

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN THE SIPBS MPharm PROGRAMME

Sabrina Anne Jacob, Anne Boyter



Nationwide survey

Objectives: To determine the current structure and challenges in experiential learning (EL) in MPharm programmes in UK universities

Subjects: Directors or people in charge of EL in MPharm programmes in 30 universities in the UK.

Findings: Twenty (66.7%) universities responded. EL coordinators were mostly academic/teaching fellows (95%), and spent 0.29 ± 0.31 Full Time Equivalents on coordination. Tutors completed training annually in 53.8% of universities.

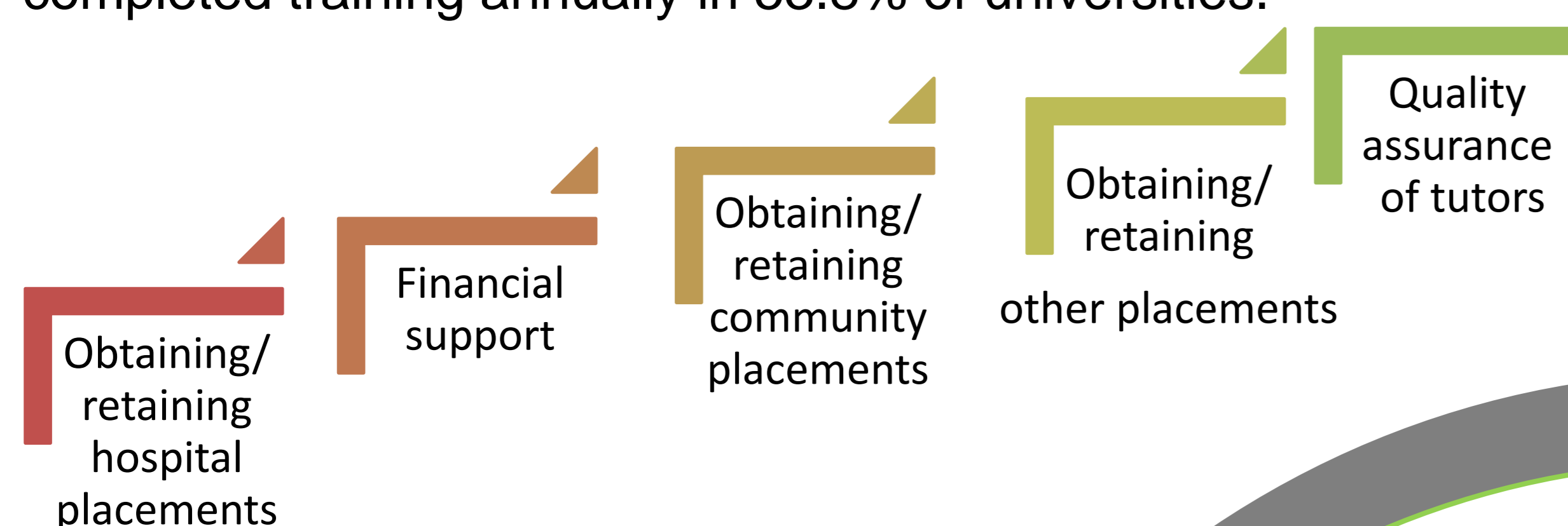


Figure 1: Challenges faced in providing EL

Total placement hours in all practice sites over four years of study ranged from 54 – 496 hours, and included EL in hospices, hospitals, prisons, nursing homes, and community pharmacies

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Numerous studies have reported on the challenges currently faced by those involved in or affected by the EL programme in the pharmacy curriculum e.g. lack of tutors and placement sites, staffing and tutor-training issues, and student dissatisfaction with the programme.¹⁻⁴ There is a paucity of studies conducted in the UK, and specifically Scotland which assessed the effectiveness of the EL programme.

This necessitated a 360 degree exploration of the current situation to determine if our students are achieving what is required in terms of skills, knowledge, and professionalism.

Based on the findings, it can then be decided if the MPharm EL programme is adequate, or needs improvement.



Students

Objective: To ascertain students' views on the EL programme

Study design: Mixed-methods exploratory study

Subjects: MPharm students who have undertaken EL

PART 1

Objective & Design: A pre and post study where students will be asked to record on their mobile phones their views of what they expect to gain in terms of skills and knowledge during placements, and if these were fulfilled.

Subjects: MPharm students who are about to undertake placements

PART 2



Tutors

Objective: To determine tutors' perceptions of the EL programme and their training needs

Study design: Mixed-methods exploratory study (Phase 1: survey, Phase 2: qualitative)

Subjects: Hospital and community pharmacists, who have experience as EL tutors for SIPBS

Phase 1 study instrument: 16-item survey consisting of open and closed questions, with Likert-style responses

Preliminary findings from Phase 1: 32 community, 43 hospital responses. 80.6% believed it was part of their professional responsibility to tutor a student undertaking EL. Majority believed EL programme was effective in developing student's clinical and communication skills (**Fig 2**). For tutor-development, respondents wanted topics on teaching/tutoring strategies (85.7%), how to engage & motivate (80%), and provide constructive feedback to students (75.5%).

Formulate/develop pharmaceutical care plan (64.8%)

Demonstrate problem-solving skills (63%)

Assess patient adherence (51.9%)

Figure 2: Effectiveness of EL in preparing students

Open-ended comments: While some respondents lamented the lack of time as well as the negative attitudes of some students, most found the experience as a tutor enjoyable, and found it as a way to give back.

"Having EL students is beneficial to the hospital and the whole pharmacy department including myself as a tutor. The students bring their own perspective and natural curiosity to our current practice. They keep me on my toes by asking questions I had not thought about; and they make me go back to first principles and review my knowledge of pharmacology and clinical practice. I believe they have a positive impact on patient care because they are not in so much of a rush when it comes to spending time with patients; they also help me to focus on the patient in terms of thinking through what I should be saying, my demeanour and bedside manner." (Hospital pharmacist)



Stakeholders

Objective: Obtain feedback from stakeholders with regard to the effectiveness of the SIPBS EL programme in preparing MPharm students for practice

Study design: One-on-one interviews or focus group discussions

Subjects: Pharmacists including Directors of Pharmacy, practicing pharmacists, NHS Education for Scotland, and patient groups

References

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This project is funded by NHS Education for Scotland

