



The Pharmacy Experiential Learning Database (PELD)

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The Pharmacy Experiential Learning Database (PELD) is the first stage of a project involving The University of South Australia, The University of Sydney and The University of Queensland. By making an online repository of collaboratively developed learning and assessment tasks available to pharmacy teachers and preceptors, this stage aims to provide a platform for improvement in the planning and delivery of pharmacy experiential learning throughout Australasia.

Context

A 2007 Carrick Institute funded (now Australian Learning and Teaching Council – ALTC) project [1] established a need for the development of

- a national repository of learning and assessment activities suitable for experiential placements in Pharmacy;
- standardised developmental descriptors related to competencies for university students at the novice and advanced beginner levels;
- quality experiential placement success indicators in relation to preceptors, students, university, site and overall environment

Further ALTC funding has been provided for a follow-up project, “Outcomes-based planning, graduated descriptors and quality indicators for pharmacy experiential placements,” allowing us to proceed with these developments. The Pharmacy Experiential Learning Database represents the outcomes-based planning aspect of the project.

Website address

The PELD is located at <http://peu.pharm.usyd.edu.au/peld>

Collaborative development process

Site content is developed collaboratively using an educational model and activity template also developed in the earlier project [1], building on Kolb’s experiential learning cycle [2]. The activity template follows the principle of alignment of the learning outcomes, learning activities and evidence of learning within the placement situation, with pre-placement activities also being outlined. It focuses on the responsibilities of the student, preceptor and academic in the experiential learning process. The collaborative development of repository content is initiated in workshops around Australia, involving academics, students and representatives of professional bodies. Using wiki-like functionality, the content is then available for editing by repository users before publishing.

On the PELD website, unauthenticated users can browse short descriptions of published activities. Pharmacy academics, professional representatives and students who are signed up to the site are able to download and use activities according to their role: academic, preceptor or student. Activity-specific

evaluation forms provide ongoing evaluation of each experiential activity's effectiveness in enhancing student competency, and guide continuing improvement of both the activities and the PELD site as a whole.

Iterative site development

The use of the Drupal modular open-source content management system has afforded an iterative approach to site development, with continual improvement of the PELD driven by user feedback both at workshops and via the online feedback functionality. The expansion of the site currently being undertaken will incorporate the PELD into a larger online presence, also encompassing the second and third stages of the project: the standardised descriptors and the quality indicators for experiential placements.

Early outcomes

There are over seventy pharmacy academics and professionals enrolled on the PELD as contributors, editors and users. The site currently contains ten published activities, and a further three are currently in the editorial process. The published activities are related to patient counselling, individual reflection on a group project, dispensing, inter-professional learning, over-the-counter products and medication management review. In addition, there is a strong reflective component to all activities. The development of the database will continue at further workshops planned for late 2009 and early 2010.

The activities have been mapped to the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia's *Competency Standards for Pharmacists in Australia*[3] and work is proceeding on relating the activities to the project's standardised graduated developmental descriptors.

Endnotes

1. Owen, Susanne & Stupans, Ieva (2008). *Experiential Placements in Pharmacy: 'Quality Indicators for Best Practice Approaches to Experiential Placements in Pharmacy Programs'*
http://www.altc.edu.au/system/files/resources/grants_report_DS6-608%20Stupans%20pharmacy%20Final%20Report.pdf (accessed 5 October 2009)
2. Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as a source of learning and development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall
3. <http://www.psa.org.au/site.php?id=643>

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