

## Using the Traffic Lights Toolkit with first year undergraduate pre-registration Midwives in preparation for initial placement

**Rationale:** Students midwives are required throughout the duration of their programme to complete periods of placement in clinical settings in order to become eligible for professional registration. These placements are significant for student learning as they provide a context for professional knowledge and skills to develop in real life contexts, as well as requiring the integration of theory to practice. The PQRS Tools were used as a pilot study to see if they benefitted first year students to prepare effectively for their first clinical placement. By working with the tools to describe their learning needs in relation to the competencies on which they would be assessed during placement, they were able to reflect on their levels of knowledge and skills before placement began. They were encouraged to engage with their learning outcomes to acknowledge prior learning and transferable skills, and to identify areas of perceived challenge. The tools were then used to establish and promote a proactive approach, which rather than waiting for difficulties to be encountered, encouraged students to take responsibility for their learning by acknowledging and engaging both the cognitive and affective dimensions constructively to enhance learning and develop proactive academic strategies.

**Choice of Tools:** PoC,

The PoC tool was used by each student to engage with their learning outcomes for placement and to identify areas of knowledge skills and practice which were working or going well, drawing attention to existing knowledge transferable skills and prior experiences of success. Once areas of competence have been articulated they could then move on to identify 'amber' and 'red' statements. Areas identified as being of particular concern to them, were then addressed through the use of the rating scales, to help develop an incremental view of learning, which supported them to engage with challenge and take risks that enable them to develop their learning by identifying a series of positive actions they could undertake to address statements which present a particular level of challenge and possibly distress for them.

**Mode of delivery:** Paper versions

**Number of tools completed:** 1

**Outcomes:**

The students who engaged with the tools demonstrated considerable variety in the way in which they engage with the tools, and used them to support their placement learning. The feedback from students about using the tools was positive and they identified the following benefits:

- The exercise required the students to familiarise themselves with the Assessment of Practice Tool (APT) prior to placement. By reading through the competencies and thinking about some of the challenges ahead, helped the students prepare for clinical practice.
- The students felt less overwhelmed by the APT after completing the exercise.
- They felt more in control of their learning.
- They could focus on the areas they thought were going to be the most challenging and discuss these with their PAT (personal academic tutor) and mentor.
- At midpoint through their placement, the students could see their progress and achievements with fewer on-going 'red dots' identified.

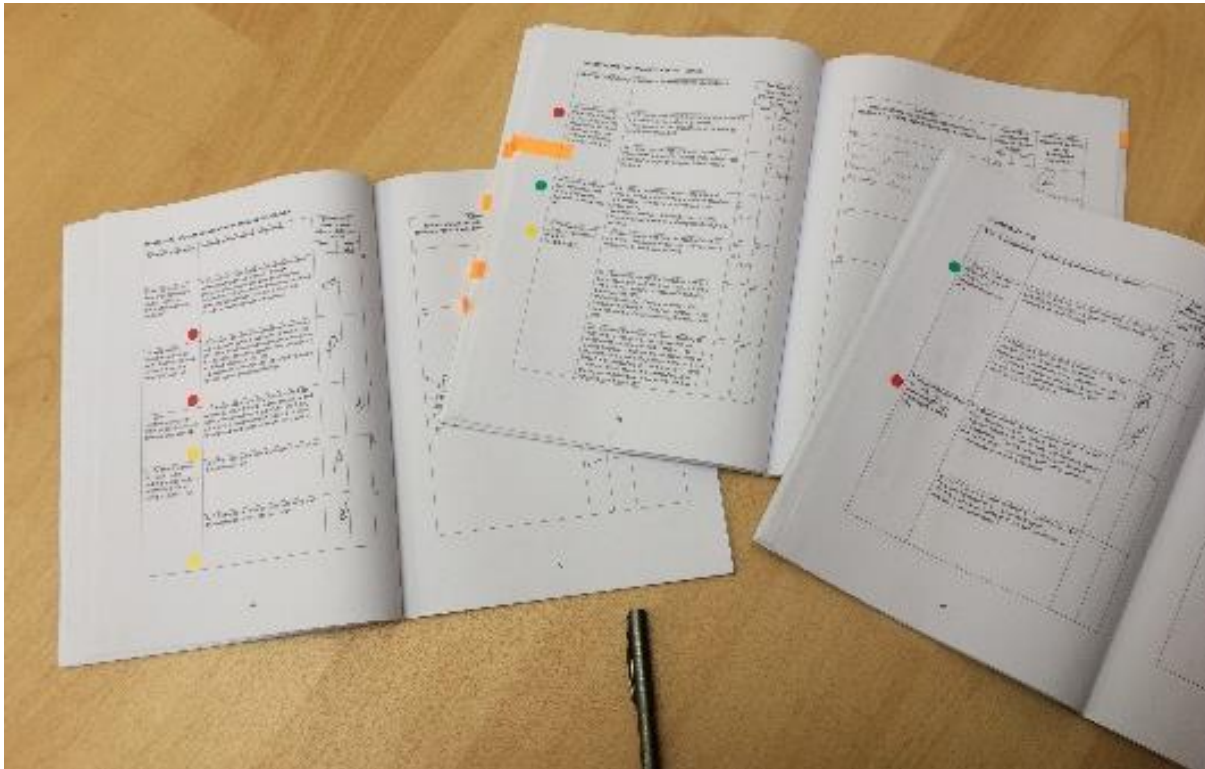


Fig 1: Examples of Perception of Challenge Tools annotated by midwifery students.

**Context:** The full use of the tools was not possible within the timescale of the project as the programme was moving from the APT to a new practice assessment tool. Due to the complexity of these changes it was too difficult to introduce additional new processes at this point.

Students who used the tools initially are just now starting their second placement, and were asked to reflect back. Overall, the students found the exercise useful. They felt their learning was enhanced by reducing their anxiety and felt less over-whelmed by the APT at the beginning of their placement. The students also stated that the tool encouraged a useful dialect with their mentors regarding their anxieties and concerns, particularly at the beginning of the placement when the environment, people and expectations are unknown to them.

Two of the students used the tool to help them revise for their Human Biology exam; identifying areas they felt needed further revision and clarity, which again helped them to manage their anxiety and focus their time and energy on specific areas.

The students identified for the project were first year students with no experiences of completing the APT without the PoC and therefore, they had no comparison. However, as their personal academic tutor, the benefits of the tool provided a benchmark for discussion in which we were quickly able to identify some of the issues and challenges the students were having and discuss a management plan, helping to reduce possible escalation of the issue. Relating some of the taught elements of the course and the students own transferable skills to the area's identified as red helped to reduce anxiety and boost confidence in the students. The reflection back at midpoint in the placement area was particularly useful as the students could reflect back and map their progress with very few areas of concern remaining.