

University of Chester

Below is a case study from the Dietetics Programme at the University of Chester which details our approaches to Practice-based Learning for Dietetic learners during COVID-19 and beyond.

At the beginning of the pandemic, Dietetic learners were unable to go out on their clinical Practice-based Learning so the University ensured they recovered their lost clinical settings hours through the use of simulation. In 2021 the final year dietetic learners took part in 2 weeks of peer assisted learning and coaching in ward and clinic simulation settings and were able to produce evidence for their competencies and prepare to go out on their final NHS Practice-based Learning. This also meant that their final Practice-based Learning was extended to 18 weeks which included the University of Chester and their NHS Practice-based Learning.

This extended Practice-based Learning was not only a challenge to clinical dietitians supporting the learner over the summer and into September under very challenging conditions, but also our dietetic learners who, after missing the middle P2 Practice-based Learning were required to complete an 18-week Practice-based Learning with limited prior experience. The learners were placed across Trusts in the North West of England, away from friends and families in an ever-changing healthcare environment which posed unique challenges. We were so proud of our learners with how well they coped and thrived and have now entered the dietetic workforce.



At the University of Chester, we have used simulation as part of our learner's University of Chester experience prior to their P1 and P2 Practice-based Learning for some years now and it is developing every year. Just recently we have expanded simulation to cover community home visits and increased our use of service users to not only formally assess our learners but allow for feedback that is relevant to their practice.



Learner feedback suggested that the University Practice-based Learning setting prepared them for their clinical setting and raised their confidence to complete their final Practice-based Learning and then enter the healthcare workforce.

At the University of Chester, we have used simulation as part of our learner's University of Chester experience prior to their P1 and P2 Practice-based Learning for some years now and it is developing every year. Just recently we have expanded simulation

to cover community home visits and increased our use of service users to not only formally assess our learners but allow for feedback that is relevant to their practice. Learners have fed back that the sessions allow them to apply knowledge learnt in lectures in a real-world setting. They are encouraged to develop practical skills such as communication and behaviour change techniques, build their confidence particularly speaking to service users and feel more prepared and less anxious for clinical Practice-based Learning settings. Based on the success of this Practice-based Learning experience, we hope to potentially increase the use of simulation that we offer and contribute to the final P3 Practice-based Learning. By doing this we can alleviate the pressure on our dietetic colleagues out in clinical practice by reducing the impact of the rapidly increasing learner numbers but also ensure our learners are confident with their clinical skills, knowledge and Practice-based Learning expectations in a familiar learning environment.

“ ***During ward simulation we aim to use a variety of different clinical and patient scenarios and bring in dietitian’s working in clinical practice to support the learners and bring the learning experience to life.*** ”

During ward simulation we aim to use a variety of different clinical and patient scenarios and bring in dietitian’s working in clinical practice to support the learners and bring the learning experience to life. If anyone would like to be involved even if it is sharing interesting cases with the learners then get in touch with abigail.price@chester.ac.uk. Clinical simulation is a really rewarding environment to support our learners in and all the dietetic staff at the university get involved and have positive experiences.