

Workshop 2

Monday 9th November, 15.15 - 16.00

Developing generic skills for novice researchers using Learner Needs Analysis and Personal Development Planning

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Dr Andrea Taylor has worked for 20 years in the design, development and delivery of distance learning programmes at the postgraduate level. In 2004 she joined the School for Health at the University of Bath to design and develop the Professional Doctorate in Health and became the first Director of Studies for the course. She moved to the Department of Pharmacy & Pharmacology in 2007 and has just designed a new MSc in Advanced and Specialist Healthcare Practice aimed at mid-career professionals. She has interests in technologies for supporting work-based learning and in approaches to supporting personalised learning.

Dr Christina Maslen

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Dr Christina Maslen joined the School for Health, University of Bath in 2006. She has worked as a facilitator and advisor in the fields of clinical effectiveness and research into practice within a variety of NHS organisations, including primary and secondary care. She has also worked as a researcher for NICE on their guideline programme. She has a Masters in Evidence-Based Health Care from the University of Oxford, and has also held research posts at the University of Bath as a post-doctoral Research Officer.

Christina works across the range of online distance-learning Postgraduate Programmes offered by the School for Health and has a particular interest in enhancing the learning experiences of students on these Programmes.

Introduction

A process for personalisation of learning for use with novice researchers was developed in 2003 for the Professional Doctorate in Health at the University of Bath. This approach was adopted because each student's research and practice context is different and these students are all 'distance learners' studying remotely and online. The scheme derived from criteria determined from the Roberts' Review (2001) of postgraduate research training, which identified the need for closer attention to the development of generic skills for novice researchers.

A self-diagnostic tool was developed based on the concept of a 'learning contract' (Knowles, 1973) and took the form of a Learning Needs Analysis (LNA). This tool provided a means for self-audit and fed into a second tool, a Personal Development Plan (PDP) which created a 'route-map' for skills development. These completed tools were submitted by learners as part of a portfolio of research practice illustrating their development as a researcher during their first and second years of study on this course. Students were supported by individual Personal Development Advisers, who provided feedback and mentoring to develop their generic skills and broad research ideas.

An evaluation of the students' experiences of using these tools to support their development as researchers has been conducted using a phenomenological approach. The findings from this work, along with ideas from the literature on LNA and PDP approaches, will be used in the workshop to support small group discussions about the use of this LNA and PDP approach in novice researcher development.

Workshop Aim

To discuss and appraise the use of LNA and PDP approaches in the development of research skills for professional doctorate students

Workshop Objectives

Explore the design, development and implementation of a tool for self analysis of research skills

- Consider resource implications for supporting learning this way
- Consider feedback of learners experiences of this tool to inform use of this personalised approach to skills development of novice researchers

Workshop Approach

In small groups workshop participants will review, discuss and critique the general approach of Learning Needs Analysis (LNA) and Personal Development

Planning (PDP) as a means for supporting research skills development. Groups will address questions such as: What is the LNA/PDP approach? What forms the basis, criteria or competencies of the approach? What are the challenges of this approach and what are the assumptions underlying this approach? Is such an approach consistent with the development of doctoral level skills? Participants will then review the Bath tool developed to support skills development in novice researchers and share experiences of other tools used to fulfil the same purpose. Finally, we will look at feedback collected from a small phenomenological study based on Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (Smith and Osborn 2003) of the students experiences of using these tools as an aid to planning their skills development and consider this in the context of other published work on the use of Personal Development Planning for personalising learning (Gough et al 2003; Clegg and Bradley, 2006; Clegg and Bufton, 2008).

References

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