

INFORMATION FOR SIGN-OFF MENTORS



SIGNING-OFF NMC STUDENTS AT A PROGRESSION POINT

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 pre-registration nursing and midwifery students plus a sign-off Mentor at a progression point/end of a programme.
- The sign-off mentor must be in the same field of practice as the student
- Mentors, sign-off mentors and practice teachers are identified and verified by their employing Trust or Organisation
- Not all mentors are sign-off mentors: for confirmation, please contact your Trust/Organisation Named Person responsible for student support and placements

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 the programme has been met, so how will this work in the practice placement?

- In practice settings, a sign-off mentor or practice teacher will consider the practice evidence to make a judgement that all competencies have been met and the student is considered proficient.
- They will then sign-off the practice part of the student's programme, making the ultimate decision that the student is fit - from a practice perspective - to go onto the NMC Register. Overall confirmation is made by the University.
- If the sign-off mentor or practice teacher considers that the student has not met all the competencies and that in their judgement, the student is not proficient, the sign-off mentor or practice teacher cannot – at this point – sign off the practice part of the programme to confirm that the student is proficient.
- Sign-off mentors and practice teachers are accountable to the NMC for their decision about a student's fitness for practice as a registrant and that they (the student) have the necessary knowledge, skills and competence to be proficient in the role they have been studying for.

So as a sign-off mentor/practice teacher, what will I have to do?

- You will be expected to review all of the student's previous practice assessment documentation to ensure that any concerns raised earlier in the programme by previous mentors have been appropriately addressed. This includes placements in the common foundation and branch programme as well as snapshot assessments.
- This does not mean that you will question the judgements of previous mentors, just that you are satisfied that all appropriate assessments have been undertaken with any concerns or issues followed up/addressed.
- You will also undertake the final practice assessment of the student 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 the student's time that is normally required for mentorship activities.

For example:

- ✓ As a sign-off mentor you were reviewing a student's practice assessment documentation and you noticed that a concern was raised during a second year placement.
- ✓ It was documented that the student did not always communicate with service users/patients to the expected level. The student had not failed the placement but the mentor had identified this as an area in need of attention
- ✓ You then looked through subsequent assessments and noted that no further problems of this nature had been identified and mentor comments suggested that the student had adequately addressed this issue.
- ✓ During your own supervision and assessment of the student in the final placement you make sure, through observation, questioning and discussion, that this (and any other concerns/issues) is (are) no longer a concern about the student's performance and document this accordingly.
- ✗ However, if you have concerns and that in your judgement, you consider that the student has not reached the desired level of practice and is not yet proficient; you **cannot** sign their practice off.
- ✗ Document this and 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 teacher who can act as a support and add reliability and validity to your judgements
- ✓ Members of Faculty staff such as module leaders, APPL/personal tutors, course directors and practice leads/links

The majority of pre-registration students are fit to progress to the NMC Register at point of signing off. However, **if you do have concerns and in your judgement, consider that the student has not reached the desired level of practice/competence and do not considered them as proficient, you cannot sign them off.** Remember that you are accountable to the NMC for the decisions that you make

Reference: Nursing and Midwifery Council (2008) Standards to support learning and assessment in practice
NMC Standards for Mentors, practice educators and teachers 2nd edition
London: Nursing and Midwifery Council
Available at <http://www.nmc-uk.org/aDisplayDocument.aspx?documentID=4368>

Final Checklist

Is the pre-registration student in their final practice placement?	✓ Yes – allocate a verified sign-off mentor	✗ No – sign-off mentor not required, allocate a mentor
Has a verified sign-off mentor been allocated to mentor the student and are they 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
Has the sign-off mentor worked 40% of the student's time with them?	✓ Yes – no action needed	✗ No – ensure the student is allocated & rostered to work with the sign-off mentor for 40% of the students' time
Has the sign-off mentor had an hour a week (or thereabouts) protected time for reflection, providing feedback to the student and for record keeping?	✓ Yes – no action needed	✗ No – address with Trust/Organisation Named Person and manager for action plan/allocation of time
Has the sign-off mentor assessed the final practice requirements of the student and documented the outcome?	✓ Yes – no action needed	✗ No – inform manager and contact the Liaison Lecturer and Trust/Organisation Named Person to discuss action plan.
Has the sign-off mentor reviewed all of the students practice documents and are sign-off mentor assured that all appropriate assessments have been made and that the student is 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 also.
Has the sign-off mentor <u>any</u> concerns about the students practice?	✓ Yes - contact your Liaison Lecturer and Trust/Organisation Named Person to discuss concerns. document these.	✗ No – no action needed
As a sign-off mentor, do you need any additional support?	✓ Yes – seek support from colleagues and contact your Liaison Lecturer and Trust/Organisation Named Person	✗ No – but reflect on your experience with colleagues and other mentors/sign-off mentors

For further information/advice, please contact either:

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