

A peek at Assessment and Learning in Practice Settings (ALPS)

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BSc Audiology students at the University of Leeds have been piloting a newly developed practice-based assessment tool.

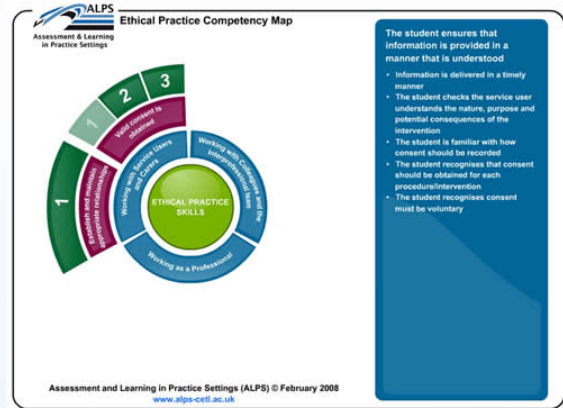
The ALPS approach to *confidence* and *competence* is to encourage more reflection in action by the students through interprofessional assessment in practice. The generic assessment tools were developed from the agreed three common competences of Communication, Team Working and Ethical Practice¹.

The tools are designed to assess across ALPS Common Competences and are based within practice settings. These scenarios are; "Providing information", "Gaining consent", "Working interprofessionally", "Knowing when to consult or refer" and "Demonstrating respect for a service user during an interaction"².

These assessment tools were delivered by mobile device ("Personal Digital Assistant" or PDA) in order to promote the immediacy of feedback for student reflection in action³.

Tutors in the University can then provide feedback via a website for students away from their University site.

There is support from the Professional, Statutory and Regulatory bodies (PSRBs) for the concept of generic assessment using the ALPS Common Competences in practice.



The Audiology Pilot

The ALPS tool was seen to address these development areas through its advantages of being:

- An "off the shelf" format thus obviating individual assessment tool development time
- Endorsed by 16 adjacent clinical professions as to the validity of the professional skills
- Economic in time and effort to use and so likely to be used busy clinical environments
- Able to improve the quality of PDP evidence gathering

The tool selected was relevant to everyday practice and so seen as; worthy to student and educator; economic in clinical time; and a skill needed to be evidenced as a part of the existing PDP guidance. These criteria led to the selection of the "Gaining consent" assessment tool⁴. Gaining consent is one of the skills required for evidencing Ethical Practice.

After the session the student and the educator completed the mobile ALPS assessment tool about the student's performance. The patient and potentially student peers could also provide feedback. The ALPS assessment tool has a comments box where qualitative feedback can be gained. The students could then reflect and comment on their feedback. Finally the student and the educator could agree an action in order to progress their professional skill development. This was uploaded onto the ALPS website (password protected) using the mobile device. The university clinical liaison tutor could then access the students' submission and provide professional and clinical supervision for the students to view, whilst still in practice setting.

Evaluation

Student responses

Focus group feedback showed that the paperless aspect of the ALPS assessment tool was liked by the students:

'It's easier for filing! In a paper sense in a, not having notes everywhere and everything, in that sense it's really good.'

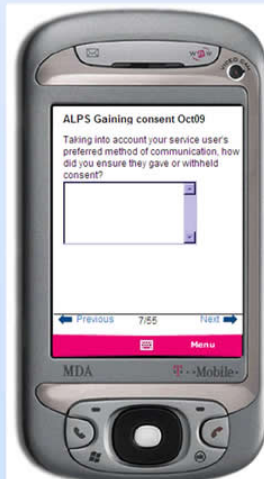
The significant finding from audiology students was that the mobile device was seen as unnecessary, as the use of existing PC based system within every NHS Audiology Department would have been more practical to use:

I thought the assessment tool was a good idea but it would be quicker and easier for everyone if we were able to fill it out on a computer.'

What next?

The next task is to investigate for Audiology students, the potential for the implementation of the ALPS assessment tool through a more practicable PC online version.

A further enhancement being proposed is a project to combine the ALPS tool with an electronic PDP tool⁵. The advantage of an electronic PDP would be its potential linking with the current successfully deployed national Audiology electronic logbook for audiology clinical skills (IRCP).



References

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ALPS (Assessment & Learning in Practice Settings) is a collaboration of five Universities (Bradford, Huddersfield, Leeds, Leeds Metropolitan and York St John) working together with 16 health and social care professions, the NHS, service users, carers and commercial partners to increase the competence and confidence of graduating health and social care students