

## **Abstract**

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Presenter 1:

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Presenter 2:

Dr John Unsworth, Principal Lecturer / National Teaching Fellow, Faculty of Health & Life Sciences, Northumbria University, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UK

**Title: Avoiding Failure to Fail: the role of triangulation**

Type: Concurrent session

**Aim:** To discuss the usefulness of mentor triangulation of evidence from multiple sources in order to arrive at a judgement about a student's performance and the achievement of competence. The session will explore the development of a scale of competence based on the work of Bondy (1983) and will describe the development and testing of various forms of evidence from integrated assessment tools, Director Observation tools and the use of a structured portfolio to triangulate evidence on student performance.

**Abstract:**

Failure to fail students in healthcare education has been recognised as a problem for some time (Duffy, 2004). Despite recognising the issues associated with failure to fail there have been few suggestions about how the process of assessing competence can be improved and there remains a dearth of evidence about the validity and reliability of systems for assessing student performance in practice (Bradshaw and Merriman, 2008). Stuart (2013) has outlined how triangulation of evidence from multiple sources may assist mentors to arrive at more robust decisions about a student's performance. Whilst the evidence base supporting the use of triangulation in practice assessment is weak such systems may be of assistance because they prevent the decision about a failure in practice being based on a single person's judgement. Redfern et al (2002) has outlined how systems which involve multi methods of assessment are likely to be more reliable and valid than systems which involved a sole judgement.

This presentation will outline how in partnership with placement provider's one University set developed a criterion referenced system of practice assessment based on the use of triangulation. The entire system relies upon the assessment of Nursing and Midwifery Council competencies using a scale of competence based on the work of Bondy (1983) but adapted to reflect the fact that students remain supervised throughout the process. The presentation will outline the development of the scale and the results of early testing of the scale both formatively and summatively.

Alongside the scale of competence a wide range of different forms of evidence have been identified and students are encouraged to collect their own forms of evidence alongside the programme prescribed assessments. The new assessment tools range of integrated forms of assessment to

director observation of practical skills with students being assessed by different registrant's on each practice placement throughout the three-year period. The final 'sign off' mentor who is responsible for assessing with a student is fit for practice and therefore entry into the register can then utilise evidence from a wide range of assessments and the view of numerous practice colleagues to inform their view.

The presentation will outline the challenges associated with the move from a norm referenced system of assessment to criterion referenced assessment and the logistical issues associated with preparing 7,000 practice educators and other staff for the new approach to assessing performance and competence.

#### References:

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Duffy, K (2004) *Failing students report*. Nursing and Midwifery Council: London

Redfern, S, Norman, I, Calman, L et al (2002) Assessing competence to practice in nursing: a review of the literature. *Research Papers in Education*, 17(1); 51-77

Stuart, C, C (2013) *Mentoring, Learning and Assessment in Clinical Practice*. Churchill Livingstone: Edinburgh

#### Biographies:

**Dr Andrew Melling** Principal Lecturer / Reader in Nursing

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**Dr John Unsworth**, Principal Lecturer / National Teaching Fellow

Prior to joining Northumbria John worked for 24 years in the National Health Service (NHS) in hospital and community services. I have extensive experience in practice, health management and education. Dr Unsworth currently teaches on a range of under-graduate and post-graduate nursing programmes and he is the Departmental lead for International Development. In 2013 he was awarded a National Teaching Fellowship by the Higher Education Academy for his contribution to teaching and learning. John's main areas of teaching are patient safety, infection prevention and control and law and ethics.

Dr Unsworth has a range of experience of teaching international students as is the Associate Course Director to the Global Scholars programme which is run by the University and St George's University, Grenada, West Indies.

Outside of his University role he Chair's a Statutory Practice Committee for the UK Nursing Regulator (NMC) and is a member of the Governing Body of a NHS Commissioning Group. In addition, John is also a Trustee and Council Member of the Queen's Nursing Institute.