FACULTY OF HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE AND EDUCATION

Introduction

This handbook is produced for Mentors and Practice Teachers to use to assist them in supporting learning and assessment in practice. It outlines key information that will enable you to successfully undertake your role in supporting student’s in their practice learning experience.

The Schools of Midwifery & Child Health and Nursing offer a range of programmes of study that lead to registration as either a midwife or a nurse. Equally, the registered midwife or nurse can access a variety of modules in the Continuing Personal and Professional Development programme to enable the development of specialist or professional knowledge and skills. This mentor and practice teacher handbook relates the principles of mentorship and will enable you to support students from pre-registration and post-registration midwifery and nursing programmes.

The Standards to Support Learning and Assessment in Practice: NMC Standards for Mentors, Practice Educators and Teachers.

The Nursing and Midwifery Council introduced the Standards to Support Learning and Assessment in Practice: NMC Standards for Mentors, Practice Educators and Teachers in September 2007. The Standards:

- are a single developmental framework to support learning and assessment in practice

- describe the knowledge and skills Registrants need to apply in practice when they support and assess students undertaking NMC Approved programmes that lead to registration or a recordable qualification on the NMC Register

- designed for application within context of inter-professional learning and working in modern healthcare

The Standards – also known as SLAIP – are the foundation for the way we support learning and assessment in practice. You can download a copy directly from the NMC website. [http://www.nmc-uk.org/](http://www.nmc-uk.org/)

All resources in the handbook reflect the professional role and responsibility of Mentors and Practice Teachers as outlined in the NMC Standards for Mentors, Practice Educators and Teachers (NMC, 2008).
1.1 Introduction for all nursing and midwifery student mentors

The Standards to Support Learning and Assessment in Practice (NMC, 2008) include a number of underpinning principles for NMC Registrants who make judgments about pre-registration students. Mentors/practice teachers must:

- Have developed their skills, knowledge and competence beyond the point of registration to support their role
- Hold professional qualifications at an appropriate level to support and assess the student
- Been prepared formally to fulfill the role
- Keep records e.g. of students mentored, decisions made, actions etc.
- Be accountable and honest in their decision making and to seek support when necessary

As a mentor or practice teacher, it is important for you to understand the programme that students in your practice area are undertaking. This means you will be able to:

- identify the academic level they are trying to achieve
- identify the learning and practice outcomes of the student’s programme/module
- identify how they relate to your practice area
- offer practice learning opportunities to help the student to meet their outcomes.

Unique identification number

It is a requirement that all pre-registration students are mentored by a verified mentor or a verified practice teacher. On successful completion of either the mentor or practice teacher programme, you will receive a Unique Identification number (U.I.). This number, local to Kingston University: St. George’s, University of London, is used to verify your right to practice as a mentor or practice teacher. You will be required to use your U.I. number on all student practice documentation.

Your U.I. and a Mentor Resource Pack is issued to the person in your Trust/Organisation who is responsible for student placements. This person will forward your U.I. and Mentor Resource Pack onto you.
1.2 How the University allocates nursing and midwifery students to practice experiences

Pre-registration nursing and midwifery students

Practice learning opportunities for pre registration students undertaking NMC approved programmes are organised by the Placement Team within the Student Services and Programme Office. Kingston Hill. Practice experiences are organised in liaison with the Trust or Organisation Named Person. An annual forecast of student practice experiences is agreed between the Faculty and Trusts/Organisations, taking into account student capacity and range of experiences offered. Individual placements are notified at least six weeks in advance of student placements.

If you have an issue that you wish to discuss regarding the allocation of pre registration nursing or midwifery students please contact your Trust or Organisation Named Person. If necessary, they will contact The Placement Team at the Faculty.

Post-registration nursing and midwifery students

In some cases the practice learning opportunities which are required for completion of a CPPD / Workforce Development module are arranged by the module leader in conjunction with the student and appropriate Trust/Organisation. Students are informed of this if this is the case and will be provided with contact details of the relevant module leader.

Return to Practice programme (RTP) & Overseas Nurses Programme (ONP)

Practice learning opportunities for these students are organised and supported by Trusts, Organisations or by an Independent Agency. If you are seeking information about this programme or have an issue that you wish to discuss regarding student allocation please contact the named RTP/OMP/ONP Trust, Organisation or Independent Agency co-ordinator in the first instance. The course or module leader can also be contacted.
1.3 Preparing students for their learning experiences – the role of the University

Mentors can expect that students will be prepared for each practice learning opportunity. Preparation takes place in a variety of ways depending upon the stage of the programme and field of practice.

Students in their first year of the programme will have minimal experience of learning in practice. For this reason, the university and local Trusts/Organisations will work together provide a comprehensive preparation programme. In later years of the programme students will be expected to take greater responsibility for their preparation for practice learning.

Typically a preparation for practice programme includes advising students to make appropriate contact with a practice area at least 1 week prior to commencing the practice learning experience. A pre-practice visit is strongly recommended to ensure students are fully prepared to commence practice learning.

Preparation for practice requires a student to engage with a range of learning experiences including tutorials, group work and practice visits. Mentors can expect that specific aspects of preparation for practice will change year by year according to relevant changes in practice learning opportunities.

Examples of preparation for practice

- Guided tutorials
- Practice preparation checklists
- Explanation of practice assessment document
- Community study
- Practice visits
- Mandatory training
- Pre practice reading

1ST YEAR

2ND YEAR

• Explanation of practice assessment document
• Practice visits
• Planning of learning experiences
• Pre practice reading

3RD YEAR

• Explanation of practice assessment document
• Practice visits
• Planning of learning experiences
• Pre practice reading
1.4 Education quality review – summary of the audit cycle

The NMC requires that all practice learning areas undertake a regular Education Quality Review. This is to ensure that the practice area meets the NMC ‘Standards to Support Learning and Assessment in Practice’ (NMC, 2008). The educational quality review will reflect the opportunities available for student learning in the area and the support mechanisms in place to facilitate student learning and assessment.

The audit cycle takes place over a two year period. The cycle begins with an educational quality review, undertaken by a representative from the University, usually a Link Lecturer in partnership with the Trust/Organisation Named Person and senior member of the practice team e.g. Ward Sister, Senior Staff Nurse – Community Team Leader etc. The educational quality review will involve the development of action plans that support the improvement of the practice learning environment.

The action plan will indicate a plan for keeping the learning environment under review. The second stage of the educational quality review cycle will be focused primarily on a review of the action plans developed during the first stage of the cycle.

If there are any changes in the practice area between educational quality review the Trust/Organisation Named Person should be notified so the educational quality review coordinator within the Placement Office can be informed.
1.5 Facilitating learning and assessing students

The NMC expects that mentors will facilitate a range of suitable learning experiences for a student during their practice experience. Facilitation of learning requires mentors to plan, supervise, guide, and provide feedback so that students are exposed to a wide range of opportunities relevant to the practice learning outcomes.

Orientation and Initial Review

This should occur within 48 hours of the student commencing a practice learning opportunity and at be completed within the first week of the placement. You should use this time to discuss the range of learning activities available to fulfill the designated outcomes. Dates for interim and final review should be agreed. The orientation should also include a plan for the total learning experience, including an initial discussion on any ‘outreach’ learning opportunities that could be accessed.

Interim Review

The interim review should be held at the midpoint of the practice learning opportunity, and be documented for all students, regardless of whether they are on or off ‘track’. It provides the mentor and student an opportunity to discuss progress towards achieving identified learning outcomes, reflect together on any areas that require development; document progress within the practice assessment document and develop action plans as required. Feedback from any ‘outreach’ learning experiences, service users and members of the multidisciplinary team should also be discussed. If there are concerns with the student’s practice or if it is considered that the student may not achieve their learning outcomes, please contact your link lecturer who will need to be involved in the development of any action plan.

Final Review and Assessment

The final review and assessment of the practice learning opportunity should be normally conducted at the end the practice learning opportunity. The mentor and student should review the practice learning outcomes and any evidence that supports achievement of these outcomes. Feedback from ‘outreach’ learning experiences, service users and members of the multidisciplinary team should be included in the discussion. The mentor is required to consider all evidence in deciding if the student has achieved the learning outcomes. If action plans have been developed, these should be reviewed in partnership with your link lecturer and student.

If the student has achieved a learning outcome this should be documented by the mentor as a pass, if the student has not achieved this should be documented by the mentor as a fail. The student should have undertaken their self assessment and should be able to provide evidence to support this. The student and mentor should document a summary of the practice learning outcomes following the final review in the pages provided within the practice assessment document. Students should be encouraged to plan future activities and identify further needs for learning in practice.
Feedback

Students should be given regular feedback – ideally on a weekly basis - and the opportunity to reflect formally and informally on their progress. Feedback should be both verbal and written to ensure that information given is clear, factual and can be reviewed throughout the practice experience.

Ongoing Achievement Record

At the conclusion of every practice learning opportunity the mentor is required to provide a summary of the experience for the next mentor. The ongoing achievement record should include comments on the student’s strengths, any areas that of concern and any developmental needs. The ongoing achievement record can be used to inform the discussion at the orientation to the practice learning opportunity.
1.6 Support for students and mentors in practice – key people

Prior to the commencement of the learning experience the Trust/Organisation Named Person will liaise with the university to ensure the student is allocated an appropriate practice learning opportunity. Lecturers and Clinical Placement Facilitators, Trust/Organisation Named Person will also coordinate mentor update events. Day to day support for the students practice learning opportunity is the responsibility of mentors, who are required by the NMC to facilitate student learning experiences and assess practice learning outcomes (NMC, 2008). Mentors are supported by link lecturers, who are available to discuss the student's progression through the practice learning opportunity, providing advice and support in relation to practice learning and assessment and support the development of action plans.

The Link Lecturer

This is a specifically allocated Academic member of staff from the School of Midwifery or Nursing. The link lecturer acts as a source of reference for mentors and students allocated to practice areas. They are involved in organising student surgeries, mentor updates, educational audits and visiting clinical areas and supporting mentors and practice teachers as appropriate.

Link Lecturers will

- be able to advise on student's learning needs,
- provide help in dealing with learning issues and
- offer advice on strategies to enable the learning environment to develop

Link Lecturers will keep practice areas informed of changes to the programme, including information about the student's practice assessment scheme.
The Academic Zone Lead (Nursing)

This is a specifically identified person from the School of Nursing who co-ordinates the activities of the nursing link lecturers (student surgeries, mentor updates, educational audits) across a specific area of practice which includes a number of clinical placements.

The Academic Zone Lead (Nursing)

- Works in partnership with the Trust/Organisation Named Person to ensure quality learning experiences are offered to students
- Provides in conjunction with the Trust/Organisation Named Person, a strategic communication link between the Health Care Provider and the Faculty.
- Assists in identifying new learning environments.
- Ensures quality of the learning environment.

The Trust or Organisation Named Person

This person is nominated by the Trust or Organisation to specifically maintain the quality of their practice learning areas.

In some areas, the role of the Trust/Organisation Named Person is only part of their total role and function within their Trust/Organisation and for others, it is a dedicated role.

Mentors should ensure that they are aware of the person who is undertaking this role in their Trust/Organisation and how to contact them.

Liaison meetings between the School of Midwifery & Child Health and the School of Nursing and Trust or Organisation Named Persons

Trust/Organisation Named Person and key staff (academic and professional support services) meet regularly at the University. These are planned meetings with specific agenda items related to student practice. If you have an issue that would be relevant for discussion at this meeting, please ensure you forward it to your Trust or Organisation Named Person. You may also wish to observe a meeting: your Trust or Organisation Named Person can also arrange this for you.
1.7 Advice for mentors - supporting a failing student

A student can be considered to be ‘failing’ during a practice learning opportunity if they are falling short of the standard set by the learning outcomes they are attempting. Learning outcomes printed in each practice assessment document are based upon NMC standards; therefore a failing student is defined as not meeting the NMC standard for their particular programme. Students must always be judged against these standards rather than your own expectations or personal criteria.

Failure to meet the required standards may be noted by mentors or other members of the multidisciplinary team; perhaps during outreach experiences. It is important that any concerns regarding a student’s ability to achieve the required competence are addressed with them as soon possible to allow the maximum time for help to be offered and improvements made.

Feedback

If a student is failing to meet the required standard then this should be documented clearly within their practice assessment document. This documentation should be undertaken in addition to the documentation of any action plans. In most cases, the interim review is a good opportunity for both mentors and students to reflect on progress and to clearly document achievements and areas for improvement. The review of progress should be supported by evidence from the practice experience. It may be that evidence has been witnessed by people other than the main mentor, for example, members of the multidisciplinary team, service users or other mentors. The source of the evidence and who observed the evidence should be clearly documented.

Action plans

An action plan should be put in place by the mentor and student as soon as possible after concerns regarding competence are acknowledged. An action plan should clearly state what concerns are being addressed and what strategies will be put in place to aid a student in developing competence. Link lecturers must always be involved in the development and review of any action plans.
**Support for students and mentors**

This will obviously be a very difficult situation for the mentor and student so it is important that both feel supported throughout the practice experience. If a student is not achieving the required standard then a mentor should seek support as soon as possible. Support can be offered in a number of ways by different people. Senior mentors and managers can offer support by sharing their wealth of experience in dealing with similar situations and also offering to share the workload or offering second opinions. Link Lecturers and the Trust/Organisation Named Person can also offer support through helping to develop action plans and guiding the mentor and student in ensuring NMC competencies are fairly assessed.
1.8 Advice for mentors – supporting a student who has failed

If a student does not achieve the required NMC standard of competence by the final assessment and interview of a summative practice experience then they will have failed the overall experience. Whilst an action plan can address areas of weakness; it does not always follow that the provision of an action plan will ensure a student achieves the required standard.

Feedback

If a student has failed to meet the required standard then this should be clearly and carefully explained, with evidence provided to support the final decision. If clear feedback has been provided throughout the practice learning opportunity then this should not come as a surprise to the student. The reasons for the student not achieving the learning outcomes should be documented clearly within their practice assessment document. It may be that evidence has been witnessed by people other than the main mentor, for example, members of the multidisciplinary team, service users or other mentors. The source of the evidence and who observed the evidence should be clearly documented.

Ongoing achievement record

The NMC requires the mentor who assessed the student to provide a summary of the students’ strengths, areas for development and weaknesses for the next mentor. It should provide an accurate account of any areas which the student will need to focus on if there are any concerns related to proficiency. If a student has failed to meet the required NMC standard at the summative assessment then this should be clearly documented within the ongoing record of achievement.

The main aim of the ongoing achievement record is to provide evidence of the student’s progression throughout the programme. The sign-off mentor will be reliant on clear documentation within the ongoing achievement record to confirm that all practice competencies have been met and there are no ongoing concerns about a student’s fitness for practice.

Support for students and mentors

This will obviously be a very difficult situation for the mentor and student so it is important that both feel supported during this time. Senior managers, mentors, the Trust/Organisation Named Person and Link Lecturers can all offer valuable support.

- A student fails to achieve required NMC standard
- Mentor and student document reasons for failure
- Mentor and student seek support regarding future options