

Tips on Starting an Interprofessional Education Session

In writing this section we have given you some tips to ensure that the teaching session starts positively.

Resources

Interprofessional Education (IPE) can be costly. Money may have to be allocated for administration costs, room hire, additional materials, tutor/facilitator time or employment of additional staff and patient/service user involvement.

Preparation for Interprofessional Education

- **Have the students been told in advance about this session**

IPE should be integrated within student's core curriculum whether this is at pre or post registration level. In this regard students should formally be told about the IPE stream of learning during induction to their professional programmes and this should be recorded in the student's handbooks on the details of their course. Where the teaching is for continual professional development information about the session should be shared in advance. Before attending any IPE event the students need to know about the:

- purpose of the learning including aims and intended learning outcomes
- alignment to prior learning or relevant curriculum
- structure of the session
- workbook or support learning materials for the event
- pre-course reading or work to help the students become familiar with the context for the learning
- assessment or post-course additional work
- environment in which the learning will take place
- expectations of the students for the session
- expectations of the facilitators including the professions they represent and their professional roles in academia or practice
- mechanisms for receiving feedback
- feed back to the students schools on student progress, learning and behaviours during the session
- monitoring of attendance
- process for feedback on unprofessional behaviour during the session

In many cases the students can be given this information in a face-to-face situation with their programme leads. In other situations this information can be shared through detailed flyers, or using an e-environment. If the learning is to take place

using an e-environment it is important to consider if the students have all the technical support they require with access to required specifications of IT, and that they understand the teaching e-interface.

- **Finding the right environment**

This will depend upon the type of learning. But we will consider the following

Class-room IPE teaching: Consider the following issues

- preparing students who are *not* studying in their own campus or college environment. This must be considered especially when students have to travel to another institution even if it is just down the road. Students may arrive feeling stressed and/or disadvantaged. The preparation of the host institution is also important to ensure students feel welcomed and supported as they find their way around.
- the size of the environment for the number of students
- tables for students to sit around easily, with round tables being ideal
- space for movement
- access to materials you need, e.g. power point, computers, technicians
- general comfort and ambience is vital and poor quality environments can send out negative views of the value of the teaching session.

In our experience we have had to allocate funds to identify suitable teaching rooms within Universities which are not part of a subjects departments or faculty. In other situations external rooms in, for example, community environments might need to be purchased.

A note of warning in some Universities and in external venues risk assessments may have to be undertaken for additional students from outside the institution and/or for the activities undertaken during the teaching.

Clinical Teaching Environments

IPE can take place in a plethora of clinical environments, from clinics, to wards, to operating Theatres, schools classrooms, social care centres, policing units etc. In most of these situations the following should be considered:

- liaison arrangements between the Higher Education Institution and or college and the clinical area. This may require formalised annual meetings and processes and may require the establishment of designated posts to be created

- engagement of the host clinical or practice team where the learning will take place
- student preparation for appropriate conduct within the clinical area
- the establishment of processes to assimilate the students within the clinical area or practice team, for example, names written on information boards
- consent processes for patients/service users if this is required
- attendance monitoring processes
- professional monitoring processes.

Simulation suits

Many students learn together in simulated environments. These require the commitment of the simulation and/or practical skills teachers who are skilled in this type of learning and oversee and run many of these units. Access to units may be competitive as they mainly provide uni professional education and also support pre and post-registration learning. This can be challenging for IPE where large amounts of time are required to assimilate the large numbers of mixed students cohort groups as the session may need to be run several times to take all the students through the learning. Much of this requires local dialogue and may require evidence to support the extended time required to take students from different professions together.

The cost of these units cannot be overestimated especially where actors are purchased for roles as patients/service users.

E-learning

Learning using an e-interface is often preferred because with adequate support these systems can manage large numbers of students at one time. However, it must not be underestimated that this type of environment requires:

- trained e-moderators with time to respond to students postings
- technical support
- student prepared for the e-interface
- clear codes of conduct for student communication using typed words
- access to the e-materials which might require students having specific programmes on their computers, and processes to ensure access to these systems when in practice which because of fire walls, can be a problem
- time to prepare the educational materials with finite detail as there is no additional face-to-face opportunities for student's queries and questions to be addressed

- systems for managing student concerns and where to seek help and support if required. The materials have to be clear and easily useable e.g. films in technologies which students have on their computers etc.

Allocation to small groups

Face-to-face environments

Students must be prepared for learning alongside other students prior to the event. However, no matter how often they are told they will be separated their natural tendency is to want to be with their peers. Given any chance they will rotate to sit with people with whom they feel comfortable. The facilitators must be ready to greet the students with a warm and friendly response and guide them to their student group. Normally students will be allocated to their small group randomly.

We wish to share our experiences of allocation from many years of delivering IPE. Where there are small numbers of any given professional student group e.g. n=16 clinical psychologists to n=60 social work students and n=60 nursing students, then some thought must be given to the imbalance and likely impact to students from the minority group should they work in groups of more than 4. We advise prior discussion with the smaller student group as to their preference to work alone, that is be allocated as the single representation of their profession to a mixed student group, or to be allocated in pairs. The impact of the latter will result in some mixed student groups not being able to meet students from their professions. In asking the students ahead of the event you overcome feelings of disappointment, concern and hence lack of motivation to learn when they find themselves feeling overwhelmed, working as they perceive it, in isolation. Mature students and those familiar with IPE will and we could argue should be able to manage being part of a learning event where they are the single representative of their profession. This can be expected towards the end of training as students should be able to work in group formations which will represent their future professional working lives. We would expect post-qualified practitioners to have no problems in this regard.

How and when they are placed into their small working student team will be depend upon the event.

- a) Class-room events: Where students learn together seated around tables in cabaret style they should be sent to that table on arrival. Table numbers placed adjacent to the attendance list will help to confirm where they are going.

- b) Clinical Events: In some of these sessions students may already be in small groups and no allocation process is necessary. Where large groups learn in classrooms adjacent to clinical areas and then are sent to work and learn together in the clinical area, student agreement on the allocation may be needed. This engagement with allocation happens where they may have preferences for which clinical unit they return to related to their uni professional learning expectations.
- c) E-learning events: Some thought has to be made about allocation by student profession and to the size of the group. Student profession will relate to the learning tasks. Missing professions may pose problems for the group to meet their intended learning outcomes as unlike clinical environments they cannot go and find the missing professional practitioner. Consideration on group size must be made according to the amount of postings and responses each student is expected to make to the other. A group that is too large e.g. n=10 may become overwhelmed with reading each other's responses while a small group e.g. n=4 may find little material to engage with. The other consideration for group size will be the number of e-moderators available.

As students arrive

Organisation of the environment

Be ready and have the learning environment fully prepared for the session. There are always more student challenges prior to an IPE event than in a uni professional teaching session. This often because the students are, i) less familiar with IPE events; ii) often arrive after having been in uni professional learning event; iii) have forgotten to be organised and ready for the IPE session; and iv) because they have been randomly allocated and have to check they are in the right place as they cannot follow their peers and there are no points of reference e.g. even the teachers are unknown to them.

Consider making the best use of the space you have and ensuring all those involved are prepared.

Managing the allocation to small groups

We suggest that you stay focussed on how students arrive and how they find their way to their groups. Never consider they follow instructions clearly. Many often do

not understand the allocation especially at their first IPE event. Always check you have the right distributions of students as absence for whatever reason, can hugely impact on your well calculated preparations for mixed profession student groups.

Overcoming student fears

Students often need reassurance that they are not expected to be bringing to the session all their uni professional knowledge. In early IPE events many students are fearful that they are expected to behave and have the knowledge of being that profession e.g. they should know about being a doctor, pharmacist, police officer etc. They will only be expected to contribute what they know for their level of progress through their curriculum. The event will be tailored for all the different students to manage together and students need to be reassured of this. Where content is required this should be relevant to the level of all the students abilities at that time along their curriculum trajectory.

Gaining Trust to Facilitate the Session

Clarity of purpose for the session

IPE events need to be clearly understood by students and the sessions must commence with clear understanding of the intended aims and learning outcomes. To achieve these facilitators who normally work in pairs must agree how to start the session. There should be a formal welcome and introductions which ensure the students know why they are there.

Many students attend IPE sessions which are run by educators from different professions to their own and with whom they are unfamiliar. Gaining trust and respect is important and no different to any good teaching situation. The difference is that students need to appreciate that taking part in an IPE session is the opportunity for two way learning that is from students to teachers and vice versa. Giving power to students in this way can free learning opportunities and help students begin to realise they can shape and inform their future practice.

Ensuring small group cohesion

Getting to feel comfortable with one another and ground rules

In most small group teaching the first steps after introductions and explanations of the purpose of the event is to ensure the group feel comfortable working together. There are several ways of doing this. To choose the right approach the educators need to consider the student composition. Maturity, familiarity with IPE, type of learning expected e.g. clinical, classroom, etc. Each of these different teaching situations require different approaches to achieve group cohesion. In our view there are two steps to this process

Step One: Informal chats to one another along the following lines...

- With mature confident students, simply leave them time to talk to one another. It is possible with larger groups for students to talk to their neighbour and then use the rule that by the end of a given time frame, groups members will be expected to introduce their neighbour to the entire group.
- With undergraduates simply asking them to share why they chose their career pathway and something about their name e.g. has it any special meaning, do they like it etc.

A tip: It is a good idea to have a large piece of poster paper in the middle of the table for everyone to write their names around the edge of the paper as in this way they can quickly and easily remember who's who.

Step Two: Ground rules...

Ground rules are designed to enable the student group to adopt and own an agreed professional code of team working for the duration of their joint learning. What is it exactly that will enable this group, who may not know one another at all, to learn together over the coming hours, days or weeks? How will they recognise they are working well together and how will the facilitators understand their efforts to learn together? In the end the ground rules will help the facilitator rescue groups that are failing to learn interactively and effectively. They normally comprise group agreements on aspects of respecting difference, allowing contributions from everyone, time management and professional behaviours the group want to encourage.

We offer lots of ideas for this throughout our materials on TIGER. Please go to the section on managing small groups ([LINK HERE](#)) to read more.

Teaching Content Ideas

Interprofessional education (IPE) requires students to interact with one another to achieve their intended learning outcomes. The learning must require students to share their different professional perspectives and to reflect on what happens in practice when different practitioners work together to help patients/service users. We hope you will find the teaching materials in TIGER helpful as they have a range of possibilities for IPE.

In this section we offer ideas on how to start a programme for the very first time.

Possible first ideas

A useful place to start in designing interprofessional learning is to enable students to learn the correct use of terms relating to team working and collaborative practice and for education for preparation for this.

Professional language divides professionals in the work place as they use abbreviations and terms which are not often understood by another. Students need to appreciate these issues using relevant learning materials (SEE LINK STRAND ONE EXERCISES).

Early Activities -Strand One (LINK HERE)

- Complete a team activity and relate this to theory of team working
- Explore the development of stereotyping
- Case studies based upon a wide range of peoples experiences of health and social care, community support, teaching etc.