

## Frequently Asked Questions for Mentors on Nursing and Midwifery Programmes

### Sickness or Absence

#### *What do I do if I have a student who is sick or absent from placement?*

It is the student's responsibility to report their sickness or absence to the Absence Reporting Line: 0117 3283283. If you are trying to establish if a student is on practice placement or report an absence of a student from practice placement this should be directed to the Practice Absence email address ([practiceabsence@uwe.ac.uk](mailto:practiceabsence@uwe.ac.uk)) and not the Practice Support Line.

#### **Ensure that sickness or absence is documented on the student's timesheet and keep a note of student sickness or absence on the local off duty/diary.**

If appropriate discuss absence with the student and contact the Academic in Practice via the Practice Support Line 0117 3281152.

#### *Are students required to have a sickness certificate?*

Yes, for university requirements only. Students' sickness certificates need to be sent to the Professional Practice Office for their personal file and to support bursary claims.

#### *Can a student make up sick leave hours whilst on placement with me by working extra shifts, weekends or during their holiday time?*

Student nurses cannot make up sick time. If hours need to be made up these will be planned by the nursing programme manager and placement lead.

#### *When do nursing students make up their sick or absence time?*

They can make up hours at the end of the programme and by negotiation with and in their final placement.

#### *Can a student fail their placement due to high levels of absence or sick leave?*

Yes, they are likely to fail as they may not have had opportunities to be assessed as competent. The NMC requires student nurses to complete 2300 hours of practice.

#### *What should I do if a student is always off sick when I arrange to do an assessment with them?*

Keep a note of the dates and times of arranged meetings.

Make a record of these at the midpoint (formative) or end point (summative) discussion.

Contact the Practice Support Line asking for the Academic in Practice to contact you for support and advice.

#### *Do students have to work Bank Holidays?*

Students are not required to attend placement over Christmas or New Year. However, if their practice placement falls during Bank Holiday periods such as Good Friday, Easter Monday, May and August Bank Holidays, they should expect to be rostered for shifts on these days as normal. Hours worked on these days are counted as normal placement hours not enhanced or extra hours. If a student's placement is shut on a bank holiday (e.g. outpatients) then they will be expected to either make up the time through directed work that their mentor will sign-off as evidence of achieving the practice hours or they will work with practitioners in an associated service or placement which will be arranged and approved by your mentor.

#### *Can students take additional leave outside their timetabled curriculum?*

No, students are not permitted to take time out of the regular programme. Annual leave dates are pre-set for the entire programme.

### Lateness

#### *What do I do if a student is constantly late for the start of their working day?*

Students should be available to start their shift on time. **Record lateness on their attendance form.**

Discuss with the student to identify possible causes and agree an action plan to deal with problem.

If lateness continues contact the Academic in Practice via the Practice Support Line 0117 3281152.

#### *How can I link persistent lateness to learning outcomes so that I can action plan with the student appropriately?*

Persistent lateness is related to professionalism and should be linked to the appropriate learning outcomes in the *Ongoing Achievement Record (OAR)* and the code of professional conduct.

#### *Are child care problems a valid excuse for persistent lateness?*

Students are aware they need to be able to work the full range of shift patterns. If this is an issue contact the Academic in Practice via the Practice Support Line 0117 3281152.

## Using the Practice Documentation

### *How do I use the Student Ongoing Achievement Record (OAR)*

Students are expected to know how to use the OAR document and to work with the mentor. There is guidance that mentors can use in the OAR, copies of which are available on the Practice Support Net for the mentor. If you are still unsure contact the Academic in Practice via the Practice Support Line (0117 3281152) who will support you and the student in the completion of the document.

### *What do I do if my student fails to bring in their assessment documentation for me to complete?*

Agree a deadline for this with the student. If documents are not produced, inform the Practice Support Line 0117 3281152. It is helpful to keep a record of requests to bring in documents and record non-compliance with these requests. Inform your student that you are doing this. It is good practice to inform the student at your first meeting that you will need to see the OAR regularly.

### *What should a learning contract contain?*

There is an example of a learning contract in the OAR document.

### *Who should write the student's learning contract?*

The student should write the learning contract after discussion and support from the mentor.

### *How do you complete an action plan?*

Action plans contain targets to help the student achieve specific learning outcomes and skills. It may be helpful to follow the SMART acronym when constructing an action plan (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound, when describing the action required).

The AIP or organisational education link can be contacted if support is required

## Competency Assessment

### *Who else can assess the competency of a student?*

In recognition of the existence of well-established integrated teams of nurses and other registered professionals in some areas the NMC states it may be decided that assessment decisions for first years can be made by another professional. In this case the professional must:

- have been suitably prepared for the role
- have received preparation to ensure they fully understand all the requirements for progression in the context of nursing – this may include undertaking the relevant parts of an NMC approved mentor programme
- be listed on a register which confirms their ability to act in this capacity
- be subject to similar requirements as those for mentors who are registered nurses, including annual updating and triennial review.

Assessment by other professionals should occur only where the skills or aspects of competency are transferable across professions. Safety and public protection must always be the overriding factor in determining who should make assessment decisions. The NMC defines **an appropriate registered professional** as a registered professional competent in the skill or aspect of competency in which the student is being assessed. **Suitable preparation** means they have undergone training and development that has provided them with the competence to support and assess students.

Decisions on whether the student has achieved the practice outcomes in the third year **must** be made by a mentor who is a registered nurse.

### *How should professional skills competency sheets be completed by a student nurse?*

There are differences across the different nursing fields. Students on the mental health branch of nursing no longer complete skills sheets. For adult nursing students the mentor can select three skills for a student to complete using skills sheets as evidence. The child branch students need to complete some skills sheets as evidence of their competency and where this is required it is indicated in their assessment document; remaining skills may be signed off following discussion. As students on the learning disability branch undertake NMC essential skills irregularly they will continue to use skills sheets more regularly.

Where required skills sheets should be completed BY HAND unless students have an access plan that entitles them to complete them online. Students will be able to access a skills template to enable them to complete the sheets.

### *Can a student nurse use professional skills competency sheets that they completed in a previous placement to demonstrate their competency?*

Yes, over the course of the programme a library of skill sheets will be developed. The student should be able to discuss the skill with their mentor, demonstrating development in their critical thinking, and could be asked to repeat a written skill if the mentor is unhappy with their competency.

*Should I sign off professional skills competency sheets if I have not seen the student complete the skill?*

The mentor takes overall responsibility for student assessment and signing off the competencies. The mentor decides who can assess students for skills, so another qualified professional may be able to do the assessment and report back to the mentor.

*How do I know what to expect from a student at their stage of training?*

Assessing students in practice is about making judgements. All professions are concerned that these judgements are as reliable and as valid as possible in order to be fair to students and safeguard service users and the professions.

As a mentor / assessor it is a requirement that you and your team will have thought about the intended learning outcomes and standards and how the student can demonstrate that they have met those outcomes in your practice area.

Discuss your expectations with peers, other practitioners who support students at that level and academics who know the programme. Take advantage of opportunities to update yourself as annual updating is an NMC requirement. It is particularly important if you practice in a highly specialised area or in relative isolation that you make time for these discussions.

*In what ways can a student provide evidence to the mentor/ assessor to demonstrate competence?*

For some outcomes there is a very clear requirement to demonstrate competence in a prescribed way, for example, carrying out a particular procedure. However, much of health and social care is also concerned with attitudes and behaviour, which is arguably more difficult to assess. The assessor should be clear to the student and other members of the care team how an assessment is to be made. The OAR document gives examples of suitable evidence.

*Where do I record identified problems with student performance?*

Concerns must be recorded in the student's assessment documentation as they arise. An action plan should be formulated to address areas of specific areas of concern. If you are unsure please contact the Practice Support Line 0117 81152, or your organisation's education link.

*What documentation do I need to keep if I have to fail a student?*

Ensure that there is documented evidence of an on-going action plan and evaluation of the action plan. Make a record of meetings (even if the student did not turn up) throughout the placement, where possible in the practice documentation (Ongoing Achievement Record) and keep a copy for yourself for future reference.

*Who is available to support me with a failing student?*

Contact your Practice Support Line 0117 3281152 / your organisation's education link. Please inform the student you are seeking support.

*Will I be expected to grade students' practice?*

Students starting their programme in September 2013 will have their practice graded at the end of their 2<sup>nd</sup> year and again at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> year. In the second year the grade is formative, given to help the student assess their progress in practice and is not linked to their final grade. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> year the grade is summative and will contribute to the students' final degree classification.

Eventually all mentors will have the opportunity to grade 2<sup>nd</sup> year students, but only Sign Off mentors will award a grade for practice that contributes to the final degree classification.

*What support will be offered to mentors to prepare them for this task?*

Practice grading will not be taking place until September 2015, at the end of the students' 2<sup>nd</sup> year. In the meantime information about the process will be given during mentor updates, by leaflets and will be available online. If mentors need further support they should contact the Academic in Practice via the Practice Support Line 0117 3281152.

*What will grading involve?*

Only students who have been assessed as passing their placement will have grading applied to their practice. Mentors will assign a grade from C to A+ for each of the 4 NMC domains of practice: 1) Professional Values, 2) Communication and Interpersonal Skills, 3) Nursing Practice and Decision-Making, 4) Leadership, Management and Team – working. Once the mentor has assigned the 4 grades in the Ongoing Achievement Record, UWE will calculate an overall percentage which will be applied to the degree classification.

*What happens if I am unable to pass the student in this placement?*

Only students who have passed placement will have a grade applied.

*The student appears to have done very well in the previous placement but has not achieved well in this placement, what should I do?*

You, with the support of your team, can only apply the grades at the level you can observe in your setting. As the grades are applied across 4 areas of competency it should be possible to identify where the student's strengths lie.

*If I have any problems with practice grading who should I contact?*

Call the Practice Support Line 0117 3281152.

### **Student support**

*Who should the student contact if they are having difficulties with their academic work?*

The student has a variety of people they can contact for support in their academic work:

The module leader

Student advisor

Academic personal tutor

*Who can the student contact if they are experiencing problems while out in practice?*

Practice Support Line 0117 3281152

### **Supervision of practice**

*How much of the practice time is directly supervised by a mentor / assessor?*

Whilst giving direct care in the practice setting the NMC state at least 40% of the student's time must be spent being supervised directly or indirectly by a mentor/assessor.

How this is achieved is discussed and agreed with the student as part of the learning contract or agreement.

If you are unsure about the standard, contact the AIP/ your organisation's education link

When in a final placement 40% of the student's time is **in addition** to the protected time (one hour per week) to be spent with a sign-off mentor.

*How do I become a sign off mentor?*

Contact your organisation's educational lead or manager for local guidance.

*Can a student undertake some practice without direct supervision from a qualified practitioner?*

Yes, however the qualified practitioner is accountable for assessing the student's level of ability to do this. The student is responsible for their actions.

*Should I be organising all of the student's visits to other areas?*

No. It is part of the student's development to identify their learning needs and opportunities in negotiation with their mentor. The mentor should have a list of learning opportunities for the student available within their setting. The time spent on these visits should be agreed with the mentor and should be linked to an identified learning outcome in the Ongoing Achievement Record. Evaluation of the experience should be undertaken, by a follow up discussion with the student.

*What should be in a student resource pack?*

#### **Information about:**

The physical environment of the placement e.g. kitchen facilities

Staffing: who is who?

Shift patterns

Staff facilities

#### **Signposts to:**

Learning opportunities available at the placement

Learning packs

Patient Care Journeys

Literature resources and recommended reading

*Where can I find information about UWE policies and guidelines?*

Information about UWE policies and guidelines regarding a range of circumstances are available under the Policy and procedures section of the Practice Support net

*How much preparation do students receive before coming out to practice?*

UWE provides generic preparation for practice for all students.

The students need a local induction to the placement and may also attend the organisation's own induction at the beginning of the placement or year if it falls within the relevant timescale.

*What are Supervision of Learning Days (SoLD)?*

Supervision of Learning Days (SoLD) count as practice hours. They provide opportunities for students to link their experiences in practice with underpinning theory. The work they produce can be used to help students demonstrate their learning to mentors during their assessments.

*What clinical skills are students taught at UWE?*

As required by the Nursing and Midwifery Council (2010) in the first year mandatory skills such as basic life support, manual handling and, and infection control (such as hand washing) are taught to all nursing students before they come into practice. In addition, some further nursing branch related skills such as observations are taught in the first year. As the programme progresses further skills relating to each branch will be taught, but the majority of skills are taught and learnt in practice.