



OPALBU News

Online Practice Assessment *for* Learning at Bournemouth University

November 2014
**Pre-Registration Nursing
and Midwifery**

IN THIS ISSUE : INTRODUCING OPAL

Introducing **OPAL (Online Practice Assessment for Learning)**

Portfolios for practice learning and assessment form a significant element of health care courses to support students preparing for professional practice in the School of Health and Social Care at Bournemouth University. The tripartite relationship between the student, the university and our practice partners is fundamental for supporting student learning and assessment in practice and assuring our students' fitness for practice.

The development of an Online Practice Assessment for Learning (OPAL) tool – www.opalbu.com - has been gathering pace following the successful launch of the project to placement providers on 11th July 2014. At the event, the Dean of the School, Professor Gail Thomas, explained that Bournemouth University are working with Axia Interactive Media to develop a series of profession specific online portfolios that will initially be used to support all the nursing and midwifery courses, and eventually to support other health care course within the School of Health and Social Care. Axia have experience in the area of on line portfolios, including developing and supporting a similar approach to undergraduate pre-registration practice assessment at Southampton University.

How will the OPAL portfolio differ to what is currently in use?

The practice assessment, competencies and grading structures will remain the same as those currently approved. The difference will be in the way the assessment is modified to work within an online format. The main difference is the shift from print to online. This is in keeping with current trends in both our personal and professional lives, where we are increasingly using online approaches to record and store information. The main difference will be how mentors, students and tutors access the practice assessment records. Rather than needing to have the print document to make an assessment, record learning, or review progress, access is flexible through the dedicated and secure online portal. The mentor will be able to access the assessment documentation at any point and any time during the placement to review, record and assess the student. Similarly, tutors will be able to see how the student is progressing during a placement without having to wait for the print document to be brought to University.

The online portfolio and assessment can be carried out using a wide range of devices such as smart phone and tablet computers, as well as PCs, so all users have more flexibility and freedom to use the portfolio. OPALBU supports access using a range of devices that have internet access and we have been working with organizations' IT departments to ensure the portal is recognized as a bone-fide site.

Will this change affect all students?

Firstly, students who commenced their course using the print based practice assessment will continue with the print format. Secondly we do not underestimate the scale of this task and therefore are using a phased approach to implementation, starting with two courses in the first year. The roll-out begins with BSc (Hons) Midwifery/PGDip Midwifery students (Bournemouth campus) in November 2014, with BSc (Hons) Adult Nursing students and a second group of student midwives (Portsmouth campus) starting in Spring 2015. The plan is for Mental Health Nursing and Children and Young Peoples Nursing to start using OPAL from September 2015.

Who has been involved and can I get involved?

During August and September 2014, a number of students and mentors have road tested OPALBU (each professional group has their own portfolio) and changes made. We have just completed the first phase of testing with a group of NHS education staff who have signed up to be OPALBU champions. These champions will be involved in the development of a series of guides for mentors. The guides will be disseminated through mentor updates and via www.opalbu.com.

If you are interested in the project and would like to get more information, or be more involved, please contact one of the BU project team. Further roadshows and events linked to mentor conferences and updates will include OPALBU project discussion and updates. Details of these events will be published through the BU practice assessors' web site.

Contact the BU Project Team:

Project Manager: Gabriela Macauley gmacauley@bournemouth.ac.uk

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Websites:

www.opalbu.com

<http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/hsc/placements.html>

The practice assessors web site requires registration and after 24 hours gives free access to multiple BU resources for mentors, available at www.bournemouth.ac.uk/practiceassessor