

Appendix 1: Illustration of a Programme of Study

The following is an illustrative example of how the candidate's current interests could be developed into a Learning Plan and the possible topics that would be included to meet the programme assessments.

Celia is an experienced team leader in a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service. Her professional background is mental health nursing and then trained in counselling.

The thematic focus of my programme of study will be autism. This has been a long-standing area of interest of mine whilst working within children's services and especially as we seem to be seeing more children come through with this diagnosis. I not only work with children directly but I also have to work with the team to think of the best ways to meet people's needs, and also more recently, as a senior practitioner in the Trust, to think strategically about future service delivery.

*I would really like to know more about how the mental health of young children is affected by autism. Questions like 'does the condition of autism mean that you might have mental health issues, or is it the stresses of living with autism which might mean you encounter more psychological problems, or is this even a sensible question to ask? So for my **Critical Review of Literature** I would like to review what is known about the incidence of psychological problems in children with autism.*

*It is my hunch that we are seeing more children come to our service with autism but I have no real data on that. Since the Autism Act 2009 we have to monitor referral rates more closely but we have never really sat down and looked at these statistics. Hopefully, having done the critical review I will have a clearer idea of what the incidence rates are generally, so for my **Service Development Research Project** I would like to audit our referrals of children with autism, including the reasons for referral and outcomes. Out of this I hope we will get some good ideas about how well we are meeting the needs of this population and make some suggestions for how we could improve the service.*

*For my **Report of Professional Practice** I would like to write up a case study of one of the families we see who has a child with autism. I think this in combination with the other two bits of work will give me a richer view of the picture by learning more in-depth about one family's experience, how I responded to their needs and what could have gone better. I think I would like to choose a family who come from a different cultural background because this is an area where I don't think we know enough in terms of other cultures views on autism.*

*Linked into this and leading on from a couple of experiences I have had with families from a different cultural background who had a belief system which meant they felt ashamed that they had a disabled child, I would like my **Applied Research Study** to be focused on cultural beliefs about autism. I know this would mean reviewing the literature in the first place, but then I would like to interview parents from these different cultures and try and understand a bit more about the belief system around disability and autism, where this comes from and especially how it interfaces with our service system which is based on a different set of beliefs. It often strikes me in practice that we tend to ignore this and just try and fit people into our frameworks and then can be quite critical if they do not go along with it. I think I could find out some really useful things for our service about how we could adapt our service to be more inclusive in this way, after all since the Autism Act we have a legal requirement to make sure we provide such services.*

*Finally in my **Reflective Account** I would like to pull all this learning together and be able to summarize the main things I have learnt, the priorities of change for our service and also for myself to have more confidence and better skills in collecting, reviewing and communicating what we already know, and also that I will know more about how we find out if the information is not available.*

Given Celia's plans for how she might use the various assessments to help her follow her interests and find out valuable information for her service, she was able to sit down with her Supervisor and sketch out working titles for each of her assessments and to think about the order in which she wanted to start work and what preparation work was needed.