

Welcome to the ALPS Bulletin –  
Special Research Issue

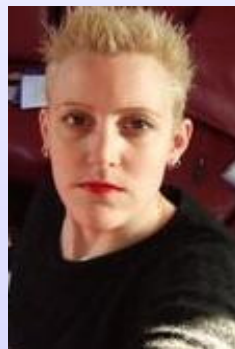
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*“The research (and evaluation) work being done on behalf of ALPS has certainly changed beyond recognition since this time last year. When I first arrived sixteen months ago I did wonder what I had agreed to do...trying to encourage research in a Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning did sound a bit like fitting a square peg into a round hole! What I quickly came to realise however is that ALPS provides a unique opportunity to get involved in research. ALPS, like all CETLs, was funded “to reward excellent teaching practice and to invest in that practice further in order to increase and deepen its impact across a wider teaching and learning community”(1). Having received the funding, the work of ALPS is, therefore, ‘happening anyway’...so effectively there is data generated surrounding any project that ALPS does (such as the Common Competency Mapping or the Mobile Technologies) – which means anyone who wants to can do research or evaluation projects with this ‘free data’. We also have a wonderful opportunity with links across five Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and the NHS Yorkshire and the Humber Strategic Health Authority (SHA) to encourage cross-institutional work. With funding bodies increasingly looking for evidence of collaborative bidding and working, the relationships built during the ALPS programme will result in proven existing relationships for future bids.*

*Of course being a funded project has a downside too – we don’t have any specific research monies that we can give people to undertake projects on our behalf, so the money for staff time and resources has to come out of the partner share each year. We did of course have the Research Capacity Fund, which was money from the SHA (more news about the projects funded by that later in the Bulletin) which was targeted very specifically at building research capacity for the ALPS partners by encouraging staff who might not currently have a research profile to get involved in these projects and creating new research resources. What we therefore rely on for the rest is ‘goodwill’ – asking heads of schools to allow staff an afternoon a week to get involved in collecting data for three months for example. As the research reputation of ALPS*

*grows however, we hope that producing a paper on behalf of ALPS will act as both reward and incentive for both individuals and the departments they have come from.*

*This Bulletin details just some of the excellent research and evaluation work that is now being done across ALPS – from conference and journal papers to disseminate the work of ALPS thus far, the projects funded from the ALPS Research Capacity Fund, and the innovative new research projects such as CIPA which are helping to build a legacy for ALPS – research-wise and beyond. I would therefore like to take the opportunity to thank everyone who has been or already is involved in research work for ALPS, and as always, look forward to hearing from anyone who would be interested in getting involved in existing or new research projects for ALPS”.*



(1)[http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2004/04\\_05/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2004/04_05/)

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## Assessment & Learning in Practice Settings

### Measuring Competence and Confidence at Graduation

The ALPS Baselines and Outcomes Research Working Group (affectionately known as 'BORG') have developed a data collection tool to measure student perceptions of confidence and competence to practice. Anita Slade from Leeds Metropolitan University has led the BORG in developing a questionnaire to capture student perceptions of graduating students of their competence and confidence to practice. This followed a search for existing competence-measuring tools, which found that no large-scale, cross-institutional piece of research on this area had been published previously, and therefore there was no 'proven' pre-existing tool with which to measure either confidence or competence perception. The questionnaire—called CIPA (Competency in Practice Assessment) is administered online and is currently in its pilot phase. Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy students from Leeds Metropolitan University were involved in the first phase of the pilot. The second phase of the pilot, which has just started, involves graduating students from across all five ALPS HEI partners being invited to complete the questionnaire this summer, after which the psychometric validity of the scale will be examined using Rasch analysis.

Ieuan Ellis, Chair of the BORG says: *"The ability to demonstrate that new graduate professionals are competent and confident at the point of qualification and initial professional registration remains a significant challenge to those of us involved in education and training. In spite of overwhelmingly positive outcomes and reports of recent Quality Assurance Agency and NHS Major Reviews and generally positive reports from ongoing professional and regulatory body programme approval, monitoring and review processes, there remain sporadic outbursts of anecdotal evidence of employer dissatisfaction with the competency of new graduate health and social care professionals. One of the key aims of ALPS is to improve the assessment of competence in practice across sixteen professions, increasing the confidence of new graduates and their employers. The CIPA tool has been developed to establish measures of new graduate confidence in their ability across a number of areas of professional competence. Initially it*

*is being piloted as a self-rating tool for new graduates, with the ultimate intention of extending its use to employers of new graduates. The tool offers a way of establishing some baseline measures of confidence and competence where these do not currently exist. It will also enable comparison of confidence and competence levels in and between different professions. If used for repeated measures it also has the potential to measure changing levels of confidence and competence during career development."*

The second phase of CIPA (planned for the end of this year) will see follow up questionnaires being sent out to graduates 6 and 12 months post-graduation to see if their perception of their competence and competence to practice changes once they have spent a year in their chosen professions.

You can follow the progress of CIPA by logging on to the ALPS Research Web pages. These can be found at [www.alps-cetl.ac.uk/researchnetwork.htm](http://www.alps-cetl.ac.uk/researchnetwork.htm)

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**In 2007 ALPS were given money by NHS Yorkshire & the Humber Strategic Health Authority in order to fund Research Capacity Building Projects. After 2 rounds of bidding, three innovative and exciting projects were funded. The following 3 articles detail the projects and some of the activities they have achieved so far:**

#### **1. Service user and carer involvement in learning, teaching, and research and development**

This project, led by Dr Virginia Minogue and a group of service user and carer researchers, as well as representatives of local universities and NHS Trusts, aims to examine the effectiveness of service user and carer involvement in mental



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health teaching, education and research from the service user, professional and policy perspective. Stage one of the project involves an extended literature review and review of documentary evidence including national policy and guidance (e.g. Department of Health, Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills), and local policy and guidance. The review of national policy and guidance will identify a number of key indicators relating to models and types of involvement. Review of local policy and guidance will identify how national policy has been interpreted and implemented in practice, models and types of involvement.

The project will then seek to explore how policy works in practice. Through a process of interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders in each of the four West Yorkshire universities and three NHS mental health organisations, the research team will elicit information about different models of service user and carer involvement, philosophy of involvement, and seek to identify whether there is a common language. So far the research team have undertaken a preliminary literature review and are in the process of developing the interview schedules.

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### 2. Mobile Enabled Disabled Students – A very focused start!

In September 2007, a small team at the University of Bradford started work on one of the projects funded by the ALPS Research Capacity Fund. The project is entitled 'Mobile Enabled Disabled Students' (MEDS) and aims to inform the ongoing work and development of ALPS in relation to the specific needs of disabled students when using mobile devices for learning and assessment in practice settings. Within this aim there are key objectives to establish what works well for disabled students who currently use mobile devices and to identify any specific challenges they face so that we can inform the development of the ALPS mobile assessment tools. We also wanted to provide opportunities for disabled students to trial the new assessment methods as they were

being developed and agreed by the Tools Working Group and commercial partners.

Our first step in achieving some of these aims was to hold a focus group. Nine students from across the University, with a wide range of disabilities and prior experiences of using various mobile devices (which ranged from laptops to scanning pens) joined the project team, Ian Hall from MyKnowledgeMap® and Mark McGookin from ecommnet for a very lively discussion of shared prior experiences. This was recorded and professionally transcribed for deeper analysis.

Ian and Mark also presented a prototype ALPS assessment tool, and the students were then invited to try a number of mobile devices which had been pre-loaded with the tool. This enabled the students to handle each device, and explore the issues around navigating through different functions of the device and the ALPS assessment tool. Following this, we had another in depth discussion that enabled the students to feedback on this experience to the team and to the software developers. This was again recorded and transcribed for deeper analysis. However, a real strength of this day was that it facilitated an opportunity for students with disabilities to 'try out' the ALPS mobile assessment processes as they were being developed and for the developers to gain immediate feedback on work in progress, which they were able to take back with them for immediate implementation.

Overall, the ALPS assessment tool was well received and students were impressed by the potential additional benefits and uses that a mobile device might hold for them. Students had enjoyed the day and those who were eligible, i.e. from health related disciplines, all put their names forward to take part in the next stage of data collection. This will entail using an ALPS mobile device with assessment tool and recording a diary over a period of time to help us gain a fuller understanding of how these tools and devices might impact on the disabled student journey.

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### 3. What matters to US (Users of Services): discovering and applying user and carer perceptions of the requisite skills and attributes of health and care students to enable shared care and decision making

The aim of this project is to deepen and build on understanding of service user and carer perceptions of the attributes, behaviours and context that health and social care students require for effective partnership working with users and carers. This takes another perspective on professional competences with the idea that professionals need to learn how to support patients and their carers to play a greater part in care and decision making - an imperative for transforming relationships in health care, arising from evidence and policy around dealing with long term conditions.

Users and carers (the **US** group, 23 in all) are involved in a collaborative enquiry process with practitioners, students and academic teachers. The **US** group had all been participants in the Patient Learning Journeys programme. This was developed first at the University of Leeds School of Medicine and taken forward in collaboration with the School of Healthcare and the Universities of Bradford, Huddersfield, and Leeds Metropolitan University, all continuing collaborators on this current study. Patients, mainly with long term conditions, and carers reflect together in small groups on their experiences of illness and care, sharing their stories and their learning. They then focus on how to offer these for student and professional learning.

The **US** group have now met in small and larger groups during an iterative action research and learning process to examine and apply their experience to student assessment. These groups were facilitated by two university user and carer involvement workers and recorded. Notes of the meetings were fed back to participants for further discussion. In between meetings, the involvement workers reflected on the process and emergent findings, with support from an observer/reflector academic and meetings with the project steering group, drawn from the four universities involved.

User and carer participation has brought fresh voices to the discussion of professional competences in the ALPS project. Starting from their perspective of their needs from professionals, their work so far supports the holistic framing of teaching and assessment, incorporating notions of ethical practice, communication and team-working into person-based practices. Their talk has focussed on notions of openness, flexibility, not making assumptions, sharing ownership, being able to find solutions together and the context students will need to enable them to demonstrate these capacities. Involving 'expert' user and carer learners has brought to the enquiry their understanding of effective learning for transformational change. They are aware of the difficulties inherent in assessment: "*the more we say 'this is what you have to do and say' the more it becomes a tick box exercise for them*". (**US** group participant).

The investigation continues with a modified Delphi study with a wider group of users and carers, as well as students, practitioners and teachers. This stage of the study will include comparison between the **US** groups' perceptions with those of students and academic teachers.

The **US** group have developed further their confidence and capacity to contribute to education at a more significant level than mere consultation. This includes co-development of nursing and medical examinations across the universities, participation in university steering groups - including the new lay advisory council for the Curriculum Review by the Leeds School of Medicine - and creating digital learning materials for Bradford's e-learning project.

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### Electronic Portfolio System (PebblePad) introduced to students at York St John University

In January 2008 we began a trial using electronic portfolios (PebblePad) with Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy students at York St John University. We are particularly interested in exploring the potential for electronic portfolios to support learning during undergraduate programmes as well as fulfilling the need to record continued professional development post registration. This is of high importance to Occupational Therapists and Physiotherapists who are required to meet the standards of continued professional development set by the regulatory body, the Health Professions Council, in order to practice.

Three cohorts of students are using their electronic portfolios in different ways during various modules. 19 in-service Occupational Therapy students have submitted a portfolio for assessment, based on their learning on a module and evidence of their achievements from their current practice. A group of 21 full time Occupational Therapists have used their electronic portfolio as a tool to assist with reflective practice during a professional practice placement. 11 in-service Physiotherapy students have reviewed their professional development which has included their abilities when starting the programme. We also have a staff group of approximately 20 within the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences who are actively using their accounts to facilitate learning with students and for their own continued professional development.

After 2 weeks of using PebblePad, the 3 student cohorts were asked to complete an online survey concerning the utility of PebblePad. Overall the response rate was 53% (n=27). When divided into cohorts response rate for full time was (76%, n=16) and part time (37%, n=11). After very limited use and training (approximately 1-2 hours), students were using a range of tools offered by the electronic portfolio and thought it would be useful within their course. Further evaluation over the summer is planned to explore the ways in which students and staff made use of their electronic portfolio and to what extent the electronic portfolio promoted learning.

Implementing the electronic portfolio has had its challenges. These have included training being predominantly the responsibility of one person. Although very little training is needed plans are now in place to share this responsibility so that more members of staff are available to support students and respond to queries. Some students, particularly at the beginning of their programmes are unfamiliar with various information technology systems and learning the use of another electronic tool was challenging due to the amount of new material. These students have been offered additional support.

In future we plan for more members of staff to become familiar with the use of the electronic portfolios system so that they can join discussions about its use and be active in planning ways to use electronic portfolios as an integrated tool within modules and programmes. All first year Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy students will be given a PebblePad account from September 2008. We are currently engaged in planning how the use of the electronic portfolio system can be incorporated to support students during their programmes and as qualified health professionals.

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### ALPS Group Study Area showcased at international conference

The ALPS Group Study Area was presented at an international conference on information and learning commons in Hong Kong. Organized by The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology Library, representatives from Australia, North America, China and the United Kingdom were amongst 150 delegates who heard how the ALPS Group Study Area is being used to support students to develop teamworking and communication skills.

The conference entitled, "International Conference on Information and Learning Commons: Enhancing its Role in Academic Learning and Collaboration" looked at how universities provide learning and collaborative spaces as well as information service and technical assistance to foster individual learning and group collaboration". Delegates were welcomed by Dr David Mole, Associate Vice-President for Academic Affairs and Samson Soong, University Librarian, both from The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology.

[Harriette Hemmasi](#), University Librarian at Brown University, USA gave the keynote speech on "[The Why of Information and Learning Commons](#)"

A number of the presentations demonstrated how student services had been integrated with learning space (libraries) to provide a "one stop shop" for students. In contrast, ALPS, in partnership with the Leeds University Library, have designed a work space with specific learning outcomes in mind. By providing space where they can work in groups students are encouraged to develop their communication and group working skills. The ALPS Group Study Area has furniture which promotes this type of learning. Facilities include comfortable seating, computer workstations with large screens intended for sharing and moveable group tables.



**The ALPS Group Study Area**

Trish Walker, ALPS Programme Manager, and Liz Waller, Head of Public Service Strategy at Leeds University Library, presented "The Library Chameleon: changing spaces for 21st Century Learning". The presentation explored collaboration in the re-design of learning spaces between academic units, librarians and students. The results of the pilot evaluation were presented and strategies

for the future were suggested.

The preliminary stage of evaluation is part of ongoing work to assess this space for learning to see whether it meets the expectations of students and how it has affected their work practices. Initial feedback from students is that the space is well used, that they find the environment, including light, noise control and furniture, conducive to working in groups. Future evaluation is planned and will involve working with academics and educators.

The presentation is available at <http://www.alps-cetl.ac.uk/Presentations/REVISED%20The%20Library%20Chameleon%20020108.ppt>

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### Announcements Welcome - ALPS Mobile Technologies Project Manager



*"My first few weeks have been busy and exciting, as I have begun to get to grips with the innovative and challenging programme that is ALPS!"*

*Prior to joining ALPS I had spent 8 years working as a Project Manager, in the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Leeds, on a series of online learning and knowledge transfer projects. This followed on from 8 years' work on research and development projects in the area of the use of computers in education, based mainly at the Universities of Leeds, Lancaster and Newcastle. I am delighted to be involved with ALPS and to be helping to deliver new learning experiences to students through the use of mobile technologies.*



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*I am looking forward to working with everyone involved in the ALPS programme. If you have any questions about the mobile technologies work then please don't hesitate to contact me."*

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Congratulations to Chris Essen (ALPS Service User and Carer Working Group member) and Lisa Malihi-Shoja on winning the 2008 Ian Light award for Service User and Carer involvement in Higher Education. They receive £500 to work together on a project in order to gain mutual support and develop their expertise in involving service users and carers in higher education. Chris says *"We're delighted. This award is already allowing Lisa and myself to carry out a shared theoretical exploration of community engagement as a relatively new approach to developing relevant health and social care professional education. Language tends to be used interchangeably and the term 'engagement' is sometimes used in the place of 'involvement'. But there are methodological differences between inviting the involvement of individuals and the engagement of authentic geographical communities to share in empowerment and learning around mutual concerns. Community engagement is a way for our university to meet its stated strategic aim of contributing to the enrichment of local society"*.

### **\*STOP PRESS\***

#### **ALPS dissemination event**

We are delighted to bring you news of an ALPS dissemination event to be held as a pre-conference day to this year's ALT-C Conference. The main conference is entitled **ALT-C 2008: Rethinking the digital divide**, and is being held at The University of Leeds, 9-11 September.

The ALPS showcase, organised by the ALPS e-Valuation Group, will be held on September 8<sup>th</sup> at Old Broadcasting House, Leeds Metropolitan University. The day will involve 9 ALPS-related workshops, which will focus on the experience of using mobile technology to support work based practice in health and social care. If you are an academic or learning technologist from any subject area who has cohorts of students who undertake work based practice, then these workshops will be of interest to you. You will hear about how to develop both formal and informal assessment and learning using these devices.

We will discuss the challenges of embedding both the technology and the pedagogy into your courses and infrastructure. You will hear about how to develop and manage learning objects for mobile devices and we will relay our experiences of how effective this technology can be for supporting students in work based practice.

Details of this event will be publicised on the ALPS website shortly. In the meantime if you would like to see a full programme for the day, or book a place, please contact Viktoria Sargent ([v.c.sargent@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:v.c.sargent@leeds.ac.uk)).

#### **Future Bulletins**

The Bulletin is distributed electronically and via the ALPS website three times a year to keep colleagues up to date and involved with the work of the ALPS Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning and networks and resources. For further information on the articles featured visit our website at <http://www.alps-cetl.ac.uk/>

We are looking for keen readers **and** contributors to the Bulletin, in order to make it a valuable, relevant, collective resource. **The deadline for contributions is September 30<sup>th</sup> 2008.** You can contribute by emailing the ALPS Core Team at [alps@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:alps@leeds.ac.uk) with brief details of events, links to articles and other information. We'd be delighted if you would forward this Bulletin to your colleagues. Equally, if you've received this in error, or if you don't wish to remain on our circulation list, please let us know – [alps@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:alps@leeds.ac.uk).

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For the benefit of new readers and as a reminder to everyone else, ALPS is a collaborative programme between five Higher Education Institutions with proven reputations for excellence in learning and teaching in health and social care: the Universities of Bradford, Huddersfield, Leeds (lead), and Leeds Metropolitan and York St John Universities. There are 16 professions across the partnership from Audiology to Social Work and a wide range of partners including NHS Yorkshire and the Humber and practice networks. We are also working in consultation with the professional statutory and regulatory bodies.