# A guide to setting up practice-based learning in a non-clinical setting



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## 1. The purpose of this guide

The BDA Curriculum Framework 2020¹ states that learners are required to complete 1000 hours of Practice-based Learning (PBL). This guide aims to support qualified dietitians who wish to develop innovative, non-clinical PBL for both undergraduate and post- graduate pre-registration learner dietitians in a step-by-step way.

This guide will be supplemented with 'real life' examples of timetables and case studies in the Appendices at the end of this document.

**This guide is aimed at** Registered Dietitians from all four home nations of the United Kingdom (UK) working in non-clinical dietetic work settings as well as Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) providing dietetic training courses.

#### Specifically, this guide will:

Describe what PBL is

Describe who the guide is aimed at

Outline what work settings are considered to be non-clinical

Describe the aims of PBL

Describe why innovative PBL settings are needed across all four nations

List the benefits of non-clinical PBL to the learner, the Practice Educator and the organisation

Provide a step-by-step guide to setting up non-clinical Practice-based Learning

Describe the types of activities learners may do in nonclinical PBL

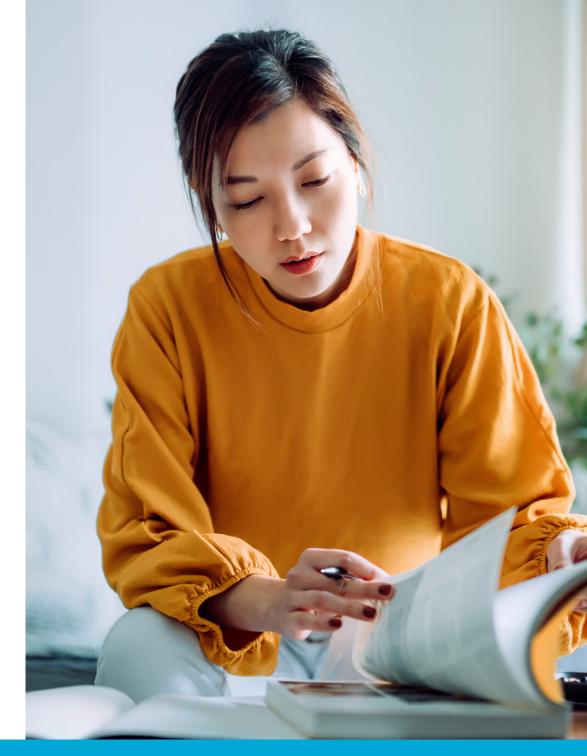
List additional factors to consider when setting up nonclinical PBL

## 2. What is Practice-based Learning?

Practice-based Learning (PBL) is/are the period(s) of study and activities undertaken by learners as a formal element of their dietetic pre-registration training whilst in the practice-based learning environment.

The main aim of PBL is for the learner to acquire experience and 'competencies' (sometimes referred to as 'capabilities' or 'learning outcomes' – see Section 12: Glossary) as set out by the requirements of the undergraduate or masters level degree. Many of the competencies are generic and non-clinical in nature and can be met in a non-clinical work setting.

The BDA Curriculum<sup>1</sup> contains a detailed explanation of what is expected during Practice-based Learning and the roles and responsibilities of the learner, HEI and Practice Educator.



## What is Practice-based Learning?

#### Aims

#### **Early**

PBL aims to introduce learners to dietetic practice and can take place across both clinical and non-clinical settings.

#### Middle

PBL can take place across both clinical and non-clinical settings. By the end of the PBL the learner should be implement the nutrition and dietetic care process in practice under supervision.

#### **Final**

PBL can take place across both clinical and non-clinical settings. By the end of PBL the learner should be able to consistently and independently implement the nutrition and dietetic care process in practice.

## Duration

This should be agreed between the Higher Education Institute (HEI) and the dietitian (wishing to be the Practice Educator) in the prospective PBL setting.

PBL within the clinical setting should usually be not less than 350 hours, and undertaken on a continuous, full or part time basis. The learner should demonstrate case load management at the end of this PBL within the clinical setting. Consideration needs to be given to thelength of time it is reasonable for a learner to: -

Settle into the new environment and learn about how it works e.g., a food industry or research setting

Meet the competencies that are set out for the PBL setting.

In practice, non-clinical PBL may be two - three weeks or longer.

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## What is Practice-based Learning?

## Competencies

For each PBL the learner is expected to be given experiences and opportunity to meet the key competencies as determined by the HEI. If the learner has difficulty meeting one or more of the competencies, the HEI is likely to offer the learner support and an opportunity to retake. The design of the PBL is therefore crucial to give the learner every possible chance to meet their competencies. It is also very important to highlight to the HEI any problems that the learner is having in meeting the expected competencies at an early stage so that extra consideration and support can be given. The competencies may include, for example:

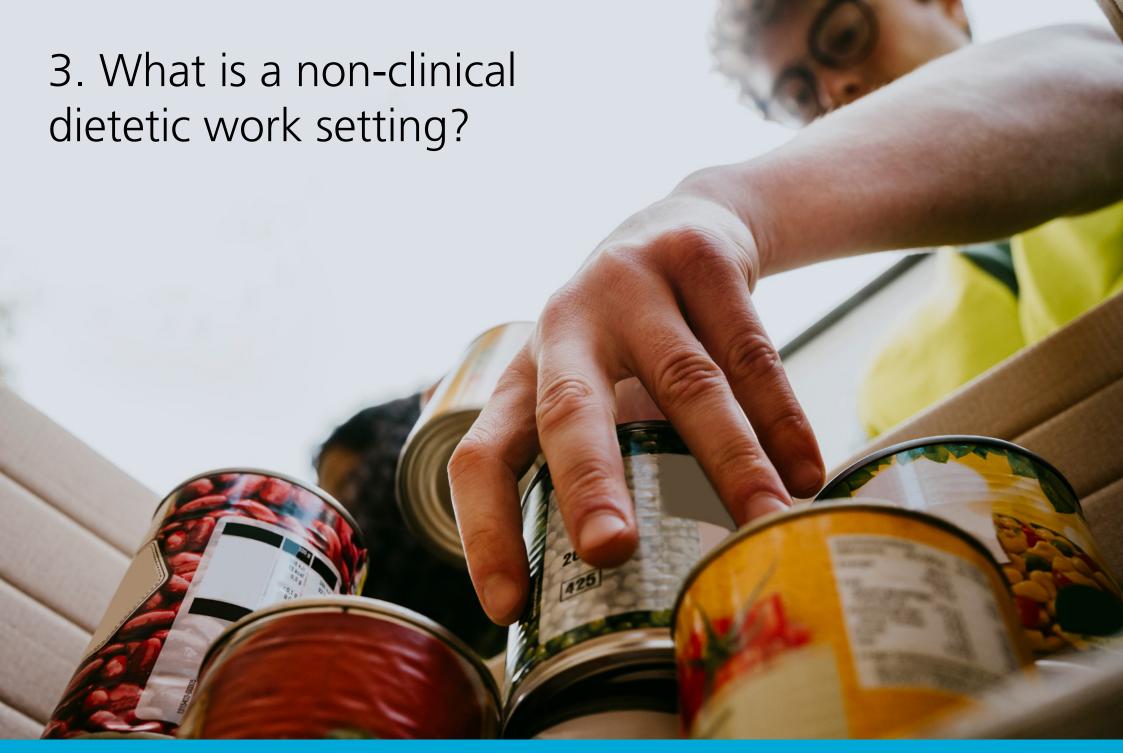
Knowledge competencies

Communication competencies

Care Process competencies (some of these competencies may include service user facing competencies which in a non-clinical PBL setting are not relevant and the learner would not be expected to achieve these).

Professionalism behaviours.





## What is a non-clinical dietetic work setting?

Traditionally, learner dietitians have done their PBL in a hospital or community clinical setting. For reasons outlined in Section 4, it has become necessary to expand the work settings in which learners can be placed to complete part of their PBL.

Therefore, innovative, non-clinical PBL can include (but is not exclusive to): -

Industry, e.g., food companies, medical nutrition companies

Freelance dietetics including media work

Leadership roles

Research laboratories

Third sector organisations e.g., Age UK and other charities

Food Banks

Family centres

Health and Social Care Trusts

Hospices

Care homes

Tier 1 and Tier 2 weight management services



## 4. Why do we need non-clinical Practice-based Learning?

Across all four nations there is a rising demand for Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) including dietitians. This is to enable the right levels of care for service users in the ever expanding and changing healthcare sector. There are also more and more opportunities for dietitians to work in settings outside of the traditional healthcare world e.g., in areas such as the food and medical nutrition industry, public health, catering, research and media.

All four UK nations are considering or actively increasing the number of dietetic undergraduates and postgraduates in preregistration training to secure the future of the dietetic workforce.

The HEIs have responded to this by increasing the places they have on offer for training dietitians. Consequently, the demand of PBL has increased to levels that the traditional clinical PBL settings are struggling to meet. This situation has been exacerbated in recent years by the Covid pandemic which has increased the work demands on clinical dietitians. HEIs are having to think creatively and are now planning to or are already offering innovative, non-clinical workplace settings for the PBL of their learners.

Non-clinical PBL will not totally replace clinical PBL. Indeed, it is

designed to relieve the pressures on clinical PBL settings and offer different opportunities to learners. The learner will be able to achieve many but not all the HEI set competencies through non-clinical PBL. However, the 'service user related' competencies must be met through traditional, clinical PBL settings.

Prospective dietetic employers (in both clinical and non-clinical dietetics) can be reassured that new graduates who have experienced non-clinical PBL are well rounded and have achieved all the competencies required to qualify as a Registered Dietitian.

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## 5. What are the benefits of non-clinical PBL?

PBL offers a mutually beneficial learning experience between the dietitians providing non-clinical PBL (referred to as Practice Educators) and the learners. There are also benefits to be had by the organisation to which the Practice Educator belongs (if relevant).





#### What are the benefits of non-clinical PBL?

### To the Practice Educator

Supporting the training of learners is part of expectations of a qualified dietitian in the BDA Code of Conduct<sup>7</sup>: 'contribute to the learning and development of learners and colleagues, as appropriate to the member's role.'

The HCPC Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics<sup>8</sup> state that: 'You must work in partnership with colleagues, sharing your skills, knowledge and experience where appropriate, for the benefit of service users and carers.' Becoming a practice educator will enable you to evidence that you uphold this standard.

It feels good to be altruistic – i.e. helping train the future of the profession.

It feels good to watch learners grow in confidence and ability.

You can get work done that you might not have had time to do yourself – however, it must be appropriate work that contributes to the learner's achievement of their competencies.

You may wish to use it as an additional way to promote yourself as a professional i.e. self-marketing: You can share your experience on social media or in the printed press.

You may use this as part of your evidence for continuing professional development.

Learners can share what they have learnt with you to help you keep up to date.

Your role may be seen as a possible future job / career choice by newly qualified dietitians.

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## What are the benefits of non-clinical PBL?

## To the Learner

The learner will be able to learn about alternative career paths.

The non-clinical PBL contributes to the achievement of many of the learning competencies for degree.

Learners may possibly get more opportunity to achieve some of the competencies such as 'giving presentations' - it may be difficult to get the opportunity to do this activity in a clinical PBL setting.

The learner may meet a potential future employer.

Innovative, non-clinical PBL will enable learner dietitians, at an early stage, to see what employment and career possibilities exist outside the usual clinical settings.

## To the Organisation

The organisation may be seen as a 'good future employer' by talented new dietetic graduates i.e. gain a competitive advantage in the jobs market.

Having learner dietitians may help the organisation to meet internal targets.

By offering PBL the organisation may be looked on favourably by its customers.

## 6. Working with the Higher Education Institute

The HEI is likely to have appointed a member of staff to coordinate PBL and this person is the first port of call when considering taking on PBL learner dietitians. The PBL coordinator will be your key contact during the setting up of the non-clinical PBL and also throughout the time of the PBL and afterwards.

They will provide you with information which describes:

The overall aims of the PBL

A detailed list of the competencies the learner is expected to be able to meet at the end of the PBL

A PBL Induction Checklist

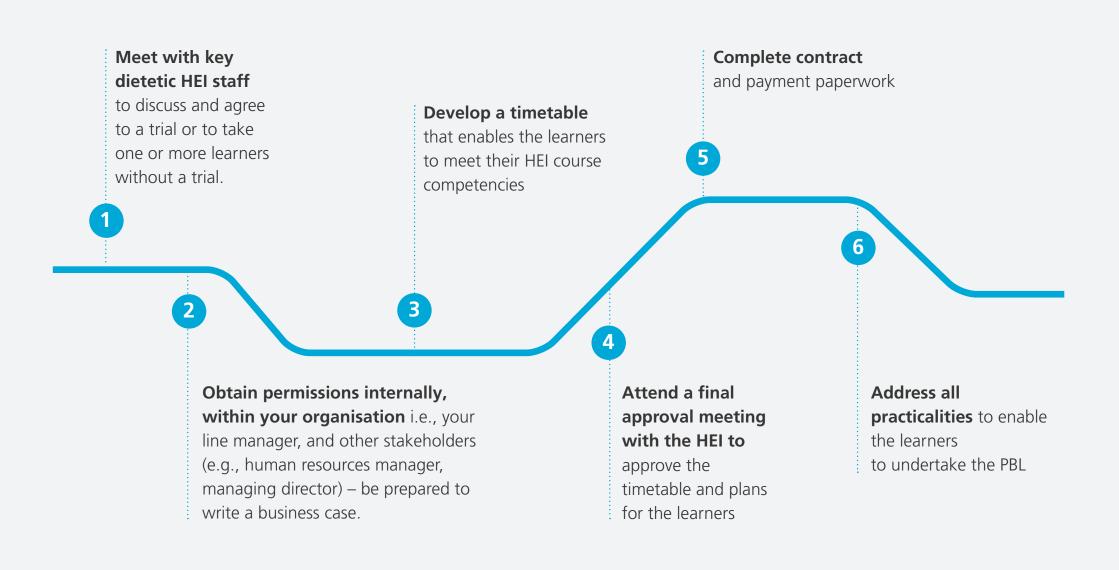
Expectations of both the PBL Practice Educator and also of the learner on PBL

HEI paperwork to complete during and after the PBL – this is usually submitted to the HEI after the PBL. Learners are usually expected to be responsible for completing their own HEI paperwork but there may be paperwork that needs to be completed jointly with the Practice Educator or that the Practice Educator needs to complete alone. The HEI paperwork that is required varies from one HEI to another but may include:

- Professionalism form
- Presentation assessment forms to be completed when delivering a presentation
- End of week review forms
- End of PBL review forms.



## A step-by-step guide to setting up PBL



## 8. The timetable

See <u>Appendix 1</u> for a real-life example of a timetable. It is just one way to write a timetable – not the only way – you may adapt it to suit your own needs. In your timetable:

Build in time for the learner(s) to have a regular e.g., daily 'catch up' with you, (the Practice Educator). This is especially important if the learner is working 'virtually' rather than face to face. This 'catch up' need only be 30 minutes in duration. It is useful to do this once at the beginning of the day and once at the end of the day – certainly at the beginning of the PBL when the learner is new. After that you approach this in a more ad hoc way.

In the first week include time for induction to the **organisation** – meeting staff from key areas of the organisation. Induction to the organisation may involve the learner completing some e-learning.

**Arrange meetings with internal staff** as part of the learner's induction.

**Build in time once a week** for the learner to reflect on their week and complete their paperwork.

**Build in time to reflect** on major pieces of work or after visits. In the example all activities in the timetable are colour coded so that the learner can cross reference to the details about each activity in the Activities Log (Appendix 2) including the following:

- Whether the activity is self-directed or not
- What competencies the activity helps the learner to achieve
- The aim of the activity
- The objectives for each activity

Be prepared to change your timetable at short notice to accommodate changes with your own workload or organisation as well as the learner. i.e. be flexible and inform your learner that their timetable may be subject to changes and why.

## 9. The Practicalities

Some PBL may be 'virtual' or a blend of 'virtual' and face to face. The practicalities below take this into consideration. In Sections 8 and 12 the needs of learners who are working 'virtually' are described.

#### The practicalities include:

Acquiring a laptop/ desk top computer/space for the learner to use during their PBL.

Acquiring the appropriate usernames and passwords to use with the provided computer hardware.

Acquiring a mobile phone for the learner – if required.

Setting the learner up with email and virtual communication e.g., MS Teams / Zoom.

Setting the learner up with a means to share files e.g., SharePoint / a VPN.

Setting the learner up with access to internally used computer programmes e.g., nutritional analysis programmes.

Setting up an Induction programme for the learner for the first week they are with you.

## 10. Induction

It is recommended by the HEIs that you write an induction programme for your learners to be completed in the first week of their PBL. There is an example Induction Checklist in Appendix 3. The learners are likely to be with you for a short period of time so it is important that they get a good induction during their PBL with you so that they can familiarise themselves with you, your organisation, and your organisation's policies early on.

To ensure data confidentiality e.g., business secrets/client data, it is recommended that you include your expectations regarding data confidentiality in the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in the learners' induction training.



## 11. The activities

#### These can include (but are not limited to): -

**Attending** workplace meetings e.g., management, project or sales meeting.

**Visiting** a customer, factory, warehouse or office.

Completing work projects e.g.,

- Nutritional analysis of a menu / food diary and comparison with RNIs or nutritional guidelines
- Writing a nutrition information leaflet for service users e.g., coeliac disease
- Writing and presenting a nutrition training webinar / presentation for non-nutrition experts
- Devising nutrition related tweet chats, producing podcasts, updating / developing webpages
- Nutritional analysis of recipes and comparison with nutritional guidelines
- Providing nutritional support for the shooting of a video or a food photo shoot
- Audit and evaluation of services projects may be suitable.

## 12. Additional factors to consider: the 8 'P's

## Pandemic: Covid- 19

The Coronavirus/Covid-19 pandemic has put additional strains on all workplace settings. It has never been more important to support the training of more dietitians. The pandemic has also meant that learner training has had to be altered to protect learners and their teachers (including PBL Practice Educators) alike. It is recommended that when planning PBL you are aware of:

The non-clinical work setting – consider 'virtual' working (i.e. based from home but working via virtual communication technologies like MS Teams and Zoom).

Respect the medical/health requirements of the learner some of whom may be shielding. You may need to adapt the timetable to adjust for any medical problems.

Follow Covid regulations / legislation.

Social distancing.

Mask wearing.

Travelling.

Working at home.

## **Practice Educators Training**

The HCPC Standards of Education and Training<sup>9</sup> state that: 'Practice Educators must undertake regular training which is appropriate to their role, learners' needs and the delivery of the learning outcomes of the programme.'

Some HEIs will hold training courses for Practice Educators (virtual or face to face) which it is recommend that you attend to make sure you are up to date with the latest paperwork as well as guidelines on pastoral care of the learner.

For more information about Practice-based Learning refer to the BDA website<sup>10</sup>.

The BDA held a webinar in 2021 about innovative PBL for dietitians who are thinking of setting up a PBL. This can be viewed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g5LcPNT7Ep8

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Additional factors to consider: the 8 'P's

#### Practice Educator workload

Ensure you have space in your diary and workload to look after and supervise the learners and complete the paperwork required.

## Paperwork

Learners are usually expected to be responsible for completing their own HEI paperwork. However, Practice Educators may need to complete some paperwork with their learner during the PBL and there may be some paperwork the Practice Educator must complete alone. Assessment of the learner and paperwork may be required during the PBL (at the end of each week or after an activity such as a presentation) or at the very end of the PBL

## Payment

HEIs offer payment to PBL providers. The amount varies depending on which UK country you are in and will change each year. You can receive an amount for each learner you take each week they are with you.

To receive payment, you will need to complete new supplier forms for the HEI and provide evidence that you have all the expected insurance to take a learner and you should discuss this with your

HEL. You can also find further insurance information here: https://www.bda.uk.com/practice-and-education/nutrition-anddietetic-practice/professional-guidance/insurance/bda-pii-keypoints.html

You are expected to use this money for the benefit of the learners e.g., it can be used for paying travel expenses incurred by the learner whilst they are with you or put towards for the purchase of an extra licensee for nutritional analysis software to be used by the learner.

## Pastoral care

An important part of the role as PE: build in an opportunity to have an informal catchup with your learners at the start and the end of the day and invite them to talk about any work or non-work issues they are facing during this time. This is especially important when learners are working 'virtually' or remotely as learners may feel isolated. Also, reassure your learners that they can talk to you at any point during the day if something crops up. You may wish to link the learner to a 'mentor' in your organisation whilst they are doing their PBL with you.

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## Additional factors to consider: the 8 'P's

The mentor may be a non-dietetic member of your staff whose role it would be to provide a 'listening ear' and nondietetic and pastoral related help and advice.

## Policies

Before embarking on PBL for learners it is recommended that you look up your internal organisational Human Resource policies e.g., induction training, learner training policies, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy, Bullying and Harassment Policy. HEIs may request evidence that you have these policies. The policies may also be helpful to you and point you to internal support of which you were unaware.

## Problems that can arise

Problems can occur at any point during the PBL. The problems may be pastoral in nature or related to the learner's abilities or behaviour. For all problems it is recommended that you alert your HEI contact (PBL facilitator) at an early stage. They are there to help you support the learners and are very approachable and experienced. Be aware that some problems may require you to solve them out of normal working hours.



## 13. Glossary

#### **Practice-based Learning (PBL)**

The period(s) of study and activities undertaken by learners as a formal element of their dietetic pre-registration training whilst in the practice-based learning environment.

#### **Competencies/Capabilities/Learning Outcomes**

An integration of knowledge, understanding, and subject-specific skills and abilities used by an individual to function according to the demands that are put upon them in the specific dietetic context.

HEIs may sometimes use the words 'competencies'/'capabilities'/'learning outcomes' to mean the same as the above definition.

#### **Higher Education Institutes (HEIs)**

Universities are an example of HEI.

#### **Practice Educator**

This is the term used to describe a qualified, Registered Dietitian who provides direct educational support to the learner dietitian when on PBL and who is responsible for arranging the PBL.

#### **Dietetic PBL Co-ordinator**

This is the term used to describe the person from the HEI who is responsible for arranging and co-ordinating the PBL of learner dietitians in their non-clinical and clinical PBL.

## 14. References

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## Appendix 1: Timetable example

Week 1	Mon 18 Oct	Tues 19 Oct	Wed 20 Oct	Thur 21 Oct	Fri 22 Oct
0900-0930	0900-0915: Teams call with Jo (Practice Educator)		Morning Teams call with Jo (Practice Educator)		Reflection on Week 1 - individual meetings with Jo
0930-11.00	0915-10.15: Ops team meeting 10.15 Outline of PBL/ paperwork		NHSSC Induction: e-learning		Project 1: Menu design/ analysis
Break					
1130-1300	Overview of Foodbuy / NHS supply chain	- Trip to Midlands Partnership Foundation NHS Trust (St. George's Hospital) to visit Eating Disorders Ward:	Meet Kirstin - Procurement	Trip to Chertsey for filming video	Project 1: Menu design/ analysis
Lunch					
1300-1430	Meet the dietetic team and outline of what we do	Kinver Ward	NHSSC Induction: e-learning		Project 1: Menu design/ analysis
Break					
1500-1630	Outline of your project and using Nutritics and travel to St. George's Hospital		Meet Client Account Manager, Rachel and NHSSC Induction: e-learning		Project 1: Menu design/ analysis
1630-1700	Afternoon call with Jo		Afternoon call with Jo		Finish for the day

Colour Legend: The colours identify different activities and correlate to the colours on the Spreadsheet in Appendix 2 for easy look up

## Appendix 2: Activities explained (the objectives)

Week 1 activities	Week 1 activities						
Project activities by learner	Project: ie: self directed	Capabilities met	Aim of the session	Objectives. By the end of the session you should be able to:			
TEAMs call with Practice Educator	TEAMs call with Jo and Danielle	TEAMs call with Jo and Danielle	To ensure that learnerss are achieving their PBL objectives and are OK.	To allow feedback from learners and discussion about the PBL; To check that learners are well and OK			
Dietetic team intro sessions	No	P1, K1	In this first week the dietetic time aims to introduce the learner to the wider team and provide induction to the organisation, what it does and how it fits in with feeding hospital service users.	(1) describe what the dietetic team does and what documents it works with (outline the work project that you will be doing during your PBL) (2) Be aware of the differenet food frameworks especially: MDT, Food to Go and DRPM			
Day trip to Kinver Ward	Yes	P1, K1	To observe an eating disorders ward at meal times and meet key staff including the diettians and the ward caterer.	(1) Describe a typical meal time on an eating disorders ward (2) Discuss with the carterer and dietitians the challenges faced when serving meal times for these pateints  (3) observe and describe the provision of food drom purchase of raw ingredients to actual service to service users (4) familiarise yourself with the 2 week menu			
Visit to Chertsey	No	P1, K1	To observe the filming of short video about food fortifictaion	1) See some food products that are used for food forrtification (2) observe how a video is made (3) provide assistance if needed during the filming process.			
Meetings with other workers in NHS Supply Chain		P1, K1	To meet other key NHS Supply Chain Food contract workers and hear about their roles	(1) describe the role of procurement professionals in the buying of food suitable of the hospitals(2) describe the role of the CAMs in the sales process (3) describe the role of the chefs in NHS Supply Chain Food.			
Project: analyse menus	Yes	K1, CP3, CP4, P2, C1	The aim is to nutritionally analyse the new vegan menus and make any comments / suggestions for improvement if necessary	1) The nutritionally analyse all 14 days of the 2 week vegan menu (2) compare the nutritona of each day with the Digest nutritional standards, (3) Where there are deviations to recommend an alternative solution			
NHS SupplyChain Food E-learning	Yes	K1	To complete all mandatroy e-learning to keep you and us safe when working together	Complete all mandatory e-learning			
Reflections and forms/ feedback	No	P1, P2, CP4	To spend some time to reeflect on your week's activities and your acheivements and receive feedback.	1) To complete paperwork (2) reflect on week's activities and achievements (3) identify challenges and how you overcame them (4) respond to feedback well.			

**Colour Legend:** The colours identify different activities and correlate to the colours on the Spreadsheet in <u>Appendix 1</u> for easy look up.

## Appendix 3: Example of an Induction Checklist

Dietetic Learner Induction Checklist: B PBL with 'X' Organisation

No.	Task	Date completed	Learner signature	Practice Educator Signature						
Essei	Essentials									
1.	Introduction to Practice Educator and the Dietetic Team									
2.	How to contact staff in an emergency or when need immediate help									
3.	Illness reporting									
4.	Daily morning and afternoon catchups with Practice Educator									
5.	Hours of work, lunch/tea and coffee breaks, private study time									
6.	3 week timetable and projects overview									
7.	IT – how to get IT help, Outlook emails and Teams, the N-Drive									
8.	Read Induction Pack									
9.	How to access online learning									
10.	Online mandatory training: Covid safe work									
11.	Online mandatory training: Dignity @ work									
12.	Online mandatory training: GDPR Essentials									
13.	Online mandatory training: Code of Business Conduct									
14.	Online mandatory training: Health and Safety for non-caterers									
Basic	induction to 'X' Organisation functions									
15.	Introduction to 'X' organisation									
16.	'X' Organization: what we do and structure/org chart. Website/page overview									
21.	Overview of the work of the dietetics team: strategy									
22.	Overview of the work of the organisational structure and other teams									
23.	Meet the other teams									



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