

5. SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

5.1 Initial Education and Training of Radiographers

Introduction

The exact nature of the European educational provision for the entry into the radiographic profession is not widely known. Many countries have introduced an undergraduate BSc programme, some being honours level others not. This network set out to explore the nature of that provision.

Aim: To explore the nature of provision of radiography education across Europe

Objectives:

1. Explore and identify the nature of radiographic education across Europe within and out with the HE sector.
2. Identify the learning outcomes of radiographic programmes of study at Bachelor level.
3. Develop a peer review system for radiography education
4. Facilitate interaction and integration for the Eastern and Central European region.
5. Review quality assurance mechanism and benchmarks for radiographic Education and to disseminate such information

Outputs at the end of year three:

- First post content survey
- Directory of radiography programmes
- Survey for first cycle Subject-specific competences

Composition of sub-group:

The working group had representation from 14 countries mainly from northern Europe and a few from Eastern Europe, who comprised of radiography educators from a range of institutions and professions e.g. Radiologist, Nurse, Radiographer, Physicist who support radiography education, this composition reflects the diversity of radiography education across Europe.

Directory of programmes

The directory of programmes of Radiography education was facilitated by a survey distributed to 30 countries within Europe which included EU and non-EU countries. This Europe wide survey initially included hospitals and educational institutions, but was later restricted to only educational institutions providing radiography pre-registration programmes to avoid overlap with information gathered from other HENRE working groups. The design and content of the survey was initially influenced by; consultation with the International Society of Radiographers and Radiological Technologists (ISRRT) in order to compliment a survey published by ISRRT in 2003¹ and reference to; work that had been completed by the European Education Networks of Radiotherapy Technologists ^{2,3}. The purpose of the survey was to collect sufficient data to provide a picture of the range and diversity of radiography education across Europe and thus the nature of radiography education across Europe. The data is presented in a Directory, available to a range of organisations and institutions involved in the delivery and/or monitoring of Radiography Education across Europe. The directory is available in English and is web-based through the HENRE website to allow information to be updated periodically.

The directory will be available on CD to radiography Institutions across Europe, professional bodies and societies and partner members at their request. The format of the directory makes it accessible for those for whom English is not their first language.

Directory Format:

The first post programme content survey data was recorded on a spreadsheet for ease of interpretation and the information categorised into relevant sections. As was noted in the pilot there were some issues with interpretation of terminology, this was not considered to be significant and did not detract from the main survey findings. Therefore where there was ambiguity in the responses, the sub group agreed to exclude this information. The Directory therefore includes the following information:

List of Institutions by country to include:

- Radiography pre-registration programmes
- Status of qualification i.e. diploma, BSc. Etc
- Credit values (European Credit Transfer System) if applicable
- Scope of practice
- Proportion of academic, clinical and inter-professional study
- Teaching and Assessment methods
- Teaching staff qualifications
- Details of registration bodies and quality assurance mechanisms
- Curriculum content

The first post programme content survey has provided extensive information about individual programme learning outcomes and curriculum content. Themes have merged within the data that demonstrates commonality across programmes and evidence of a core curriculum. With this in mind there is potential for:

1. Future collaboration between institutions and countries in the delivery of core curricula within radiography education.
2. Future collaboration in the area of inter-professional learning with other thematic networks, as the survey demonstrated a significant number of programmes that shared learning with other professions

Whilst the survey showed inconsistency across the countries in the use of the European Credit Transfer System, there was sufficient information for those institutions not currently using the ECTS to map their programmes against others using the system and therefore provide a rationale for inclusion within the system.

Conversely there are subject areas covered in a number of programmes i.e. physiological measurement, which are not included within the curriculum of other programmes, leading to the potential for future collaboration in this area.

Constraints & Limitations:

The major constraint to the initial progress in the work plan was the initial poor responses to the surveys. However by the end of the project this was no longer an issue, the perceived reasons for this were:

1. Involvement of more countries, each bringing their own network of contacts
2. Raising of the profile of the group's work e.g. Conference presentations at the European Radiology Congress in 2004 & 2005 and the 1st Euro med Congress of Radiology in Malta 2005

Throughout the project, interpretation of terminology has been the greatest challenge in terms of cooperation and communication particularly in regard to survey design, this related to educational terms and some of the complex terms used in Radiography. This was also found in the work completed by the Occupational Therapy Thematic Network.

At the annual general meeting in Malta in 2004, a workshop dealt with the potential issues surrounding the use of terminology used in this and other HENRE surveys. Participants discussed and reached a consensus on definitions of terms commonly used in radiography education (see appendix A). The outcomes of the workshop and reflections of working on a cross-cultural project were presented at the 1st Euro-med Congress for radiographers in Malta in September 2005.

Beneficiaries and Impact:

The information collected in the survey gives a comprehensive overview of the status of radiography education within those countries that responded. It should be of value to:

- Those institutions wishing to join or expand their involvement with the Socrates and Erasmus programmes, by providing them with relevant information about those countries and institutions they may wish to partner with.
- Individuals wishing to teach radiography in other countries within Europe will be able to access the directory to find out the requirements of institutions with regard to qualifications.
- Individuals wishing to move to another country to practice will be able to access the directory and compare the educational outcomes from their own programme against the country in which they wish to practice, this will enable the individual to prepare a clear and concise application to the relevant registration board that permits the licence to practice in the country of choice.

Additional Benefits and spin-offs:

During the timescale of the project, group members have used the information gained from discussion and the survey to inform their colleagues of potential areas for curriculum development within their own programmes of study. New partnerships have been developed which have led to increased staff mobility and staff are reportedly sharing their expertise and knowledge with students and staff at other institutions across Europe.

Directory of competencies

HENRE has been involved in the first stages (Phase 2) of the 'Tuning' programme which has the aim of trying to reach a common understanding with regard to programme content and learning outcomes across programmes offered within Europe. The aim of the 'Directory of competencies' is to provide information on academic and professional profiles and create a compendium of subject specific competencies in line with and under the guidance of the 'Tuning' programme. The work is on-going and will be rolled over into the HENRE 2 project commencing in October 2005.

Subject specific and generic competencies for radiography were identified at the HENRE annual conference in Malta 2005. A questionnaire was designed for academics using the Tuning methodology and piloted during 2004. Compilation of generic competencies was not pursued as work in this area by other health related subjects such as nursing has already been completed. The questionnaire is currently being targeted at academic staff involved in the delivery of radiography pre-registration programmes or first cycle level degree programmes (to use Tuning terminology) and distributed to all institutions delivering radiography education within EU and non-EU countries in Europe. Academic staff were and still are encouraged to complete the Tuning questionnaire on-line at the Tuning website www.rug.nl/let/tuningeu. Each HENRE partner institution must obtain a login from the HENRE administration at henre@ucsm.ac.uk. Other academics from non-HENRE partner institutes are particularly encouraged to complete this questionnaire and can obtain a login also.

Opportunities for further dissemination:

Both the past and current sub-group co-ordinators have links within the USA and the Southern hemisphere. It is likely that the data included within the directory will be of interest to the organisations within these countries as they face similar challenges with regard to the tuning of radiography education. Experience of working in multi-cultural groups to achieve common aims and objectives could be shared with other groups who wish to embark on similar projects.

Conclusion

The network has most importantly provided a forum for radiography educators to liaise about educational programme content that exist within various European countries and their institutions that provide radiography training for first post radiographers. The group have been particularly keen to facilitate the interaction of those countries that do not at present provide education and training to first cycle degree level and as such those whose countries where education and training of radiographers lies outside of the higher education system, particularly Eastern and Central European Regions.

The group have produced a directory of radiography programmes as a result of a Euro-wide survey to investigate current programmes offered that includes, amongst other data, data regarding curriculum content, the Status of qualification, the Scope of practice and the proportion of academic, clinical and inter-professional study. It should be of value to institutions and individuals including those in the clinical environment as well as those involved in education.

The group have begun to identify the learning outcomes of radiographic programmes of study at Bachelor level that will in turn allow for the review of a quality assurance mechanism and benchmarks for radiographic Education.

Recommendations for further work

The compilation of a directory of radiography education across Europe can be further expanded by:

- An Invitation to those countries not yet contributing to the Directory to be included outlining the potential benefits of their inclusion
- Collection of data on quality assurance mechanisms and benchmarks for radiography education. The first post content survey showed that quality assurance mechanisms were not wide spread, with countries in northern Europe taking the lead. During the timescale of the project, some institutions noted that their governments were considering future work in this area
- Linking of competences to ECTS using data from the survey
- Links with the Occupational Therapy Thematic Network which has completed similar work in order to gain from the expertise of its members
- Continue work on clarifying common terminology associated with radiography education

1 ISRRT (2003) Conditions for the Education of Radiographers within Europe *ISRRT Europe and Africa*.

2 Leer J.W.H et al (1991) The European Core Curriculum on Radiotherapy, *Radiotherapy and Oncology* 22 153-155 Elsevier Edinburgh.

3 ESTRO (2002) Second Review of the European Core Curriculum for Radiotherapy Technologists *ESTRO*