Clinical Reasoning at a Distance
Richard Newsham-West
School of Physiotherapy and Exercise Science, Griffith University, Queensland

Introduction / Background
Strong communication skills surrounding the clinical reasoning process have been shown to be an essential component in the development of the clinicians’ reasoning skills. The aim of this study was to evaluate two on-line reasoning skill tasks undertaken as part of a distance education program that assesses students’ clinical reasoning and reflection of their reasoning processes.

Methods of Research / Description of Activity
Students were enrolled in a post-graduate clinical physiotherapy course and completed two clinical assessments off-campus. The students videoed their initial assessment and treatment, completed a clinical reasoning form as well as a critical reflection form after they viewed the video the following day. All students were then invited to undertake a focus group to explore their expectations regarding the assessment item.

Results of Research / Evaluation of Activity / Application
All students (n=18) completed the clinical assessments and seven (40%) attended the focus group. The thematic analysis identified a number of differences in the clinical reasoning process between the examiner and student in the initial assessment task. However, the second assessment task indicated similar themes between the student and examiner. On reflection of the assessment item, students suggested that they had become better communicators with patients (100%), were able to gain better information from their examination (71%), were able to better interpret the findings (86%), and more proficient at clinically reasoning (86%).

Conclusions / Implications / ‘Where to from here?’
The combination of the clinical reasoning and clinical reflection tasks appears to enhance off-campus students’ clinical reasoning skills. Further development and refinement of the forms are currently being developed to staircase the reasoning process across the second year of the program.