



AUDIT TRAINING FOR INTERNATIONAL NURSE STUDENTS' CLINICAL PLACEMENT AUDIT

A case study protocol



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1 Background

The HEALINT project is promoting international training by developing management tools that support higher education and healthcare institutions in offering and directing high-quality cross-border apprenticeships, which can serve as a basis for the development of formal international standards and guidelines. The mission is to facilitate the international mobility of trainees and, consequently, of professionals in the healthcare sector. The vision is to increase the supply and quality of international placements offered by hospitals throughout Europe, as well as to simplify the processes involved in organizing these for students, educational institutions and healthcare organizations. (Healint Main Draft 2016.) There are seven partners in HEALINT project, five universities and two health care organizations, from Finland, Poland, Spain and the United Kingdom.

In the three-year project (2017 – 2020) as the result of the first IO1 (Protocol for Appraisal and Audit of Settings e.g. Hospitals or Clinics to Receive Trainees) was a protocol for an auditing tool, based on literature, legislations and guidelines. The second IO2 (Audit and Monitoring Protocol of Placements and Addition of New Placements within a Learning Environment) was an audit tool based on the audit protocol (IO1), translated by following the translation process of WHO and piloted by each project partner as was the procedure also with IO1. This paper focuses on the IO3 (Protocol for Training and Support of Auditors to Achieve Benchmark Audit Standards), where the objective was to design, test and cost the preparation for auditors and make proposals for future working. The next step IO4 (Set of Tools for Post-Evaluation of Placement-Quality) will identify the metrics which determine whether the conclusions drawn from the initial audit can be predictive of high-quality placement learning environments. The final IO5 (Monograph on Transferability), will analyze whether the approach proposed in the project could be applied to other sectors. In the end of the HEALINT project national multiplier events will take the form of a half-day seminar, where the various tools and protocols created by the project will be presented to the wider stakeholder community. (Healint Main Draft 2016 .)

2 Introduction

According to ISO 19011 (2018) audit is a “systematic, independent and documented process for obtaining objective evidence and evaluating it objectively to determine the extent to which the audit criteria are fulfilled”. In the HEALINT project audit is described not only critical but also as developmental evaluation. The auditors are seen as auditee’s critical friends who are using improvement-led evaluation while audit (Knubb-Manninen, Niemi & Pietiläinen 2013). The IO3 includes the preparation of *a code of ethics for auditors* and *the preparation of trainers* to assess consistency (Healint Main Draft 2016). The IO3 provides a proposal for auditor training to achieve the necessary competence.

The *Code of Ethics* is a statement of principles and expectations governing the behavior of individuals and organizations in the conduct of auditing. The purpose of the *Code of Ethics* is to promote an ethical culture in the profession of auditing. (Chartered Institute of Internal Audits 2018.) A code of Ethics is of major importance to help auditors attain full objectivity in their observations and subsequent analyses (Milos 2012).’

The development of potential support materials is also explored and processes for moderation of international quality standards by auditors determined. (Healint Main Draft 2016.) This paper presents the design and implementation of audit training in Finland and the training test in Spain. The feedback from HEALINT partners from the United Kingdom and Poland are also described. As an international project, it was found to be important to pay attention to lingual, cultural and social issues, such as clear training design based on international ISO 19011 standards and material easy to translate.

The auditors participating in the audit program should have the necessary competence to manage the program and its associated risks and opportunities, and external and internal issues effectively and efficiently. The necessary competence includes professional behavior and appropriate knowledge and skills to fulfil the needs of the audit program (ISO 19011 2018). Particular attention should be paid to *the design, planning and validation of the audit program*. It is important that the competent individuals should be assigned to manage the audit program. (ISO 19011 2018.)

To achieve auditor competence the selection for audit trainees was following the ISO 19011 (2018) requirements. The trainee should achieve the generic auditor knowledge and skills by successful completion of the audit training. The trainee should have education in nursing and experience in nursing for at least three years, and should understand the process of nursing students’ learning in clinical practice. The trainee should gain audit experience under the supervision of an auditor competent in the same discipline. In addition, the trainee should understand the discipline in contribution of the development of overall audit competence, and to show the desired behavior. (Table 1.)

	Prerequisite for the audit training participation		Completion of the audit training
Qualified auditor’s knowledge and skills / competence	Personal and professional behavior, see ISO 19011 (2018), page 35	Discipline and sector specific competence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • registered nursing competence under the directive EU/2005/36 • understanding nursing practice • understanding the process of nursing students’ clinical practice 	Generic knowledge and audit skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding the meaning of the audit and its relation to the quality • ability to perform the audit by using the HEALINT audit tool • understanding the benefits of the audit to the Higher Educational Institute (HEI) and the clinical placement.
Evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • registered nurse certification • work experience in nursing for min. 3 years • nursing educator training and supervisor experience of clinical practice 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attendance at training days • passing the test • audit experience under the supervision of an auditor competent in nursing discipline (audit report)

Table 1. Requirements for a qualified auditor for international nursing students’ clinical placement audit

3 Method

The audit training was designed to be consisting of four days. The total of 24 hours, completed in two weeks, will include 20 contact hours and four hours of independent study. The objectives of the audit training were:

- 1) Trainees understand the meaning of the audit and its relation the quality of the operations (NB developing audit).
- 2) Trainees are able to perform the audit by using the audit tool created in the HEALINT project.
- 3) Trainees and auditees understand the benefits of the audit to the Higher Educational Institute (HEI) and the clinical placement.

3.1 Participants

The training for auditors was organized by Satakunta University of Applied Sciences (SAMK) as the responsible partner of IO3 of the HEALINT project. The three participants from SAMK were trainers. The audit team leader has completed audit training that covers generic auditor knowledge and skills and is experienced in nurse education that contributes to the development of overall audit competence (ISO 19011 2018) and has worked for SAMK as a lecturer of health care. Two other trainers were lecturers of health care and members of the HEALINT project. SAMK as a university of applied sciences was responsible for the training material design and the content, as well as the schedule of the audit training. The two participants representing the auditee, the Social Services and Healthcare Centre of Pori, were also members of the HEALINT project and they had participated in the design of the audit training. They booked the auditees (units and participants) to the audit day, informed the chosen ward managers and mentors about the audit day schedule, and were also responsible for the premises. In addition, they participated as observers in the audit day and collected feedback from the auditees.

The four audit trainees were senior lecturers in nursing from SAMK. Two of the trainees had experience in teaching for over 30 years and the other two trainees had experience of less than three years. All trainees had been working as a nurse and had experience in mentoring nursing students. None of the trainees had any former experience in auditing. None of the trainees had been supervising international exchange nursing students recently. All the trainees were chosen by following the code of ethics for auditors: integrity, objectivity, confidentiality and nursing competency (Chartered Institute of Internal Audits 2018), fair presentation of due professional care, independence, evidence-based approach and risk-based approach (ISO 19011 2018), and there was no risk of personal relationship with the auditee (Slapničar 2015).

3.2 The structure for audit training

The HEALINT partners in Finland, SAMK and the Social Services and Healthcare Centre of Pori, co-operated in designing the structure for the audit training basing it on literature, the audit training structure in SAMK, ISO 19011 (2018) standards and the HEALINT audit tool during spring 2019.

Day 1

The first day of the audit training consisted of four hours of lectures on the theory of the audit and auditing techniques led by the audit team leader. In SAMK one lecture is calculated as 45

minutes, so the first day consisted of 4 x 45 minutes. At the beginning of the training, the audit team leader gave a lecture on HEALINT as a project, and how to reflect the learning process by writing a reflection diary and gave instructions for the diary. Next, the audit team leader shared information with a power point presentation containing the headlines: the objective for the training, core concepts, quality and audit, principles of auditing, and the audit as a process. In total the power point-presentation contained 32 slides. At the end of the first day, the trainees had a short time to write their reflection diary, which was an evaluation method for the audit training.

Day 2

The second day of the theoretical part was briefing the trainees of the structure of the audit tool and how to ask the audit questions based on the tool. The lecture took 4 x 45 minutes. Firstly, the trainer told briefly more about the HEALINT outputs and the protocol. Secondly, she went through the international exchange nursing students' pathway in SAMK and relevant material related to international nursing student exchange beforehand such as description of the placements for audit, Orientation guide for exchange nursing students and Instructions for exchange students on the modules. The schedule of the last two days of the audit training the following week was also the topic. According to the ISO 19011 (2018), the assigning of roles and responsibilities were chosen: the trainees with a long experience in lecturing formed one pair and the trainees with fresh experience in mentoring in placements the other. The roles of the trainees were decided, one concentrated on writing and the other interviewed the auditees. The audit questions were the most important part of the second training day, and each of the three trainers had one audit tool section to discuss (governance, resources and allocation, opportunities and the experience of trainees.) The trainers created their own questions of each section of the audit tool and guided the trainees with them. The guide *The guidelines for completing traineeship placement learning audit* was sent to the trainees beforehand as a part of the pre-material and it was not looked at closer during the audit training because of the limited time.

1. Governance	<i>How does your strategy take into account the traineeship of international students?</i> <i>How are risks related to traineeship recognized?</i> <i>How are the mentors introduced to mentor international trainees?</i>
2. Resources	<i>What kind of resources does the unit have for guiding international students and how is it assured?</i> <i>In your opinion, what is the unit like as a traineeship environment for international students?</i> <i>How many working hours have been reserved for the mentors to guide the traineeship of an international student?</i>
3. Traineeship planning and control section	<i>Who guides international students?</i> <i>How is the mentor chosen/the task allocated? – in a competence-based manner?</i> <i>How many working hours have been allocated for the mentor to guide the international student?</i> <i>Has the job description of the mentor of international students been recorded?</i> <i>Who is in charge of the unit?</i> <i>What kind of management style is there in the unit and has it been discussed?</i> <i>Is learning a central matter in the organization?</i>

	<p><i>How is the learning of the personnel supported?</i></p> <p><i>How is the information about/from international students utilized in the unit?</i></p> <p><i>What is the attitude in the unit towards new things and possible mistakes?</i></p> <p><i>Is there a peaceful space for guiding international students, if necessary?</i></p>
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Table 2. Examples of audit questions

After day 1 and day 2 the trainees familiarized themselves with the audit tool, prepared for the audit of the second week and wrote a reflection diary as an individual study. The trainees had a meeting to discuss the questions according to the audit tool. The total time for the individual study was calculated to be 4x 45 minutes.

Day 3

During the second week there was the audit day in the Social Services and Healthcare Centre of Pori. The four units that have had international exchange nursing students participated in the audit day. The auditees, four ward managers and four mentors of international exchange nursing students, participated in the audit day. The auditees were from a geriatric acute ward, a child health clinic, a school health clinic and a home care unit. All the audited units had had international exchange nursing students and none of the auditees had previous experience in audit but all the auditees had necessary nursing competence. All the auditees had received the audit tool before the audit day by e-mail.

Pre-brief. At the beginning of the audit day, the HEALINT partners from the Social Services and Healthcare Centre of Pori welcomed participants and everyone introduced themselves. At the beginning of the day the audit team leader from SAMK gave a short presentation of HEALINT project and a pre-brief of the audit as a process and the content of the audit tool. Next, the audit team leader went through the schedule of the audit day and highlighted the meaning of audit: the audit is not for judging the organization, it is for helping to improve the organization. After the 60-minute pre-brief there was time to ask specific questions concerning the audit.

Audit. The auditees were divided into two groups: ward managers and mentors. Since there were two pairs of auditors, the four mentors were divided into two pairs, too. The mentors were interviewed first, and after them the four ward managers, divided into pairs of two as well, were interviewed by the auditors. They worked as assigned beforehand: one auditor interviewed the auditees by following the structure of the audit tool and the other auditor wrote down the answers of the auditees. The time for one audit was scheduled as 60 minutes and the two audits took 120 minutes in total. While the auditors were with the mentors and ward managers, the audit team leader with HEALINT partners from SAMK and the Social Services and Healthcare Centre of Pori were preparing the audit report. After the audits, the mentors and ward managers, the auditors and HEALINT partners with the audit team leader got together for summarizing the findings for the audit report. The summary section of the audit tool was filled: the strengths and suggestions for improvement were collected and verified. There was also discussion on the audit tool: the strengths and weaknesses as well as unclear sections were collected since the audit day was not only a test of audit training but also a pilot of the audit tool. Unclear sections and concepts were written down by auditors before the auditees came back for the final step of the day, conducting the closing meeting. The meeting took 60 minutes. (ISO 19011 2018.)

Closing meeting. Five of the auditees managed to participate in the closing meeting. The management of the auditee, clinical manager and the director of Health and Hospital Service of the Social Services and Healthcare Centre of Pori joined the meeting. The audit team leader presented the audit findings to the meeting participants and explained that the audit evidence collected earlier was based on the sample of the interviews and the available material found on the web pages of the Social Services and Healthcare Centre of Pori. The method of reporting and the process of handling the audit findings were informed to the participants of the auditee. The audit team leader presented the audit findings and conclusions, and the auditee agreed with them. The auditee chose three main findings that could be the most important ones to improve in the Social Services and Healthcare Centre of Pori. The auditee set the timeframe for the implementation of the three actions. The auditee reviewed the findings and the audit conclusions were reported. The closing meeting took 60 minutes. (ISO 19011 2018.)

Day 4

The audit team leader and audit trainers from SAMK got together to evaluate the audit training. The objective of the day was to complete the audit as the end of the audit process. First, the audit report to the auditee was completed and distributed to the Social Services and Healthcare Centre of Pori. The audit report should provide a complete, accurate, concise and clear record of the audit and included information of ISO19011 2018:

- a) the audit objectives
- b) the audit scope, particularly identification of the organizational and functional units or processes audited
- c) identification of the audit client
- d) identification of the audit team and auditee's participants in the audit
- e) the dates and locations where the audit activities were conducted
- f) the audit criteria
- g) the audit findings and related evidence
- h) the audit conclusions
- i) a statement on the degree to which the audit criteria have been fulfilled

Secondly, the audit team leader collected feedback of the audit training from trainees. The audit tool, the audit process, the schedule for the audit training and the audit day were evaluated. Any specific structured questionnaire was not used as the number of the participants was four and discussion according to the trainees' reflection diaries and experiences was seen as a more effective way to gather overall feedback of the audit training. The improvements for the training were reviewed. The last day of the training took 4 x45 minutes.

4 Evaluation of audit training

This audit training took place at the end of May 2019. SAMK audit trainers had 24 hours for training and, according to their feedback, it was sufficient, since the trainees did not have any former experience on the audit as a process. Four separate days divided within two weeks were seen as a good framework for audit training. In addition, both the Spanish test group and the Polish partner found the audit training structure useful with small changes for the contents of day one and two. The code of ethics as a characteristic of a good auditor should be mentioned more clearly on the first day's topics and the role of the project was removed from the structure. On table 1 there is a summary of the audit training according to the partners' feedback.

The audit trainees gave good feedback from the training days one and two. They had no former experience of auditing so they felt that it was important to explain the basics of audit and the audit process to gain a better understanding on the audit. Yet, they claimed that because of the lack of experience the questions were difficult to ask even though the second day of training was mostly meant for audit questions and familiarizing with the audit tool. The Spanish test group and the Polish partner saw that on day two focusing mostly on the audit questions would be a good help when applying the theory of day one and two into the day three, auditing. It was also suggested that the audit tool should have a more visible role in the training to be more familiar to the trainees, and the trainees should be competent to explain the importance of the audit to the auditee.

It was seen good that the trainees were given good instructions on how to write an audit report, how to approach the auditees and to keep a positive atmosphere, and how to focus on the strengths of the auditee. The trainees also had a meeting before the audit day to clarify the terms of the tool and to be sure that they had understood everything in the same way so that all the four audit trainees would perform an ethical and equivalent audit. The Spanish test group suggested that a video recording of the audit would give a good feedback of the trainees' audit competence.

The pre-brief of the audit at the beginning of the audit day three was regarded as important and helped the auditees to understand the core of the audit. The Spanish test group found the day and the schedule useful. Also dividing the ward nurses and mentors into two groups was a good idea because, as a result, the ward managers had a better understanding on the first part of the audit tool whereas mentors knew the third part better. Audit trainees liked the idea of working in pairs where one was asking questions and the other one writing down a memo. They thought that it was important to stick to the facts but not firmly, and write down only the issues that mattered from the auditee's point of view. The time for one audit, 60 minutes, was too short to go through the whole audit tool, and trainers were unsure whether it would have been important to finish the tool or not.

The trainees and auditees gave feedback on the audit tool - there were unclear concepts and the auditees needed clarifying from the trainees during the audit. Some ISO concepts, e.g. mission and vision, were unclear to the mentors, some parts of the tool were odd, e.g. risk management, or they felt that the same questions were asked twice because of the tool. The trainees felt that if they could audit more and become more competent with the tool, there

would not be so many unclear issues as in the pilot. In addition, they gave feedback for the tool and suggested some changes needed to be done. The guideline for the tool was not helping the trainees enough and needed improvements. The audit tool should have questions instead of sentences, and it was claimed to be too long and detailed according to trainees. They had difficulties to go through the whole audit tool because of the limited time and because they needed to explain the concepts to the auditees, and it took a lot of time. Instead of the guideline the trainees suggested that before the audit day the auditees should be sent an e-mail about the audit, the standards and explanations for standards, and the audit tool.

The trainees were satisfied with the training and willing to perform audits in the future. There should be careful consideration on the resources for the training and the schedule of the audit. Nevertheless, the training framework was considered to be appropriate. The number of individual training hours should be higher because independent study took the participants more time than assumed, partly because none of the trainees had former experience in the audit process. The time for lectures was seen to be enough, but the time for the audit itself was too short and it should be more than one hour. On the other hand, would more time give possibility to focus on less important issues? The audit tool had three parts and going through it required more time. In addition, the trainees felt that there was a need to focus more on the audit questions before the audit, e.g. having a lecture only on the audit questions. In the future, the training should pay more attention to the audit tool and the concepts in it. Trainees felt unsure whether they had understood the tool right and felt stressed if they misled the auditees. One big question was how to help the auditees to prepare for the audit: should the guide for the audit tool and the tool itself be sent to the auditees beforehand and should international exchange students take part in the audit as well.

Table 1. The revised version of content of the audit training

Day and the topics	Time and method	Responsible organization
Day 1: Audit as a process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core concepts: audit, audit quality, the principles of auditing, characteristics of a good auditor, the audit as a process • Objectives for the audit training 	4 x 45 min Lecture: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power point-presentation • Discussion Test	University
Day 2: Content, structure and use of the audit tool <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The audit questions: governance, resources and allocation, opportunities and experience of trainees • The international nursing student's pathway in Higher Education Institution (HEI) 	4 x 45 min Lecture: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit tool and the model questions • Material describing an international student's pathway Simulation of audit questions	University
Day 3: Audit day <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 hour: Pre-brief of the audit and the schedule of the day to auditees, auditors and trainees from HEI, clinical manager • 2 hour: 60 minutes/ audit , in total 120 minutes -two auditors in pairs ->1. two mentors ->2. two ward managers • 1 hour: Debriefing with auditors and audit trainers • 1 hour audit findings: auditors, audit trainers and contact persons from the audited organization • 1 hour Audit closing meeting: auditees, auditors, audit trainers and partners from audited organization 	6 x 60 min Audit pilot	University Auditee (organization)

<p>Day 4: Summary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The audit report to the auditee: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -participants -the aim of the audit -strengths -recommendations -three actions, by when and by whom • Feedback and evaluation of the audit training 	<p>4x 45 min Team work Discussions</p>	<p>University</p>
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5 Conclusions and proposal for future working

As a conclusion of the Finnish audit training pilot the objectives for the audit training were fulfilled: the trainees achieved the necessary audit process competence, and appropriate knowledge and skills as written in ISO 19011 (2018). The structure of the training worked well. The day three, audit day, was effective since the auditee was active and the interaction between auditors and auditees was good. Finnish trainees claimed that more time was needed for the preparation for the audit: the audit questions and time to focus on material like the audit tool was considered to need more independent time.

According to the test and dry tests of the audit training, it was suggested to take into consideration sharing the pre-material for familiarizing the trainees with the audit tool before the training. Testing trainees after the theoretical part of the training would give an insight of the competence of the trainees, and audit practice such as simulation could give better competence to the trainees before the audit. In conclusion, it is proposed for future working that the audit training protocol and the profile of the audit trainees need to be customized to meet the requirements in different countries.

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About the HEALINT Project and this publication

In healthcare, student learning in clinical practice is an essential part of the curriculum. However, in a context of international mobility, healthcare professionals ideally need to train within the system they intend to work in, so that they may easily integrate and deliver care. HEALINT is promoting such international training by developing management tools that support Higher Education and Health Care institutions to offer and direct high-quality cross-border apprenticeships which can serve as a basis for the development of formal international standards and guidelines.

This publication reports the case study protocol of the audit training for international nursing students' clinical placements as a part of the intellectual output (IO) 3 of the international HEALINT project. The description and evaluation of the pilot audit are reported, and a proposal for future working is made. The audit training in question was based on ISO standards, audit literature and audit training structure in Satakunta University of Applied Sciences (SAMK). At first, the training was piloted with four audit trainees from SAMK and the Social Services and Healthcare Centre of Pori. The four trainees reported satisfaction with the structure of the four training days. The trainees achieved the necessary audit process competence, and appropriate knowledge and skills. According to the feedback of the Finnish audit training pilot, attention should be paid to the time for the preparation for the audit: the audit questions and the time to focus on the material like the audit tool was considered to need more independent study time. Secondly, the audit training was tested by HLA Vista Hermosa and the University of Alicante, and dry tested by University of Nottingham and University of Middlesex from the UK and the State Higher Vocational School in Tarnow, Poland. As a conclusion, proposals were made for future working, i.e. the audit training protocol should be more flexible to serve the needs of different countries.



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