



ALPS annual reflective review (April 2006 - March 2007)

Overview

This report presents an overview of our background, mission and aims together with a reflective appraisal of achievements in year 2. At the outset it is worth recording that all objectives have been met or exceeded.

1. Background

- 1.1 Assessment and Learning in Practice Settings (ALPS) is a collaborative programme between five Higher Education Institutions with proven reputations for excellence in learning and teaching in health and social care: the Universities of Bradford, Huddersfield & Leeds (lead), Leeds Metropolitan University and York St John University. The collaboration works in partnership with the NHS Yorkshire & the Humber. The HEI partners provide a range of programmes across the full spectrum of pre-registration Health and Social Care (H&SC) courses. HEFCE funded programmes include Medicine and Dentistry at the University of Leeds, Pharmacy and Optometry at the University of Bradford, and Social Work across the four universities in the partnership. The NHS funded programmes cover Audiology, Clinical Physiology, Diagnostic Radiography, Dietetics, Midwifery, Nursing, Occupational Therapy, Operating Department Practice, Physiotherapy, Podiatry, and Speech and Language Therapy.
- 1.2 Many publications report how newly qualified H&SC professionals taking up their first post feel a lack of preparedness for the role. The key to equipping these professionals for the 'real world' is increased partnership between HEIs, students and stakeholder employers involving work-based learning.
- 1.3 All students value assessment processes that accurately and fairly measure their capabilities and provide effective feedback as a basis for reflection. ALPS aims to:
 - enable students to collect a wide range of workplace mini-assessments, both formative and summative, comprising professional assessor, self, peer, and service-user ratings to provide a comprehensive portfolio of competences
 - enhance substantially the reliability and validity of assessments in existing work-based settings and permanently change the culture of the organisations involved, in line with relevant strategic changes in workforce planning and the delivery of patient care

ALPS forms a centre which draws together the collaborative uniprofessional expertise in workplace H&SC assessment and which can then disseminate good practice both within and across the institutions.

- 1.4 Groups of health and social care professionals will be encouraged and enabled to provide improved assessments of students' practice in the workplace. These will be well-grounded in pedagogical theory and consistently measure students' competence, so that students and professional bodies can be confident that an assessor from any of the relevant professions will be equally able to assess common outcomes for any students in practice settings. Inclusivity will enable existing excellence in defined subjects to be shared and expanded across professions and within programmes. The development of effective and creative assessment will enhance scholarship in education, focusing on the student learning experience and lifelong learning outcomes. This presents a means through which the status of teaching may be raised, teachers may come to teach more knowledgeably and the quality of teaching may be more explicitly measured.

2. Mission:

2.1 Building on existing strengths across the partnership, the Centre for Excellence in Assessment and Learning in Practice Settings aims to ensure that students graduating from courses in health and social care are fully equipped to perform confidently and competently at the start of their professional careers so improving the standards of care.

3. ALPS Strategic Aims

- A1. to develop and improve assessment and thereby learning in practice settings for all health & social care students
- A2. to develop the competence of people who support and assess health and social care students in practice settings
- A3. to enhance the role of service-users and carers in assessment and learning in practice settings
- A4. to develop effective project management, evaluation and partnership working
- A5. to research and disseminate assessment practice
- A6. to respond to and influence national and international policy and culture in assessment

4. ALPS activity & progress

The following reports on the work which has taken place in ALPS' second year. The work is reported on with reference to the Strategic Aims and the Operational Plan. "Action points" are noted in bold for particular attention and action.

Common Competency Mapping (A1)

The first common competency of communications has been mapped by a team of professional and institutional representatives. The map has been the subject of a consultation across a range of assessors, and potential assessors, including academic and practice staff, students, service users and carers, and feedback has been used to refine the map. The process of this first mapping has been used as a template and the second competency of teamworking is currently being developed. Mapping ethical practice, which is seen as being slightly more complex, has started involving a student at York St John who is studying for a PhD in the same area, a consultant from a skills mapping organisation and colleagues from both the University of Leeds School of Medicine and the Interdisciplinary Ethics across Subjects CETL

Earlier challenges over whether ethical approval was required in order to consult stakeholders about the content of the map were overcome through discussions with the Advisory Board, chairs of research ethics approval committees at each of the partners and partner lead staff. It was agreed that ethical approval was not required for what was essentially curriculum development. However, the Core Team and partners have now a greater understanding of which ALPS' activities require ethical approval. In principle agreement has been reached with the chairs of partner ethical approval committees that once ethical approval has been obtained from one partner than a less resource intensive process might be adopted by the remaining four partners. A plan of engagement with chairs of NHS Research Ethics Committees is underway in order to facilitate the passage of COREC applications across the geographical spread of ALPS HEI project site.

Action points:

- **Complete all 3 common competency maps by the end of December 2007**
- **Work with partner ethical approval chairs to test the process for obtaining HEI approval**
- **Engage and work with chairs of NHS Research Ethics Committees to rationalise the process for obtaining COREC approval**

Assessment Tools (A1)

The Tools Working Group has been established to:

“synthesis(e) the evidence and information from ALPS Groups and Working Groups and start to produce a menu of tools to be used in supporting learning and assessment of common competences of health and social care students in practice which may be supported by the use of mobile technologies.”

Specifically, the Tools Working Group has agreed a draft definition of a “tool”, ie. a tool that is located with the student and offers a structure for peer, self, service user, carer, other professional and mentor/supervisor evaluation of their competence”. The Tools Working Group has agreed a number of principles with the Joint Management Group which will guide them as to the type of interprofessional assessment tool and its deployment. The group has undertaken a brief review of the literature. Tools will be trialled both in placement sites where two or more types of professions have student placements, and longitudinally across a variety of cohorts representing the various ALPS professions.

ALPS partners are working together to identify a range of practice placements in which students across the 16 professions are involved. Research of baselines of existing assessment practice is underway. The next baseline measure identified for a research stream is student competence and competence at graduation. Evaluative criteria for this will be developed in conjunction with the Research Strategy planned by the Research Group.

Action points:

- ***Identify a minimum of 2 ALPS tools and initiate trialling them across partner sites and a sample of professions***
- ***Revise tools according to feedback received from stakeholders***
- ***Continue engagement at a strategic level to ensure new tools are embedded into partner learning, teaching & assessment strategies***

Mobile technology and its architecture (A1, A2, A3, A4 & A5)

The purchase of the mobile technology “architecture”, one part of the capital expenditure programme is now complete. ALPS have entered into a contract with T Mobile who will provide PDAs (Personal Digital Assistants) and airtime which will support the students’ learning and assessment process whilst on placement. Additional services, assessment form generation for the PDAs and the technical infrastructure for the PDAs to “talk” to the partner institution IT systems, have also been purchased as part of the contract. Figure 1. shows the integration between ALPS’ systems and those of the partner institutions’.

Pilot projects identifying feasibility issues for the use of mobile technologies by students were undertaken last year and the result were fed back into the procurement process to ensure that user needs informed the decisions. The next stage of the IT implementation purchasing plan will involve the use of an assessment “form” available on the PDA for use by students in placement sites.

Action points:

- ***Work with Tools Working Group to develop assessment “forms” for use on PDAs***
- ***Work in conjunction with the Tools Working Group to implement first phase of student practice assessment using mobile technology***
- ***Work with partners to develop supporting technical infrastructure at each partner site***
- ***Continue engagement with partner IT strategists to ensure systems are embedded at local level***

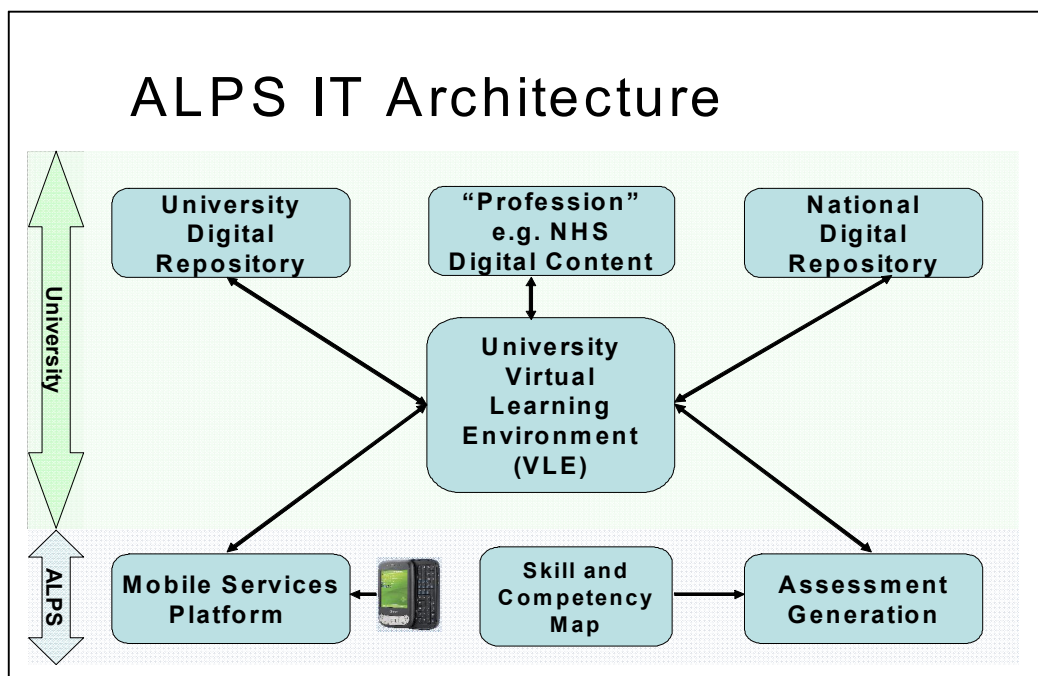


Figure 1. ALPS architecture

Research (A1, A2, A3, A4, A5 & A6)

The Research Strategy which was developed early in year 1 of ALPS is currently undergoing revision in order to bring it up to date with the progress of ALPS. The Baseline and Outlines Research working Group (BORG), a sub-group of the Research Group (see page 12), was established to look specifically at the baseline and outcomes of assessment tools. The Group have been tasked with identifying mechanisms for the measurement of validity and reliability of in-practice assessment. The Group were also instrumental in the establishment of graduate competence and confidence as a research stream (see "Assessment Tools" section above).

The E-evaluation Working Group has also been established. The E-evaluation Working Group is a sub group of both the Research Group and the IT Group. The E-evaluation Working Group is tasked with working to the Research Group's Terms of Reference with a particular focus as follows:

- assessment processes
- e-learning
- developing research relationships with mobile technology suppliers

A Research Interest Network has been established to facilitate sharing of research interests and ideas across the five partners. As part of this, a Research Network web page has been developed <http://www.alps-cetl.ac.uk/ResearchNetwork.htm>

This will hopefully develop in to a forum for research discussion and serve as a base for storing ALPS related research resources.

Progress has also been made on the ALPS 'line' on ethics, and a paper on this will be taken out to all Management and Working Groups shortly.

The University of Leeds School of Medicine contributed £50,000 to ALPS to be used to increase research capacity across the partnership and further the aims of ALPS. A call for proposals was announced and 12 were received. Disappointingly only 1 has been funded with a possible second proposal still being discussed. Few of the proposals were judged to be increasing research capacity, and in some cases were simply funding existing teaching activity. A second round is being considered, however, this is likely to include a workshop providing support on addressing the principles of the next ALPS call for proposals.

To address these issues it has been agreed to use some of the money to fund research capacity building workshops and seminars. We hope that these will help staff involved in ALPS to develop more suitable proposals which can be funded in the next round. We are also considering commissioning research to enhance the ALPS programme.

We are also pursuing a number of other collaborative research possibilities:

- Linking with PG training
- Patient education – nationally
- Patient education internationally via a European Framework Programme avenue

Actions points:

- ***Research Strategy to be updated by Research Group with support from Research Officer, and disseminated to all Groups***
- ***Each Group to use Research Strategy to identify strand or strands of research where their current work is focussed and to discuss research possibilities from within these***
- ***ALPS 'line' on ethics to be developed further, with consultation with COREC chairs and HEI ethics committee representatives***

Engagement with stakeholders (A1, A2, A3, A4, A5 & A6)

Following advice from the Advisory Board at their inaugural meeting a seminar was held with the Professional, Regulatory and Statutory Bodies (PSRBs) of the 16 ALPS professions. As well as outlining the work of ALPS PSRBs were invited to share their vision of interprofessional assessment. With interprofessional working high on their agenda the question was framed in order to engender engagement from the outset. PSRBs were receptive and contributed positively to the day. It was agreed that ALPS would work in "consultation" with the PSRBs and to meet annually. A second seminar is planned for September of this year where the challenges of interprofessional assessment will be discussed and how ALPS and PSRB might assess ethical practice across 16 health and social care professions.

Engagement with practice continues through partner dissemination including mentor update programmes. ALPS continues to work with Practice Learning Facilitators providing updates on ALPS work and a plan is underway to reach practice staff via the ALPS Bulletin using this network. Practice staff have been involved with developing the communications map and have been consulted on the draft map.

A Service User and Carer Working Group has been set up to develop and enhance the role of service users and carers in assessment and learning in practice settings. A dissemination and programme of engagement is underway. However, it should be noted that service users and carers are members of ALPS partner's curriculum development work, and in some cases, on the ALPS Partner Site Implementation Group. Service users are also represented on some ALPS Management Groups. Service user and carer views have been collected on the first common competency map and remain an integral part of the development plan for the tools and mobile technology work.

An additional post of Educational Staff Developer funded through the School of Medicine, University of Leeds, and shared with the Medical Education Unit has been appointed and will start work in developing training and support for student assessors from the ALPS stakeholder groups.

Students have been engaged with ALPS through the first mobile technology pilots and the common competency consultation exercise. Whilst the programme is still in the development stage (until the end of year three, March 2008) limited numbers of students will be engaged through involvement in initial mobile technology projects and through further competency map consultations. The subject of student involvement in ALPS has been the subject of debate and the general view is that whilst ALPS is in a developmental stage and because of limited

devices care must be taken not to set up expectations that all students will be involved in ALPS and receive a device. Again students are involved in partners' curriculum development work through existing arrangements and ALPS will continue to disseminate information to students as appropriate.

Actions points:

- ***Continue to incorporate the views of all stakeholders into further common competency maps***
- ***Involve stakeholder views in identifying ALPS "tools"***
- ***Use feedback from first stage of mobile technology assessment exercise to refine tools and performance of technology***

Monitoring & Evaluation (A4, A5 & A6)

The Interim Evaluation Report is required by HEFCE at the end of July 2007. The Monitoring & Evaluation Group have worked with an external facilitator in developing the ALPS evaluation strategy and building their own evaluation capacity. This answers key questions on what and how ALPS will evaluate. Partners have developed case studies showing the impact of ALPS on areas of activity in their institution. Evaluation of these case studies, for example understanding practice assessment processes between the ALPS professions and student engagement with ALPS via the IT pilot projects, is underway and will form evidence of impact at this half way stage of ALPS. Informal feedback from the external facilitator, who also has experience of evaluating learning and teaching projects, is that ALPS has made good progress in many areas but particularly in terms of collaborative working.

Action points:

- ***Submit the Interim Evaluation Report to HEFCE, reflect on learning points & review feedback***
- ***Continue to support ALPS staff in evaluating and reporting impact to stakeholders including their own institutions***

Capital expenditure (A1, A2, A3, A4, A5 & A6)

The deadline for capital expenditure which involved both partner refurbishment projects and the purchase of the mobile technology were completed on time. The use of capital expenditure for mobile technology was indeed innovative, the aims of the CETL programme, but not without problems. Both HEFCE and the institutional financial rules found it hard to accommodate the developmental aspect that such a programme of innovation would require. ALPS produced a project plan on how the funds would be used to develop the mobile architecture but allowed for flexibility as systems were tried and tested. However, financial rules from both parties required that much more definite information on purchases and performance were required. Extensive negotiations took place between the University of Leeds, HEFCE and ALPS on the risks involved and although we were successful in gaining support for the programme, it does demonstrate that the aims of the programme are not always aligned with existing business processes.

Similarly, discussions with HM Revenue & Customs finally resulted in ALPS securing eligibility for zero rated VAT. This was not a straightforward decision and took some negotiating both with Revenue & Customs and with the University of Leeds. However, the result was that whilst saving c£200,000 for ALPS, it has also set a precedent for the type of work we are involved in and is likely to benefit ALPS in future funding expenditure.

Capital expenditure has also been used to secure a hosting service on behalf of all the partners. The University of Bradford and ALPS will have confirmed the detail of this by the end of June. Gareth Frith who was employed by ALPS as the Mobile Technology Project Manager for year 2 and managed the procurement process has also been secured as a consultant for a further 2 years.

Action points:

- ***Feedback the ALPS experience of spending capital expenditure “innovatively” to HEFCE***
- ***Continue to work and engage with partner key financial personnel***

Management (A4 & A5)

The ALPS Strategic and Operational Plans were revised at the end of 2006 and the latter now runs through until July 2008. Apart from developing the programme of work the main point to note is:

the ALPS programme was divided into three Phases (1. descriptive & developmental, 2. transformative and 3. evaluative & embedding) and these ran consecutively. As ALPS is already beginning to transform practice and embed activities the Phases have been revised:

- Phase 1 Descriptive & Developmental – years 1 - 3
- Phase 2 Transformative – years 2 – 5
- Phase 3 Evaluative & Embedding – year 3 onwards

Partners were comfortable with extending Phase 1 in the light of the complex work involved in mapping and identifying tools. However, because all stages were seen to overlap and, in the case of Phases 2 and 3, were brought forward, this was confidently agreed.

The ALPS risk register has been updated through work at the Risk Assessment Group and is available as appendix g.

Dissemination activity continues through both partners and the Core Team. Dissemination is also an agenda item for all ALPS Management Groups and its importance is understood by all those involved in ALPS. The Dissemination & Impact Group is currently under review as a Management group and we are considering reforming it to have a more strategic approach to disseminating and linking with organisations to ensure sustainability of ALPS resources and processes.

Staff changes over the year have included the appointment of new Learning Development and Research Officers. The University of Leeds has also contributed a Project Officer 0.8fte (3 years), an Educational Development Officer 0.5fte (2 years) and additional contributions to salary top-ups. One member of staff will be taking maternity leave later this year and the funding required for this will need to be addressed immediately.

Action points:

- ***Ensure activities and milestones in the Operational Plan for year 3 are met***
- ***Ensure the ALPS risk register is updated and monitored***

ALPS Organisation & Reporting Structure (updated March 2007)

