

Moving midwifery placements online

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Chosen theme(s)

Professional learning and accreditation

The context

Midwifery students are required to meet the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council (ANMAC) National Competency Standards in Midwifery and midwifery and nursing programs have to demonstrate capacity for students to meet these standards through a process of course accreditation against the Education Standards for Courses Leading to Registration. Teaching institutions commonly use these education standards as frameworks for their clinical practice assessment and documentation tools for students, ensuring that each student meets the requirements of the program before entry into the profession. Therefore, documentation of placement hours, activities undertaken while on placement, and assessment of skills and competencies form an essential component of the clinical placement of midwifery education programs across the country.

How it was ...

Previous processes involved the distribution, collection, filling in and validation of many paper-based forms and documentation of activities in a student-held bound workbook. Records of each placement were then transcribed into a paper-based form that was stored in the student file. Verification of the various assessments was undertaken at the time of completion of each placement and again prior to course completion in order to confirm that each student had met the education standards as outlined by the ANMAC accreditation process. Issues:



- physical handling of the large volume of forms was cumbersome
- paperwork could be lost or misplaced
- version control was difficult
- storage problems including retrieval
- confirmation of completion of placement was reliant on student submission of the placement form
- potential for falsification of records as students took possession of the form after the completion by the clinical educators
- academic administrators had challenges managing student records and monitoring clinical learning at external sites
- all participants acknowledged the current paper process was not ideal

The approach

We initially ran a pilot with first year students of the Bachelor of Nursing / Bachelor of Midwifery, La Trobe University using an on-line version of the existing reporting form. Participants included 70 students, 20 Clinical facilitators (from 5 different hospitals) and 5 La Trobe academic staff. The following outline the key steps undertaken:

1. Initial consultation with staff
2. Developed a project plan.
Who, what, how, when and Why
3. Identified parameters/requirements for a pilot
4. The form was migrated to a PebblePad Workbook
5. Draft demonstrated for feedback
6. Workbook modified based on feedback
7. Testing as a student, clinical facilitator and LTU Staff
8. Training to Clinical facilitators, including demonstration video and documentation
9. Orientation to students, including demonstration video and documentation
10. Created a support forum within the LMS for discussion around issues
11. Review pilot
12. Modify processes based on review feedback for next iteration

Example Workbook

<https://v3.pebblepad.com.au/alt/latrobe/Asset/View/yqqhw77jhWjc9srbhZ3tznnwzc>

How it is now

Placements were conducted from November 2013 through to February 2014. Of the 70 students in the pilot, 67 used PebblePad for the completion of the placement workbook. Only three were unable to use the PebblePad at the time of completion of their placement and their issues related to access to the system (these were able to be resolved with simple IT assistance once the issue was raised with the appropriate support staff).



The benefits

Feedback from students, Clinical Facilitators and Midwifery Academics has been positive and the majority of participants have reported the format to be easy to use.

Using PebblePad has placed the onus of the clinical reporting process onto the student. The design of the workbook requires that students have completed their documentation prior to their assessment meeting with their clinical facilitator. This has ensured that facilitators have the information necessary to complete their workbook, and has reduced the number of incomplete workbooks coming to the University.

Given the widespread acceptance of the tool amongst clinical facilitators, it is planned to roll the tool out across the program in 2014. Minor modifications are being made based on facilitator and academic feedback.

The capacity of this format for clinical reporting has great potential for the recording and reporting on clinical placements within the program. Ideally, students could have one 'master' tool that is cumulative throughout their program, and each workbook could feed into this 'master'. This allows a tracking or progression using a single workbook rather than using multiple workbooks. This would also provide access to comments from other facilitators when meeting with the student for the first time, which becomes invaluable when students are located in a different setting from their normal placement allocation.

Other perceived efficiencies include:

- Student access to records when required for application for employment (currently managed by requesting copies to be made of paper based reports)
- Monitoring of Clinical Facilitators and students by LTU Staff
- Data collection
- Ready access of progress reports required by the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council Accreditation
- Storage and retrieval of data/workbooks
- Opportunities to action identified skills gaps and record progress
- Opportunities to facilitate self-directed learning using evidence portfolio
- Opportunity to support personal learning



Lessons learnt

- The existing form was not difficult to convert to an online version
- Staff saw the value of an online version immediately
- Clinical sites were a potential problem for accessing PebblePad and needed checking. Equally, access to computers in the clinical environment can be problematic. Ideally, the completion of the workbook should accompany a dialogue between student and facilitator. Ensuring the workbook is compatible with mobile technology could improve access with minimal cost to organisations.
- Involve staff throughout the process
- Develop a prototype early and demonstrate for feedback
- Test early and test as much as possible
- Based on this case study, we have created a reusable development methodology for other Health Science PebblePad projects
- The experience of this pilot has identified a great potential for these workbooks using PebblePad. The capacity for linking of workbooks into a 'master document' would be advantageous in streamlining the ongoing data that is required throughout the students' course of study. This could then be easily accessed for reporting.

In brief

- Students are encouraged to take responsibility for evidence gathering
- Staff are considering how they can take action for students who are not meeting the standards
- Students have an electronic record of their personal individual progress of their learning
- Students are encouraged to have a personal evidence portfolio based on learning activities

