Practice example
Portfolio assessment for longer term learning in practice

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Abstract
The challenge was to counter a reduction in students’ levels of clinical experience during a postgraduate course and ensure ongoing learning into practice. We looked for strategies to use assessment during the course to foster learning beyond the course. A portfolio task was chosen to encourage engagement right from the start - students had to write up one example from their practice each week from Week 1. Interventions were then added (and evaluated) to encourage:

• Independent Learning
• Judgement
• Self-assessment
and, towards the end, • Competence.

Students use the portfolio to demonstrate competence and in doing so, become involved in understanding relevant criteria and standards. Further understandings of students’ perceptions of these interventions led to improvements. Students were then followed at 12 months into their qualified life to see if the portfolio encouraged learning in practice. As portfolios were no longer required, these new practitioners were learning in different ways; so practice theories were used to investigate workplace practices and their potential to foster learning (Hager et al, 2012). Three standout practices were identified – ‘The Worksheet’ - a diagrammatic summary of a case (illustrations provided), ‘The Interesting Case’ – interesting cases and the discussions they foster, and ‘The Staff Meeting’ – from which inter-professional learning occurs. The next iteration of the portfolio tasks will be to incorporate these workplace practices, perhaps supported by a tutorial, simulation, role-play or further portfolio task. The audience will be invited to consider the ‘workplace practices’ their own students may encounter upon graduation and some of the skills that students will need to be effective in those practices. Consideration will be given to learning activities or assessment tasks that would give students the opportunity to practice these skills and evidence them in their portfolios.

References

Theme
Assessment that engages students in learning that is relevant to the disciplinary, professional and community contexts (theme 1)