

Blended learning, blended teaching: Collaborative course development and delivery for Work Based Learning

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The workforce within the field of substance misuse is becoming increasingly diverse, with qualified health, social care practitioners and unqualified support workers with a range of underpinning academic achievement from NVQ level to first degrees. In response to the need for developing a competency focused work force, The Institute of Health and Society convened a diverse group of individuals to offer student support to address a range of perspectives in collaborative course design and delivery of the Certificate in Substance Misuse.

The course is delivered at Certificate and Intermediate Certificate level 4 and 5 respectively. The first module is delivered by a range of experts from within the clinical field of substance misuse. The second module is a work based learning module whose outcomes are negotiated through collaborative discussion within the trinity of employer, educator and participant.

The assessed component takes the form of an e-portfolio of evidence which is developed over the course of the semester to support the negotiated outcomes. Students are provided with access to the PebblePad e-portfolio system and given continuing support in the development of their evidence throughout the module. The workshop provided an historical overview of the development and major drivers for the course and explored the roles and responsibilities of those involved within a work based trinity. Workshop participants were asked to take up one of the three roles as representative of the trinity and consider the implications from those particular standpoints. Groups were then developed to consider their findings, negotiate and prioritise issues of significance. The data created from the experiential enquiry was mapped against those of the course team, to promote discussion for best practice in supporting students in undertaking Work Based Learning.

Findings from the workshop participants mirror those of the course team and the issues raised are detailed in the table below.

Employer
A concern for a balance between the organization and the participant's needs A need for preparation and orientation to the role. A desire for input into the assessment process
Participant
A concern that sufficient time will be allowed for study. A need for ongoing support in terms of both the learning outcomes and the technical skills for e-portfolio use. A desire for the maintenance of relevance to practice.
Educator
A concern to ensure that students stayed on track of the learning outcomes. A need for the consistency of regular discussion and verification of the learning process. A desire for genuine positive impact on participants' working competence.

The course will run again in September 2009 and the outcomes of this piece of action research will inform the ongoing development of this educational collaboration.

The authors have been involved in active dissemination through presentations at the HEA e-learning in Health – Working Together to Enhance Learning conference in July 2009. Here they elaborated on the use of e-portfolios to enhance the student learning experience and augment clinical impact through educational provision.