**Managing Difficulties in Practice Learning**

If difficulties arise for you that are in your personal life, you should contact the student advisors to find out about support the university can provide as this can have a significant impact on your studies. At times the practice issues you are working with can be upsetting and can connect with your own life. You are encouraged to share this with your practice educator or to let your tutor know if you want advice on how to approach that. Sometimes stress is a matter of workload and lack of clarity for your role and we work through this with the practice educator and tutor. A placement can be stopped temporarily before holding a meeting to identify the issues and next steps but this is only if there is a serious risk to the student or others. We follow what would happen in employment where the first step is to explore the issues and together resolve these for successful continuation of the placement. The provision of support outside of the placement is available and tutors will advise students on this.

Taking sick leave and compassionate leave is also like employment where you need to let the practice educator know first thing that morning to arrange cover for your work. (You will also need to note this and alert your tutor to changes to your pattern of attendance and if this is more than a week you need to contact them and discuss implications).

Tutors should be alerted to any difficulties/concerns that arise within placement at the earliest opportunity. In such cases, a practice learning team meeting may be convened which will be chaired by the tutor. The tutor takes responsibility for taking notes from this meeting and ensuring that agreed actions with suitable deadlines are recorded. This action plan should be reviewed at any subsequent practice learning team meetings (such as the interim review or final review meetings).

The advice below sets out how the university will seek to deal with a range of possible difficulties that arise in practice, including those which relate to other matters than student circumstances alone.

**What sort difficulties might arise?**

These could relate to one or more of the following areas:

a) students’ personal circumstances that affect their learning and professional development

b) aspects of the practice learning opportunity including the quality of supervision and support or the availability of suitable work

c) lack of student progress in meeting assessment requirements

d) standards of practice in agencies adversely affecting the well being of service users or carers

e) suitability of the student for professional practice.

**Who can raise concerns?**

Concerns may be identified by the student, supervisor, practice educator, tutor, or anyone else involved in the student’s practice learning.

**How will the concern be taken forward?**

Issues are best discussed openly and as soon as possible with the student, practice educator and/or supervisor. An exploration meeting should be held to explore the issues and review the practice learning agreement. Difficulties may not always be easy to distinguish and may impact on each other so placements should not be ended without this meeting. It may also be appropriate to involve the tutor or other relevant person at this stage. The meeting may be chaired by a member of the practice learning team, the practice module leader or team leader or relevant other.

Following the meeting the tutor is responsible for informing the practice module leader and the supervisor responsible for informing the team manager and practice learning co-ordinator, unless other arrangements for communication are negotiated.

Written records of communication, discussion and decisions will be kept. Records of meetings will be signed by all participants. Information will be shared in accordance with university policy, legal frameworks and HCPC requirements.

This meeting may produce a resolution of the issues but should there be outstanding areas of concern other policies, outlined in the following section, may be relevant. Placements should not be ended without a meeting and where appropriate one or more of the policies noted should inform subsequent action.

**a) Personal Circumstances - Withdrawal/ Intermitting**

Students may experience changes in their personal circumstances or unexpected events that make it impossible for them to continue the placement or they may find that previous experiences impact on their practice learning. Wherever possible an action plan should be developed to support their practice learning. However, if this is not feasible or the best course of action then the placement may be discontinued. The student may also need to discuss intermitting or withdrawing from the programme. The decision to intermit or withdraw will be considered with the tutor and programme leader and the faculty administrative process is followed. Anticipated dates and arrangements for the student’s return will be clarified.

Intermitting or withdrawing can be a hard decision given the commitment already made and uncomfortable emotions may be raised by the issues involved. However agencies and the programme team acknowledge that there are times when this is as an appropriate decision and indicates that students understand their professional responsibility to services, service users and carers.

Assessment Implications: Any modules that the student is taking at this point are treated according to the university regulations in terms of assessment opportunities and fees. Students are advised to consult a student adviser in order to make an informed decision and consider the implications of their decision.

**b) Aspects of the Practice Learning Opportunity**

If it is clear that the practice learning opportunity is not viable for reasons other than student’s standard of practice, and it is not possible to resolve the problem at that stage, the module leader and training team should decide whether the student continues in the placement.

Assessment Implications: If the placement is halted an alternative should be provided within the same assessment opportunity.

**c) Standard of the student’s progress in practice module requirements**

If there are any concerns regarding the standard of the student’s practice in the provision of services the options outlined in the module handbook will be considered by the training team with the involvement of the Quality Panel.

Assessment Implications: If the student does not meet the required standard or does not complete the placement this is considered as an assessment opportunity completed. The practice quality panel will consider and make recommendations to the programme leader for additional assessment opportunities that will be considered by the Faculty Award Board.

**d) Concerns Regarding Practice in the Agency with Service Users - Whistle Blowing Policy**

If the issue relates to agency practice that causes serious concern regarding service users’ well-being, the programme Whistle Blowing Policy applies. This states that the agency policy for such a concern should be followed and the student be supported by the university during this period.

Assessment Implications: The training team, in consultation with the module leader, will decide whether the student continues in the placement. If the decision is made that the student should not continue, an alternative should be provided within the same assessment opportunity.

**e) Suitability of Student for Professional Practice**

If there is a concern relating to the suitability of the student the University Professional Suitability policy should be used. This is a formal process that provides support to the student and gathers the fullest information for consideration. Suitability also covers issues of student conduct and concerns relating to the HCPC Guidance on Conduct and Ethics.

Assessment Implications: The process may include the continuation of the practice learning period or a temporary period of absence. The outcome may include

• a resumption of the same practice learning period

• an alternative opportunity in the same assessment opportunity

• a requirement to leave the programme.

**Support for students regarding concerns**

The student may involve a student union representative or independent advocate at any stage of the process. The student may make a complaint at any stage or an appeal and other policies may apply (e.g. Racial Harassment and Disability Discrimination) as detailed in the University Student Handbook.

Other relevant university, professional and agency policies and procedures will be used where appropriate.

**Summary**

These policies seek to resolve issues in the earliest and most effective way between the people concerned. Placements should not be ended without a meeting and where appropriate one or more of the policies noted should inform subsequent action.

1. An alternative placement will be sought within the same assessment opportunity if:

a) the placement is not viable due to agency situation

b) the student has initiated Whistle Blowing Policy and the module leader, in consultation with relevant others, considers it necessary to arrange an alternative placement.

2. An alternative placement will not be sought within the same assessment opportunity if:

a) the issue concerns the standard of the student’s progress

b) the student is found to be unsuitable for training under the Suitability Policy

c) not allowed under UWE assessment regulations.

This paper should be read in conjunction with:

* The Programme Handbook

The relevant Practice