Development of an Experiential Learning Programme for Pharmacy Students

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Background

GPhC standards for the initial education and training of pharmacists state that students should receive practical experience as part of their training, potentially including off-site placements(1). Placements had previously been structured using pre-determined student tasks. An evaluation of these tasks found that they provided a focus to placements but were also sometimes detrimental to learning (2). It was decided to explore a system using an electronic personal portfolio (ePortfolio) and a competency framework as an alternative method for the delivery and assessment of placements.

Description of work

The aim was to develop an experiential learning programme which uses an ePortfolio and competency framework. To do this, a working group was convened between October 2014 and June 2015 composed of academics, placement providers and MPharm students. Communication was through a combination of face-to-face meetings and email feedback. The group considered:

- Scope of the experiential learning programme
- Competencies on which the programme would be based
- How the programme would be assessed
- Support required for students
- Support required for placement providers
- Support required for academics

It was decided that the scope for the programme should include off-site placements, IPL sessions and patient experience opportunities. A bespoke set of 'Experiential Standards' was developed for the programme.

Support resources were created for students, placement providers and academics.

Proposed evaluation

A mixed method evaluation is planned. Focus groups (FGs) will be used to allow qualitative exploration of student perceptions. Focus groups will be facilitated using a topic guide which draws from the peer reviewed literature around experiential learning.

FGs will be audio recorded and transcribed verbatim before undergoing thematic content analysis. The findings will be used to design a questionnaire which can be used for a larger scale quantitative evaluation which can identify trends and further areas for improvement.

References

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