends may be best placed to advise on the person’s needs and preferences.

To ensure that client consent/assent is obtained, all learners are first required to confirm with all clients that they are a candidate on an approved training route that leads to eligibility to apply for registration as a practitioner psychologist with the HCPC. Having informed the client(s) of their training status, they will be required to gain the consent/assent of their client(s) via completion of a consent/assent form (please see example Client consent form in Annex 1 and Client assent form in Annex 2). The consent/assent forms will be confidentially stored by the learner for the duration of their training route.

The consent/assent form includes statements regarding:

- awareness of the learners’ current registration and supervision status;
- the title that the learner is able to use;
- confirmation that the work, or parts of, may be reported in anonymised form for educational purposes (and viewed by supervisors and reviewers);
- that the data collected during the work could be requested by regulatory authorities for approval purposes.

Candidates should ensure that they consider the client's dignity in all written and spoken communications about their applied work and write reflections and case study reports in such a way that clients would feel respected if they read the report or letter themselves. A good rule of thumb is to consider the question, "how would I react to reading this about myself or a family member?"

## 7. Health and safety considerations in the Practice Placement Environment

In the sport and exercise psychology context, the placement host is the client and BASES needs to be reassured that whilst the candidate is undertaking this type of supervised practice that they are doing so in a safe and secure environment.

To facilitate this, learners are required to develop a risk assessment prior to any lone working (this is also a necessary piece of evidence within the competence profile: Management of resources, risks, self and others – 3.4.2). There will also be a random selection of risk assessments, requested on an annual basis by the BASES office from learners, for external examiner scrutiny.

Further to the requirement for risk assessments, the following are also essential prior to any lone work commencing.

1. That someone known to the SEPiT (supervisor / relative) is aware to where they work and for the likely duration - this can be supported by SMS messaging on entry and exit of the work;
2. That the SEPiT conducts as much due diligence about the client prior to meeting them;
3. That the SEPiT conducts as much due diligence about the setting on the initial visit with regard to policies that relate to lone working, safeguarding, and health and safety;
4. That the work takes place in a public place (e.g., one that is overlooked but not overheard);
5. That the SEPiT has a strategy (that is agreed following discussion with their supervisor) to be able to remove themselves from any unprofessional situations (this is to include inappropriate facilities, settings as well as practice).

It is also strongly recommended that the supervisor conducts a 'site-visit' and observes the SEPiT 'at work'. It is acknowledged that this may not always be possible, but to ensure that SEPiTs and supervisors are taking the strongly recommended actions to minimise the risk of lone working, it is expected that this should take place on a minimum of two occasions per year and for the supervisor to comment on the visits and observations in their reports. It is also an expectation of the SEPAR qualification given that at least 20 hours of the 50 hours with the supervisor (of the 275 for CPD and supervisor-led activity) should be for observed work of the candidate.

In line with [HCPC's Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics](#), candidates must report any concerns about the safety or well-being of service users promptly and appropriately. Health and Safety issues must be reported to the Placement Supervisor and/or the (main) Supervisor. Any areas of concern must be given serious consideration and an action plan should be produced to rectify the problem. Issues and problems should be referred to the SEPAR Advisory Group.

For further information on Health and Safety considerations, it is worth ensuring familiarity with the following:

Health and Safety Executive: [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

Health and Safety Work Act 1974: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1974/37/contents>

## **8. Safeguarding considerations**

With the title 'Practitioner Psychologist' being allied to the health profession, and reinforced by the fact that some candidates may undertake work with children, young people, or vulnerable adults, it is necessary for all candidates to have an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check prior to entry to the SEPAR and on conclusion of the programme.

The process for the DBS check is outlined within the SEPAR Qualification Handbook (section 2.1) but candidates are reminded that they are encouraged to register for the annual 'Update Service'.

## 9. Insurance

### Professional Indemnity Insurance

All individuals wishing to enrol on the SEPAR must provide evidence to confirm that they have appropriate professional indemnity insurance. Individuals who hold employment would normally be covered by their employer's indemnity insurance cover. It is recommended that individuals check with their employer to ensure that the cover extends to those in an 'in training' role.

For individuals who are not employed, or who plan to complete some of their SEPAR outside of their employment context, it will be necessary to arrange individual cover. BASES is able to support preferential rates for indemnity cover with their insurance partner – please see the [BASES website](#) for further details.

## Annex 1: Client consent form

SEPAR candidate name:

Telephone:

Email:

SEPAR Supervisor:

Telephone:

Email:

### Please initial each box if content

1. I confirm that I am aware that [INSERT NAME] is currently a candidate on the BASES Sport and Exercise Psychology Accreditation Route (SEPAR) that is an approved training route that leads to eligibility to apply for registration as a practitioner psychologist with the HCPC. I am also aware that they are being supervised by [INSERT NAME] and that they are able to use the title of '**Sport and Exercise Psychologist in Training (SEPiT)**'. I confirm that I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and that these have been answered satisfactorily.
2. I understand that the work with which I am giving my consent to participate in may be written up or reported, in an anonymised form, for educational purposes. This means that it may be read by a number of people connected with training, including supervisors and assessors. I give my permission for my anonymous data, which does not identify me, to be disseminated in this way.
3. Data collected during this work *could* be requested by regulatory authorities. I give my permission to any such regulatory authority with legal authority to review the work to have access to my data, which may identify me.
4. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the work at any time without giving any reason.
5. I agree to take part in this work.

Name of client:

Date:

Signature:

Name of person taking consent:

Date:

Signature:

## Annex 2: Parental/Guardian assent form

SEPAR candidate name:

Telephone:

Email:

SEPAR Supervisor:

Telephone:

Email:

### Please initial each box if content

1. I confirm that I aware that [INSERT NAME] is currently a candidate on the BASES Sport and Exercise Psychology Accreditation Route (SEPAR) that is an approved training route that leads to eligibility to apply for registration as a practitioner psychologist with the HCPC. I am also aware that they are being supervised by [INSERT NAME] and that they are able to use the title of '**Sport and Exercise Psychologist in Training (SEPiT)**'. I confirm that I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and that these have been answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that the work with which I am giving assent for my child to participate in may be written up or reported, in an anonymised form, for educational purposes. This means that it may be read by a number of people connected with training, including supervisors and assessors. I give my permission for my child's anonymous data, which does not identify them, to be disseminated in this way.

3. Data collected during this work *could* be requested by regulatory authorities. I give my permission to any such regulatory authority with legal authority to review the work to have access to my child's data, which may identify them.

4. I understand that my child is free to withdraw from the work at any time without giving any reason.

5. I agree for my child to take part in this work.

**Name of client:**

**Date:**

**Signature:**

**Name of person taking consent:**

**Date:**

**Signature:**