



Managing the Placement Learning Experience

A resource commissioned by the Making Practice Based Learning Work project, an educational development project funded through FDTL Phase 4 Project Number 174/02 and produced by staff from the University of Central Lancashire.

Authors

Dr. Graham Congdon, Placement Learning Support Unit

Garry Wakins, Applied Electronics Technology

Tracey Baker, Nursing

Heather Stewart, Physiotherapy

Eugene Thompson, Nursing

Christine Keenan, Social Work

Jacqui Gibson, Midwifery

University of Central Lancashire

contents



Managing the **Placement Learning Experience**

Introduction	02
Aim	03
Learning Outcomes	04
During Placement Management	05
Post Placement Management	07
References	08

PLACEMENT LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Introduction

Within this section we will be exploring how you will manage the placement learning experience during the placement, and the management that needs to be done once the placement has finished.

PLACEMENT LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Aim

The session is designed to provide you with opportunity to consider how you manage the learning experience during the placement (i.e. once the student has arrived), and the post placement management that you need to do to meet the requirements of the HEI and also for your own development.

PLACEMENT LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Learning Outcomes

At the end of this session you will:

- Be able to describe the management components of the learning experience during the placement and how these will be integrated into the placement structure.
- Discuss the importance of a Learning Agreement to the management of the learning experience.
- Consider the post placement management in terms of the HEI's requirements and your own learning and personal development.

PLACEMENT LEARNING EXPERIENCE

During Placement Management

Organising a placement for a student can be stressful, as you have to consider your own strengths and weaknesses, as well as the opportunities and threats in relation to your organisation, the student's needs and desires as well as the requirements of the University. We have considered many of these factors in the first Management Unit. Now you need to consider how you are going to manage the actual placement itself, in terms of how you are intending to meet the learning outcomes.

It's now time to start planning your student's placement learning experience

Individual Activity

Thinking about the HEI learning outcomes, and all the factors you considered in the first Unit, plan a timetable for your placement. It is best to keep this reasonably flexible, to allow for any possible threats that you identified, as well as accommodating the student's own personal learning objectives.

Does this timetable make allowances for any possible threats, as well as incorporating all the opportunities that are available to enhance the students learning?

Having a plan of the placement means that both yourself and the student have an idea of how the placement will be structured to meet the learning outcomes. This can reduce tension and stress in both of you, as you know what you want to do/achieve throughout the placement.

This links closely with the student's Learning Agreement.

Learning Agreement

Learning Agreements or contracts are widely used within practice education of health professionals. The use of a learning contract allows negotiation between the clinician and the student with regard to what is needed, what is wanted and what is possible.

Firstly, students may come to placements with little idea about what they could hope to learn during the placement, and their learning objectives may be unreasonable or unrealistic. The use of a learning contract allows clarification of what the student can expect to see/do/learn during a placement, and therefore lets them set more achievable goals.

Secondly, by discussing the learning contract, all involved in the learning process are aware of each other's intentions for the learning experience, and therefore are working towards the same goals. This can reduce conflict and confusion during the placement. Regular review of the learning contract throughout the placement allows for objectives to be revisited and altered as required.

Finally, the learning contract has a lot to offer in terms of the learning that will occur both in direct response to the completion and use of the contract, but also due to its effect on the student's attitude to the learning experience.

Think about your own experience of a learning agreement when you complete the next activity.

Individual Activity

What do you think constitutes a good learning contract?

How do you think using a learning contract will improve the learning experience for a student?

What skills/attitudes to learning does a student develop by use of a learning contract itself?

The next part of the process is the get you to construct the ideal learning contract.

PLACEMENT LEARNING EXPERIENCE

During Placement Management

Individual Activity

Design a Learning contract, including all of the factors discussed above and all you have considered in the previous activity.

Compare this with an existing Learning contract.

Now see what everyone else has come up with!

Discussion Topic

Post your learning contract on the discussion board, and review the others posted there. If there are any points raised by other learning contracts, discuss these.

To finish, you need to think pragmatically about the use of a learning contract in your placement. These can take time to negotiate and discuss and to be used effectively should be reviewed at regular intervals. This all needs to be planned into your learning experience for the student.

Individual Activity

How and when will you first look at the learning contract with your student?

How and when would you review the learning contract with your student?

PLACEMENT LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Post Placement Management

Once the student's learning experience is completed it is useful to evaluate the placement.

Individual Activity

From what perspectives do you think the placement needs to be evaluated?

(Hint - consider who and what the placement may have impacted on).

The University will usually have established evaluation procedures which need to be completed. These will often involve the clinician, the student and the visiting university member of staff each evaluating the other. Service users may also be involved in this process depending on your profession. If they are, it is important that you respect their anonymity during this process. Although evaluation can seem like a lengthy process it is vital for ensuring the quality of the educational experience for the student. It also provides feedback to you about the placement you have provided.

At this point it is also useful to consider how you feel the placement went from your point of view as a mentor. By reflecting back on what you intended to happen, and what actually happened, you can learn and develop in your role as a mentor.

Individual Activity

Thinking about the questions below, reflect on what you have learnt from managing a student learning experience.

When managing a future student placement.

What would you do the same?

What would you change?

PLACEMENT LEARNING EXPERIENCE

References

Jarvis P. and Gibson G. (2001). 2nd Edition. *The Teacher, Practitioner and Mentor in Nursing, Midwifery, Health Visiting and the Social Services*. Cheltenham - Nelson Thornes. Chapter 7

Quinn F.M. (2001) 4th Edition. *Principles and Practice of Nurse Education*. Cheltenham, Nelson Thornes. Chapter 3.

Froggett L (2000) *Staff Supervision and Dependency Culture - a Case Study*. Journal of Social Work Practice Vol.14 No 1. pp 27-35

Anderson G, Boud D, Sampson J. (1996) *Learning Contracts A Practical Guide*. Kogan Page London ISBN 0-7494-1847-8

Matheson R (2003) *Promoting the Integration of Theory and Practice by the Use of a Learning Contract*. International Journal of Therapy and Rehabilitation. June 10(6) 264-8.

Whitcombe SW (2001) *Using Learning Contracts in Fieldwork Education: the View of Occupational Therapy Students and Those Responsible for Their Supervision*. British Journal of Occupational Therapy. Nov. 64 (11)552-8.

Timmins F. (2002) *The Usefulness of Learning Contracts in Nurse Education: the Irish Perspective*. Nurse Education in Practice. Vol 2 190-196.

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?

Project Administrator

Telephone: 028 90 368 458

www.practicebasedlearning.org

