**IPL WWO Assessment article.**

## Introduction

In the first decade of the 21ˢᵗ century, policies about the perceived value of interprofessional education and learning became evident (DH, 2000; DH, 2001; DH, 2005). Within higher education institutions (HEIs), it is important to define what is meant by interprofessional education (IPE) and interprofessional learning (IPL). The definition of IPE adopted at this HEI is that provided by The Centre for Advancement of Interprofessional Education (CAIPE), they describe IPE as occurring when two or more professions learn with, from and about one another to improve collaboration and quality of care (CAIPE, 2002). This definition is used to inform and adapt the curricula within which IPL takes place.

This article describes and evaluates the assessment used for one of the IPL modules delivered at our university to first year health and social care students. The module is entitled 'IPL - Working with Others'. In total there were 320 students enrolled on the module from the following professional groups; adult nursing, child health nursing, mental health nursing, midwifery, social work, operating department practice, diagnostic radiography and therapeutic radiography.

This module introduces the principles of interprofessional working, contextualising each student's growing professional identity within the broader interprofessional arena. The aim of the module is for the student to engage in effective professional relationships with colleagues and service users.

For the delivery and the assessment of the module students were divided into interprofessional groups with eight students in each group. All group members were purposefully selected to ensure a good interprofessional mix in each group, so students were allocated into groups manually to ensure that as many different professions were represented in each of the groups. At the start of the module the groups were provided with

a case study of a service user who came into contact with several different health and social care professionals during their case pathway.  The students had to work together to produce a group poster, based on the case study and were then required to defend their poster as a group, answering  questions from two assessors about their poster and their learning experience.  See Figure 1 for the assessment criteria for the group poster and the presentation.

*Figure 1:  Assessment criteria for the group poster and presentation*

| POSTER | |
| --- | --- |
| **Assessment Criterion** | **Weighting** |
| Demonstrate the complexity of delivering effective service user centred care in an interprofessional environment | **15%** |
| Present the information on the poster clearly and logically, using professional language | **15%** |
| Produce a poster that contains appropriate original, visual material, annotated appropriately | **10%** |
| Produce work which demonstrates presentation, grammatical and referencing skills consistent with level 4 criteria. | **10%** |
| **POSTER DEFENCE** | |
| Discuss the issues relating to working within an interprofessional team | **15%** |
| Articulate the challenges of delivering effective service user care in an interprofessional environment | **15%** |
| Understand the roles of the professions represented in their  group and in the given case study | **10%** |
| Reflect on their own practice and understand their role within the interprofessional team | **10%** |

This group presentation lasted for 20 minutes and ensured that all members of the group met the learning outcomes of the module which can be seen in Figure 2.  The interprofessional groups provided a 'real' experience of working together and understanding one another's roles in context (CAIPE, 2002).

*Figure 2:  Aims and Learning Outcomes for the module*

| **AIMS** |
| --- |
| 1.    To develop an understanding of their own professional identity. |
| 2.    To develop an awareness of each other's role within the interprofessional team. |
| 3.    To understand the importance of interprofessional communication and team working. |

4. To appreciate the complexity of delivering effective service user centred care in an interprofessional environment.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Upon successful completion of this module, the student will be able to: -

1. Understand their role within the professional team
2. Learn from and about other professionals.
3. Demonstrate the fundamental communication skills and principles necessary to facilitate effective relationships with colleagues from different professional groups and to care for service users.
*4.* Reflect on their own practice within the interprofessional team.

The contributions of individual students in terms of materials, information and draft documentation were made available to the markers via a Wiki. The Wiki allowed for tracking of contributions made by individual students, and the assessors and other group members could see how much each student had put onto the Wiki. A final electronic version of the poster was submitted which contributed to the grade awarded. The group's poster and defence were assessed with overall feedback provided to the group as a whole. As an integral part of the interprofessional learning the group members engaged in a discussion with their peers and the assessors in order to evaluate their own and others contribution to the poster and presentation. This discussion was taken into account by the markers alongside the evidence of contributions to the work via the Wiki when allocating the final grade for each individual student. For example, in some groups there were individual students who had contributed more than others and so the group decided that they should be awarded a higher mark. There were also some students who it was felt had contributed less to the assessment and therefore the group awarded them a lower grade.

*Literature review*

A search of the literature was carried out using the search terms 'interprofessional', 'assessment' and 'working together'.

Since 2000, there has been a lot written about IPL in pre-registration education within health and social care.  Writers have focussed on the impact of IPE on team working and stereotyping (Ateah *et al.*, 2010; Bell and Allain, 2011).

It has been difficult to quantify the long term impact of IPL on interprofessional working in practice (Cooper *et al.*, 2001; Hammick *et al.*, 2007; Lapkin *et al.*, 2013).  However, it is acknowledged that IPL should have a positive effect on practice and the way in which health and social care professionals work together. The principle of IPE is that if health and social care students learn together then they should be better prepared for interprofessional team work in the practice environment which should lead to improved care of the service user (Barr *et al.*, 2005).

This needs to start in the university setting for students to ensure that IPL improves the safety of service users through improving communication and collaboration between professionals (Barr and Low, 2012).  However, the evidence in support of the effect of IPL on practice and patient care tends to be anecdotal, rather than empirical (Lapkin *et al.*, 2013). Educators and practitioners agree that the care of the service user is paramount and that interprofessional collaboration should improve this care.  A team approach is vital so that professionals with different areas of expertise can respond collaboratively to complex problems thus ensuring optimum care for all service users along their care pathway (Barr and Low, 2012).

Teamwork is a key aspect of successful interprofessional working.  Therefore team working should be promoted and indeed be a key part of IPL so that students see its importance.  In the case of health and social care professionals, the team should be working towards a common goal, the care of the service user (Martin *et al.,* 2010).  Teams are successful when all of the members work cohesively but this can be a challenge when team members are

from different professional backgrounds.  In some teams there can be misunderstandings of the roles of others and this can cause tensions (Shaw *et al.,* 2005).  Interprofessional rivalry and tribalism can also occur where professionals are working with different professionals in a team (Mandy *et al.*, 2014).  The language and terminology used by different professional groups can also be a barrier to working together, and so it is important that all members of the group understand the language and terminology used (Welsh, 2012).  If these tensions are 'ironed out' within the university setting this should lead to a greater understanding of one another within the practice environment.

In terms of pre-registration education, several authors have promoted the use of team work in IPL within the university setting.  Gilligan *et al.* (2014) found that recent graduates valued the IPL experiences that involved genuine engagement and opportunities to interact with students from other professions to look at a relevant problem.  They felt that these experiences prepared them well for practice and  enjoyed looking at case studies or scenarios where they could learn about the roles of other professionals and how they contributed to the given case study or scenario (ibid).  Shared learning about a specific case study is critical to the effectiveness of IPL (Kilminster *et al.*, 2014).

Mellor *et al.* (2013) also found that students welcomed the opportunity to learn the roles of other professions and their contributions to the team.  They also used case studies as part of the IPL programme and students recognised the importance of an interprofessional approach and the valued contributions of each professional group.  This allowed them to make theory to practice links and apply what they had learnt to professional practice.

Some students were surprised that the others wanted to learn more about their roles. However, by explaining their role to others the students were prompted to reflect on what they did and their area of expertise (Mellor *et al.*, 2013).  This turned out to be a really important part of the students learning, developing an appreciation of what other

professionals did, their role, and responsibilities and how they each contributed to the patient pathway.

Kilminster *et al.* (2004) used patient-focussed interprofessional workshops in their small-scale study.  One of the participants in this study said "I learnt about what is going on in other health professionals' minds when they ask you to do something, what they are expecting you to do" (Kilminster *et al.,* 2004:720).  The students were enabled to increase their knowledge and awareness about the expertise that other professionals had and were enabled to understand who they could ask for advice in the future.

Problem-based learning based on case studies is also advocated by McKee *et al.* (2013). They suggest that such case studies create positive learning as they are experimental, co-operative and based on service user cases.

Stone (2010) in her paper provides an argument for the formal assessment of IPL.  She suggests that this will ensure that students recognise its importance and relevance to their future practice.  She proposes that IPL assessment should utilise assessment tools which make student collaboration essential.  Stephens *et al.* (2013) suggest that group learning and assessment using online tools has benefits for the students.  By engaging online the students do not have to deal with a loss of face if they have the wrong answer; the group becomes more cohesive and motivated if they all engage and quieter students can engage more confidently (Stephens *et al.*, 2013).  However, this is only successful if all students engage in the process and become involved.  Incorporation of the Wiki into the assessment process encourages more regular use by students and engagement with the process (Parsell and Bligh, 1998; Reeves, 2000).

Stone (2010) also makes a case for the use of group work that is designed to replicate or simulate the workplace to make learning authentic.  Students can become frustrated about

group work assessment and so this needs to be managed carefully (Purchase, 2000).

Group work can be assessed in a combined way utilising observer, self and peer review

(Cheng and Warren, 2000).  Peer assessment can be approached as a learning exercise in

itself, encouraging further collaboration (Purchase, 2000; Stone, 2010).  Self-assessment

can be used to develop reflective skills which are useful when working in a team

environment, and can aid in self-awareness.  The assessment needs to be carefully

managed so that it suits the needs of all of the students from different professional groups

(Dunworth, 2007).


Overall, it has been established that IPL should allow for deep and rich learning experiences

(Stone, 2010).  Students should from and about one another (CAIPE, 2002), and learn to

work in interprofessional teams with a common goal, the care of the service user (Martin *et

al.,* 2010).  The use of case studies that replicate practice and problem-based learning in IPE

enhance the learning and allow students to learn about one another's roles in the team

(Kilminster *et al.,*2004; McKee *et al.*, 2013).  Formally assessing IPL allows for greater

engagement from students (Stone, 2010), and the use of online tools such as a Wiki

increases student engagement with group work (Parsell and Bligh, 1998; Reeves, 2000;

Stephens *et al.,* 2013).  IPL assessment needs to be designed and managed to meet the

competencies required by all students from each professional group engaged in IPL

(Dunworth, 2007).


### *Methodology*

This study was a prospective, cross-sectional study focussing on the assessment of the

module. As stated earlier the students were allocated into interprofessional groups of eight

students.


In order to review the assessment both students and staff were asked to complete a short

questionnaire to provide qualitative feedback about the assessment process.  The

questionnaire asked them to note the positive and challenging aspects of the assessment from their own perspective and to also provide suggestions and recommendations for the future.  They were encouraged to write free comments and to give their own opinions.

This type of research tool has a number of advantages such as ease of completion, low cost, straight forward data analysis and the ability to collate data effectively (Gilham, 2000).  The purpose of the questionnaire was to gather the opinions of the students and staff members about the assessment and to collate suggestions and recommendations for the future.  The data were analysed using a thematic analysis.

The evaluation formed part of the university's on going module evaluation and therefore ethical approval was not deemed necessary.  The chair of the ethics committee has approved the publication of these findings.

### Results & Discussion

All of the staff provided feedback and approximately 60% of students also provided feedback.

The findings were analysed by both researchers using a thematic analysis.  The researchers looked through the questionnaires responses together and identified themes.  Themes were identified from both the student and staff feedback.  These themes highlighted trends within the data and subjects that were discussed by the participants.

There were six themes identified from the feedback:

- Communication in the groups
- Learning each other's roles
- Real issues from practice uncovered

- Working together

- Making it relevant to all

- The assessment was also a learning experience


*Communication in the groups*

The students had time during the module delivery to meet up and they also had a Wiki and discussion board that they could use to email one another.  However, because the students were on different courses and had different patterns of attendance both at university and in practice it was difficult at times for them to meet up with and communicate with the group.  This was expressed by a lot of the students as a challenge of the assessment.  Interestingly, some of the students pointed out that this was very similar to the tensions experienced in practice when trying to communicate with or share information with other professionals (Shaw *et al.*, 2005).  This may be due to working different shift patterns, working in a different organisation, not being able to speak on the phone or difficulty in sharing information between different computer systems.  In essence we had created a situation that mirrored practice and prepared the students well for the tensions of trying to commi8nciate with other professionals in the practice environment.

The use of the Wiki did help the students in their communication with one another as they were able to share ideas and resources to assist them in the creation of their poster and in planning the presentation.  Stephens *et al.* (2013) suggest that the use of a Wiki for group work encourages the group to become more cohesive and motivated and that the use of online learning tools are believed to increase interest and ownership in the subject matter.

Students also commented on the use of professional language and jargon in their groups. They said that they had to ask other students to explain some of the terminology that they were using.  This is common in interprofessional teams and has been found in other studies

(Welsh, 2012). Although this was expressed as a challenge it could be argued that this was actually beneficial to the students as they were able to reflect on their use of professional language and jargon. This allowed the students to think about the language that they use to communicate with colleagues from other professional groups.

This demonstrated that learning outcome three from the module descriptor 'Demonstrate the fundamental communication skills and principles necessary to facilitate effective relationships with colleagues from different professional groups and to care for service users' was being met through the assessment process.

*Learning each other's roles*

As a result of the module and the assessment the students said that they had learnt about each other's roles. This had provided them with a greater understanding of the roles of each of the other health and social care professionals studying on the IPL module (Mellor *et al.*, 2013; Gilligan *et al.*, 2014). The students said that by learning one another's roles they were able to better understand the patient pathway and see where each profession fitted into the pathway and how they could each have an input and influence the care given to the patient; this is similar to the findings from the study by Kilminster *et al.* (2004). This was really encouraging feedback from the students and demonstrated that module aim number two 'To develop an awareness of each other's role within the interprofessional team' was being met and this fits with learning outcomes one and two:

1. Understand their role within the professional team

2. Learn from and about other professionals.

This awareness of others also heightened the student's awareness of their own professional role within an interprofessional team, developing an understanding of their own professional identity (module aim number one).

Both the students and the staff members commented that this group assessment allowed students to learn from and about one another, and therefore improve patient care (CAIPE, 2002). It was also felt that the students learnt a lot more about their own professional role.

*Real issues from practice uncovered*

The students felt that this assessment enabled them to see some of the real issues from practice around communication and the sharing of information. As previously mentioned the group members did not always find it easy to communicate with one another due to other pressures such as attending other academic sessions and attending practice, as well as their own personal commitments. The students felt that this was similar to professionals trying to make contact with one another across organisational and team boundaries or when they were working different shift patterns. Some of the students felt that this made it much more real. There was a real awareness of communication issues that occurred in practice as a result of this group assessment. Students were also made aware of the issues around sharing information about service users and the balance of confidentiality versus 'needing to know' (Shaw *et al.,* 2005). This allowed the students to meet the module aims three and four;

- To understand the importance of interprofessional communication and team working.
- To appreciate the complexity of delivering effective service user centred care in an interprofessional environment.

The staff members felt that because the assessment mirrored the real issues that occur in practice with interprofessional working it was a fantastic learning experience for the students and that it prepared them well for interprofessional working. It allowed the students to understand how complex working with other professionals can be.

*Working together*

The students said that because they were able to see patient pathway, they were able to also see how they could work together for the good of the patient.  This enabled them to think in a positive way about the interprofessional team and team working (Mellor *et al.*, 2013).  The students could understand the expertise that each profession had and also develop a greater understanding of the knowledge base of the other professional groups. They could therefore see the importance of working together to improve the care given to the service user, and they acknowledged that they could not provide the complex care needed on their own.

Several students said that they found the experience enjoyable and that they had made some new friends and had fun working together.  One student described this as an 'unexpected bonus', and students felt that knowing someone from a different professional group would provide useful to them as they progressed as a student, as they could ask their colleague about things that they might need to know later on in their course.

The staff members felt that the students had engaged well with the team task and that interprofessional team working was evident.  During the group presentation assessment it was obvious that several of the groups had really 'gelled' together whilst completing the task and this was really pleasing to see.

*Making it relevant to all*
It was really challenging to ensure that all of the professional groups had a role in each case study; this was a challenge for the module team.  The students fed back that some professional groups had more involvement with their group's given case study.  It was inevitable that this would happen as some professional groups will not have as much involvement as others.

However, it is important that students can see the relevance of the case study to their own professional practice. Any case studies used need to be relevant to all of the students in the group and have something for them all to contribute so that they all feel included (Gilligan *et al.,* 2014).

Staff members also acknowledged that it was part of their role as facilitators to ensure that students saw the relevance of some of the case studies to their own profession, and that they should be able to do this in their discussions with the students when the case studies were given out

*The assessment was also a learning experience*

Through the group case study assessment the students were able to learn from one another and also learn about one another's roles. Therefore, the assessment also became a learning experience as the students had to produce a poster and learn what each other did (Stone, 2010). This was the intention of the module team, so it was pleasing to see that the students acknowledged this in their questionnaire responses.

The staff were impressed by the standard of the group posters that were produced and commented that there were some fantastic posters and presentations which showed a good level of learning from the assessment.

Overall, both staff and students commented that the negotiation of marks went well and was also a good learning process for the students about working in a team and negotiation, Purchase (2000) and Stone (2010) both argue that peer assessment can be approached as a learning experience in itself and it allows students to develop reflective skills which can be useful for team working in the future.

Finally, the staff and students were also positive that the assessment process was all completed in one day.

## Conclusion

On reflection it is felt that the delivery of the module and the group assessment worked well and was positively evaluated by both the students and staff. The students have found it to be both a good learning experience as well as being a good way to assess an IPL module. The assessment was beneficial in terms of the process of working together in an interprofessional team, and the product – the group presentation and poster based on the case study.

The module delivery and assessment have met the aims and learning outcomes of the module. In working in interprofessional groups the students had a 'real' experience of interprofessional working, facing the barriers and challenges to overcome which are similar to practice.

The students were able to learn from and about one another, reflect on their own professional role and understand the complexities of caring for service users within an interprofessional team. Friendships were also developed as a result of working together.

The students were encouraged to work together to care for the service user and to reflect on the service user pathway and the knowledge base of each profession involved.

## Recommendations

Staff members acknowledged that it was part of their role as facilitators to ensure that students saw the relevance of some of the case studies to their own profession, and that they should endeavour to do this in their discussions with the students when the case studies were given out at the start of the module.

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