Second group of theme sessions
E-learning, including blended learning
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E-learning, including blended learning

Core and theme papers

Wednesday 5 and Thursday 6 September

Please note:
References are as supplied by authors
Papers included are those being presented at the conference at the time of going to press.
Core paper

Biographical details of core presenters

E-learning, including blended learning

Andrew Walsh and Patricia Fell

Andrew Walsh RNHM, LPE, BSc(Hon), PGDip, MA Ed, PGCert Ed is a senior lecturer at Birmingham City University where he works mostly on the pre-registration mental health nursing course. He previously spent 24 years in NHS mental healthcare areas in Birmingham including ward management, community psychiatric nursing, primary care liaison as well as a diversion at point of arrest service.

As well as an interest in e-learning development, Andrew is currently developing a research study into perceptions of competency and values in newly qualified mental health nurses. He is also in the second year of studying for an educational doctorate (EdD) at the University of Birmingham.

Patricia Fell, PhD, BSc (Hons) Human Biology, PGDip Education, is a senior academic based in the Health Sciences Department at Birmingham City University. After obtaining her PhD in pharmacology, she spent a brief spell in further education before moving to higher education where she has been involved in teaching biosciences to both pre- and post-registration student nurses for over ten years.

In addition to lecturing in applied physiology and pharmacology across healthcare disciplines within the Faculty of Health at Birmingham City University, Patricia is actively involved in the field of educational development and research and leads several initiatives that support student learning of biosciences in health care. Her current research interests include: mobile learning, blended e-learning, laboratory based learning approaches and student–academic partnerships.
Connecting body with mind: Increasing mental health nursing students’ knowledge of physical healthcare through the use of an interactive, innovative blended e-learning approach

Andrew Walsh, Senior Lecturer; Patricia Fell, Senior Academic, Birmingham City University, UK

Introduction
This paper explores how an interactive e-learning tool, blended with structured face-to-face activities and aligned to assessment, can enhance pre-registration mental health student learning of physical healthcare issues. This presentation will reflect on the process of shifting away from didactic pedagogy and present initial findings as to whether such an approach can add value to student learning in developing an understanding and knowledge of the biosciences that underpin physical healthcare.

Background/rationale
There is growing evidence that people with mental health problems have generally worse outcomes for a range of physical health conditions. For example, Brown et al. (2010) found that people with a diagnosis of schizophrenia had a mortality risk nearly three times higher than the general population. Another study (Wahlbeck et al., 2011) found that people with serious mental health problems lived for 15-20 years less than average, a disparity described as scandalous and suggestive of ‘cynical disregard’ for lives lost (Thornicroft, 2011).

Suggested causes for these disparities include effects of medication, obesity, smoking, and the effects of social exclusion (McCloghren and Foster, 2011). Diagnostic overshadowing is also identified as a factor, and Sayce and Owen (2006) cite examples of people who felt that there was ‘no point’ in seeking help for physical health problems. It has also been suggested that lack of attention to and understanding of physical healthcare by healthcare staff is a significant factor (Happell et al., 2011; Howard and Gamble, 2011). In the UK it has been recognised that there are deficits in care and that mental healthcare staff need to be aware of and able to respond to physical health problems (Department of Health, 2006; Department of Health, 2011). Diabetes has been identified as an important cause of problems and there is evidence for an association between anti-psychotic treatment and the incidence of metabolic problems including diabetes (De Hert et al., 2011).

A working appreciation of biological scientific knowledge underpins many health profession skills and it is widely recognised that a sound understanding of bioscience is an essential basis for safe and effective practice (NMC, 2010)

Evidence that student nurses view physiology training with trepidation is cited by Johnston (2010) as well as by Fell et al. (2011) whilst others (McVicar et al., 2010) cite ‘consistent’ evidence that bioscience learning is generally problematic for student nurses. The authors were aware from classroom interactions, module assessments as well as from discussions with current students that their knowledge of physical healthcare issues was generally patchy. As will be discussed below, evaluation of assessment recordings also suggested a need to develop our teaching in this area.

Project aims
One possible response to the above concerns was to investigate the use of a blended e-learning approach to the development of existing teaching. Evidence suggests that student nurses were willing to use e-learning resources to supplement learning in this area. For example, Green et al. (2006) describe the use of a virtual learning environment to supplement teaching of anatomy and physiology to student nurses. This study found that students were willing to access this resource, and found the ease and convenience of access to be useful. Students enjoyed using this resource although it was found that there was no correlation between frequency of use and final assessment mark. A similar study (Raynor and Iggulden, 2008) found that e-learning was an effective supplement to teaching of anatomy and physiology in student nurses although less experienced students required more direction to make best use of this. This study also found that the group experienced problems accessing the resource and that IT issues need to be considered when introducing e-learning resources.

The aim of this project was to develop and evaluate an interactive e-learning tool to support student learning on the topic of diabetes mellitus. This resource, developed using Adobe Captivate, incorporates activities such as mini video lectures, animations, quizzes, video scenarios and other resources, all designed to support independent and flexible learning whilst still being blended/structured within a framework of classroom based activities and aligned to assessment.

The resources were developed through collaborative partnership working between a health science lecturer and a mental health nurse lecturer (the authors) to ensure that they clearly linked theory to practice. The intention was to encourage students to access this resource before attending a taught session on physical healthcare needs of people with enduring mental health problems. We were curious to see whether this resource had any effect upon the teaching of the session as well as upon student knowledge and understanding, we were also curious about how the students would use this resource and what they would think about this.
**Pedagogy, interactivity and social factors**

The teaching resource is designed to assist individual study as well as to encourage students to rehearse and share their understanding in class-based interactions. Informing this resource is an attempt to avoid a purely didactic, information giving approach. Instead, the social and shared nature of learning is acknowledged as well as ideas that knowledge is socially constructed and distributed amongst people (Cole, 1996).

Firstly, an e-learning tool was developed using Adobe Captivate software. Captivate is a software tool that enables the development of interactive e-learning resources. In this case, digital video of a teaching session about diabetes was recorded and presented online to students alongside descriptive graphics and explanatory text. The software also allows for the insertion of quiz type questions which allows students to test understanding. Another feature of the software is that students are able to progress through the online lesson at their own rate and are able to pause or to re-view material as they choose.

Work done online prior to the session is consolidated in the classroom session which is joint facilitated by a physiologist and a mental health nurse lecturer. Students are encouraged to define type two diabetes, initially alone before being encouraged to share their definitions to the whole class. The session facilitators then combine definitions given to arrive at a shared understanding of the issues around diabetes and mental healthcare.

**Evaluation**

A mixed methods approach was adopted to evaluate the effect upon student learning as part of an initial pilot. A retrospective analysis was conducted to determine student performance on this topic area in previous assessments (viva). This analysis will be used as a baseline indicator to assess the effect of this intervention on student knowledge and understanding. A group discussion was then undertaken to explore student views on this initiative.

1. **Retrospective evaluation**

Some retrospective evaluation of student mental health nurses understanding around the area of diabetes was conducted. The e-learning tool is used as part of the teaching of the community mental healthcare module. The assessment for this module is a viva examination which is video recorded so that external examiners can make a judgment about the assessment process. These videos are also routinely examined by the module leader as a means of assessing student understanding of different learning outcomes. In the assessment, students select at random one of six sets of questions focusing on areas of the module content. For the purposes of this evaluation, the filmed assessment from the previous 41 students who had randomly selected questions including one about diabetes knowledge were examined. Note that these responses were recorded before the e-learning resource was introduced; students had received a taught session covering the question, What is diabetes? (NB. How many of these actually attended the session is not recorded).

It was possible to identify that student responses tended to include some or all of the following four categories; a general description of diabetes, a recognition that lifestyle factors (such as obesity) was important, a description of common symptoms and a description of underlying physiology.

![Figure 1: Breakdown of responses to question re diabetes in 41 mental health nursing students](image-url)
As can be seen from the above figures, student performance was mixed. In terms of recognising possible symptoms of diabetes it was pleasing to note that most students had a good level of understanding. Similarly, many of them could identify the importance of lifestyle factors and the corresponding need for health education and appropriate healthcare interventions.

However, knowledge appeared to be especially lacking when students were describing the underlying physiology of diabetes. When examining overall performance (figure 2), despite some areas being correctly described, generally the answers given lacked detail and contained significantly inaccurate definitions. It will be interesting to compare the results of our current students who have been exposed to this e-learning resource to establish if the performance of students is improved.

2. Student evaluation of e-learning tool

It was also decided to evaluate student responses to the e-learning resource. Two groups of student mental health nurses were chosen, four members of a Diploma H/E cohort and six members from a group of Graduate Diploma students. Two informal meetings were conducted and in each case a mind map was produced in which a summary was recorded of the areas discussed by participants. The mind map method of recording discussions was adapted from studies described by Burgess-Allen and Smith (2010) as well as by Meier (2007).

The main themes that were identified from these discussions are summarised below.

Theme one: knowledge of diabetes.

- learned new things and consolidated existing knowledge
- improved knowledge/confidence
- useful for revision
- know more about insulin now than before

Theme two: e-learning

- enjoyed using this resource
- good to be able to progress at own pace
- good that you can review things until you understand them
- we have busy lives – we do want to know more but sometimes we want to know enough to pass exams as well
- an efficient way of learning
- useful to have the index at the front then you can focus on areas you need to

Figure 2: Overall summary of answers
Theme three: e-learning/lectures relationship

- useful that information is broken down in sections
- sometimes lectures are hard to follow and people don’t always want to stop lecturer to ask questions
- this is a useful resource but only in conjunction with other things, i.e. lecture and own study/reading
- wouldn't like this instead of taught sessions but useful as extra resource
- lectures are more interesting if you come to them having read/studied beforehand, you can ask more interesting questions or have a basis for asking better questions
- this tool combined with lecture ‘brought things together’

Theme four: usability

- first group had issues with sound – university IT rooms have sound turned down and difficult to follow sometimes with headphones
- one student used via own laptop in library and was embarrassed when audio commentary came on too loudly in a quiet area
- one student wanted to be able turn commentary off and just read text
- second group reported no usability issues at all either at home or at university

Discussion

It was encouraging to find that these future mental health nurses may already recognise symptoms as well as having an understanding of the importance of underlying lifestyle factors. Confidence around their understanding of underlying physiology is less secure however.

The evaluation discussions to date suggest that students enjoyed using the resource, engaged with the learning process and that they felt they had learned from its use. The ability for them to control the pace as well as to select areas to view and to re-view was cited as a positive factor. Students also valued the way in which this breaks learning into more manageable units. Unlike the study cited above (Raynor and Iggulden, 2008) the students were all able to access the resource (apart from some relatively minor issues with sound).

The authors were able to utilise the classroom time (previously dedicated to a formal didactic lecture on diabetes) to promote more active forms of learning involving techniques requiring high levels of participation (role-play, group discussions etc).

Evidence already gathered suggests that the students are quite happy to access this resource and are generally positive about it; however, at the current time of writing, this study is on-going. It is intended to compare the assessment feedback from students who have used this resource with those from previous groups reported above for whom the e-learning resource was unavailable.

Future work

Evidence gathered to date suggests that the structured use of e-learning can increase student engagement with a perceived challenging topic. Whilst this investigation is on-going, clearly, more research is required to explore this further. It is therefore intended that assessment performance scores from students who have used this resource will be compared with those from previous groups reported above for whom the e-learning resource was unavailable.

The resources designed in this case are reusable and have wider applicability; they offer significant potential to enhancing the knowledge and skills of physical healthcare by not just mental health nurse students but by many health professionals across the sector.

References


Nursing and Midwifery Council (2010) *Standards for Pre-registration Nursing Education: Draft for consultation*. London: NMC.


**Key words**

- blended e-learning resource
- physical health assessment
- mental health nursing.
Theme papers
Preparing preceptors online

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Hamilton, New Zealand

Introduction
The aim of this paper is to show how a simple e-learning package met the educational needs of a private hospital corporation by delivering a purely online short course on Preceptorship of Nurses in Practice nationally from the point of view of the facilitator/lecturer and the learning opportunities that presented themselves throughout the six weeks the course ran.

Background
Here in New Zealand, the entry to nursing has been via a three year degree programme from 1991. The demands of the new and improved nursing curriculum (Nursing Council, 2007) can sometimes be seen as another task to complete for the registered nurse (RN) to keep up to date and cognisant of the academic goals their student nurses have to battle with to succeed. By possibly not fully understanding the mature student's very real concerns around organizing family matters, sometimes previous negative educational experiences and or low academic confidence, the registered nurse is in a unique and arguably very powerful position to affect and shape how the nursing student, or new-to-area staff nurses (referred to as preceptee) in their care ultimately progresses or not. Student attrition from higher education is a worldwide challenge and there is a substantial international research base on issues surrounding student retention and the complex set of personal circumstances that make completing the programme difficult (Torenbeek et al., 2010). Urwin et al. (2010) stresses there is no consistency as to the reasoning of attrition rates or collective methodologies, however, in the present climate of austerity; motives are likely to be probed politically Support of the preceptee, seemingly fundamental, in the form of a prepared, enthusiastic preceptor who would care for and about the student appeared to be needed.

Educator's role
Preceptors help to bridge the theory/reality gap of academia and the reality of dealing with the ever changing public face of nursing at the clinical coal face (Billay and Myrick, 2007). The ability to stimulate critical thinking one moment and demonstrate compassion for a sick patient the next, takes the notion of multi-tasking skills to new levels. By wielding this kind of knowledge and influence, it isn’t surprising that nurses who act in the role of preceptor have a great deal of power over the professional growth of the preceptee and possible continuation within the profession for the learners (Leners and Sitzman, 2006).

A short six week course was developed that could be accessed from both urban and rural localities, vital within New Zealand, as an understanding of how staff are physically and socially distributed was essential for successful engagement which also needed to be flexible enough to meet the registered nurse’s needs with regards to shift work and personal commitments. From an academic viewpoint, the course was written at level seven attracting five academic credits. It included interactive activities, video clips, multiple choice formative tests and culminated in two short summative assessments that aimed to highlight the role and scope of being a preceptor.

Challenges/learning
The very real challenges of creating online communities and the technological abilities of the registered nurses were worked through and reflected on in terms of managing such a diverse range of learners from both islands within New Zealand. Also, the dichotomy of trying to provide a flexible, self-paced course that had to be completed within six weeks felt at odds with the ‘accessibility-on-demand’ philosophy of online learning.

Relevance to practice
The workforce becoming more aware of the role and needs of preceptors who are able to teach the students and junior/new staff with a greater knowledge base, deeper understanding of adult learners and ultimately excellence in patient care by nurturing exceptional, well-informed nursing staff.

References


Will the implementation of e-portfolios facilitate the link between theory and practice?

Kath Baume, Clinical Educator, Practice Development Team, University of Worcester, UK

This paper describes the design, implementation and evaluation of an e-portfolio to support student nurses to reflect on their learning, development and evidence achievement of competence and skills in practice. An examination of the literature on e-portfolios indicates there are many drivers to implement. The Higher Education Institutes advocate the use of e-portfolios for professional development planning supporting lifelong learning skills (QAA, 2009). Within the nursing profession portfolios are well established as they are a regulatory requirement to evidence continuing professional development (NMC, 2011). The literature indicates the NHS e-portfolio is well established in medical training and in many dentistry, nursing and radiography programmes (Bridge, 2006; Cotterill, 2005; NHS e-portfolio, 2012). Many benefits to e-portfolios have been identified; accessible 24/7, interactive, collaborative, enhance IT skills with feedback more quickly available (Reed, 2011). E-portfolios provide freedom to be innovative and creative thus increasing student engagement and responsibility for their learning (Tochel, 2009).

A new curriculum BSc (Hons) Nursing programme with the award of 50% credits allocated to practice modules required the assessment of practice to be robust. Tripartite assessment of practice has been introduced with the emphasis on the practice relationship between the student, active mentor and zoned academic with the focus on the student’s theoretical knowledge base and application to practice. The e-portfolio has been embedded into the practice modules as a learning technology to support the integration of theory to practice at the formative intermediate assessment.

In collaboration with academics, information and learning services, mentors, practice development team (PDT) and practice partners (PP), the e-portfolio was designed and implemented for the September 2011 student cohort of adult, child and mental health students commencing their first practice placement. The teaching strategy adopted a blended learning approach with lead lectures and small IT workshops in university with additional learning resources available online. IT drop in sessions were held for students when out in practice to avoid an implementation dip (Deketelaere, 2009). IT workshops were delivered to zoned academics, practice development team and practice partners to facilitate a cascade teaching approach for mentors. Mentor support included direct support from zoned academics at the intermediate interview and mentor update training. The evaluation study focused on the effectiveness of the e-portfolio in showcasing student learning, development of reflection skills, achievement of progression outcomes and linking theory and practice. This was achieved through:

- Moderation of e-portfolios: comparison of evidence with paper portfolios by previous placement 1 students.
- Collection of quantitative and qualitative data through an evaluation questionnaire sent to zoned academics, PDT and PP
- Focus groups with mentors.

Some issues that have been identified are difficulty in accessing computers in clinical environments and the limitation of some mentors IT skills leading to lack of engagement.

Preliminary evidence would suggest there is greater engagement by the students with their portfolio, increased linking of supporting evidence to progression outcomes and greater integration of theory to practice. The e-portfolio will support the student to evidence their progression from a novice to competent practitioner but support is needed to ensure early adoption translates into sustained engagement.

References


Key words:

- e-learning
- preceptorship
- flexibility
- online.

How this contributes to knowledge development within this theme:

- online e-learning provision provides healthcare managers with a cost effective solution to education
- a reliable, efficient and academically rigorous solution to meeting the essential learning needs of healthcare professionals
- learning is self-paced and gives RN’s the flexibility to access the course around work and family commitments.

T105

Will the implementation of e-portfolios facilitate the link between theory and practice?


Key words:
• e-portfolios
• tripartite assessment
• competence
• reflection
• theory
• practice.

How this contributes to knowledge development within this theme:
• e-portfolios need to be embedded into the curriculum as a learning technology to support the integration of theory to practice
• e-portfolios enable students to be innovative and creative in evidencing competence
• e-portfolios increase personal responsibility for learning.

**T106**

How can online learning with patchwork text analysis be used to ease the return to academic learning for students beginning a top up degree level nursing course?

Katrina Whittingham, Lecturer in Nursing; Dorothy Adam, Lecturer in Nursing, The Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, UK

**Background**

As nursing moves towards an all degree profession (NMC, 2010), many nurses without degrees are signing up for ‘top up’ degree programmes. The return to academic learning can seem daunting. It may have to be prioritised around busy work-life schedules. Online learning provides the flexibility to fit with students’ lives, suiting both their priorities and their learning style. E-learning cannot simply be ‘e-information’ (Race, 2005; Smith, 2010): the learning must be obvious. However, students must master online engagement as well as tackling the subject to be studied (Atack, 2003).

Those returning to learning following a gap in formally assessed education may experience a fear of failure (Cottrell, 2001). Traditional assessments such as essays can result in increased levels of anxiety (Neville, 2009) and students may focus on completing the assessment rather than meeting the learning outcomes. They need to develop the scholarly skills to succeed in these traditional methods of assessment. Patch work text analysis consists of a series of short pieces of work (formative), which students receive feedback upon, then ‘stitch’ together to form a larger summative assessed piece of work, this method has been demonstrated to reduce levels of anxiety associated with this process (Winter, 2003). Students’ learning is deeper and they are better prepared for meeting the intended module outcomes (Arnold, Williams and Thompson, 2009). Ongoing feedback from peers and facilitators leads to deeper reflection and insights (Winter, 2003).

**Project aims**

To evaluate students’ perceptions of how:
• patchwork text analysis can be used effectively to support returning learners undertaking a degree.
• online learning used in conjunction with patchwork text analysis can be used effectively to supporting nurses returning to education to enhance their clinical care.

Methodology
A mixed approach will be taken. An online questionnaire will gather data from students who participated in the module. The qualitative approach using a focus group will facilitate gathering more in-depth data so that the student experience can be more fully explored. Robson (2010) acknowledges the benefits of using both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods.

Methods
Permission and ethical approval for the project has been sought from the School of Nursing and Midwifery, The Robert Gordon University, ethical review panel.

The questionnaire will be delivered using the online tool ‘Survey Monkey’. The questionnaire will be released after the completion of the module, when the students have completed their assessments and received feedback. The focus group will take place in March 2012, during a planned contact day.

Analysis of data
The quantitative data from the questionnaire will be analysed using descriptive statistics (Polit et al., 2001) and presented in table/graph format.

The focus group will be facilitated by a member of academic staff out with the module team and the research team to minimise bias. The content will be independently analysed by both researchers and coded for emerging themes (Goodman and Evans, 2010). Participant statements will be used to support the emerging themes. The qualitative data will be reviewed by both researchers and an independent third party, using investigator triangulation to reduce personal bias (Simons and Lathlean, 2010).

References


Key words
• lifelong learning and scholarship skills
• e-learning
• reflection for professional development
• empowerment
• building confidence.

How this contributes to knowledge development within this theme:
• adding to the body of knowledge around the use of patchwork text analysis in online nursing courses to support the return to education
• sharing evidence of how to develop confidence in learners returning to study (online), in a way that supports motivation, empowerment for lifelong learning and evidence based clinical care.
E-portfolio and practice assessment

Sharon Jones, Nursing Adult Field Lead, Lecturer Adult Nursing; Karen Jeffrey, Nursing Child Health Field Lead, Lecturer Child Health, Plymouth University, UK

It is widely recognised that we are advancing rapidly towards a paperless working environment, with many schools, offices and healthcare settings utilising a variety of technologies to not only support but replace paperwork. E-learning within education has been supported by a range of government led strategies (The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) 2005; Department for Education and Skills (DfES) 2005; National Health Service University (NHSU) 2004), focussing on delivery of learning and teaching programmes. The benefits of supporting learners through e-learning have been strongly advocated by DfES (2005). Although more recently HEFCE have embraced a wider definition of e-learning that identifies the benefits and outcomes from using technology to support learning and related processes individual to each institution (HEFCE, 2009).

Universities are well placed to be innovators of change and incorporate information technology within their curriculum. With the introduction of the new Standards for pre-registration nursing education (NMC, 2010) the Faculty of Health, Education and Society at Plymouth University were provided with an opportunity to introduce an innovative approach to practice assessment and portfolio development.

The programme development team worked with service staff and students to design a new practice assessment tool that incorporates the NMC progression point criteria and competencies (NMC, 2010) within the on-going achievement record.

In previous curricula nursing students were required to provide evidence to demonstrate achievement of practice assessment criteria that was stored in weighty ring-bound files. Whilst there remained a requirement for this underpinning evidence it was agreed that an improved system for storing the evidence was needed that allowed a blended approach to learning. Working with the faculty’s information technologist, the e-portfolio was developed using the Pebble Pad system (http://www.pebblepad.co.uk/). Pebble Pad has been designed with the learner at the centre of the system offering flexibility and accessibility. It provides scaffolding to help users create records of learning, achievement and aspiration and has a reflective structure underpinning all of its core elements.

However, it was quickly recognised that within a professional programme, such as pre-registration nursing, the e-portfolio had to support the students in demonstrating achievement of competencies needed to meet the criteria for registration with the NMC (NMC, 2010). Plymouth University is confident that we have done this through the creation of profiles within the e-portfolio that clearly identify:

- NMC progression point criteria (NMC, 2010)
- Competencies (NMC, 2010)
- European Union Directives for adult nursing students (Directive 2005/36/EC)
- NMC essential skills clusters (NMC, 2010)
- Interprofessional teaching and learning.

With the use of e-portfolios students have the ability to readily update entries, building and representing evidence of achievement as they progress, an ability to share their e-portfolio with their mentor and personal tutor and receiving regular feedback on their progress. To support the implementation of e-learning we have had to consider and be prepared for difficulties encountered with integrating e-portfolios within the curriculum (Childs et al., 2005) acknowledging that new skills have had to be gained by both students and staff.

References


T108

Using technology to enhance student nurses learning experience

Mike Twigger, Senior Lecturer; John Page, Senior Lecturer; Lynne Topham, Senior Lecturer; John Aldridge, Senior Lecturer, University of Northampton, UK

This study explores the use of technology to enhance student nurses learning experience. An innovative blended learning approach (Bonk and Graham, 2006) using multimedia internet based technologies was validated for a BSc (Hons) pre-registration programme in learning disability nursing (University of Northampton, 2011a). This study reports on the pilot for the programme which utilised a PebblePad platform (Pebble, 2011) and student e-notebooks as a delivery mode, taking two forms. Firstly, generic and specialist theoretical modules were structured into e-learning units to enable the delivery of learning through PebblePad gateways to the students own computer. The theory within the units made links to media sites such as YouTube and other web based material. It also incorporated into the programmes video lectures utilising panopto equipment made available within lecture theatres. Understanding and engagement of the online material was promoted through activities linked to the theory requiring student responses which could be seen and commented on by the tutor at a remote location. The more collegiate online elements were actualised through blogs for each unit which used asynchronous postings amongst the student cohort; whilst andragogic focused face to face tutorials supported the process at set points throughout each module.

The second strand to the programme required the development of an e-portfolio of nursing practice competences (NMC, 2010) with all the features of the equivalent paper based versions. This was achieved for the pilot using the design features of the profile page functionality of PebblePad which allowed for learning disability descriptor explanations to become visible for each generic competence by simply rolling the cursor across the relevant section. Secure validation of the students’ competence was possible and comments related to performance could be added through a pop up box, where explanations were seen to be necessary. The e-portfolio itself was accessible via a gateway which made it possible for the personal tutor to oversee the process from a distance. The students involved in the pilot were given an e-notebook to allow for flexibility of access across a wide geographic placement area.

The pilot scheme for the formats and systems was evaluated using questionnaires and case studies with one student learning disability group. The questionnaires were formulated using the Bristol Online Survey (BOS) (University of Northampton, 2011b) and gathered data related to group demography and responses to questions aimed at gathering the student experience in both the online theory and practice. Further data was captured for the e-portfolio through case studies involving six students and their mentors in a range of different placements in the independent and public sector; whilst for the online theory senior practitioner readers evaluated learning units. Early indications are that blended e-learning approach can be successfully integrated into a formal nurse learning programme and offer some advantage over paper based approaches to practice assessment and traditional lecture formats.

References

Nursing Midwifery Council (2010) Standards for Pre-registration Nursing Education. London: NMC.


University of Northampton (2011a) Learning Disability Nursing Pre-registration Programme. Validation document BSc (Hons). University of Northampton.

Key words:
• blended
• e-learning
• e-portfolio
• PebblePad
• technology.

How this contributes to knowledge development within this theme:
• explains the application of PebblePad technology to a learning disability nurse training programme
• examines the use of an e-portfolio for assessing practice competencies
• shows the use of multimedia learning units within a blended learning programme.
Conference committee

Dr Elisabeth Clark, The Open University, UK
Professor Lorraine Ellis, University of Derby, UK
Professor Philip Keeley, University of Manchester, UK
Professor Gary Rolfe, Swansea University, UK
Professor Fiona Timmins, Trinity College Dublin, Republic of Ireland

Scientific panel

Professor Collette Clifford, University of Birmingham, UK
Mrs Jacky Conduit, University of Birmingham, UK
Dr Kay Currie, Glasgow Caledonian University, UK
Dr Anitta Juntunen, Kajaani University of Applied Sciences, Finland
Dr Amanda Kenny, La Trobe University, Australia
Dr Andrew Mckie, The Robert Gordon University, UK
Professor Sara Owen, University of Lincoln, UK
Ms Patricia Proudfoot, Amity Group Pty Ltd, Australia
Professor Elizabeth Rosser, Bournemouth University, UK

Conference Convenors

Internationally known convenors have been invited to facilitate the theme groups:

Julia Ball, University of South Carolina Aiken, USA
Abbie Barnes, Keele University, UK
Elisabeth Clark, The Open University, UK
Kay Currie, Glasgow Caledonian University, UK
Karen Egenes, Loyola University, Chicago, USA
Lorraine Ellis, University of Derby, UK
Benny Goodman, University of Plymouth, UK
Carol Haigh, Manchester Metropolitan University, UK
Karen Holland, University of Salford, UK
Alex Hopkins, University of Wolverhampton, UK
Anitta Juntunen, Kajaani University of Applied Sciences, Finland
Philip Keeley, The University of Manchester, UK
Mandy Kenny, La Trobe University, Australia
Una Kyriacos, University of Cape Town, South Africa
Tom Laws, University of South Australia, Australia
Sian Maslin-Prothero, Edith Cowan University, Australia
Elizabeth Mason-Whitehead, University of Chester, UK
Milika Matti, University of Nottingham UK
Pat Mayers, University of Cape Town, South Africa
Craig Phillips, University of South Australia, Australia
Gary Rolfe, Swansea University, UK
Elizabeth Rosser, Bournemouth University, UK
Fiona Timmins, Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland
Brian Webster, The Robert Gordon University, UK