

THE PEER ENHANCED E-PLACEMENT (PEEP)

A Case Study Exemplar For Online
Work-Based Learning Placements



LISA TAYLOR

Medicine and Health
Sciences, University of
East Anglia

GILLY SALMON

Education Alchemists
Ltd UK



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CONTRIBUTORS

LISA TAYLOR

Professor of
Employability and
Learning Innovation and
Associate Dean for
Employability for the
Faculty of Medicine and
Health Sciences,
University of East Anglia
Norwich UK

Email :
Lisa.Taylor@uea.ac.uk



GILLY SALMON

Professor, CEO and
Principal Consultant –
Education Alchemists Ltd
UK

Email:
gillysalmon@education-
alchemists.com



SUMMARY

Introductory video by Lisa Taylor, Learning and Gilly Salmon <https://youtu.be/ivbrluE9PZM>

Finding and completing statutory work-based learning placements for health higher education students has become a challenge in terms of institutional and organisational capacity along with increased student numbers. The pandemic (2020) further exacerbated existing log jams through covid placement suspensions, which in turn inspired the creation by the University of East Anglia of an innovative online placement model for Occupational Therapy students.

Following positive reviews and feedback from both students and staff, the model was further developed by working with a highly experienced researcher and practitioner in online learning design and delivery. This expertise, combined with the evidence and insight gained from this first online placement exercise and the extensive experience within higher education of the initial placement creator, resulted in the construction of an innovative new model of student work-based learning placement called “The Peer Enhanced e-Placement (PEEP)” .

The PEEP model has not only successfully challenged the need for students to be physically in the workplace setting for work-based learning placements but has facilitated a reimagination of work-based learning placement provision which is now moving beyond health into other disciplines across the higher education sector. In response to the demand an online “PEEP acquisition experience” has been developed for higher education and employer staff, working together in placement teams to facilitate adaption and adoption of the PEEP for their own profession and student needs.

The PEEP model has now been widely disseminated and adopted across the UK and beyond. Over 80 placement teams from HE health and social care from 20 professions and disciplines have engaged in the PEEP acquisition experience to and to date over 1800 students have benefited from the PEEP model experience. The model is now being used beyond health disciplines as the core robust pedagogical and evidence-based principles of the PEEP model design and delivery are applicable for work-based learning placement provision across the higher education sector.

CONTEXT



Peer Enhanced e-Placements started in April 2020 at the beginning of the pandemic. Pre-existing placement capacity challenges had resulted in a 'log jam' in being able to easily fulfil statutory work-based learning placements for health higher education (HE) students. The log jam was exacerbated by covid placement suspensions. Lisa Taylor created a 3-week online placement, based on her employability and health HE experience and knowledge, for University of East Anglia (UEA) BSc Occupational Therapy students, to help progress their placement learning; a statutory part of their academic programme. The first online placement received good reviews from students and the staff involved. Not only did the students meet the placement learning outcomes required for them to pass, but they exceeded them in some areas. Seeking further understanding, evidence and insight, Lisa collaborated further with Professor Gilly Salmon, who is a specialist in online design and delivery. Together they researched and constructed a model for others to follow, which they called the Peer Enhanced e-Placement (PEEP) model. A PEEP is delivered to students entirely online and harnesses evidence-based online (Salmon, 2011, 2013) and peer-learning pedagogy (Topping et al., 2017). It also facilitates collaboration between employers, and HE institutes, throughout its design and delivery (Taylor and Salmon, 2021).

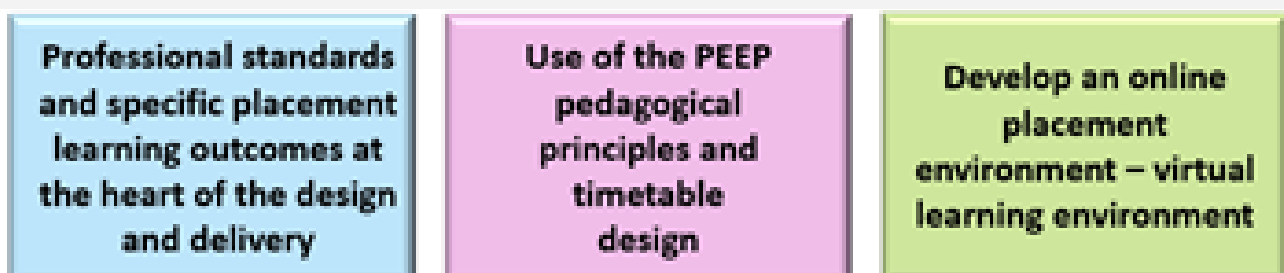
Fast forward two and a half years - Lisa and Gilly have worked with over 80 placement teams from HE health and social care organisations, spanning 20 disciplines. There has been wide dissemination about the model and its outcomes through many conference presentations and publications internationally. Around 1800 students have already benefitted from the PEEP, rising exponentially.

The PEEP model challenges the need for students to be physically in the workplace setting for work-based learning placements and demonstrates emergent additional benefits, including preparing students for future digital workplaces. PEEP has facilitated a reimagination of work-based learning placement provision and is now moving beyond health and into disciplines across the HE sector.

The PEEP offers HE providers with an online work-based learning placement option, that can be delivered via existing Virtual Learning Environments/Learning Management Systems (VLE/LMS). The PEEP model encourages collaborations between HE providers and employers to design and deliver authentic materials, activities, and learning events to facilitate learning towards employability skills and attributes relevant to current and future workplaces.

Work-based learning is highlighted as a crucial part of employability learning within HE (Jackson and Bridgstock, 2021). There are reported gaps between employer expectations and graduate preparation, with soft skills and critical thinking emerging as key areas of development in recent literature (Arsenis et al., 2022; Dalrymple et al., 2021). All these areas of employability can be supported and developed through the PEEP model design and delivery.

Figure 1 – Key Components of the Peer Enhanced E-Placement (PEEP) model for students.



METHODOLOGY & IMPLEMENTATION

Scaling up the PEEP: the PEEP acquisition experience

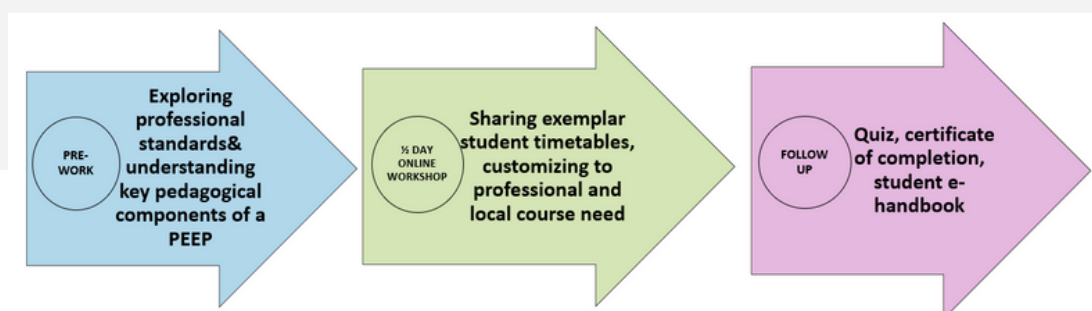
Realising the demand for the PEEP model, Lisa and Gilly developed an online, flipped learning, PEEP 'acquisition experience' for staff in placement teams. The experience includes pre-workshop activities and a half day synchronous online workshop – led by Gilly and Lisa. The three stages of a PEEP acquisition experience are shown below.

The workshop includes HE academics and employers working together. In the first half of the workshop, the teams develop their understanding of the pedagogy and of the researched evidence underpinning the PEEP, and how to adopt and adapt it. In the second half, the participant teams work together to contextualise the PEEP model for their own local students' needs, with the support of Lisa and Gilly.

An online quiz at the end of the workshop quality-assures the knowledge of participants from the workshop who are then able to adapt and adopt the PEEP for their own profession and students' requirements. Lisa and Gilly have worked with over 75 placement teams between 2020-2022 (and are still working with new PEEP placement teams now!) spanning 20 health professions and fields across the UK and beyond. Around 14,000 potential weeks of PEEP based work-based learning placements have been created so far. In addition, many others have picked up on our dissemination efforts through many conferences, blogs, publications, and meetings.

There is consistently positive feedback as to the usefulness of the PEEP acquisition experience and the workshop has been sustained and developed based on action research.

Figure 2. The three stages of a PEEP acquisition experience



ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

Action research explored the participants' experiences of the PEEP acquisition experience and their subsequent capability and capacity for of adapting and adopting the PEEP for their own students. Ethical approval for the research was gained from the UEA Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences research ethics committee. The data collection and analysis were conducted by an independent researcher.

An online survey was developed and distributed with a mix of closed and open questions (n=26) to placement teams who had completed a PEEP acquisition experience. Evaluative interviews (n=3) were conducted to provide in-depth discussion of the areas of investigation. Inductive reflexive thematic analysis of the qualitative data (Braun and Clarke, 2006) from the survey and the interviews was completed using NVivo 12 (Richards, 2005). The quantitative data was collated and analysed descriptively.



IMPLEMENTATION

The PEEP is highly flexible and can be adapted to professional body and employer requirements, and local students' needs. For example, the PEEP has been developed to accommodate live links to service users and clients, where desired. The design once and deliver many times approach to PEEP enables the required number of placement weeks to be created by repeating the initial PEEP design with subsequent cohorts of students.

At least ten HE Institutions have now implemented the PEEP so far, with some delivering PEEPs for more than one profession within their organisation. Consistent positive feedback on learning outcomes for students have been received.

Almost all report that they plan to embed PEEPs on an ongoing basis as part of their work-based learning placement provision for their programmes. Their initial weeks of placement capacity generated will be repeated for subsequent cohorts, providing sustainable placement capacity for them through the 'design once and deliver multiple times' concept of the PEEP.

ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

The feedback from students and placement teams on the quality of the learning achieved through a PEEP has resulted in the PEEP being considered as a sustainable work-based learning placement option beyond the Covid emergency phase, by many placement teams throughout the UK, initially spanning multiple health professions but now being considered across the HE sector.

PEEP facilitates HE and employer collaboration, has helped increase student numbers from the guaranteed placement capacity generated from the PEEP. Placement capacity assurance is required to increase student numbers on programmes with statutory placements as part of their academic programmes. PEEP provides confidence for PEEP adopters to develop further education innovations. has been embedded in policy within HE and a national health and social care strategy report (COD, 2022).

Stakeholders and impact on employers include placement providers, hospital trusts and community health and social care services, charities and social enterprises, higher education institutes – in short, all HE providers and employers of health graduates.

We followed up PEEP acquisition participants as a later stage of our action research process to check on their local adoption and PEEP implementation experiences.

One response reported an increase in students on their programmes by at least ten students resulting from the additional placement capacity created through using PEEPs. All but one of the HE institutions reported that they plan to embed PEEPs on an ongoing basis as part of their placement provision. Further, PEEPs will be repeated for subsequent cohorts, providing ongoing sustainable placement capacity for them through the design once and deliver multiple times concept.



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PEEP benefits for the sector

- offers appropriate mitigation against ongoing and increased disruption and placement capacity challenges;
- supports an appreciation of “non-hands-on” placement and employability learning -critical for the digital work-place;
- proven success and adoption across multiple professions in the health sector;
- Is flexible and adaptable for local need and contexts without compromising the pedagogical principles of design and delivery, with the specific placement learning outcomes at the heart of its design;
- the design once and deliver multiple times ethos for PEEP helps with the longer-term sustainability of PEEP;
- PEEP supports collaboration between HE and placement providers and employers;
- PEEP is acceptable to professional bodies – able to fulfil their statutory learning standards.

PEEP benefits for placement teams

- diverse range of curricula, case studies, and scenarios can be delivered through to target specific areas of learning, widening the learning and preparation for the workplace and the profession without losing the integrity of the PEEP model;
- consistency of learning opportunity for students and transparent quality assurance;
- the model is scalable and sustainable, ultimately lowering costs;
- offers practical insight and use in seminal online learning research, such as the 5-stage model (Salmon, 2011; 2013) which assists staff with their online, hybrid and blended learning as well as placements;
- opportunity to for cohorts of students to be exposed to clinical area or organisations that may otherwise not be possible within usual face to face in situ placements;
- can be designed to access specific areas of learning that otherwise could not be accessed by students through location-based placements. Thus equipping students with a more comprehensive and consistent placement learning experiences to take into the workplace when graduating.



PEEP benefits for students

- 90% of students were reported to have passed their PEEP placements and met their placement's learning outcomes (reflecting the usual historical outcomes for previous traditional placements);
- students added value their learning (compared to regular in situ, in person placements) through increased peer learning and additional critical analysis and reasoning;
- offers students a safe space to learn, share, engage and question their own, and others' learning;
- students accessed the PEEP via their usual VLE/LMS;
- the adaptability and the design and delivery of the PEEP provides a placement option that facilitates a better accessibility and inclusive experience for students;
- many students find travel and accommodation challenging to attend their placements, from a financial, emotional, time and physically draining point.



Considerations for PEEP implementation

- extra support and understanding from the placement team involved in designing and delivering the PEEP may be required, to support culture change and understanding of viability of online learning;
- sustainability and efficiency of the model – being able to re-use and share resources, and its ability to address work-based learning for whole cohorts at a time, hence low costs over time but investment needed in design to start;
- supportive resources for the PEEP are developed with the inclusive and universal design principles (<https://udlguidelines.cast.org/>) in mind. The PEEP timetable structure allows for personal time for consolidation and reflection of learning by students.

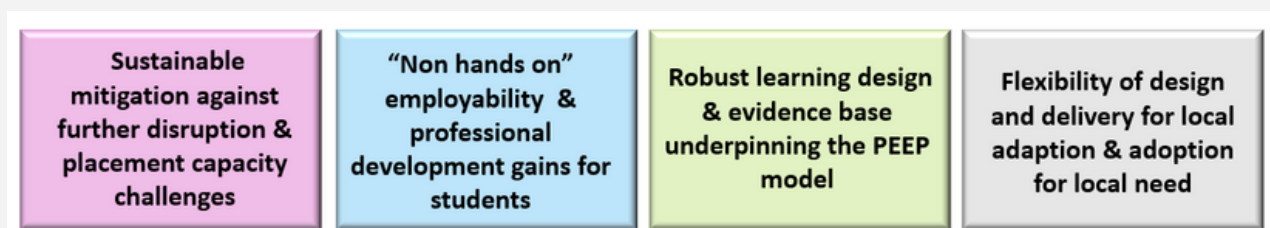
PEEP acquisition experience participant personal learning

- the PEEP acquisition experience for staff impacts on participants' understanding of online placement and key elements of the PEEP design - helping to 'change the mindset';
- wider personal and professional development outcomes from the PEEP acquisition experience, include a change in thinking around how to provide quality placement learning opportunities and the value of peer learning pedagogy;
- many participants saw opportunities for widening and improving the bespoke curriculum content and clinical area exposure through PEEP;
- confidence was increased for participants, encouraging wider innovation around work-based placement learning.

REFLECTIONS & CONCLUSIONS

- The PEEP acquisition experience facilitates collaboration between HE institutes and placement providers and employers;
- The flexibility of the PEEP to be adapted, customized and adopted to local circumstances and different professions is appealing and sustainable
- The PEEP timetable template provided can be used to help to underpin the evidence-based pedagogy;
- There needs to be time resource allocated locally to support staff to develop and design their PEEPs;
- PEEPs can be designed once and delivered multiple times providing cumulative benefits to placement capacity and efficiencies over time;
- Sharing resources within an organization, and across professions, increases the sustainability and efficiency of the PEEP.

Figure 3. Overall conclusions from the initial PEEP research

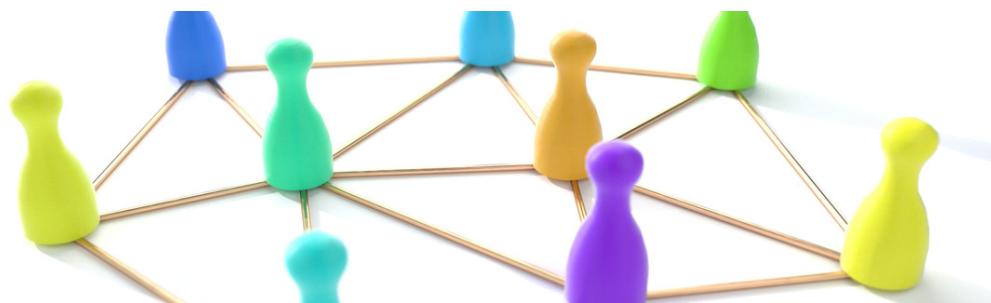


- An evaluation by a nursing placement team has shown the development of mental health clinical knowledge and skills but also interpersonal and team working skills. Their research methodology included a mix of quantitative and qualitative data, with respondents from clinical providers and service users in the delivery of the PEEP. This nursing placement team is now developing a cross region PEEP in collaboration with one of the large NHS Trust placement providers (project in progress with full publication of the evaluation to follow).

- An Occupational Therapy programme implemented a PEEP for 100 students receiving positive evaluation from the students. The students reported an in depth understanding from their participation in the PEEP, the positive findings resulted in plans for the PEEP to be embedded into ongoing programme provision (Payne and Downes, 2021).

- A detailed example of a nationwide PEEP contextualisation project led by the Gilly and Lisa - was for the Operating Department Practitioner (ODP) profession. Within the first six months of the commencement of the project, 175 ODP PEEPs were delivered, with positive feedback from students. Subsequently a further 636 four-week PEEPs have been delivered, with programmes embedding PEEPs into their ongoing placement provision.

- In an evaluation of PEEP for physiotherapy students, 93.9% of students felt expectations were clear and they were prepared for placement, with 81% reporting they met all the learning outcomes. The three top most valued learning activities were the simulation suite (56.4%), the patient journey (37.5%) and the case histories (31.3%). The pre-placement anxiety that students had reported reduced post PEEP, with little anxiety being reported. The strengths of the PEEP model were reported to be exposure to a range of different teams, the peer group learning and support, the clarity of the structure of the PEEP, the opportunity to follow a patient journey and the good support from the staff leading the PEEP. Internet stability, the lack of hands-on learning, one-one opportunities and feedback and real time assessment for this specific design and delivery of the PEEP and the need for self-motivation were identified as limitations of the PEEP experience (Stears et al., 2022). Overall, the evaluation demonstrates that the PEEP was effective to provide physiotherapy students with an initial experience of practice-based learning.



Participants commented on the PEEP acquisition experience and the ability to customise the PEEP model for their highly specialist HE environment and learning standards:

“Threshold points have been a powerful part of our reflection on [the PEEP] education”

“I have been through a journey of learning about the PEEP through the PEEP acquisition package from the pre workshop activities and the workshop and now I want to take my students through that journey too with their own PEEP”

“Such a valuable tool, so many ideas to individualise and implement across all three years of the ODP programme”

“PEEP is a valuable evidence-based tool to support learning”

“...I think virtual placements could be effective in exposing ODP students to non-traditional roles, such as working as a practitioner in ED [emergency department] or transferring an intensive care patient to a different hospital”

“It would be good for ODP students to see the patient journey [through a PEEP] from admission to discharge including their surgery and the input they receive from the MDT including radiography, dietetics, Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy”

All corners of the ODP profession, from the President of the College of ODPs, the immediate past president, the chair of the education standards committee, clinicians, academics, and student ODPs were involved in the contextualisation process. An artist in residence used visualisation not only to explore context, make meaning for all involved, but also to empower and promote design thinking and future goal setting (Brand, 2017). The resulting visualisation used the metaphor of a fairground ride image and can be seen described via this link

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nt-a2cgc2DI&t=3s>

Feedback from the ODP PEEP acquisition experience participants suggested a breadth of ideas areas of practice that could be captured in the delivery of PEEPs for students to respond to the call to build extended roles beyond the theatre environment into the student experience that is not always possible in the face-to-face placement environment. Areas of practice were identified for the PEEP, to enhance the breadth of student experience beyond the theatre environment. It also highlighted how the use of PEEP could help students to experience non-technical areas of practice, which has been reported previously in the literature to be less of a focus on a traditional face-to-face clinical placement environment (Rutherford et al., 2015).

PEEP AWARDS



- Finalist for the UEA Innovation and Impact Awards 2021 – Outstanding Contribution/Response to Covid-19
- 3rd Place Pearson HE Innovate Award for Most Innovative Hybrid or Blended Learning Project
- Winner of the National Undergraduate Employability Awards 2022 – Outstanding Contribution to Work Experience
- Finalist of the AGCAS Awards for Excellence 2022 – Supporting Student/Graduate Employability Award
- Winner of the AGCAS Awards for Excellence 2022 – Strategic Innovation Award
- Winner of Innovation from Teaching award for the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences Annual Research Prizes competition 2022
- Finalist for Wharton-QS Reimagine Education E-learning Award 2022

BOOK BASED ON THE PEEP



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HYPERLINKS & SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Please find further contextual and published evidence for the PEEP below.

www.e-placements.net and <https://www.educationalchemists.com/placements.html#/>

- The original PEEP – structure and pedagogy; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EHZfjUjwM8>
- PEEP placement innovation; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6nQn2y3eXNg&t=6s>
- PEEP 6 months on – adapting and scaling; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uXaFM9CXTl8&t=8s>
- Achieving online health placement delivery with Deborah Lewis and Martin Rhodes - Highly Specialist Orthoptists; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q052vMeb57I>
- PEEP implementation with Helen Lowes Sheffield NHS Trust; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g3Xz2BaAapl&t=367s>
- Student experience and feedback Glasgow Caledonian University Physiotherapy students; <https://youtu.be/YBGtCsumFiw>
- Peer Enhanced e-Placements - Accessibility, Diversity and Sustainability; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TtXf-IDVlgw>
- Council of Deans Innovation Fortnight CoDHCast; <https://www.councilofdeans.org.uk/2022/01/codhcast>
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