



Service Learning in Nursing & Midwifery

A range of service learning modules are available at NUI Galway whereby students undertake accredited activity of specific relevance to their chosen subject for the benefit of the community

Teaching Context

Subject	Nursing
Department	School of Nursing & Midwifery
Participants	2 nd year students
Pedagogy	Service learning / community based learning
Method	Classroom preparation followed by work in a different cultural context
Participants	Up to 30 students
Hours	30 hours module and then 4-6 weeks in a national or international community setting.
Credits	6 ECTS
Materials	Lectures, seminars and workshops.
Assessment	Submit a 3,000 word written reflective report on the service learning experience Present a 20-minute presentation of the experience to peers and lecturers. Assessment on the planning process involved in setting up the service learning placement.
Length	Theoretical content delivered over one semester and service learning placement takes place during summer period
Community Partners	Ranchoid Hospice, Kabwe, Zambia Ortum Mission Hospital, Ortumn Kenya, Our Lady's Hospice Lusaka Zambia
Optional/Mandatory	Optional
First Piloted	2003/2004

Introduction

Service learning enables students to make meaningful connections between classroom theory and real life (Callister & Hobbins-Garbett, 2000). It also allows the provision of a needed service to the community while, simultaneously, students learn and apply concepts learnt in the classroom in the real world (Eyler & Giles 1999).

Service Learning in Nursing

This module, one of the first of its kind within Irish Nursing, is entitled 'International Nursing: Nursing in the Developed and Developing Worlds', students are required to undertake a service-learning placement in a culture different to their own. The focus of the module is to enable students to explore and develop awareness of cultural diversity; to develop understanding of cultural differences and how this can affect health/ nursing care and to foster social awareness and social responsibility.

Academic Basis

This is an optional module accruing 6 ECTS. The theoretical content is delivered in semester two, year two of the Bachelor of Nursing Science. Topics include; Culture and Health Beliefs; Transcultural Nursing & Assessing Clients from different cultures; communicating with culturally different clients; Dealing with conflict and conflict transformation; Health and Human Rights and Personal Health and Safety Issues.

In order to ensure that students are fully prepared an information session is held at commencement of year 1 informing students about the module. The need for students to identify sources of funding and potential community placement areas is highlighted at this point. At the beginning of year 2, following a briefing session outlining the details of the module and the service learning placement, students are given 4 weeks to sign up to take the module.

A key-learning outcome for the module is that students demonstrate the ability to initiate, negotiate and obtain a community placement in an environment culturally different to their own. Therefore while the module team will advise students, they are expected to show drive and initiative in taking the lead. The role of the link person is to provide friendly support for the student. Students are required to write letters of introduction, negotiate their own accommodation and provide evidence during the planning process that they have considered and dealt effectively with all important health and safety issues.

Students maintain contact with the School while on community placement via a virtual learning environment (Blackboard™).

Students who register for the module are required to:

- inform the module leader of any personal chronic illness;
- sign a form which outlines personal responsibility for health and safety during the placement experience;
- show proof of liability insurance;
- complete a pre and post placement medical examination as appropriate;
- show proof of having received any necessary immunisations;
- attend a debriefing session on return from the service learning placement.

A second aim of the module is to develop reciprocal relationships with the service-learning sites and help build their capacity and continued links by working together to identify areas where assistance could be provided by the School, be it develop an educational programme or undertake a piece of research for the community which would help them to meet their needs.

Introduction Contd.

Assessment

The module is assessed by 100% coursework. Taylor (1994) and Duffy (2001) identify reflection as a key strategy in developing intercultural sensitivity. In light of this students are required to submit a report that demonstrates critical self reflection as well as including a description of the planning process, the practice placement environment and an account of the socio-political structure of the health care system operating in that culture. In addition students are asked on their return to present a brief 20 minute presentation about their experience to peers and lecturers. In order to write the report students are encouraged to keep a reflective journal for recording experiences with clients and other health care professionals. In recognition of the amount of hidden work involved in setting up the community placement students are also awarded marks.

Student Benefit

Service Learning in Nursing provides students with the opportunity to develop their awareness of cultural diversity and how this can affect health and also fosters social awareness, and social responsibility. Students have positively evaluated the module. Students are also invited to participate in an ongoing qualitative research study, the aim of which is to explore the learning experiences of students undertaking a service placement in a different culture. The findings from this study reveal that the majority of students who participate in this service learning module experience both personal and professional development and bring back important knowledge, skills and understanding to the Irish health system.

Community Benefit

The Community Knowledge Initiative (CKI) at NUI, Galway funded a needs analysis trip to Africa in 2006 to undertake a needs analysis across community learning placement sites in Zambia and Kenya. Part of the rationale for these visits was to ascertain site suitability and to ensure that there was a reciprocal relationship between NUI, Galway and the community. The students bring the money that they raised in Ireland to the community, however the School of Nursing & Midwifery felt strongly that this was not enough and that the needs of sites rather than the students should drive developments. Undertaking a needs analysis in sites therefore enabled the identification of key priorities for each site. A key priority for some community partners was the need for assistance with pain management in palliative care. Currently the School of Nursing & Midwifery is working with one community partner to develop a programme specific to their needs and in July 2008 a member of staff and an RGN (who undertook her placement in this site as a student nurse) will travel to Africa to work with partners to pilot and implement a sustainable programme.

Academic Comment

Dr. Dympna Casey of the School of Nursing & Midwifery at NUI Galway, commented on the success of the service learning module, "This is a fantastic opportunity for our nursing students, which allows them to develop awareness of cultural diversity and an understanding of cultural differences and how this can affect health and the delivery of care. Students report that this learning experience has changed them professionally in that they are more aware of different cultural and ethnic groups and are more likely to approach such clients and have a better understanding of what its like to be a minority in a different culture. On a personal level they all report how they feel more mature, independent and more confident in their nursing skills. Currently we are working with service learning sites to assist them with their identified needs. At the moment we are helping one site to obtain solar power panels. It is envisaged that as the relationship develops staff student exchanges will also be established"