

# The SMARTAL Project:

## St MARTin's College health students Access to Learning resources whilst on placement

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### Background

- The project ran from Dec 2004 to March 2005
- Based on Northumbria University's HENSAL (Health and Education Northumbria Students' Access to Learning resources whilst on placement) Project
- St Martin's College is a higher education college, whose courses are validated by Lancaster University. It has 3 main campuses at Lancaster, Ambleside and Carlisle with teaching sites in London and in the hospitals in Barrow and Whitehaven.
- SMC has 7100 FTE students (2004/05), the majority taking teacher training or nursing and allied health-related courses. There are 1289.4 FTE pre-registration health students.

### The Aim of the Project

- To determine patterns of use of learning resources (print and electronic resources, IT access and study space) by health students on placement
- To find out barriers to access and use
- To inform the achievement of the Library's Strategic Aims
- To compare with other HE institutions and to contribute to national and local discussions

### Methodology

- A questionnaire to students recently returned from placement. 268 were completed = 60% return rate.
- Interviews with NHS Practice Placement Facilitators

### Main Findings

- Most students had access to a library, study space and IT facilities but those on placement outside a large hospital were less well-served
- Students continued to make use of the College library
- Difficulties accessing and using the NHS and College libraries were reported
- Lack of awareness of what NHS and College services and resources were available
- Students mainly used electronic resources from home
- Little awareness of NHS e-resources
- Students tended to ask clinical staff for help
- The findings were very similar to those of the HENSAL project

### Reported difficulties included

- Too far from an NHS or College library
- Library opening hours
- Not enough time to study
- Access to a PC and network log-ins

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### Recommendations include

- Library involvement with the Faculty's audit of placements
- Briefing sessions with the students before placements
- More publicity on services – web page, leaflet, VLE module
- Placement evaluation feedback from the Faculty
- Exchange of information between the College, NHS libraries and the placement mentors