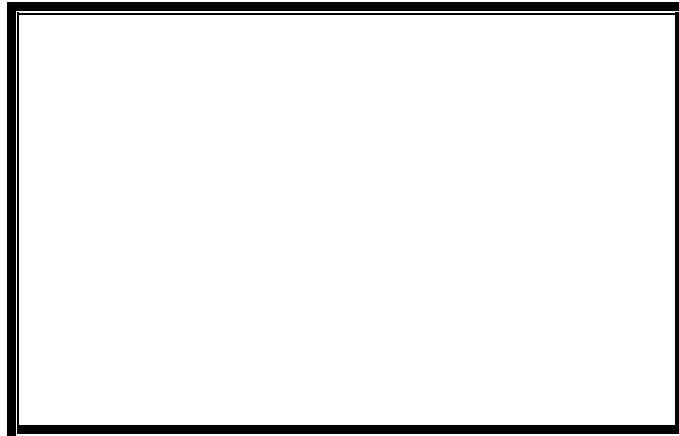


SIGN-OFF MENTORS



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In September 2006 and revised in 2008, the NMC introduced the Standards to support learning and assessment in practice NMC Guidelines for mentors, practice educators and teachers (NMC 2008). Included in the standards was the introduction of sign-off mentors: NMC Mentors who meet specific criteria in order to be able to sign-off a pre-registration student's practice proficiency at the end of an NMC approved programme/at a progression point. The standards apply to all pre-registration students who commenced their programme of study from September 2007.

- From September 2007, a Mentor NMC Stage 2 is a mandatory requirement for all students undertaking a pre-registration nursing or midwifery programme. A sign-off Mentor is also needed at the end of the programme.
- Mentors, sign-off mentors and practice teachers are identified and verified by their employing Trust or Organisation
- The sign-off mentor must be in the same field of practice as you are (e.g. adult, child, learning disability or mental health).
- Not all mentors are sign-off mentors: if your mentor is not sure, please ask them to contact their Trust/Organisation Named Person responsible for student support and placements or the Nursing Programme Office

The NMC requires confirmation at the end of a programme that both practice and theory parts have been successfully achieved. The University will confirm that the theory part of your programme has been met, so how will this work in your practice placement?

- In practice settings, a sign-off mentor or practice teacher will consider the practice evidence to make a judgement that all your practice competencies have been met and that you are considered proficient.
- They will then sign-off the practice part of your programme, making the ultimate decision that you are *fit for practice* from a practice perspective.
- However, if the sign-off mentor or practice teacher considers that you have not met all the practice competencies and that in their judgement you are not yet proficient, the sign-off mentor or practice teacher cannot – at this point – sign-off the practice part of your programme.
- Sign-off mentors and practice teachers are accountable to the NMC for their decision about your fitness for practice as a future registrant and that you have the necessary knowledge, skills and competence to be proficient in the role you have been studying for.

So as a student, what will I have to do?

- You will be expected to review, in conjunction with your sign-off mentor, all your previous practice assessment documentation to ensure that if any concerns have been raised earlier in the programme by previous mentors, that these have now been appropriately addressed. This includes your practice placements in the common foundation and branch programme as well as your snapshot documents.
- You both might like to discuss your progress with other healthcare professionals to make sure that all appropriate practice assessments have been made
- You will also undertake your final practice assessment with your sign-off mentor and complete the required documentation
- It will take extra time to do this properly and to support this, the NMC have stated that sign-off mentors and practice teachers need *protected time of one hour per week to perform the role -*

for reflection, for providing feedback and for record keeping

This is in addition to the 40% of your time that is normally required for working alongside your mentor/sign-off mentor.

Example:

- ✓ Your practice assessment documentation is being reviewed by your sign-off mentor and she/he notices that a concern was raised during a second year placement.
- ✓ It was documented that you did not always communicate with service users/patients to the expected level. You had not failed this placement but the mentor had identified this as an area in need of attention
- ✓ Your sign-off mentor then looks through subsequent assessments and notes that no further problems of this nature have been identified and mentor comments suggested that you had adequately addressed this issue.
- ✓ During your supervision and the assessment process in your final placement you demonstrate, through the process of observation, questioning and discussion that this (and any other worries/issues) is (are) no longer a concern about your practice performance. Your sign-off mentor can now sign your practice off.
- ✗ However, if your sign-off mentor still has concerns about your practice and consider that you have not yet reached the desired level of practice and that you are not proficient, he/she cannot sign your practice off.
- ✗ This must be documented and you must seek support from your Liaison Lecturer and the Trust/Organisation Named Person responsible for student support and placements

Who is there to support me?

- ✓ Your first points of contact is your Liaison Lecturer and your Trust/Organisation Named Person responsible for student support and placements
- ✓ Other mentors, sign-off mentors and practice teachers can also act as a support.
- ✓ Members of Faculty staff such as module leaders, APPL/personal tutors, course directors and practice leads/links are also there to support you.

The majority of pre-registration students are fit to progress to the NMC Register at point of signing off. However, **if your sign-off mentor does have concerns and considers that you have not reached the desired level of practice/competence and do not consider you as proficient, he/she cannot sign you off.** Remember that **they** are accountable to the NMC for the decisions that they make

Final Checklist

Are you in your final (long) practice placement?	✓ Yes – you should be allocated a sign-off mentor	✗ No – sign-off mentor not required, you should be allocated a mentor
Has a verified sign-off mentor been allocated to mentor you and are you both in the same field of practice?	✓ Yes – no action needed	✗ No – check with your Trust/Organisations Named Person to identify a suitable verified sign-off mentor
Will your sign-off mentor be able to work 40% of my time/placement with me, the student?	✓ Yes – no action needed	✗ No – try and ensure that you are allocated & rostered to work with your sign-off mentor for 40%+ of your time/placement
Has your sign-off mentor had an hour a week (or thereabouts) protected time for reflection, providing feedback to you and for record keeping?	✓ Yes – no action needed	✗ No – address this with your sign-off mentor and Trust/Organisation Named Person for action plan/allocation of time
Has your sign-off mentor assessed your final practice requirements and documented the outcome?	✓ Yes – no action needed	✗ No – contact the Liaison Lecturer and Trust/Organisation Named Person to discuss action plan.
Has your sign-off mentor reviewed all of your practice documents and is he/she assured that all appropriate assessments have been made and that you fit for practice?	✓ Yes – complete documentation and declaration as such	✗ No – contact your Liaison Lecturer and Trust/Organisation Named Person to discuss concerns. Document these concerns also.
Has your sign-off mentor <u>any</u> concerns about your practice?	✓ Yes - contact your Liaison Lecturer and Trust/Organisation Named Person to discuss concerns. Document these.	✗ No – no action needed
Do you feel that you may need any additional support?	✓ Yes –contact your Liaison Lecturer and Trust/Organisation Named Person or a member of academic staff	✗ No – but reflect on your experience with colleagues and other mentors/sign-off mentors

For further information/advice, please contact either:

Trish Griffin
Principal Lecturer, Practice Education
Tel: 07876 137986
Email: Patricia.Griffin@sgul.kingston.ac.uk

Lesley Acton
Principal Lecturer, Practice Learning
Tel: 07796 267625/020 8417 8719
Email: L.Acton@sgul.kingston.ac.uk