Pearson

BTEC Higher National qualifications in Healthcare Practice/Healthcare Practice forEngland

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Unit: 18 Innovation and Improvement through Action Research

First Teaching from September 2018

First Certification from September 2019

For use with the following qualifications:

Pearson BTEC Level 4 Higher National Certificate in Healthcare Practice/Healthcare Practice for England

Pearson BTEC Level 5 Higher National Diploma in Healthcare Practice/Healthcare Practice for England

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1   Introduction to theme

Theme

The Pearson-set theme for use with Unit 18: Innovation and Improvement through Action Research is:

Theme: Improving services by involving people

Health and social care were once delivered to patients and service users by those that thought they knew what the patients and service users needed or wanted. Those who accessed services were told what care, treatment or interventions they would receive. Experts, in the medical model of health and social care sense of the word, made the decisions. Thankfully, the days of hegemonic health and social care are in the past… or are they?

The aim of this year's theme is to enable learners to explore personalised care, the depths of its integration into the systems and services they are involved in, and to critically examine the service they, and their placement/workplace colleagues deliver. They should explore ways people could be more involved in their own personalised treatment and care.

This document outlines some of the approaches that may be taken when designing the assessment brief for this unit.

Tutors/research supervisors must ensure that they, learners and practice supervisors are fully aware of, and able to abide by, the principles contained within the *UK policy framework for health and social care research* (Health Research Authority and UK Health Departments, 2017) <u>before</u> any primary research is proposed or undertaken. This policy framework comes under the auspices of the National Institute for Health and Care Research and the Good Clinical Practice international standard (National Institute for Health and Care Research, n.d.).

Learners <u>must not</u> attempt to carry out primary research where the employer or placement provider is not supportive of the research and cannot appropriately supervise and support the learner's research interactions and

data gathering with service users.

Where primary research using an action research methodology is not possible, pragmatic alternatives have been suggested in section 3.

Background

Health and social care services are delivered in a wide variety of locations by a large number of different health and social care professionals, students and learners.

Individuals, carers and families access services in their own homes, communities, residential care homes, day care facilities, hospitals, health centres, medical practices, pharmacies, hospices. This is not an exhaustive list.

Health and social care services are also increasingly being delivered online, by telephone and via specially developed software and applications that can be installed on mobile or desktop devices.

Organisations and professions have different names for those who use and access their services. Clients, service users, users of services, patients, individuals, public, and people are just some of the terms in common use. However, the core principle of safe, effective care remains unchanged.

NHS Improving Quality (2014), now part of NHS England, defined a service improvement project as being "about testing ways to implement evidence-based care". A service improvement project is not the same as a research project, but it will be grounded in the evidence from research. Service improvement project documents should include a section that discusses the published and peer reviewed evidence related to the project idea.

This theme, improving services by involving people, has been chosen because interprofessional multidisciplinary care, wherever the service is delivered, is an essential baseline standard of care. Where improvements are proposed and made to services, the project has to describe a collaborative process involving the relevant professional groups and *essentially*, those who use the services. The voice of the people the service is designed for should be at the heart of improvement projects.

2 Commentary on learning outcomes, unit content and assessment criteria

This unit may have some challenges in relation to research terminology, learning outcomes and assessment criteria. These challenges will not affect all centres but where they do, this section may be helpful.

Unit introduction and aim

The introduction contains the unit aim and an overview of the unit content. Some centres may find it helpful to have this clarification of elements of the unit introduction.

Introduction

> Students will firstly develop a deeper understanding of the types of research conducted in public health and develop their research skills further to carry out a research study using their own research questions.

This unit and assessment are not just related to the Public Health and Health Promotion pathway. *Unit 18: Innovation and Improvement through Action Research* is a core mandatory unit in all Healthcare Practice/Healthcare Practice for England pathways. Tutors should ensure that their teaching, learning and assessment materials meet the needs of the learners' own contexts as far as reasonably possible.

Unit aim

> The aim of this unit is to develop student's research skills further to be able to carry out an independent piece of action research using human participants to contribute to service improvement. Students will make use of the Practice Themes in order to identify a suitable research project or extend a proposed study devised at level 4.

In health and social care, where service users must be involved in service improvement research, it may not be possible for learners to carry out "an independent piece of action research using human participants". Research using human participants in health and social care has many standards and requirements that must be adhered to. These can be international, national and local requirements.

Not least is the frequent requirement for researchers to submit a proposal to an independent health and social care ethics panel which will be made up of sector experts, lay members, service users, primary research active academics and clinical academics, and other health and social care professionals. External research ethics panels are beyond the scope of this qualification and tutors/research supervisors should discuss the learners' proposed research at a very early stage to ensure that submission to an external panel is not required.

Education institution internal research ethics panels may be utilised where participants are *not* patients, service users, clients etc. The internal panel should consist of members who are research active in the learner's fields, service users/clients or lay members and members of the workforce where the learners is seeking to recruit participants. Learners' submissions should be supported by their academic research supervisors.

Research design

> Students will then go on to design their research methodology and carry out a piece of action research and produce findings to a range of audiences

Learners will not be able to "design their methodology". The methodology to be used in this unit is action research, as stated in the title and throughout the unit descriptor. One of the variants of action research may be used as the research methodology. In this instance, "methodology" can be taken to mean that learners will design their own research *project*.

Carrying out action research

Whether learners will be able to "carry out a piece of action research" or not depends on the factors outlined in section 1 Introduction to theme. Tutors should ensure that they take this section, and the rest of this document into consideration when designing the assignment brief.

Generalising research findings

Where the introduction states that learners will "produce findings to a range of audiences", this does *not* mean that learners' research must be generalisable to a wider population. Generalising findings to a population beyond which they have accessed in their research is beyond the scope of a level 5 qualification. Production of

generalisable findings is not included in the learning out comes or the assessment criteria.

Learners are required to examine the impact of their findings. "Examine" does not mean that they have to measure the impact of their research.

Publication of further guidance

The qualification specification document states that further guidance along with this document will be published.

> *Please refer to the accompanying Pearson-set Assignment Guide and the Theme Release document for further support and guidance on the delivery of the Pearson-set unit.

Separate guidance will not be published. This document contains all the information related to this year's Pearson-set theme.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this unit students will be able to:

1 Review the role of research in health and wellbeing improvement strategies

Research has a vital and essential role in health and wellbeing service improvement strategies.

2 Develop a methodological framework for action research into health and wellbeing improvement

As discussed previously, learners will not be able to design a methodology. They should use an action research methodology as a framework for their research.

3 Carry out action research towards improvements in health and wellbeing

This learning outcome could be challenging to many centres and placement providers. Challenges are discussed in more detail in section 1 of this document and pragmatic solutions are suggested in section 3.

4 Examine the impact of research findings with regard to service improvement and own professional development.

If learners are not able to carry out action research, as will be the case for many, they

cannot examine the impact of their research findings. However, they can examine the potential impact of their findings. They will be able to suggest possible outcomes and reflect on the impact that each of the possible outcomes could have on the problem they have chosen to attempt to address.

Unit content

The unit essential content potentially adds some confusion to the assessment.

> Promoting ethical and participatory research, e.g. possessing strong communication and interpersonal skills to develop positive relationships with participants, consideration of individual needs

There is no requirement for learners to choose *participatory* action research as their methodology. They could choose any one of the several different action research methodologies, or even keep their methodology as broad "action research". However, participatory action research would be an appropriate methodology to consider given this year's Pearson-set theme.

Participatory action research

In participatory action research, the service users who take part in the research along with the learners are equal to the researcher in the research process. Participatory action research is democratic, empowering, emancipatory and interpretative. The methodology's origins are in social justice. It is concerned with the subjective interpretations of the individuals taking part, including the researcher (Mubuuke and Leibowitz, 2013). Researcher objectivity, disinterest or distance is not part of the participatory action research methodology or cycle (Kemmis, McTaggart and Nixon, 2014). Bias is a recognised, integral and an important part of the participatory action research methodology. This is often criticised by those using quantitative research methodologies. Kemmis and his co-researchers have written extensively, and critically, on action research.

Participants are often referred to as co-participants (Langlois, Goudreau and Lalonde, 2014) and the researcher is often referred to as a co-participant too. Groups created for the purpose of the research may be called co-development groups.

Terminology

The unit refers to a methodological framework, methodology, methods, aims, objectives, research questions, hypotheses, design, reliability, validity, triangulation, sampling, research process, rationale, primary research, secondary research, study, methodological approach, etc.

Tutors should ensure learners are not confused with these terms, several of which mean the same thing. Learners should be signposted to a range of authoritative texts that simplify the research process and explain it both with words and graphics. Several resources have been cited in this document already, and more are contained within the resources list.

Terms related to a "problem" are not included within the unit descriptor. Action research in all its forms is focused on the potential solution to a problem. Suggestions to enable learners to identify a problem are given in section 4.

To aid tutors, two important terms are described below.

Methodologies and **methods** are not the same. Action research is a research methodology.

Some examples of research methodologies are listed below.

- Qualitative research
- Quantitative research
- Mixed methods research
- Systematic literature review
- **Action research**
- Design based research
- Phenomenology
- Phenomenography
- Grounded theory

There are many others. There is often overlap between methodologies. For example, action research frequently uses mixed methods of data collection.

Often there are variants of methodologies. For example, some of the variants of action research are listed below. These are not sub-divisions of action research, they are separate and distinct methodologies.

- Participatory action research
- Classroom action research

- Critical action research
- Technical action research
- Practical action research

There are further examples and Creswell (2019) will be an excellent resource for both tutors and learners. Although Creswell writes about educational research in this text much of the core content in the book is applicable across sectors. The fifth edition of Creswell and Creswell's *Research Design* (2022) text may also be a useful resource.

Research methods are the ways data is collected. Some examples of methods are:

- Survey
- Semi-structured interview
- Questionnaire
- Focus group

Primary research and primary research evidence

When a researcher plans and carries out a research project which creates new data, this is primary research. Part of the primary research process is usually carrying out a thorough literature review before collecting data. This is done to identify the findings of other related primary research projects or secondary research projects. One of the exceptions to this rule is the grounded theory methodology where only a very preliminary review of the literature is carried out before data gathering.

Secondary research and secondary research evidence

Where a researcher uses existing data only, this is secondary research. A systematic literature review is secondary research. New data is not gathered but existing data is collected, analysed and synthesised.

Primary research is not better than secondary research. In fact, systematic literature reviews are at the top of the top of the hierarchy of evidence.

Assessment criteria

The assessment criteria associated with learning outcomes 3 and 4 could be challenging to a number of learners for whom carrying out primary action research has not been possible. Tutors should refer to section 3 for further guidance.

3   Learners who are not able to carry out primary action research

Where it is not possible for learners to carry out primary action research, centres and tutors are required to be pragmatic. Learners must not be disadvantaged because carrying out primary research is not possible.

Learning outcomes 1 and 2 can appropriately be assessed by non-primary research methods.

Learning outcomes 3 and 4 can be pragmatically loosened to enable learners to submit non-primary research work or research using pseudo-service users. Some suggestions include:

- Extended research proposal – this is a much longer piece of work than a traditional research proposal. Learners would critically analyse action research as a methodology and potentially discuss some of the variations of action research described in section 2 of this document. They would then plan the research, consider ethics and consent implications and consider how they would gather and present their data.

- Analysis of data that has already been gathered – data could be from a variety of sources and some examples are included in section 7 Resources and useful links

   o   A journal article or articles

   o   An employer or placement provider (tutors need to ensure that appropriate co-participant permissions/consent were in place at the time of data collection by the employer/placement provider)

   o   National Health Service statistics website (https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/)

   o   Websites or social media – social media or forum posts by service users could be analysed as a pragmatic proxy for real co-participants. This would not be action research but could enable learners to some interesting conclusions.

   o   Case studies – patient groups, charities and the wider systems often host

case study videos where service users talk about their experiences accessing services.

- o Professional body research/publications that have involved service users.

- o Made up data – this is potentially the most time-consuming method for tutors as it would need to be realistic.

- Simulated service users – groups of students/tutors as proxies for real service users. Tutors *must* ensure that all the education institution ethics requirements are in place and there are support mechanisms available for all co-participants just as there would need to be for real service users.

This is not an exhaustive list and tutors my wish to discuss alternatives with their external examiner or submit the draft assignment brief to the assignment checking service.

4   Identifying a problem and designing a research question

Tutors will need to devise an assignment brief for learners to follow. The brief should be designed to meet the specific needs of learners' contexts and must include reference to:

- Clients/service users/users of services/patients/individuals/public/peoples/term relevant to the learners' areas of practice.

- Employers/placements/workplace/term relevant to learners' areas of practice

Identifying a problem

Learners should be encouraged to identify a specific area of healthcare about which they would like to research and improve. A problem-based approach will be useful for aiding the identification of the improvement to be proposed. It is the solution to the problem that is important when using action research as a methodology.

Learners should be encouraged to choose a small, discrete areas to aim to improve rather than trying to solve large health, organisational, regional or national problems. The research should be realistic in relation to their own contexts.

When creating the assignment brief, tutors must be cognisant of the unit learning outcomes and assessment criteria. It must be possible for all learners to achieve pass, merit and distinction criteria. Tutors, by way of assessment design, must not limit learners' opportunity to achieve the highest grades.

A problem is something that needs to be addressed or solved in order to improve the service for patients, service users, clients etc. Problems have two elements (Ellis and Levy, 2008):

1. The current state differs from the ideal.

2. There is currently no acceptable alternative that patients, service users and clients can take advantage of.

A good way to identify a problem is to ask small, simple questions (Creswell, 2019):

- What is the issue I need to address?

- Why is this problem important?

- How will the intervention I propose help to solve the problem?

- Who will benefit from my proposed project?

Research questions

The PICO method of defining research questions and search strategies can be useful. Eriksen and Frandsen (2018) describe what PICO is and how it is used. They also include an excellent diagram that learners may find useful to summarise their literature search strategy.

Once again, Creswell (2019) and Creswell and Creswell (2022) and may be excellent resources for learners.

Ethics and participant consent

If the action research is to be carried out, ethics approval and participant consent will need to be sought. However, if a pragmatically achievable intervention/ project is being undertaken learners may not need to provide a submission to a research ethics panel. Tutors or research supervisors should ensure learners understand when a research ethics submission may be necessary.

Critical evaluation of own research skills

Evaluation and reflection are essential parts of the research or service improvement process, no matter what methodology is used. In order to meet learning outcome 1 the assessment must include an element where learners can evaluate their own skills and action research as a methodology they will use. This section could include in any order:

- What they have learnt about involving service users, patients and clients in service evaluation projects.

- The action research cycle.

- Action research methodology and methods

- Locating and analysing relevant literature.

- Identification of further problems.

- Reasons why their chosen improvement intervention would not be successful.

Learners should be encouraged to write concisely and be selective about what they include. Depth of reflection and critical evaluation is preferable to breadth.

Reference list/bibliography

All sources of information, including images, must be referenced both within the text and in the reference list/bibliography at the end of the work. The Harvard format of citation should be used. Consistency of referencing format is more important than the version of Harvard that learners use.

Learners could be encouraged to use referencing tools or managers such as Mendeley, EndNote, Word's inbuilt Citations & Bibliography feature, RefWorks. There are many others both free and paid for.

Using images

Images of service users that learners have cared for must *not* be included in submitted work. If images of workplace/placement colleagues are used, learners must evidence that they have sought and obtained the appropriate permissions from the colleague.

If images are used from the internet, learners must ensure that they have abided by the appropriate copyright requirements.

5 Employer engagement

Centres are strongly advised to work with employers during delivery and assessment of the unit and Pearson-set assignment.

Real world examples of service improvement projects carried out by workplace peers, practice supervisors or placement managers are valuable learning opportunities. Within health and social care, many clinical practitioners carry out improvement projects as part of their daily role. Learners may be able to signpost the programme team to individuals whose role is to improve services by engaging with those who use the services. For example, advanced and consultant practitioners usually have research and/or service improvement as part of their job description.

Learners should also be encouraged to seek out service improvement projects that are taking place in the clinical environment and to actively engage with the project lead.

6 Sharing of good practice

An appointed External Examiner for the centre will ask to sample the Pearson-set assignment briefs for review as part of the remote sampling request. Although this is not a mandatory requirement for centres, we strongly advise that centres seek guidance and support from their External Examiner on the Pearson-set assignment. The External Examiner may also include the Pearson-set units in the centre visit sample of student work.

The External Examiner will review and identify exemplars in all aspects of good practice.

7   Resources and useful links

Suggested resources and links that centres may find useful are shown below. Centres should choose resources that are relevant and supplement them with local resources, policies and guidance to support the Pearson-set topic chosen.

Resources cited in the text of this document are included within section 8 References.References

Research and service improvement project methodologies and methods

Type of Resource	Resource Titles	Reference
Checklists for appraising different types of research article.	Critical Appraisals Skills Programme (CASP) checklists	CASP (n.d.) *CASP checklists* [online]. Available at: https://casp-uk.net/casp-tools-checklists/ (Accessed: 23rd June 2022).
Website detailing Good Clinical Practice (GCP). GCP is the international ethical, scientific and practical standard to which all clinical research is conducted.	Good Clinical Practice (GCP)	National Institute for Health and Care Research (n.d.) *Good Clinical Practice (GCP)* [online]. Available at: https://www.nihr.ac.uk/health-and-care-professionals/learning-and-support/good-clinical-practice.htm (Accessed: 23rd June 2022).
Decision making tools to help researchers decide if their study is research.	Is my study research?	NHS Health Research Authority and Medical Research Council (n.d.) Is my study research? Available at: http://www.hra-decisiontools.org.uk/research/ (Accessed: 23rd June 2022).
Website with *many* service and quality improvement tools. Be discerning in your selection of tool(s).	Quality, service improvement and redesign (QSIR) tools by stage of project	NHS England (n.d.) *Quality, service improvement and redesign (QSIR) tools by stage of project* [online]. Available at: https://www.england.nhs.uk/sustainableimprovement/qsir-programme/qsir-tools/tools-by-stage-of-project/#stage-3 (Accessed: 23rd June 2022).

Type of Resource	Resource Titles	Reference
Website with personalised care resources (registration required for some resources).	Resources for learners	Personalised Care Institute (n.d.) *Resources for learners* [online]. Available at: https://www.personalisedcareinstitute.org.uk/resources-2/ (Accessed: 23rd June 2022).

Personalised care and involving people in service improvement

Type of Resource	Resource Titles	Reference
Journal article detailing a systematic literature review strategy to identify which behaviour change techniques are most appropriate in personalised care planning for older adults. As well as being about personalised care, the article shows a PRISMA (preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses) diagram – a tool that learners may find useful for their own literature review sections. The article is freely available by searching on the title.	Behaviour change techniques in personalised care planning for older people: a systematic review	Ahmed, S., Heaven, A., Lawton, R., Rawlings, G., Sloan, C. and Clegg, A. (2021) 'Behaviour change techniques in personalised care planning for older people: a systematic review', *British Journal of General Practice*, 71(703), pp. e121-e127.

Website with a selection of resources and case studies about involving people (service users, patients, clients etc.) in quality improvement projects.	Involving patients	Healthcare Quality Improvement Partnership (n.d.) *Involving patients* [online]. Available at: https://www.hqip.org.uk/involving-patients/#.YrSObezMJhE (Accessed: 23rd June 2022).
Video giving a good explanation of what personalised care is.	NHS Comprehensive Personalised Care Model – explainer animation	NHS England (2018) *NHS Comprehensive* Personalised Care Model - explainer animation [video]. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jkzLP1_Y6Mw (Accessed: 23rd June 2022). Twitter: @Pers_Care
Website with personalised care resources. Only two have been listed but there are many more. Registration required for some resources.	Resources for learners eLearning	Personalised Care Institute (n.d.) *Resources for learners* [online]. Available at: https://www.personalisedcareinstitute.org.uk/resources-2/ (Accessed: 23rd June 2022). Personalised Care Institute (n.d.) eLearning [online]. Available at: https://www.personalisedcareinstitute.org.uk/your-learning-options/ (Accessed: 23rd June 2022). Twitter: @Pers_Care_Inst

Other useful resources

Type of Resource	Resource Titles	Reference
Website that enables service users to share their experiences of UK health and care services, *good* or *bad* An illuminating read for *all* those working in health, care and associated education institutions	Care Opinion	Care Opinion (n.d.) *Care Opinion: What's your story?* [online]. Available at: https://www.careopinion.org.uk/ (Accessed: 6th July 2022).
Health Unlocked "The world's largest social network for health" The health experiences of millions of people worldwide in hundreds of public communities. Covers more than 250 conditions	Empowering self-care and advancing patient care with research	HealthUnlocked (n.d.) *Empowering self-care and advancing patient care with research* [online]. Available at: https://about.healthunlocked.com/ (Accessed: 6th July 2022).
Website containing published National Health Service statistics There is a huge range of data available related to many different areas of healthcare provision	Statistical work areas	NHS England (n.d.) *Statistical work areas* [online]. Available at: https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/ (Accessed: 6th July 2022).
Video about Pearson-set assignments. Date of theme and topics release stated in the video are given as	Training Video for the RQF BTEC Higher Nationals Pearson-set Assignments	Pearson UK (2019) *Training Video for the RQF BTEC Higher Nationals Pearson-set Assignments* [video]. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FkQi_l78_tw (Accessed: 23rd June 2022).

guidance only as it was created several years ago.		
Professional body document containing core imaging and radiotherapy service core values for service delivery.

Contains authentic patient stories to demonstrate the impact the values have on patients, carers and the public.

Relevant to those working outside of imaging and radiotherapy. | Patient Public and Practitioner Partnerships within Imaging and Radiotherapy: Guiding Principles | Society and College of Radiographers (2018) *Patient Public and Practitioner Partnerships within Imaging and Radiotherapy: Guiding Principles*. London: Society and College of Radiographers.

Available from: https://www.sor.org/learning-advice/professional-body-guidance-and-publications/documents-and-publications/policy-guidance-document-library/patient-public-and-practitioner-partnerships-withi |

For any further additional support or guidance regarding this document, please email btecdelivery@pearson.com.

8 References

Creswell, J. W. (2019) *Educational Research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research.* 6th edn. New York: Pearson.

Creswell, J. W. and Creswell, J. D. (2022) *Research Design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches.* 5th edn.: Independently published.

Ellis, T. J. and Levy, Y. (2008) 'Framework of problem-based research: A guide for novice researchers on the development of a research-worthy problem', *Informing Science: the International Journal of an Emerging Transdiscipline,* 11, pp. p17-33.

Eriksen, M. B. and Frandsen, T. F. (2018) 'The impact of patient, intervention, comparison, outcome (PICO) as a search strategy tool on literature search quality: a systematic review', *Journal of the Medical Library Association : JMLA,* 106(4), pp. 420-431.

Health Research Authority and UK Health Departments (2017) *UK policy framework for health and social care research* [policy], London: National Institute for Health and Care Research.

Kemmis, S., McTaggart, R. and Nixon, R. (2014) *The action research planner: doing critical participatory action research.* Singapore: Springer.

Langlois, S., Goudreau, J. and Lalonde, L. (2014) 'Scientific rigour and innovations in participatory action research investigating workplace learning in continuing interprofessional education', *Journal of Interprofessional Care,* 28(3), pp. 226-231.

Mubuuke, A. G. and Leibowitz, B. (2013) 'Participatory action research: The key to successful implementation of innovations in health professions education', *African Journal of Health Professions Education,* 5(1), pp. 30.

National Institute for Health and Care Research (n.d.) *Good Clinical Practice (GCP)* [online]. Available at: https://www.nihr.ac.uk/health-and-care-professionals/learning-and-support/good-clinical-practice.htm (Accessed: 23rd June 2022).

NHS Improving Quality (2014) *First steps towards quality improvement: a simple guide to improving services.* London: NHS Improving Quality.