ALPS receives £100,000 from SHA

The NHS Yorkshire & the Humber Strategic Health Authority has agreed to fund three ALPS projects which will allow further development of the ALPS Assessment Suite.

The SHA has allocated almost £100,000 to the projects which will help to embed the ALPS tools and other outputs as the programme enters its final year of operation. Students have always been at the centre of ALPS, and it is expected that the planned developments funded by the SHA will enhance the students' experience of using the mobile devices and the assessment tools. The three projects revolve around:

- E-portfolio interoperability
- Accessibility
- Reporting

The first of the funded projects will enable students to move data between their own e-portfolio and other systems, giving them scope to import and export assessment responses, as well as other files and learning resources. This focus on e-portfolio interoperability will allow students to transfer evidence of their knowledge and competences to commonly used e-portfolio systems that are mapped to a shared standard. Plus, as more e-portfolio systems conform to the new standard, the benefits for students will increase; instead of losing their e-portfolio when they leave university, the potential is there for them to transfer all the data to the system employed at their new workplace.

Figure 1 ALPS Mobile Device

The aim of the second project is to improve accessibility of the ALPS Mobile Client. This relates to how learning materials and assessments are presented to users on the mobile devices. The Mobile Enabled Disabled Students (MEDS) project has been investigating the specific needs of disabled students when using mobile technologies for learning and assessment in practice settings, and the proposed changes will address key issues identified by their research (for more info visit http://www.alps-cetl.ac.uk/ResearchNetwork.htm). There is a general consensus across the ALPS collaboration that these enhancements, including the capacity to customise and adjust the interface, will improve usability for everyone called upon to use the devices, not just disabled students.

The final project will look at providing more information about how the Assessment Suite is being used by ALPS students. In order to monitor students' progress more closely, academic staff at partner universities (Bradford, Huddersfield, Leeds, Leeds Metropolitan and York St John) will be provided with more detailed reporting which will enable tutors to easily keep track of students' completed assessments and achieved competences. Much of this work will be undertaken by ALPS' commercial partners, MKM and ecommnet, who will work in conjunction to pull these reports together.

ALPS Mobile Technologies Project Manager, Tamsin Treasure-Jones, believes the projects will help to improve learning and assessment for students out on placement. "ALPS is delighted to have received funding from the SHA for these exciting projects. The Assessment Suite is already giving students the opportunity to gather evidence of their knowledge and competences, and further development of features such as the e-portfolio interoperability will allow them greater control over their own learning and development."