5 NMC Sign-off mentors

In order to safeguard the health and wellbeing of the public, the NMC must be assured that pre-registration nursing and midwifery students have been assessed and signed off as capable of safe and effective practice at the end of a programme.

Accountability of NMC sign-off mentors

Support for NMC sign-off mentors

As a sign off mentor, as part of the role, you should have protected time of one hour per week to perform the role.

Protected Time

• Reflection on student’s competence

Protected Time

• Feedback to student on their competence

Protected Time

• Documentation of feedback given in assessment document

Additional support from link lecturers, Trust/Organisation Named Person and other mentors is also available to assist you in decision making.
Criteria for NMC sign-off mentors

The NMC requires that mentors or practice teachers who make the final decision regarding a student’s competence for registration must fulfill additional criteria to be a sign-off mentor.

How to become a NMC sign-off mentor

From 2007, the NMC stipulated that midwives will complete their sign-off mentor development as part of their mentorship preparation programme. Nurses complete their sign-off mentor development (normally) outside of their mentor preparation programme via their employing Trust/Organisation.

To become a sign-off mentor a mentor or practice teacher needs to assess 3 final placement students (nursing) or 3 midwifery students at progression points under the supervision of a mentor or practice teacher already designated as a sign-off mentor on the mentor register. The NMC has stated that up to two of these sign-off’s can be done as simulated learning, but the final signing off must be with a final placement/progression point student. Local Trusts and Organisations are responsible for the identification of suitable sign-off mentors. Download the NMC sign-off criteria – (NMC Circular, 26 March 2010 - NMC 2010b)

Frequently asked questions

Who decides if I am a sign-off mentor?

- Your Trust/Organisation will let you know if you are required to undertake this role, it will not be your decision to opt in or out.

Can I mentor students while I am undertaking the additional sign-off mentor training?

- Yes, as long as you are a qualified mentor you can continue to mentor and assess students.

If I leave my organisation can I be a sign-off mentor elsewhere?

- Yes, however you may need additional evidence to support your competency for this role within the new organisation.
The role of the NMC sign-off mentor

As a sign-off mentor 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.

You must be satisfied that all appropriate practice assessments have been undertaken with any concerns or issues followed up/addressed.

If you are a nurse sign-off mentor you will also undertake the final practice assessment of the student and complete the required documentation.

If you are a midwife sign-off mentor you will also undertake assessment at the progression point and also the final practice assessment of the student and complete the required documentation.

You should use the protected time of one hour per week that you are allocated to perform this role to reflect on the overall performance of the student, provide written and verbal feedback in the student’s assessment document / ongoing record of achievement and maintain records in your mentor passport.

Example

- **Sign-off mentor reviews students practice assessment document**
  - Previous mentor noted a weakness in communication with service users
  - Learning outcome related to communication not achieved

- **Sign-off mentor develops action plan with student to address communication**
  - Sign-off mentor arranges learning experiences that support developing communication skills and provides feedback
  - Sign-off mentor continues to assess all current learning outcomes and provide feedback

- **Sign-off mentor makes final decision related to practice competency**
  - Communication learning outcome, and all current learning outcomes are achieved
  - Sign-off mentor decides required practice proficiencies have been achieved

If you consider that the student has not reached the desired level of proficiency; you **must not** sign the student as proficient. In this case you should provide the student with clear feedback, document your reasons clearly and seek support from your link lecturer and the Trust/Organisation Named Person responsible for student support and placements.

**Becoming a sign-off mentor**

If you are not a sign-off mentor and wish to become one. Please contact your local Trust or Organisation Named Person who can advise you attending and completing a sign-off mentor development programme.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>NMC Sign-off mentor checklist</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>NURSING - Is the pre-registration student in their final practice placement?</strong></td>
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<td><strong>MIDWIFERY - Is the pre-registration student at a progression point or in their final practice placement?</strong></td>
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<td>Is the sign-off mentor in the same field of practice as the student?</td>
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<td>Is the sign-off mentor available for 40% of the student’s time in practice</td>
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<td>Has the sign-off mentor been allocated an hour of protected time a week</td>
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<td>Is the sign-off mentor available to assess all the final practice requirements of the student and document the outcome?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is the sign-off mentor available to review all of the students practice documents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the sign-off mentor have any concerns about the students practice?</td>
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<td>Does the sign-off mentor need any additional support?</td>
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References

Nursing and Midwifery Council (2010a) Standards for pre-registration nursing education London: Nursing and Midwifery Council Online Available at http://standards.nmc-uk.org/Pages>Welcome.aspx (accessed 10 January 2015)


Abbreviations

CPPD Continuing Personal and Professional Development
IPR Individual Performance Review
MDT Multi Disciplinary Team
NMC Nursing and Midwifery Council
OAR Ongoing Achievement Record
OMP Overseas Midwifery Adaptation Programme
ONP Overseas Nursing Adaptation Programme
RTP Return to Practice
U.I. Unique Identification Number