

## **How HEI's prepare students for practice placement training**

### **Report based on DIETS visits 2007**

#### **1. Introduction**

The Education and Practice Group of the DIETS Thematic Network organised 12 visits between Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) in 2007. The aims were to share and disseminate best practice for teaching dietetic students in practice, to develop quality indicators for practical dietetic education and to develop skills of dietetic teachers through exchange visits and promoting an evidence based approach.

##### 1.1. Aims and objectives of the DIETS Network that can be met by results of visits

The visits can accomplish several aims and objectives of the DIETS Thematic Network: describe practical training of dietetic students, improve communication between educators and dietetic practitioners, build a functioning network of dietetic practitioners, dietetic educators and nutritional scientists across Europe.

##### 1.2. Visits in general

The 12 visits took place between 26 partner HEIs from 16 European Countries. In eleven of the institutes the course leads to qualification as clinical and in seventeen as general dietitian. In five of the institutes the dietetic students qualify as an administrative and in four as a public health dietitian. As a result of the visits several curricula had been placed on the DIETS webpage in order to be accessible to all partners. We received information about credits from 19 institutions.

##### 1.3. List of HEIs taking part in the visits

The following HEIs participated in the visits:

Uppsala University  
Department of Food and Nutrition, Umea University  
University of Maribor  
College of Health Care Izola, University of Primorska  
University of Rome  
Higher School of Health Technology, Lisbon  
HAN University, Nijmegen  
University of Plymouth  
University College of St Lieven  
Warsaw Medical University  
University of Navarra  
University College Ghent  
Dublin Institute of Technology  
Thessaloniki Technological Education Institute  
Harakopio University  
University Teaching Hospital, Prague  
Simmelweis University  
Complutense University of Madrid  
University of Siena

Charite University Berlin  
Hacettepe University  
University of Pecs  
University College, Jutland  
Amsterdam School of Nutrition and Dietetics  
Jagiellonian University  
Erciyes University

## **2. Details of practice placement training preparation by HEIs participating in the visits**

### 2.1. Duration and credits

74% of HEIs have ECTS credits allocated and further 26% have local credits for educating dietitians. The average length of study is 112 weeks. A student has to do practical placement training for an average of 21 weeks before qualification. ECTS credits are used in practice training in 68% of the institutions, and only in 16% of the HEIs allocate no credits for practice placement training. The range is wide: from 10 to 67 ECTS.

### 2.2. Supervision and assessment of practice placements

55% of the HEIs have requirements regarding the number of dietitians for supervising, which means 1,4 dietitians for a student on average. In two-thirds of the institutions there is training for practice placement supervisors. Only 44% of the HEIs have a checklist about the requirements which the practice placements should fulfill. In the majority of institutions HEI staff visit the placement. The range is from 1 per placement for each student to once in a year. The adequacy of the training is not assessed in only one institution, however written guidelines for this are available only in half of the HEIs.

### 2.3. Supervision and assessment of students during practice placement training

In most of the cases responsibility lies with the placement supervisors; in 30% HEI staff are responsible for the supervision of the students. In all the HEIs the student is assessed during practice placement training, although proportion of this is different. The lowest is 50%, the mean is 86%. The assessment is made by the practice supervisor in 82%, by the HEI staff in 29% and sparingly by peers. A formal pass or fail is present in 88% of the institutions. The assessment is done by evaluating oral presentations of case reports, written reports, oral and written examinations, interviews with patients, The assessment is done by the supervisor alone in 27%, by the HEI staff alone in 40%, and together in the third of the HEIs. If the student fails, can have another attempt after further training in all of the institutions participating in the visits. They can still pass the campus based course in 44% of the HEIs. Only in one case can qualify as a dietitian after failing the practice placement assessment.

### 2.4 Tools used in practice placement

Best practice is a technique, method, process or activity that is more effective at delivering a particular outcome than any other technique, method, process or activity. In practical placement this means a teaching method that enables students to reach the appropriate level of skills necessary for a dietetic practitioner. The range of these techniques is wide: it covers the possibilities from observing through practice to evaluation.

The quality indicator is an agreed-upon process or outcome measure that is used to determine the level of quality achieved. It is a measurable variable that can be used to determine the degree of adherence to a standard or achievement of quality goals.

Both the best practice and the quality indicators are used to prepare students for practice and to refine students' skills during practice.

### 2.5 Steps done by HEIs to help practice trainers

Practice training requires skills not only from students, but also from trainers. As along their work as a dietitian, they have also to teach. Teaching effectively students maybe different from counselling patients, although both can be referred as teaching. Thus, trainers needs also pedagogical and didactical skills, which can be obtained through the help provided by HEIs. The list of these can be read in the Section 4.3.

### 2.6 Remarks from visits reports and follow-up visit reports

„In summary, we learnt a lot from this visit and we hope our Greek visitors did likewise. I hope that we can maintain and develop the links between ourselves and Thessalonika. The DIETS TN must be congratulated for facilitating these exchanges which can only enrich and strengthen dietetics across Europe and we look forward to the next set of visits.” *Dr Clare Corish, Dublin Institute of Technology.*

„We think that was a useful engagement, because there has been not yet professional association in Spain.” „We have to say thanks for the opportunity of taking part in this work!”  
Hungary-Spain

“We agreed to keep in contact to each other in the future as well.” Turkey-Hungary

## **3. Conclusions**

### 3.1 Overall conclusion

The idea of the visits proved to be useful as it generated a huge amount of data. These can be used to improve the quality of the practice placement training. The HEIs that visited each other had a positive experience through the exchange of ideas. It was direct stimulation for them to critically reflect on the way they organise practice placement training.

### 3.2 How do HEIs meet the European Benchmark Statement developed by an EFAD working group and accepted by all members in 2005?

In the European Benchmark Statement (EDBS) EFAD recommended, that the practical part of the study has to account for 30 ECTS-points, corresponding to ½-¾ year of dietetic practice. The results from the questionnaire of the visits showed that 54% (7 HEIs) of the institutions where ECTS are used, allocate 30 ECTS or above this threshold level for practical training. Unfortunately, the remaining 46% does not fulfil the recommendation of EFAD regarding credit allocation, but only have 10-30 ECTS. The EDBS requires the integration of ethical issues in the practice, so students must be aware of ethics. 90% of the institutions introduce their students to the ethical code of practice, usually in form of ethics course.

### 3.3 Discussion and recommendations

Some HEIs don't use credits for practice placement at all (n=3=15%) Not all HEIs that give credits use the ECTS system to allocate points for practice placement (n=3=15%) The differences between the HEIs that use ECTS points for practice placement are too large (10-67 points). In this way it is not possible to compare the quality of the practice placement in the HEIs. Therefore we need all HEIs that train dietitians to adopt the ECTS system and also to agree on the number of points allocated to the practice placement. The demands in the practice placement should be based on the dietetic competencies that will be agreed upon later this year. In the competencies will be defined which one specifically need to be dealt with in the practice placement period. Points should be allocated to each competency. In this way differences in points for the practice placement will be minor between the HEIs.

## **4. Attachments**

### 4.1. Examples of best practice in practice placement training

### 4.2. Examples of quality indicators in practice placement training

1. Assessment (context, communication skills) with simulation clients/patients (58, \*)
2. Discussion about recorded motivational interview, health counseling (58, \*)
3. Discussion about a case-study, evaluation of the report about it (44, 50, 58, \*)
4. Checklist about students' ability and knowledge about ingredients, recipe and cooking different foods and calculate the nutrient content of it. (20, 76)
5. Examination (written and/or oral) (clinical and/or theoretical) (about e.g. knowledge and ability to devise an appropriate care plan for an in-patient; counseling an out-patient) (11, 34, 44, 47, 50, 52, 76, 117, \*)
6. Evaluation of a planned and prepared dietetic food based on a provided anamnesis. (47, 76)
7. Evaluation (reason, amount, palatability, consistency) of a planned and prepared menu for a given age and condition (eg. dehydrated 3 years old girl). (76)
8. Checklist for dietetic consultation (01)
9. Completion and analysis of 7 day weighed diet record (50)
10. Completion, analysis and submission of 24 hour and usual diet history obtained from individuals (50)
11. Evaluation of taking diet history (50)
12. Evaluation of measuring specified anthropometric indices (50)
13. Evaluation of the calculation of a diet history (50)
14. Evaluation of advising a client (50)
15. Evaluation of completed SOAP (Subjective–Objective–Assessment–Plan) (document for nutritional care plan) form. (45)
16. Assessment-checklist (knowledge, skills and attitudes of the student) (44, 45, 117)
17. Oral report about sessions with other healthcare-professional students. (71)
18. Written judgement from the supervisor concerning the skills of the student developed during clinical education (71)
19. Written essays (20, 117)
20. Evaluation of a nutritional survey done by the student (11)
21. Evaluation of the thesis (11)

### 4.3. Steps done by HEIs to help practice trainers in developing skills as identified by the visits questionnaire for year 1.

1. Regular meetings and discussions between HEI teachers and placement supervisors (\*, 1, 45, 46, 50, 71, 76)
2. Seminar and training for placement supervisors (\*, 1, 45, 58, 117)
3. HEI staff and placement supervisors working together in the preparation of the examinations and joint assessment of students (\*, 50)
4. Study guide for placement supervisors (58)
5. Share theoretical knowledge with all teachers (HEI and practice placement) (\*)
6. Developing together competences and quality indicators (\*)
7. Peer review (\*)
8. Student feedback (\*)

### 4.4. References for examples

\* *Workshops of 1<sup>st</sup> DIETS Conference, Plymouth*

*01 University of Plymouth, UK*  
*11 University College Ghent, Belgium*  
*20 Charité School of Dietitians, Germany*  
*34 Universidad CEU – San Pablo, Madrid, Spain*  
*44 Technological Educational Institution of Thessaloniki, Greece*  
*45 Harokopio University, Greece*  
*46 Faculty of Health Sciences, Semmelweis University, Hungary*  
*47 Department of Nutritional Sciences and Dietetics, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Pécs, Hungary*  
*50 Dublin Institute of Technology, Ireland*  
*52 Università Campus Bio-Medico, Rome, Italy*  
*58 Hogeschool van Amsterdam, the Netherlands*  
*71 Department of Food and Nutrition Umea University, Sweden*  
*76 Hacettepe University, Turkey*  
*117 University of Uppsala, Sweden*