

ePortfolios: Conducting Focus Groups – Students and Staff

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Aims

1. To evaluate students experiences of using an ePortfolio platform – PebblePad
2. To use focus group data to provide an in-depth evaluation of quantitative data gathered by survey monkey

Conduct a pilot interview to test interview guide and the appropriate number of respondents

Recruitment

All participants 12 (2 groups students – self-selected) and 1 group of staff have completed an ePortfolio.

Participants have volunteered themselves based on an invitation from the assessing body.

Letter of consent and information to be given as part of introduction.

Informing participants and giving them a safe opt-out

Ethical; Anonymity (Parahoo 2006/2007 Nurse Researcher)

Confidentiality

What's revealed to you (personal- what counselling facilities have you provided ; practice related unsafe practices Howatson Jones 2007 – refer to AORN guidelines and/or clinical manager))

Written information and consent form and ethics protocol including referral options Howatson Jones 2007

Composition of the group; The distribution of gender and ethnicity may influence the group dynamics (Cote Arsenault, Morrison-Beedy 1999)

Consider power differentials Happell2007

Moderator/Facilitator

One of the most important principles of focus groups is that the conversation is encouraged and facilitated between group members (Gates and Waight2007)

Anthology to the expedition leader (Gates and Waight2007)

Pre-set questions act as a guide only and they may ask other questions or use comments as necessary to stimulate and focus discussion (McLafferty 2004)

Reflexivity (Howatson Jones 2007)

- Non-threatening supportive climate
- facilitate interaction
- Interjecting probing comments
- Transitional questions and summaries without interfering too brusquely with the dialogue
- Covering important topics and questions while relying on judgements to abandon aspects of the questioning outline
- Note non-verbal responses (Basch 1987 p 415 in McLafferty 2004)

Milward 1995 in McLafferty 2004 it is necessary for moderator to be directly involved in the project because they will be sensitive to the issues and the need for methodological rigour

Ground rules were developed for all groups McLafferty 2004

Encourage participants to talk to one another rather than direct conversation to the facilitator
Gates and Waight 2007

Interview Guide

Student

- Describe your overall impression of PebblePad - both positives and negatives
- What was the impact when you started working with the ePortfolio
- Did the ePortfolio add to your learning – if so how
- Did using an ePortfolio restrict your learning – if so how
- How could your experiences with PebblePad be improved for next year's students
 - ✓ Support – IT, Lecturer, Module leader, Clinical leader

Staff - Lecturer

- Describe your overall impression of PebblePad
- Did using Pebble pad make your teaching more learner friendly - if so how
- Could your experiences with Pebble Pad be improved – if so how
- How effective was the rubric when assessing students work submitted on Pebble Pad
- Do you have and use a portfolio/ ePortfolio

Can be developed through reading literature – broad questions

Direct group discussion and to stimulate conversation about research topic

General to specific questions

Non – threatening to more threatening (McLafferty 2004) terms this funnelling design. 10 questions in that study which included an ice-breaker Morgan 1998 in Howatson Jones 2007

Site Selection

Location; the effects of the location on participant perceptions may be distorted (Kahn, Mastroianni 2001 in Howatson Jones 2007).

Interview procedure

At beginning of interview please ask participants to say their name, their discipline of nursing and country or origin (as outlined below).

Field Notes

Interaction in terms of silence and dominance were monitored as part of the moderator role in picking up cues of power expression and group norming behaviour Howatson Jones 2007

Recommendations from focus group authors

Howatson Jones 2007

Keep field notes of key interaction and group atmosphere

Mapping the number and sequence of questions to the available time frame

Pilot to test moderator role and questioning tool

Happell2007

Do not use focus groups when power differentials exist between participants

McLafferty 2004

Homogenous groups appear to work better than heterogeneous

Writers need to be more explicit about what works and what does not work for potential researchers to make more informed choices about the use of focus groups in their research

Calder 1977

Moderator as influencing factor

Lack of standardisation in terms of questions and procedures (Morgan 1996 in McLafferty 2004

(Gates and Waight2007 p.113 para 2)

Advantages and disadvantages listed

Participants may gain very little with the researchers can gain all benefits Mansell 2004 in Gates and Waight2007

Analysis of data can be time consuming Beyea et al 2000 in Gates and Waight2007

Particular areas requiring attention by researchers include;

- Recruitment
- Attendance
- Data Collection
- Ethical issues and matters of consent
- Facilitation
- Venue
- Payment

Happell (2007) suggests that focus groups will fit in with the activities of potential participants in order to ensure a high level of participation, and avoid situations where the researcher is forced to substitute individual interviews for focus groups because of logistical difficulties, as described by Reed (2005).

The Procedure

- ✚ Introductions
- ✚ Introduce study stating purpose
- ✚ Thank participants for coming
- ✚ All to wear labels with first name
- ✚ Show letter of invitation
- ✚ We explain study will be an audio-taped group discussion
- ✚ Each person invited to contribute their individual experience of using Pebble pad
- ✚ Ensure confidentiality anonymity
- ✚ Explain we want each person to introduce themselves on tape stating first name, and discipline of nursing
- ✚ If variety of country of origin we ask them to state country of origin

Assign one person to act as a primary facilitator and encourage discussion

Assign another person to act as a second facilitator and note taker

Is there anything else you would like to know before we start??

Taping

Individual introductions

Interview Guide Questions:

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Finish

Stop tape. You may be back to verify your analysis of data. Would that be OK? It may only involve reading a page or two to confirm accuracy about what was said.

The primary facilitator should pledge to send a copy of this study to all relevant parties when it is published.

Thank Everybody and Clean up.