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The nurse’s role in practice based education: Innovation in academic assessment and the influence on practice development

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Assessment is a feature of all academic courses undertaken for award. The nature of the strategies that can be used to assess learning vary a great deal. The rationale for the method of assessment should test the area of learning, although is however often related to the tutor preference. Bloom et al (1971) suggest that assessment has two functions firstly, to systematically collect evidence to determine whether certain changes are taking place in the learners’ and secondly to assess the amount or degree of change in individual students’ (p.8). Linn and Gronlund (2000) agree that assessment involves gathering information about student learning achievement but firmly locates the process in the context of learning goals (outcomes) and judgments concerning their achievement. Whereas Race and Brown (2001) argue that assessment is much more than use of a range of techniques to measure achievement but propose that it is a systematic process that plays a significant role in effective teaching. It begins with identification of learning goals and ends with a judgment concerning how well those goals have been attained (Race and Brown 2001).

Recognising that students have individual strengths, weaknesses, learning styles and preferences concerning mode of assessment, educators and those designing academic modules need to take steps to ensure their assessment practices and instruments are well designed and valid and relevant to the learners and healthcare practice needs. This paper aims to present the findings of a research study based on students’ (N=25) and their managers (N=12) views, outcomes, emotional effects and practice development following the assessment methods they used on a Post registration, ‘acute illness’ course at the University of Huddersfield. The assessment methods reviewed include the traditional essay, presentations, simulated practical exams and the innovative approach offering students the ‘choice’ of assessment methods (Garside et al, 2009) as a strategy for inculcating the values of student-centeredness and responsibility for learning.