

NET2021 Conference

Live session full abstracts

Theme Session 5A

Education in a global pandemic

5Ai, 10:30 - 12:20, 2 September 2021

Issues for debate paper

Transitioning assessment roles in Nursing: From research to reality

Dr Jan Royal-Fearn, University of Derby

Promotional abstract: This session will review prior research on practice-based assessment in Nursing to evaluate the impact of prior roles; the inherent difficulties of assessment in practice; and how clinical staff are supported as they transition into the new practice assessor role and work within the boundaries for the supervisor/assessor relationship.

Key concepts to be addressed, including, where possible, the international relevance:

This presentation will discuss post-doctoral work on the new role of the practice assessor during the transition from Sign off Mentor in the UK. It will aim to demonstrate ongoing work, developing strategic policy from the professional body into practice-level implementation and analysing challenges within the new roles.

This has wider impact for other healthcare professions and their practice-based assessment mechanisms, as roles may be split in future, reflecting the UK policy change in nursing and midwifery. It also resonates with multi-professional evidence identifying the need for robust assessment by clinical educators in practice-based learning.

Aim(s)/focus: New UK Nursing and Midwifery Council education standards separate roles into supervisor of learning and practice assessor (Nursing and Midwifery Council, 2018; Royal-Fearn, 2019a). This presentation evaluates the impact of prior roles, the difficulties of assessment in practice (Hunt, 2019) and how clinical staff are supported as they transition into the new roles and work within the supervisor/assessor relationship. Early evaluation will be included. Placement organisations and universities collaborate to ensure students, staff and educators are all clear on the assessment process. Supporting clinical staff is pivotal to the current student experience and future protection of the public.

Evidence base and literature informing the arguments: Research shows assessment of Nursing students in clinical placements is fraught with difficulty (Duffy, 2003; Hunt *et al.*, 2016; Royal-Fearn, 2017). Personal characteristics that impact on the assessor role have been identified (Black, Curzio & Terry, 2014; Hunt, 2019). This is not just a nursing and midwifery issue, with evidence showing the quality of educator support and assessment impacts on the individual students and programme retention in other healthcare programmes too (Naylor, 2019). As new roles are introduced we need to work collaboratively to ensure students and educators are supported, but at a time when policy has reduced the prescribed standard of what is required for the role (NMC, 2018) and assessment structures change as new programmes are introduced (Royal-Fearn 2019b), it may be difficult to maintain quality in the assessment process during the transition.

Issues for debate: Strategic work, led by the presenter, on integrated approaches across multiple universities in England will be discussed. This aimed to increase the reliability of assessment decisions for Nursing students in placement and ensure a consistent approach to the transition for mentors to supervisors and assessors. Early evaluation of new roles, introduced in 2019 will be included. Without clarity the profession is at risk, and ultimately patient safety is affected, if students qualify who have not been assessed using an objective evidence-based approach (NMC, 2018).

Three key points to indicate how your work contributes to knowledge development within the selected theme:

- Maintaining the quality of practice assessment through transition.
- Partnership working across practice partners and education providers.
- Impact and practice-based learning considerations for healthcare professions.

References:

Black, S., Curzio, J. & Terry, L. (2014) 'Failing a student nurse: A new horizon of moral courage.' *Nursing Ethics*, 21(2), 224–238.

Duffy, K. (2003) 'Failing Students: a qualitative study of factors that influence the decisions regarding assessment of students' competence in practice.' Glasgow Caledonian University. Available at:

<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.515.2467&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

Hunt, L., McGee, P., Gutteridge, R. & Hughes, M. (2016) 'Failing Securely: The processes and support which underpin English nurse mentors' assessment decisions regarding underperforming students.' *Nurse Education Today*, 39, 79-86.

Hunt, L. (2019) 'Developing a 'core of steel': the key attributes of effective practice assessors.' *British Journal of Nursing*, 28(22), 1478-1484.

Naylor, S. (2019) 'Right place right Now'. *Imaging and Theory Practice*, 2019, 12, 1-14.

Nursing and Midwifery Council (2018) *Standards for Student Supervision and Assessment*. Nursing and Midwifery Council. London.

Royal-Fearn, J. (2017) 'What impact has the introduction of the ongoing achievement record and sign off mentor had on the robustness of mentors' assessment practices?' Ed D Thesis. University of Nottingham. Available at: <http://eprints.nottingham.ac.uk/40845/>.

Royal-Fearn, J. (2019a) 'Separating the mentor role brings risks and opportunities.' *Nursing Times* (online) 24 June 2019. Available at: <https://www.nursingtimes.net/opinion/separating-the-mentor-role-brings-risks-and-opportunities/7029413.article>

Royal-Fearn, J. (2019b) Web Based Mentor Update for Pan Midlands, Yorkshire and East Practice Learning Group. Available at: <https://www.myeplg.ac.uk/core-mentor-updates.aspx>.

Keywords: Practice Assessment, Partnerships, Quality Process.

5Aii, 10:30 - 12:20, 2 September 2021

Research paper

Being a 'Practical Assessment SatNav': How should we equip Academic Assessors for their role?

Dr Louise Hunt, De Montfort University

Promotional abstract: Practitioners have identified that they find a person more helpful and supportive than written resources when they are managing a struggling student in a practice placement. Some have coined this person as their 'Practical Assessment Sat Nav' (Hunt *et al.*, 2016). With this in mind the UK Nursing and Midwifery Council (2018) have introduced the role of Academic Assessor. This paper examines the insights, knowledge and skills Academic Assessors need to be effective supporters to both students and their practice colleagues, particularly in relation to managing the emotionally charged situation of failing a student.

Background, including underpinning literature and, wherever possible, the international relevance of the research: It has long been recognised that those who assess students in practice can be reluctant to fail those who do not reach the required standard (Duffy, 2003). Recent publications indicate that this remains an ongoing, international concern across vocational professions (North *et al.*, 2019). Practitioners indicate that they need a human 'SatNav' to support them in assessing robustly (Hunt *et al.*, 2016). In response the NMC (2018) Standards for Student Supervision and Assessment have introduced the Academic Assessor role, with the intent of supporting practical assessment processes, to ensure that no-one gets onto the Register who should not be there.

Aim(s) and/or research question(s)/research hypothesis(es): Aim: to explore the actions and circumstances which had satisfactorily enabled mentors to fail an under-performing student nurse. Research question: How can mentors best be supported when managing struggling students and making difficult practical assessment decisions about such students? Emergent question from the Grounded Theory iterative approach: What activities and roles does a "Practical Assessment SatNav" fulfil that make them so valued by practitioners?

Research methodology/research design, any ethical issues, and methods of data collection and analysis: This study employed an interpretivist Grounded Theory approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Thirty-one nurses, from all four fields of practice, who had failed a student in a practical assessment, were recruited to the study from across England. Ethical considerations took account of the need for informed consent and confidentiality, and supportive resources were provided to participants. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and transcribed verbatim. The data were analysed using the iterative processes of Grounded Theory working through open, intermediate and theoretical coding; theoretical saturation and integration to build a theory of Failing Securely.

Key findings and recommendations:

1. Managing struggling students in placements is an emotionally charged situation for both practitioners and students.
2. Practitioners who are assessing students want people who are knowledgeable about practical assessment to support them rather than being directed to written resources.
3. Those who offer such face-to-face support are seen as 'Practical Assessment SatNavs' because they navigate practical assessors through all the perceived

blockages in the assessment process. Hence, human 'SatNavs' are highly regarded and valued by practitioners.

4. 'Practical Assessment SatNavs' are recognised as being able to provide four types of support: emotional; instrumental, informational and appraisal.
5. Academic Assessors need to be equipped to provide all four of these supportive elements in order to function effectively as the 'Practical Assessment SatNav'. This will help Practice Assessors to feel secure in both their assessment role and their assessment decisions.

Three key points to indicate how your work contributes to knowledge development within the selected theme: This work identifies that:

1. The Academic Assessor role must be introduced sensitively so that to practice partners understand it as a supportive role in ensuring fair and robust assessment rather than perceiving it as University blocker.
2. Academic Assessors need to be equipped for their role. It should not be assumed that they already have the necessary skills, knowledge and role awareness to fulfil the requirements placed upon them, particularly when supporting struggling students and their assessors.
3. There are four key elements of support which Academic Assessors must be prepared to provide: Emotional, instrumental, informational and appraisal.

References:

Corbyn, J. & Strauss, A. (2015) *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*. 4th Ed. Thousand Oakes: Sage.

Duffy, K. (2003) *Failing Students: A qualitative study of the factors that influence the decisions regarding assessment of students' competence in practice*. London: NMC. Online. Available at:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/251693467_Failing_Students_A_Qualitative_Study_of_Factors_that_Influence_the_Decisions_Regarding_Assessment_of_Students'_Competence_in_Practice [Accessed 21/02/2020].

Hunt, L., McGee, P., Gutteridge, R. & Hughes, M. (2016) 'Failing Securely: The Processes and Support Which Underpin English Nurse Mentors' Assessment Decisions Regarding Under-performing Students.' *Nurse Education Today*, 39 (2016) 79-86. doi: 10.1016/j.nedt.2016.01.011.

Nursing and Midwifery Council (2018) *Standards for Student Supervision and Assessment*. London: NMC. Available at: <https://www.nmc.org.uk/standards-for-education-and-training/standards-for-student-supervision-and-assessment/> [Accessed 21/02/2020].

North, H., Kennedy, M. & Wray, J. (2019) 'Are mentors failing to fail underperforming student nurses? An integrative literature review.' *British Journal of Nursing*, 8(4) 250-255. doi: 10.12968/bjon.2019.28.4.250.

Keywords: Practical Assessment, Academic Assessor, PracticeAssessor, Clinical Competence, Failure to Fail.

5Aiii, 10:30 - 12:20, 2 September 2021

Research paper

An evaluation of online examinations and remote proctoring for Pre-Registration Nursing students

Dr Claire Ford, Dr Laura Park, Claire Leader and Susan Chilton, Northumbria University

Promotional abstract: One of the current challenges faced by higher education institutions during the COVID-19 pandemic is concerning the transition from traditional face-to-face supervised assessments to online examinations. To overcome this challenge, Northumbria University utilised a remote proctoring service provided by Honorlock, to supervise online unseen examinations and assess undergraduate Nursing students. This research study aims to evaluate the online exam proctoring process by exploring students' perceptions, and the knowledge gained will influence how online proctoring assessments are implemented and used in higher education post-pandemic.

Background, including underpinning literature and, wherever possible, the international relevance of the research: Honorlock is a service that provides on-demand online exam proctoring (Honorlock, 2021). It is created to detect activity that may suggest academic misconduct and is deemed as a secure solution that is currently used globally by programmes outside of Nursing Education (Iyer, Aziz & Ojcius, 2020; Purpura, Davoodifard & Voss, 2021). The examinations within this study were held on virtual learning and education platforms; therefore, students were required to have access to a laptop or PC, with access to both webcam and microphone. Only students who did not have the required resources to undertake the exam at home, or where reasonable adjustments were required, were allocated space on campus to undertake the exam.

Aim(s) and/or research question(s)/research hypothesis(es): Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic and enforced lockdown restrictions it has not been possible for traditional face-to-face examinations. Alternative assessment methods have therefore needed to be utilised and additional steps taken to ensure high-quality assessment and examination standards. Due to the Professional Statutory Regulatory Body requirements for Nursing students, one necessary step taken during the pandemic was to ensure that alternative assessment strategies, exams, were appropriately supervised. This research study aims to evaluate and explore the use of remote proctoring services for online unseen exams and how changing assessment strategies have impacted undergraduate Nursing students during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Research methodology/research design, any ethical issues, and methods of data collection and analysis: A realistic evaluation approach, which seeks to explore and examine the workings and benefits of interventions (Pawson & Tilley, 1997; Graham & McAleer, 2018) was applied to evaluate students' perspectives on the acceptability of the online exam and the use of Honorlock. An online survey was sent to all students who were aligned to the respective modules. The survey aimed to assess a baseline level of self-reported IT competency and to explore students' views on the practicality of online exams using Honorlock. Using thematic analysis, evaluation results will demonstrate whether this mode of assessment is feasible and desirable for future examinations post-pandemic.

Key findings and recommendations: Data collection and analysis is scheduled for April with a view to complete the study by August 2021. Analysis of data has not yet begun, however, it is anticipated that useful information will emerge from the survey which includes, enabling education providers to understand the key barriers and facilitating the transition and implementation of online assessments into future Nursing programmes.

Three key points to indicate how your work contributes to knowledge development within the selected theme:

- Post-pandemic healthcare may look very different with more examinations and assessments being conducted remotely, as this reduces the need for physical invigilators and reduces staff workload.
- Face-to-face interactions and real-world testing are still important, especially for professional Pre-Registration programmes. Therefore, care needs to be taken to ensure it is only used for the most appropriate examination types i.e. short answer examinations.
- As students are not all technologically savvy, comprehensive preparation and practice must be included within the examination strategy, to help reduce anxieties associated with taking examinations as well as the added stress associated with using new technology.

References:

Graham, A.C. & McAleer, S. (2018) 'An overview of realist evaluation for simulation-based education.' *Advances in Simulation*, 3(13), 1-8.

Honorlock (2021) About us. Available at: <https://honorlock.com/about-us/> [Accessed: 10 March, 2021].

Iyer, P., Aziz, K. & Ojcius, D.M. (2020) 'Impact of COVID-19 on dental education in the United States.' *Journal of Dental Education*, 84(6), 718-722.

Pawson, R. & Tilley, N. (1997) *Realistic Evaluation*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Purpura, J., Davoodifard, M. & Voss, E. (2021) 'Conversion to Remote Proctoring of the Community English Language Program Online Placement Exam at Teachers College, Columbia University.' *Language Assessment Quarterly*, 18(1), 42-50.

Keywords: Remote Proctoring Services, Technology Enhanced Learning, Undergraduate Nursing, University Examinations, COVID-19.

5Aiv, 10:30 - 12:20, 2 September 2021

Research paper

Student assessment experience during a global pandemic

Alastair Tomlinson, Cardiff Metropolitan University

Promotional abstract: Many institutions adopted blended learning strategies in 2020-21: greatly reduced on-campus activity, most teaching through 'live' online sessions and asynchronous learning activities. Assessment strategies were modified to a much lesser extent. Yet assessment is a critical driver of student learning. This session investigates how blended learning in a pandemic shaped student experiences of assessment. Findings from the study explore how changes to learning and teaching during the pandemic have influenced the student experience of assessment and feedback, including comparison of 2020-21 experiences to those before the pandemic. How can we maximise the positive aspects of blended learning on assessment?

Background, including underpinning literature and, wherever possible, the international relevance of the research: The global COVID-19 pandemic has affected all aspects of society, higher education being no exception. Like many institutions, Cardiff Metropolitan University adopted a blended learning approach in 2020-21: greatly reduced on-campus activity, most teaching through 'live' online sessions and asynchronous learning

activities. Assessment strategies were modified to a much lesser extent, although a 'no-detriment' policy was introduced. Yet assessment is a critical driver of student learning (Biggs & Tang, 2011), and improving student learning from assessment requires an evidence-led approach (Jessop & Tomas, 2017). How has blended learning in a pandemic shaped student experiences of assessment?

Aim(s) and/or research question(s)/research hypothesis(es): The study aims to answer this research question: How has the COVID-19 pandemic, including the University's response, affected the assessment experiences of students on the BSc (Hons) Environmental Health and MSc Applied Public Health programmes, in 2020-21?

The study investigates the following aspects of the issue:

- What formative and summative assessments have taken place in these programmes? What changes were made due to COVID-19?
- How have students perceived and experienced assessment and feedback on these programmes in 2020-21?
- For students who were also enrolled in 2019-20, how do their experiences before the pandemic compare to their experiences this academic year?

Research methodology/research design, any ethical issues, and methods of data collection and analysis: We used the mixed-methods TESTA methodology (Jessop, El Hakim & Gibbs, 2014), comprising:

- Audit of formative and summative assessment methods in the curriculum.
- Anonymous survey asking students questions about their views on assessment and feedback in 2020-21, and where relevant, before the pandemic.
- Focus groups with students from each year on each programme, exploring their experience of assessment, feedback, study habits, and how these experiences have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Qualitative and quantitative findings are triangulated to present case studies of the assessment experience and patterns of student learning on each programme during a global pandemic.

Key findings and recommendations: Data collection is taking place during March 2021, so we cannot confirm key findings at the time of this submission. Analysis will be conducted in April/May, and the project completed by July 2021. The findings and case studies will be based around:

- Summary of audit findings: defining the cohort and key features of the 2020-21 'planned curriculum'.
- Quantitative analysis of student perceptions of five factors relevant to assessment: how students learn, internalisation of standards, quality of feedback, student effort, and formative assessment (overall findings for 2020-21, comparisons between year groups, comparison between 2020-21 and 'pre-COVID').
- Thematic analysis of students' voiced experiences of assessment and feedback in 2020-21, providing rich understanding and insight into how COVID-19 and the University's response has influenced how students experience and undertake assessment, and context for the audit and survey findings.

Blended learning seems certain to remain part of provision beyond the pandemic. Without pre-judging eventual findings, we anticipate that the case studies will allow contextualisation of important influences on student assessment and learning during the pandemic,

developing our understanding of how blended learning approaches have been experienced. Recommendations will focus on maximising positive aspects of blended learning whilst minimising adverse effects experienced by some/all students.

Three key points to indicate how your work contributes to knowledge development within the selected theme:

- How changes to learning and teaching during the pandemic have influenced the student experience of assessment and feedback.
- Comparison of 2020-21 assessment experiences to those before the pandemic.
- How to maximise positive aspects of blended learning, whilst minimising adverse effects that some students may experience.

References:

Biggs, J. & Tang, C. (2011) *Teaching for Quality Learning at University*. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill Education.

Jessop, T., El Hakim, Y. & Gibbs, G. (2014) 'TESTA in 2014: a way of thinking about assessment and feedback.' *Educational Developments*, 15(2), 21–24.

Jessop, T. & Tomas, C. (2017) 'The implications of programme assessment patterns for student learning.' *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 42(6), 990–999. doi: 10/gdqbzp.

Keywords: Assessment, Student Experience, Blended Learning.

5Av, 2 September 2021, 10:30 - 12:20

Poster+

OSCEs in a pandemic

Margaret Bannister and Sarah Partington, University of Bradford

Promotional abstract: The consistency of assessment and marking via OSCE delivery using manikins and video recordings of examinations and history taking via zoom with a service user and its reflection of clinical practice moving forward is explored in this poster.

Main focus/theme of, or issues addressed by, the poster: Advanced physical clinical examination and clinical decision making is core in the preparation of advanced clinical practitioners (ACP). Objective structured clinical examination (OSCE) is a key assessment to learning strategy and a core ACP assessment as stipulated by the RCN (2010) (Race, 2019). Traditional delivery of OSCEs is personnel intensive and involves multiple person-to-person contacts which during the COVID-19 pandemic was not allowed. To ensure robust and rigorous assessment, rather than remove the OSCEs an alternative approach to delivery using manikins and video recordings of examinations and history taking via zoom with a service user was developed.

Research approaches and underlying evaluation: Positive feedback from students was received stating they felt less stressed by the process of undertaking the OSCEs than in other modules and contrasts with previous feedback from students who found the traditional format of moving from case to case and time that involved exacerbated their stress levels. The OSCE pass rate at the first attempt was improved following rigorous marking by a consistent marking team of experience ACPs with extensive second consideration and external examiner review previously not possible.

Implications for healthcare education: Remote video consultation for the history-taking component of the examination echoes the 'real life' consultations that, due to the pandemic

have become the norm (Rimmer, 2020). Practitioners need to be able to build a rapport, elicit information and pick-up subtle clues from patients via a computer screen rather than through direct observation and physical contact (NHS England, 2020). For most services remote consultations are here to stay and therefore our future workforce needs the skills and expertise to consult in this manner.

References:

NHS England (2020) Using Online Consultations in Primary Care. Available at: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/online-consultations-implementation-toolkit-v1.1-updated.pdf> [Accessed 9.3.2021].

Race, P. (2019) *Lecturer's Toolkit: A Practical Guide to assessment, learning and teaching*. 5th edition. Routledge.

RCN (2010) *Advanced Nurse Practitioners - an RCN guide to the advanced nurse practitioner role, competences and programme accreditation*. London. RCN.

Rimmer, A. (2020) 'I do not feel confident providing remote consultations. What do I need to know?' *British Medical Journal*, 369, m1746.

Keywords: Assessment, OSCE, Video, COVID-19.