

A preliminary investigation into academic screening and selection in clinical psychology

introduction & context

higher Education

- need for fair admissions (Schwartz report, 2004)
- use of selection tests across disciplines (e.g. medicine: Brown, 2004)
- DoH mandate on delivering high quality training & Education Outcomes Framework (2013)

NHS

- culture of refocusing on values and behaviours
- Francis inquiry: compassion and caring values as paramount
- issues of employability and the need to bed it into the curriculum (Yorke & Knight/HEA, 2006; Booth, 2003)

clinical psychology

- increase in applications since 2006 (Clearing House)
- competency model (Baron, 2011; Bartram, 2006) :academic rigour and communication skills paramount
- QAA benchmark statement (2004) & HCPC standards of education & training(2012)

also.....

- ✦ there is a lack of predicative validity of application forms (Hemmings & Simpson, 2008)
- ✦ there is a lack of evidence for the predictive validity of selection processes in clinical psychology (Philips et al, 2004)
- ✦ there are biases in standard short listing processes (Philips et al, 2004)
- ✦ there is some evidence from Lancaster University that a written test is predictive of academic success on training (Hemmings & Simpson, 2008)

Academic ability

problem solving

research

writing

critical appraisal

Personal and professional suitability

compassion

reflection

ethical awareness

emotional intelligence

so in 2011

Staffordshire & Keele Universities DClinPsy introduced academic screening as a short listing tool prior to interview, designed to tap into academic and research aptitude and to select the most able and suitable doctoral trainees

the investigation....

- **research question:** *is there a relationship between academic screening pre-interview in selection and the subsequent academic performance of clinical psychology trainees?*
- **method:** a quantitative study looking at the relationship between existing screening data, interview scores and trainee assessment records
- **participants:** the data from 46 trainees was used. Of these 18 were from non-screened cohorts and 28 from screened cohorts.
- **analysis:** a combination of correlation, chi-square and t-test analysis was used to scrutinise the data



what was found?

negative correlation between screening score and interview scores – approaching significance for academic interview and total interview score.

no significant association found between the total score for year 1 assignments and screened/not screened cohorts.

significant relationship between passing at formative stage and whether in a screened or not screened cohort

mixed picture with individual assignments – some significant results with research based assignments



where does this leave us?

limitations & discussion

Academic screening appears to tap into different skills than demonstrated at interview. The results are in the right direction, but are not yet convincing.

- small data pool – need more time
- ongoing project – need more research and more detail
- reliability and validity of current screening – need more clarity
- no qualitative data about the experience for trainees – need more variety of data
- no information about *why* trainees do not pass at the formative stage – need more understanding
- does the screening exercise actually measure what we think it does, or does it reflect other skills such as speed typing and working under time pressure?
- it doesn't tell us much about more clinically based competencies or 'softer' skills

does it matter anyway?

- ★ implications for teaching and learning as well as selection

Cognitive and meta-cognitive skills (including reflection – Dewey, 1933), critical thinking skills (Mason, 2007), and learning style (Vermunt, 1996) all relate to the mastery of academic tasks and development of expertise; even if only moderately (Robbins et al, 2004) **HOWEVER** ideas around situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) & the 'process of becoming' a professional (Dall'Alba, 2009) are of equal value.