

An Automated Approach to Evaluation of Clinical Placements



One of the largest HE establishments in the UK, there are some 18,000 students studying at Salford University. The University is divided into 4 faculties, 6 research institutes and 16 schools, one of which is the Salford School of Nursing.

Quality education

Salford School of Nursing offers a range of high quality education and training programmes for students and is proud of its roots in the local health service. The School works closely with clinicians from NHS Trusts and purchasers of training in the planning, implementation and evaluation of educational and training programmes. It provides an extensive mix of clinical experiences in the form of placements for students within general hospital, community, and specialist units in both the NHS and private sector.

Asking the right questions

A number of concerns are commonly expressed about evaluation such as - Are the right questions being asked? Are students taking the questions seriously? If a discrepancy is highlighted will anything be done about it? What do the results indicate about the placement?

With a manual data capture system so much time can be taken up in processing batches of responses, there is rarely an opportunity to address these concerns.

“The School of Nursing were advised of DRS Data Services Limited’s excellent reputation for solving educational data capture problems.”

Placement evaluation

The statutory body for nursing requires educational institutions to gather information about the student experience in practice settings. Salford School of Nursing takes this very seriously, in fact, its commitment to teaching and learning was recently demonstrated by a score of 22 (of 24) from the Quality Assurance Agency Nursing and Midwifery subject review.



The School of Nursing developed a system of evaluation of education practice a number of years ago that enabled students in placement settings to provide feedback. This was achieved by completing a short questionnaire which was then sent to Salford’s Clinical Audit Administrator, Patience Stapleton. However the system was extremely labour intensive with Patience having to manually key all the data from the questionnaires into a computer system. Increasing numbers of students coupled with a more complex pattern of placement provision was overburdening the system and compromising its ability to provide timely, accurate and meaningful information to key stakeholders.

Automated data capture

The School of Nursing were advised of DRS’ excellent reputation for solving educational data capture problems, and being aware that an automated placement evaluation system had already been successfully piloted in a local NHS Healthcare Trust, Salford

approached DRS for help and advice in getting over this major problem. Salford was looking for a solution that not only enabled the data to be captured faster, more accurately and more costeffectively, they also wanted to capture more information such as scoring answers by levels of importance.



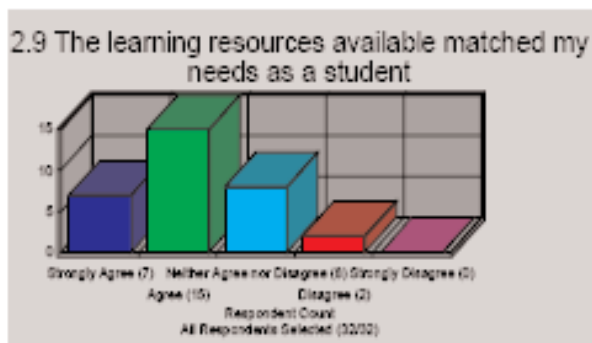
Maintaining Educational Value of Placement Experiences

Speed of data capture

With the help of DRS specialist forms design and Optical Mark Readers (OMRs), the School of Nursing's placement evaluation data is now captured electronically, freeing up Patience and her team's time to deal with more important tasks such as analysing the outputs and resolving any issues that are highlighted from the evaluation data.

OMRs are used to greatly increase the speed of data capture, while commercial questionnaire software enhances the possibilities of visual display and analysis of responses. This approach enables up to 20 statements to be identified as quality descriptors of the teaching and learning environment within clinical placements.

Student nurses are asked to respond to each statement on a 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' scale. The evaluation forms are specially designed with machine readable sections to denote the programme, cohort and length of placement and each placement is identified with an easily recognisable code.



Strategic Overview

The students are asked to fill in the evaluation forms when they return to the University on completion of their clinical placements, and the responses are batched and processed through the OMR. It typically takes about 2 minutes to read 100 completed forms. The information from the forms is automatically and securely saved and transferred to a software package that enables the results to be displayed immediately in a number of useful ways.

The results can be shown as a graph, either by taking each question separately, or by using other analytical tools built into the software. It is possible to obtain a strategic overview of the student experience across a range of clinical placements, and make some useful comparisons. This information is also extremely useful for the providers of placements. By sharing this data, it enables them to maintain the educational value of the placement experience. These analyses form the basis for reports to stakeholders, with a range of graphical output to illustrate the nature of views expressed.

The benefits of OMR

There are many benefits of incorporating OMR into the processes used to elicit student feedback about placement experiences, including:

- Easy to complete, student friendly forms enabling an appropriate range of views to be expressed.
- Rapid and accurate collation of responses, offering a considerable saving in human resources.
- Results available instantaneously in a variety of visually appealing coloured charts and graphs.
- Responses can be analysed according to various student, placement and programme factors.
- Reporting formats can be tailored to the requirements of different stakeholders.

OMR can easily be integrated into many other applications in the education sector such as classroom and lecture evaluations, attendance monitoring, individual learning profiles, examination marking and processing, in fact, if there's data to be collected, chances are DRS has a solution.

For further information on the full range of DRS products and services, please contact:

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