The integration of scientific and professional skills into a non-credit bearing PaSS module

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Background: When redesigning our MPharm we wanted to develop students' academic and professional skills in parallel and to actively engage students in the integration of these skills. To facilitate this we have introduced a Professional and Scientific Skills module into each level of study (PaSS1 to PaSS4) which focuses on essential skills for a pharmacy graduate: numeracy, communication, reflection, professional development planning (PDP) and knowledge integration.

Description of the work: The PaSS modules have no formal teaching sessions, instead drawing on content delivered in other modules at the same, or earlier, levels in the course; this is intended to actively and explicitly encourage students to integrate and contextualise their learning across the course. Each PaSS module contains 4 "must pass" assessments: a reflective portfolio on learning experiences; the communication of information, and integration of knowledge, from across the MPharm disciplines; the ability to perform pharmaceutical calculations (for both science and practice) accurately; and the assessment of achievement against the students' PDP. The assessments in each of these areas are based on a spiral design, so that students progressively improve essential practice skills as they proceed through the PaSS modules in order to meet the final outcomes for our course. The PaSS modules are non-credit bearing and are assessed using criterion based pass / fail marking schemes, we regard this as more appropriate than using a quantitative based assessment as students must reach a certain level of competence in the assessed skills before they can progress to the next level of study.

Proposed evaluation: Student performance in the assessments now embedded with the PaSS module will be compared with that achieved when the assessments were in credit bearing modules. The student perspective of the two deliveries of PaSS1 and the first delivery of PaSS2 module will be evaluated via a questionnaire.