**CPD@RCOT Short Course Workbook**

Forming Your Research Question

**A person sitting at a table using a computer

Description automatically generated**

**Your name:** Click or tap here to enter text.

**Bring this workbook with you to the group session**

Introduction

Welcome to this CPD@RCOT learning resource, **‘Forming your research question’**. This course is aimed at developing your skills with organising ideas and constructing a research question.

Accessing and using evidence from systematic investigations will enhance your research skills, resulting in greater confidence to use research results in your everyday practice. An evidence-based practice will positively influence your decision-making abilities and the provision of appropriate occupational therapy services (RCOT 2019).

The coursesupports the Evidence, Research and Development Pillar of the [RCOT Career Development Framework](https://www.rcot.co.uk/publications/career-development-framework). It is designed for occupational therapy personnel and learners at Career Levels 2 to 4.

The resource is designed to be used by groups to encourage you to exchange ideas and to support peer learning. Using the Facilitator Guide, you may also work through it as an individual. In total, the course should take about three hours to complete, in three separate sessions. More time will be required to follow up on the suggested further resources.

You may feel you need more time than the group session allows to complete the activities. If you want, record ideas and come back to the questions later. The thinking process can be challenging, so carry out the activities at your own pace. Use this resource in the way that suits you and your group.

The course has three resources: this workbook, a Facilitator Guide and an accompanying PowerPoint presentation. There are three components:

1. Individual pre-group work: four activities taking about 70 - 90 minutes to complete.
2. Group session, with PowerPoint presentation and guided discussion: four activities taking about 1 hour to complete.
3. Individual post-session reflection: takes about 15-30 minutes to complete.

An integral part of the course is the post-session reflection, designed to guide you to plan your research practice further. To support this development, you may wish to discuss in your supervision sessions and/or tutorials the learning outcomes, your learning points and the next steps you will take to develop your research.

Learning outcomes

When you have completed this course you will be able to:

1. Identify a potential research theme within a general topic that interests you;
2. Understand how Structured Frameworks are used to construct a research question;
3. Draft a research question that relates to your interests;
4. Evaluate your learning to plan the next steps of your research.

Individual pre-group work

**1: Exploring a topic of interest** (Takes 20-30 minutes)

Before you begin to construct your research question, you will need to identify a specific aspect of the topic you find noteworthy. This exercise will get you started generating different ideas.

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| Record a few bullet points about the general topic that interests you. These could be very specific or very broad – at this stage it doesn’t matter. If nothing comes to mind, go on to the steps below this box. |
| Click or tap here to enter text. |

Explore some resources about occupational therapy research to help you expand on possibilities. Here are some suggestions:

1. Review the Top 10 priorities for Occupational Therapy Research in the UK (available at the [RCOT website](https://www.rcot.co.uk/top-10)) and consider how your topic may relate to them.
2. The webpage [RCOT practice resources - topics](https://www.rcot.co.uk/practice-resources/occupational-therapy-topics/topics) provides information on several subject areas in occupational therapy.
3. If you feel you need a better understanding of your headings, explore some literature through the [RCOT Library](https://cot.soutron.net/Portal/MembersOPAC/en-GB/Search/SimpleSearch), using relevant broad terms or keywords

Now go back to the Activity box and record ideas and topics that interest you.

**2: Building a concept map** (Takes about 15 – 20 minutes)

Next, build a concept map to help you make links between the different topics or aspects you recorded in Activity 1.

Watch the video ‘[Developing a research question](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1oJNO6PYZe4&feature=youtu.be)’ produced by the Wilfrid Laurier University Library. This video explains what a concept map is.

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| Referring to your ideas recorded for Activity 1, develop a concept map for your topic. |
| Click or tap here to enter text. |

|  |
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| When you have mapped your concept, answer these questions: |
| 1. Which aspects of your map interest you the most?  Click or tap here to enter text. |
| 2. Is there anything you would like to know more about?  Click or tap here to enter text. |

**3: Characteristics of a good research question** (Takes about 5 minutes)

A good research question has essential characteristics that distinguish it from a normal question. It is precise and focused. It is written with very clear language. It concentrates on one very specific aspect of an overarching subject.

1. Watch the video ‘[What makes a good research question](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uy-kJGbzK1I)’ produced by the National Institute of Health Research.

(This video has no sound. Annexe 01, p. 17 provides a description of contents.)

1. Identify the key feature of a good research question.

|  |
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| What is the key feature of a good research question? |
| Click or tap here to enter text. |

**4: Structured frameworks for constructing a research question** (Takes about 30 minutes)

Frameworks help you to structure your question, to highlight the main ideas and to consider the components of your query.

Most frameworks are named according to the first letter of each component. Some examples are:

PICO: Population – Intervention - Comparator - Outcome

SPICE: Setting – Perspective – Intervention – Comparison – Evaluation

PICTO: Population - Index test – Comparator - Target condition - Outcome.

1. Access the City University of London research guide ‘[Using a framework to structure your question](https://libguides.city.ac.uk/postgraduate_research/frameworks)’.
2. Review the frameworks described in the guide to find out how questions can be formulated depending on your type of question.
3. On the next page, begin drafting some structured frameworks for your topic of interest. Try experimenting with different frameworks.   
     
   The first framework you try may work well, but your ideas may develop further as you apply different frameworks to your topic.

|  |
| --- |
| Map your topic according to some of the frameworks. Does your topic fit one framework best? |
| FRAMEWORK NAME:   |  |  | | --- | --- | |  |  | | COMPONENTS | **YOUR CONCEPTS** | | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. | | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. | | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. | | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. | | Click or tap here to enter text. |  | | Click or tap here to enter text. |  |   FRAMEWORK NAME:   |  |  | | --- | --- | |  |  | | COMPONENTS | **YOUR CONCEPTS** | | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. | | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. | | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. | | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. | | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. | | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. |   FRAMEWORK NAME:   |  |  | | --- | --- | |  |  | | COMPONENTS | **YOUR CONCEPTS** | | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. | | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. | | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. | | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. | | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. | | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. | |

**Before the group session, review your answers to these individual activities.**

**Bring this workbook with you to the group session.**

Group session

* **Welcome** (Slide 1:3 minutes)

Introductions and housekeeping

* **Learning Outcomes**  (Slides 2-3: 2 minutes)

Review what you will be able to do by taking this course.

* **1:** **Your general research topic (working as a group)** (Slide 4: 10 minutes)

Drawing on the concept map from Activity 2, pre-group work, present to the group your general topics of interest and the specific aspects you want to explore.

Are there any reasons for your choice you’d like to share, for example, personal or placement experiences?

How wide-ranging are the topics presented by the group? Are you all interested in different topics, or are there similar themes?

* **2:** **Structured frameworks** (**working in pairs)** (Slide 5: 10 minutes)

The presentation slide provides an example of a PICO structured framework arising from the concept map.

Share the structured framework(s) that you have developed for your topic, using your answers from Activity 4 of the pre-group work. Explain how you used your concept map to complete your structured framework(s).

Discuss how these might apply to your question. Review together what worked well for you and where the frameworks didn’t seem to fit.

Thinking about the characteristics of a research question (Activity 3, pre-work), does your partner find your concepts precise, clear and specific?

* **3: Draft your research question (working individually)** (Slide 6: 5 minutes)

The presentation slide gives an example of how the structured framework was used to formulate a research question.

Start drafting a question in the box below. Try writing out several different versions of it if you want. Remember your question may not fit perfectly into a framework.

Do not worry about writing the perfect question. You will have time to polish it later.

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| **My draft research question** |
| Click or tap here to enter text. |

* **4: Discuss your draft research question (working in pairs)** (Slide 7: 15 minutes)

Read each other’s question and review the following points:

* Are the questions specific (see Activity 2, pre-group work)?
* Is it easy to identify precisely what you are asking?
* Is it clear what you want to learn through addressing the question?

Now discuss whether the structured frameworks helped with your questions.

* Were you both able to find frameworks that suited your questions and what you are interested in exploring with the questions?
* How did the frameworks help? What difficulties did you have using them to draft your question?

|  |
| --- |
| **Notes about my draft research question** |
| Click or tap here to enter text. |

* **Conclusion** (Slide 8: 10 minutes)

As a group, share your thoughts about and reactions to the process you have just followed.

Take 5 minutes to record your immediate reflections, your follow up and your plan of action using the following pages of this workbook.

* **Follow up**

You have now a draft research question. Consider discussing it with your colleagues/fellow learners, supervisors and mentors. Don’t be afraid of talking about your ideas to people in clinical or academic settings. If you are a learner, you may want to discuss your research plans with clinicians while you are on placement.

Sharing your thoughts and talking about your question are good ways to get started in the research process.

Further discussion will support you to develop a focused research question in the individual reflection section on the following page.

Individual reflection: course end

Reflect on and consolidate your learning from this course. Identify and record at least three reflective learning points. Then record the next actions you want to carry out – see the next section ‘Course follow up’ for some ideas.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **My reflective learning points** from “Forming your research question” | |
| 1. | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| 2. | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| 3. | Click or tap here to enter text. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| My **action plan** steps are: | |
| 1. | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| 2. | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| 3. | Click or tap here to enter text. |

Individual reflection: Course follow up

You will benefit if you return to these points in the next few days. At this time, identify further learning you can do, referring to the resources given at the end of this workbook.

Review your notes from the activities and your draft research question. Revise what you discussed in the group activities, with work colleagues or mentors. Keep refining your research question. It may end up being very similar to the draft you wrote during the course, or it could be completely different! Reflect on your learning journey as you work on your question.

As suggested on page 2 of this workbook, you may wish to discuss in your supervision sessions/tutorials what you have learned and what you now plan to do as a result.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Further learning activities I can do** are: | |
| 1. | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| 2. | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| 3. | Click or tap here to enter text. |

|  |
| --- |
| Revisions to my **research question:** |
| Click or tap here to enter text. |

Feedback

Your views are important to us! Please send us your feedback about this Reflective Scenario so that we can make improvements for future participants. You can get in touch in any of the following ways -

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* Click to fill out our [feedback form](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=7-ghQ1rN2Eadr3VQBbQNOWV-zdEtQytAgGHq4NY2vXhUMjZEVE9ERkQwOEQ1NlVEN0RLV0ZXS05KNi4u)
* Find the feedback form at <https://bit.ly/3kRLt6S>
* Get to the feedback form through the QR Code.
* Email your suggestions to [Prof.Dev@rcot.co.uk](mailto:Prof.Dev@rcot.co.uk).

Resources and further reading

**COURSE REFERENCES**

City University of London. *Doing post-graduate research*. Available at:

<https://libguides.city.ac.uk/postgraduate_research/frameworks> Accessed 20.01.22

NIHRtv (2017) *What makes a good research question*? [Video clip] Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uy-kJGbzK1I> Accessed 20.01.22

Royal College of Occupational Therapists (2019) *Royal College of Occupational Therapists’ research and development strategy 2019-2024*. Available at:

<https://www.rcot.co.uk/practice-resources/rcot-publications/royal-college-occupational-therapists-research-and-development-strategy-20192024>

Accessed 20.01.22

Royal College of Occupational Therapists (2021) *Career development framework*. Available at: <https://www.rcot.co.uk/publications/career-development-framework>

Accessed 20.01.22

Royal College of Occupational Therapists. *Library search*. Available at: <https://cot.soutron.net/Portal/Default/en-GB/Search/SimpleSearch>

Accessed 20.01.22

Royal College of Occupational Therapists. *Top 10 priorities for occupational therapy research in the UK.* Available at: <https://www.rcot.co.uk/practice-resources/rcot-publications/royal-college-occupational-therapists-research-and-development-strategy-20192024>

Accessed 20.01.22

Royal College of Occupational Therapists. *Topics*. Available at: <https://www.rcot.co.uk/practice-resources/occupational-therapy-topics/topics>

Accessed 20.01.22

Wilfrid Laurier University Library (2017) *Developing a Research Question*. [Video clip] Available at <https://youtu.be/1oJNO6PYZe4> Accessed 20.01.22

**FURTHER READING ABOUT WRITING A RESEARCH QUESTION**

Sandberg J, & Alvesson M (2010) Ways of constructing research questions: gap-spotting or problematization?. *Organization*, *18(1),* 23-44. Available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1350508410372151> Accessed 20.01.22

**GOING FURTHER: FREE COURSES ON RESEARCH-RELATED TOPICS**

elearning for healthcare. *How to search the literature effectively* Available at:

<https://www.e-lfh.org.uk/programmes/literature-searching/> Accessed 19.01.22

Free online course of seven modules on finding information and developing the skills for successful searching

Future Learn. *Develop your research project* Available at:

<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/research-project> Accessed on 19.01.22

Free online course delivered by University of Southampton

National Institute for Health Research. *Learning and support* Available at:

<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/health-and-care-professionals/learning-and-support/>

Accessed on 19.01.22

Researcher Academy. *Unlock your researcher potential*. Available at:

<https://researcheracademy.elsevier.com/> Accessed on 20.01.22

Free e-learning modules on all aspects of research through sign-in portal.

Students 4 best evidence. *Study design and Research methods*. Available at:

<https://s4be.cochrane.org/blog/topic/study-design/> Accessed on 19.01.22

Turas Learn. *Skills for learning at work: How to search the literature effectively*. Available at: <https://learn.nes.nhs.scot/16571/skills-for-learning-at-work/finding-information/what-do-you-need-to-find/how-to-search-the-literature-effectively> Accessed on 19.01.22

Free online course of seven modules on finding information and developing the skills for successful searching, for NHS Scotland health and care professionals.

Annexes

**ANNEX 01 -** National Institute of Health Research video transcription

Activity 02 uses a 1:06 minutes long video produced by the National Institute of Health Research.

There is no sound on the video clip, just text appearing on the screen.

The content of the video is the following:

* The video background is blue, and the words are white. On the top left of the screen, there is the NHS logo with National Institute of Health Research written under it. -

What makes a good research question?

Not all good questions can be answered by scientific research.

For example:

* A white banner appears, with the following question written on it -

What can we do about pressure ulcers?

Is a good question, but too general for a research study.

Specific questions are more research-friendly, like…

* The white banner with the question “What can we do about pressure ulcers?” is still on the screen. The following questions appear under it -

How often should patients in bed be turned?

How do different dressings compare as healing aids?

How effective is surgery at closing pressure ulcers?

Which existing skin care products are best for prevention?

* White banner disappears and an ochre question mark appears on the screen –

Finding a good research question is key to getting good research evidence.

* Ochre question mark flips and becomes a key placed on a vertical position on the screen –

Good research evidence helps unlock better health and care for all our futures

* Key rotates into horizontal position and put into a keyhole and twisted to unlock an invisible window. A new question appears on the screen –

Tell us your research question and help open the door to a healthier future

* The invisible window opens, and a photo of a black female nurse and an older white male patient appears. They are in a hospital ward setting. Under the photograph, the following appears –

The National Institute of Health Research invites people who watched the video to submit their questions online at [www.nihr.ac.uk/identifyresearch](http://www.nihr.ac.uk/identifyresearch)

The video is over.

**CPD@RCOT**

**Certificate of Learning**

This is to certify that:

**Click or tap here to enter text.**

has completed the CPD@RCOT Short Course:

on **Click or tap here to enter text**.

**Forming your research question**

**Learning outcomes:**

As a result of taking part in this CPD@RCOT course, you should now be able to:

1. Identify a potential research theme within a general topic that interests you;
2. Understand how Structured Frameworks are used to construct a research question;
3. Draft a research question that relates to your interests;
4. Evaluate your learning to plan the next steps of your research.