

Forum Insights

ePrePP Project 629 ELECTRONIC PREPARATION FOR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Introduction and context

Work-placement is the key pedagogy for transition to professional practice in the health sciences. Nursing and General Practice have a long tradition of placing students, but the quality of experience on placement is variable and often less than optimal. Pharmacy have a recent professional requirement to include work placement in degree courses. All professions have a competency framework mandated by their professional bodies. The e-portfolio is being introduced in all three disciplines as a tool for assessment and feedback on competencies, and as a tool not only to communicate the needs to placement tutors but also to foster inter-professional learning (IPL). This dynamic digital record will be carried by students through their undergraduate study into their professional practice.

2. Overview of the project as it has developed

Since this project was conceived at the end of the last academic year, it has created interest from other health professions, the management of the College of Medicine and Health and the broader university. Digital tools to stimulate learner-centred education and to provide a vehicle for recording educational episodes to allow appraisal of professional activity have been of interest across UCC. For this reason the ePrePP team were supported by a UCC learning technologist who was seconded from the Learning Technology Unit to identify and evaluate various eportfolios, and will advise on the time and expertise that would be required to develop a UCC specific tool. With the expansion in the scope of the project, matched funding had to be identified to allow this to happen and substantial time was taken up in attending demonstrations of the main competitors and in garnering institutional support for the piloting of an eportfolio tool. This phase is now complete. The institution will support the pilot of the e-portfolio in the Collage of Medicine and Health.

3. Partners**UCC Project Team:**

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4. Key outcomes of the project**A. Developing a national network of professional educators**

Third level institutions in Ireland are challenged by the pressures in the health system to provide practical placements for an increasing number of students and so it is becoming increasingly difficult to ensure satisfactory transition from undergraduate to professional. It is remarkable how much enthusiasm has been generated by the ePrePP initiative to share and develop digital capacity to address the challenge. Each partner institution has been visited and regular tele-conferences have taken place between the various professions represented by the partners. The contributions of each partner are listed in the presentation. This network is strong enough to ensure continuation after the end of the project.

B. Recruit a panel of students to check and validate the ePrePP initiatives

A group of students have been recruited from medicine, nursing and pharmacy who are keen to assist in developing learner-centred placements and are enthusiastic about learning more about the roles and responsibilities of colleagues in other departments. The student contribution is central to ensuring a successful outcome from ePrePP. A student panel has been assembled to advise the team on the methods and processes necessary for the implementation of learner centred placements and IPL. They will also be central in collating a list of sites that can be trusted and helpful and will collaborate

in developing digital resources, portfolio templates and evaluations.

C. Establishing buy-in from UCC

UCC has supported both the development of the proposal and the operationalisation of the project through the Office for Vice President for Teaching and Learning. The introduction of eportfolios has in particular raised interest in the curriculum committee of the College of Medicine and Health and wider inter-professional conversations have been held with dentistry, therapies and social work. The software funds will be used to pilot eportfolios in ITT and NUIG because some support have been provided by UCC to enable evaluation and piloting of eportfolio vehicles. The critical importance of institutional buy-in, without which this project would have only a superficial and temporary impact, means that ePrePP is embedded to ensure sustainability.

D. Identifying Shared Competencies and protocols relating to practical placement teaching in health care settings for medical, nursing and pharmacy students

A variety of documents are undergoing thematic analysis to collect shared core competencies for medicine, nursing and pharmacy. This is a vital piece of the project because of the understandable independence of the 3 regulatory bodies and the need to identify shared competencies to underpin meaningful IPL. It is interesting to see the various stages of sophistication in the competency frameworks of each profession and the lack of inter-linking and limited learning from the experience of other bodies. The competencies listed by the Medical Council were reviewed about 6 years ago and the process of annual appraisal is fairly well developed. The Nursing Midwifery Board of Ireland (previously An Bord Altranais) are in the final stages of a review of competencies and nursing curricula and so a meeting has taken place with the education lead for NMBI to ensure consistency with our work through ePrePP. Nursing have significant experience in teaching students about the importance of a record of learning and reflective practice and collaboration between UCC and ITT will ensure that evaluative work done by ITT in assessing reflective practice will be incorporated into the eportfolio pilot. Pharmacy have developed a new and exhaustive list of competencies to be delivered by the new MPharm degree that will be offered for the first time in September 2015 by the 3 schools in Ireland (RCSI, TCD and UCC). The competencies have been developed by committees at the Pharmacy Society of Ireland and embedded into professional PG practice by the Irish Institute of Pharmacy (IIOP) who are responsible for CPD. ePrePP has enabled TCD and UCC to work together to map competencies into the shared MPharm programme and the backfill funds have been amalgamated to part fund a Masters student. After some negotiation between ePrePP and the College of Medicine and Health the remainder of the funding has been provided by UCC. This Masters student will hold focus groups to inform the ePrePP process. This cycle of developing competencies and setting up new schools to deliver the programme has just been completed by the RPS in the UK and so one of the key staff in the development of a new programme was brought over to Cork for 2 days to share his experience. The main thematic structure will be included in the presentation.

Review of placement protocols sourced from various partners revealed a paucity of documentation. These protocols have been thematically analysed to produce guidance for institutions to adapt to ensure a high quality of placement.

E. Learner-centred teaching by assessing and evaluating eportfolios

The pressure on clinical placements tutors has a negative effect on learner centred education and the use of an eportfolio has been helpful in a number of settings. The licensing of the current eportfolio system at UCC (incorporated into Campus Pack) was coming to an end as the current tool was considered not fit for purpose by the users. UCC seconded Grace O'Leary from the LTU to assist the ePrePP team in identifying and assessing a number of readily available eportfolios, as the development of a bespoke UCC tool would have taken 12 months plus and required ongoing expertise in house servers and would have been expensive and ultimately unsustainable. A pilot of an established third level eportfolios is about to be rolled out and an evaluation plan will be shown at the presentation. This has been a complex task that has taken a number of months and has again shown the value of the ePrePP network in collating the experiences of different institutions and departments.

F. Develop a suite of digital learning resources

This is still very much in the planning stage and the digital materials produced by UL and NUIG are being assessed and work is taking place between ePrePP and the Clinical Simulation suite at UCC. Patients are being approached to ask for one or two volunteers to set up a cross disciplinary scenario to test the validity of this approach to IPL. We will develop and evaluate digital clinical scenarios to highlight different professional perspectives to underpin these IPL activities. This part of the work will involve input from UCC, UCD, UL and NUIG.

5. Outline how the project benefits the higher education sector nationally

- The formation of a cohesive and supportive network of practitioners and educationalists who are addressing the challenges of transition from student to professional
- Provision of a shared core competency framework for healthcare students
- Guidance on the introduction of an eportfolio system into undergraduate programmes
- Evaluation of eportfolio usage in assessing core competencies in healthcare professions
- A digital library of clinical scenarios for use in tutorial and seminar settings, and for assessment
- Collation, creation and sharing of materials and guidance to underpin IPL sessions

6. Outline how the project benefits students

- ePrePP builds digital capacity to engage students in their learning and:
- Provides a shared competency framework that can be used to modify and improve present frameworks and can underpin the pedagogy of IPL initiatives
 - Pilots the use of an eportfolio to enhance learner centred education

- To ensure a high quality of placement by providing guidance to form agreements between institutions and healthcare settings
- Addresses the current limited opportunities for inter-professional understanding and learning
- Provides a digital library of resources and scenarios to stimulate independent and collaborative learning
- Facilitates peer learning, including peer assessment and feedback

7. Other national/international development work that complements this project

- CIT: TEL Tools for Technology Enhanced T&L
- Royal Pharmaceutical Society: Competency frameworks
- Royal College of GPs: CPD recording using digital tools (<https://gpeportfolio.rcgp.org.uk>)
- RCSI: Affiliation for pharmacy practice experiential learning (APPEL)
- EUfolio: examples of piloting mahara and Microsoft office 365 eportfolios in Europe: (eufolio.eu/)
- RCSI-IL Professional eportfolio for Healthcare: (<https://eportfolio.rcsileadership.org>)

8. Next steps

The first six months of this project have been focused on developing a national network, in setting up a pilot to evaluate eportfolio use in HEI, in collecting policies and protocols to identify shared competencies and agreements between HEI departments and healthcare settings and to prepare for writing and recording of clinical scenarios. The next steps are to deliver shared competencies, guidance for HEI and health settings and a digital repository for digital material to supplement T&L in non-campus settings. The products of ePrePP will be available through a UCC hosted web presence (www.eprepp.ucc.ie) and promoted by holding a conference on IPL.