

# THE WAY FORWARD IN PRACTICE AND WORK BASED LEARNING

**This section provides the summary and conclusions and considers the future of the project during the transferability phase**

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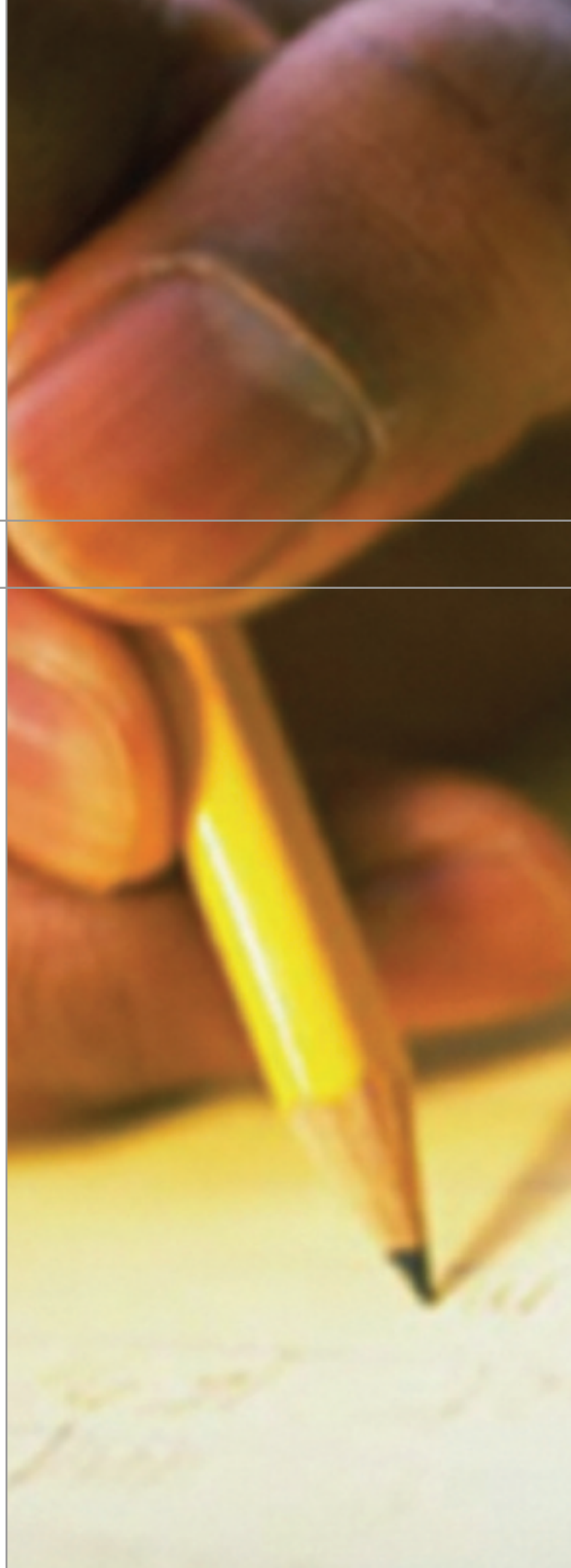
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# The way forward in Practice and Work Based Learning

## Introduction

### 7.1 Introduction

The overall aim of the Making Practice Learning Work project has been to enhance the role of the practice educator so that student learning during practice-based placements might be enhanced. A number of activities have taken place over the course of the project to address the project's aspirations.

The project began by undertaking a scoping exercise that resulted in the production of five discipline specific case studies describing current practice plus highlighting good practice in the preparation of practice educators as well as identifying issues concerning practice-based education in the five disciplines. The subsequent workshops to engage in dialogue with individuals concerned with practice education informed the nature of the second phase of the project by identifying the nature of materials required to enhance practice-based education.

The project team then undertook a range of activities that culminated in the production of a range of resources that have been made available as open source material via the project web site. In addition, learning materials commissioned by the project have also been made available in paper copy and on DVD. Dissemination and evaluation of the resources was undertaken through:

- Workshops facilitated by the project team.
- Conferences.
- Online questionnaire.
- Intention to publish articles.

The project has developed more resources and materials than was at first anticipated. It has interfaced with a great number of people concerned with practice education, with over 1000 names on the database of individuals who have participated or expressed an interest in the project and it's outcomes.

The remainder of this section will consider the overall findings from the project, the limitations of the project and recommendations of the way forward that includes information about specific post-project activity.

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## Project Team's Findings

### 7.2 Project Team's Findings

Each of the preceding sections of this report makes conclusions about specific aspects of the project. However, there are other aspects external to the project that the project team became increasingly aware of and which consequently influenced the nature of the project. Three changes, of particular significance to the project, which occurred were alteration in the nature of engagement with information technology, attitudes towards how practice educators should be both prepared and supported and finally the increased importance placed upon inter-professional learning.

The first of these changes resulted from an information revolution amongst health care practitioners arising from a marked increase in computer literacy levels of practitioners involved in practice-based education. Furthermore, these practitioners had greater access to the Internet, either in the places of work, study or at home. The project team realised that practitioners were not only becoming more willing to utilise materials delivered in an electronic format, but that this was how practice educators expected the materials to be presented to them.

The second change to take place concerned a desire for greater choice in how and where practice educators would be prepared and supported. The opportunity for practice educators to leave the workplace for whole days was becoming increasingly problematic. The project team found that these practitioners wanted flexibility in how, when and where they might access materials to enhance their educational role.

The project team had become aware of the growing importance of inter-professional learning within the working and learning agenda of health care in the United Kingdom. This has been reflected in making it a theme in the structure of the resources sourced by the project team. An important consideration in guiding the development of project-commissioned learning materials was the need to maximise the usability of these materials for inter-professional learning elements of the practice educator role.

However, the project team recognised that this may not always be possible, or even desirable, particularly when considering discipline-specific aspects of the role of the practice educator. Consequently, the project team became aware that much of the materials that were either commissioned or sourced by the project team were mainly of use to a range of professional groups involved in health care, with only a small proportion being appropriate for a specific discipline.

An interesting outcome of the project team's dissemination and evaluation activity was the realisation that the online resources often had a wider generic usage. This is probably not too surprising given the diverse nature of the disciplines involved in health care. However, it did provide the project team with an opportunity to consider the usefulness of the materials for non-health disciplines involved in learning in practice or work-based situations.

### 7.3 Limitations

The project team would acknowledge that the project has a number of limitations, those these need to be considered with respect to the timescale and resources available for the project. The main limitations identified by the project team were:

- The project brief was to engage with staff involved in practice education from the perspective of enhancing the role of qualified practitioners supervising students during practice placements. Consequently, there was no direct involvement in the project from either students or service users.
- The project has often undertaken activity with five specific health care disciplines. Any conclusions made about wider usefulness of materials are primarily based upon either anecdotal feedback or project team members' assessment of their transferability.
- Evaluation of the main project output - the online resources has been based upon verbal feedback from attendees at dissemination events and completion of an online questionnaire. It became evident during the latter stages of the project at a number of dissemination events that the materials were being used in relation to various aspects of preparing practice educators. The project team has been unable to undertake a systematic evaluation of how the materials have been used to enhance practice-based learning.
- The long term future of the project web site is uncertain. The nature of maintaining the web site is costly. The cost of domain space and software to identify dead links to externally hosted online resources is low. Unfortunately the cost of identifying replacement links as well as adding new resources is a labour intensive and thus an expensive activity that can not be undertaken using electronic methods.

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## Recommendations

### 7.4 Recommendations

In light of both the achievements of the project plus the identified limitations, the project team recommends that the following activity be undertaken as a way of gaining greater knowledge about how the resources can enhance learning in a range of practice and work-based learning situations:

- Undertake collaboration with service users and practitioners to explore how service user involvement might inform use of the resources by practice educators.
- Conduct a systematic examination of how students might use the online resources to enhance educational aspects of their role during practice placements.
- Undertake activity to assess the transferability of the online resources for use by non-health care disciplines.
- Carry out a systematic evaluation of how practitioners use the online resources to enhance the role of the practice educator.
- Explore ways to ensure effective long term maintenance and development of online resources.

The project team has already been able to begin addressing the first two of these recommendations. A bid has been submitted to undertake collaborative work with service users and practitioners to explore the potential for user involvement in using the resources to enhance the role of the practice educator.

The project team successfully submitted a proposal to the Higher Education Academy for transferability funding. This additional activity will enhance the role of work-based educators who support students on placements as part of undergraduate degrees within new partner institutions. It will build upon the project's outcomes by transferring the resources for use in developing the role of work-based

educators in the context of work-based learning as part of the academic experience. This will be achieved by facilitating the new partner institutions to adapt and contextualise existing resources. The subject centres of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism and Health Science and Practice will be pivotal to the transfer and application of this activity.

#### 7.4.1 Objectives of Transferability Phase will be to:

1. Identify current methods and resources used for preparing and supporting work-based educators in undergraduate degrees in new partner institutions.
2. Compare the resources and requirements with resources developed within the original FDTL Phase 4 project.
3. Facilitate the contextualising of resources to other disciplines and make appropriate changes to existing web-based resources.
4. Liaise with subject centres to explore embedding of principles and resources to the academic and practice community.
5. Disseminate and facilitate use of web-based resources for developing and supporting work based educators.
6. Evaluate effectiveness of transferring web-based resources designed for Health Care Professionals.
7. Produce recommendations on good practice in the preparation of persons involved in work based education.

#### 7.4.2 Transferability Work Plan

The next page contains the project plan for this additional activity, with an outline of key tasks, timescale for each task, critical dates / milestones, responsibility for completion of each task and the task outcome. The tasks have been tabled in relation to each of the objectives listed above.

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## Recommendations

.Key Task	Timescales	Critical Dates / Milestones	Responsibility	Outcome
<b>1. Identify current methods and resources used for preparing and supporting work based educators in degrees in three new partner institutions</b>				
Revise Working Group and Steering Group membership	1 month	May 2006	Project Director	Reconfigured membership of Working and Steering Groups to reflect new partner institutions
Contracting with new partner institutions	1 month	June 2006	Project Director	Contracts signed and agreed
Project plan finalised and agree work plan	1 month	June 2006	Partner Institutions & Project Director	Agreed Project Plan
Brief partner institutions on project and resources	1 month	June 2006	Project Team	Workshops in partner institution
Identify current preparation methods for work based educators	6 weeks	July 2006	Partner Institutions & Project Director	Report on current preparation of work based educators
Identify current resources used to prepare and support work based educators	6 weeks	July 2006	Partner Institutions & Project Managers	Table of current resources used
<b>2. Compare the resources and requirements against resources developed within the original FDTL Phase 4 project</b>				
Map resources against existing project resources	1 month	July 2006	Project Team	Mapping document of resources available
<b>3. Facilitate the contextualising of resources to other disciplines and make appropriate changes to existing web-based resources</b>				
Deliver workshops in conjunction with partner institutions to publicise resources and seek users views on their appropriateness	2 months	September 2006	Project Team & Partner Institutions	Feedback from workshops and summary of findings
Adapt web portal to accommodate resources suitable for other subject area	1 month	October 2006	Partner Institutions & Project Team	Web portal reviewed and adapted
<b>4. Liaise with subject centres to explore embedding of principles and resources to the wider community</b>				
Liaise with subject centre and employers regarding resources	Ongoing	Ongoing	Project Team	Feedback on application of resources to work based educators
<b>5. Disseminate and facilitate use of web-based resources for developing and supporting work based educators</b>				
Work with subject teams in partner institutions for the development and support of work based educators	2 months	October 2006	Subject Team & Project Team	Teaching team uses the resources Develop and support work based educators
Work based educators use resources	2 months	October 2006	Work based educators in Partner Institutions	Evaluation report on the use of the resources
<b>6. Evaluate effectiveness of transferring web-based resources designed for health care professionals to other disciplines</b>				
Ongoing evaluation of culture, subject discipline and processes in the transferability of resources	Ongoing	January 2007	Project Team	Produce case study and include in Final Report
Administer questionnaire to academic users of web portal	1 month	January 2007	Project Team	Report on findings included in Final Report
Administer questionnaire to work based educator using web portal	1 month	January 2007	Project Team	Report on findings included in Final Report
<b>7. Produce recommendations on good practice in the preparation of persons involved in work based education</b>				
Recommend to subject centre and HEI resources to support good practice in work based learning	2 months	March 2007	Project Team	Publish Final Report and Recommendation



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### Conclusion

#### 7.5 Conclusion

The project team believes that it has been able to meet the overall aim of the project as evidenced by informal feedback with potential users, formal evaluation evidence, external evaluator's reports and comments from relevant external bodies. Feedback indicates that the resources have been received as a very positive development in the field of practice-based education and a major achievement given the circumstances that the project operated within.

The success of the transferability application indicates that the project's materials may help address the current agenda to increase graduate employability by enhancing student learning during practice/work-based placements.

## PROJECT AIMS

The Project aims to make practitioners more effective at supporting & supervising students in the workplace across a range of healthcare disciplines.

The professions involved in the project are:

- Dietetics
- Nursing
- Occupational Therapy
- Physiotherapy
- Radiography

The principal questions to be addressed in this project are:

- What constitutes effective practice in placement education?
- How can effective practice be implemented at organisational, professional and practitioner levels so as to maximise student learning on placement?
- How can this good practice be developed and embedded in the contexts of health and social care within a multicultural workforce?

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