

The ALPS Mobile Assessment Suite is helping to enhance learning in clinical placements by re-enforcing reflective practice

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Student Training

Dental Hygiene & Therapy students train in a simulated environment (above and left), as well as on supervised placements.

Dental Hygiene & Therapy_____The ALPS mobile devices were perfectly suited for use by the Leeds DCP students, who were able to collect evidence of the skills they were developing, and receive support and assistance from their tutor back at the university.

Dental Hygiene and Therapy

Dental Hygiene and Therapy students used ALPS mobile devices to complete assessments during their placements.

The University of Leeds offers a graduate Diploma in Dental Hygiene and Dental Therapy. The 15 module course is spread over 27 months, with students undertaking placements in clinical practice outside the University during their final year of study. The aim of the course is to train registered Dental Care Professionals (DCPs) who can work within a team framework taking on the role of both a dental hygienist and a dental therapist. The three areas of common competency identified by all 16 ALPS professions are essential for the DCP students at Leeds, who are required to demonstrate their communication, team working and ethical practice skills.

Clinical placements, by their very nature, are extremely varied and there is no guarantee that students will have access to a computer or the internet while they are out on work-based practice. What students can be sure of is that they will be required to gather evidence of the knowledge and competences they acquire throughout their placement.

The ALPS mobile devices were perfectly suited for use by the Leeds DCP students, who were able to collect evidence of the skills they were developing, and receive support and assistance from their tutor back at the university. Perhaps most significantly, they were also able to receive and complete assessments on the devices.

Mobile devices were handed out to 19 second year DCP students to use whilst on their paediatric clinical placement. They were asked to complete mobile assessments on 'Gaining consent' (i.e. asking for and being granted permission to perform a procedure on a patient) and to submit both peer assessment and self reflection on this subject.

Many of the students completed an assessment after performing a tooth extraction on a child for the first time, as this was an ideal situation to demonstrate their ability to 'gain consent'. The students worked through a set of questions designed to help them reflect on and learn from their experience, either using the keyboard or stylus to type, or the audio record feature to capture their thoughts aloud. Students then requested peer feedback, before reflecting again on the experience to develop an action plan to assist them next time they had to perform an extraction.

When a student completed an assessment, they sent it from the device to their e-portfolio where their tutor could access it back at the university. Their tutor could then send feedback and advice via the built-in blog feature. This enabled a dialogue between student and tutor which increased the level of remote support for students undertaking clinical placements.

As well as mobile assessment, the devices improved the access to learning material for the DCP students. Their tutor was able to send supporting material directly to the students, in a variety of formats. For example, students could receive video demonstrations of a tooth extraction or links to helpful websites. There has been a good response from students, with lots of dialogue emerging between the students and their tutor over blog posts and assessment responses.

Stuart Boomer, Assistant Director of the Dental Hygiene and Therapy programme at the Leeds Dental Institute, is pleased with the results. He comments;

'The ALPS Mobile Assessment Suite is helping to enhance learning in clinical placements by re-enforcing reflective practice. The graduate Diploma in Dental Hygiene and Therapy offered at the University of Leeds is very 'hands-on' and it can be easy for students to get wrapped up in physical tasks and procedures. By asking students to complete mobile assessments based on common competences such as communication skills, we are encouraging the type of essential reflective learning which will ultimately create more confident and competent professionals.'