



## **Standards for Student Supervision and Assessment The Northern Ireland Model (2023)**

**Aligned to the NMC Standards for Student  
Supervision and Assessment (NMC, 2023)**

**(For pre-registration and post-registration  
programmes)**



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NB. This document will continue to be updated in accordance with any NMC updates that are required to meet the needs of students undertaking NMC approved pre-registration and post -registration programmes.

## 1. Introduction

The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) Standards Framework for Nursing and Midwifery Education (NMC, 2023b) should be read with the NMC Standards for Student Supervision and Assessment (NMC, 2023a), and the programme standards which are specific for each pre-registration and post-registration educational programme. Taking all these together, these are the NMC standards for education and training for the nursing and midwifery professions.

The NMC Standards for Student Supervision and Assessment (NMC, 2023a) set out the roles and responsibilities of practice supervisors and assessors, and the expectations for the learning, support, supervision and assessment of students in the practice learning environments. They also set out how students are assessed for theory and practice and ensure they have a fair and reliable assessment by an appropriate practice assessor.

The process of supervising and assessing students is one of partnership between the NMC, Approved Education Institutions (AEIs) and practice learning partners to ensure safe and effective learning experiences that upholds public protection. It is a process, which fosters a positive learning relationship with the student and enhances their professional and personal development. It also aims to empower the student in becoming a more resilient critical thinker and decision maker who can analyse, reflect on and improve their practice.

Students undertaking pre-registration nursing and midwifery programmes should have supernumerary status when they are undertaking their practice learning. They should always be considered part of the professional team and integral to the workforce through their contribution in providing safe and effective care, however they should not be counted as part of the staffing numbers in the practice setting. By observing and participating in practice, students should add real value to care while evidencing their learning. Students completing post-registration programmes should have employer support in practice, that includes protected learning time to undertake the learning required to meet the competencies linked to their programme.

The principles and processes contained within this model applies to all NMC approved pre-registration programmes and the following post-registration programmes;

- Specialist Community Public Health Nursing (SCPHN) programmes
- Community nursing Specialist Practice Qualifications (SPQ) programmes with integrated prescribing
- Non-community Specialist Practice Qualifications (SPQ) programmes with integrated prescribing
- Non-community Specialist Practice Qualifications (SPQ) programmes without integrated prescribing
- Independent/supplementary prescribing programmes.

## 2. Northern Ireland Model for Student Supervision and Assessment (2023)

In Northern Ireland (NI) there are three Approved Education Institutions (AEIs), The Open University, Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University who in partnership with practice learning partners provide NMC approved nursing and midwifery education programmes.

The NI Model for Future Nurse Future Midwife, Standards for Student Supervision and Assessment (DoH and NIPEC, 2021) was developed in partnership by the AEI's and practice learning partners to guide the learning, support, supervision and assessment of students

undertaking NMC approved education programmes. This was updated in 2023 to include the NMC Standards for post-registration (2024a) and the NMC Standards for prescribing programmes (NMC 2024b) and is now called the 'The Standards for Student Supervision and Assessment - The Northern Ireland Model (DOH and NIPEC, 2023).

### **3. Roles and Responsibilities to support the Standards for Student Supervision and Assessment (SSSA):**

The following roles are intrinsic within the Standards for Student Supervision and Assessment (SSSA). The Northern Ireland Model (2023):

- Nominated Person
- Practice Supervisor
- Nominated Practice Assessor
- Academic Assessor.

Every student will be allocated:

- at least one practice supervisor for each practice learning experience
- a nominated practice assessor for each practice learning experience or series of practice learning experiences
- a nominated academic assessor for all or each part of the education programme (as appropriate).

The nominated academic assessor works in partnership with the practice assessor/s to evaluate and recommend the student for progression for each part of the programme. They will certify that the student has met all the programme requirements and is able to demonstrate application of the values and principles as set out in the Code (NMC, 2018). This is informed by feedback sought and received from practice supervisor/s and practice assessors.

Separating out the role of supervision and assessment ensures robust, objective, fair, transparent assessment, while shared decision-making results in greater consistency and objectivity in the assessment process.

#### **3.1. Nominated Person**

There will be a nominated person for each Practice Learning Environment (PLE), this will be for example the ward sister/charge nurse/team leader/manager or general practice nurse lead. The nominated person will be identified on the Practice Learning Environment Education Audit (PLEEA) and they will be responsible for overseeing and ensuring the continuity of the student's learning.

The process of completing the PLEEA will ascertain the appropriate number of students per practice learning environment. This will be agreed by AElS and the nominated person in the PLE.

The nominated person will be responsible for:

- assigning students to each practice supervisor and practice assessor
- considering the registrant's scope of practice when assigning practice supervisor/s and practice assessor/s
- ensuring the practice supervisor/s and practice assessor/s receive on-going training and support to fulfil their roles.

### 3.2. Practice Supervisor

Practice supervision enables the student to learn and safely achieve proficiency and autonomy in their professional role. All NMC registered nurses and midwives are capable of supervising students, serving as role models for safe and effective practice, additional criteria may apply depending in the NMC programme the student is undertaking (refer to Appendix Three for additional guidance). Students may also be supervised by other registered health and social care professionals.

Every student will be allocated at least one practice supervisor for each practice learning experience. When identifying a practice supervisor/s to support the student, the registrant's scope of practice will be considered.

Practice supervisors will understand the proficiencies and programme outcomes they are supporting students to achieve. They will be prepared for the role and undertake a practice supervisor/assessor preparation programme which will be delivered and supported by identified key personnel across practice and education environments.

For Specialist Community Public Health Nursing (SCPHN) programmes and Specialist Practice Qualification (SPQ) programmes, practice supervisors will have:

- undertaken a period of preceptorship in line with the NMC Principles for preceptorship (NMC, 2022) as a SCPHN or SPQ qualified professional or,
- evidence of prior learning and relevant practice supervisor experience that enables them to facilitate effective evidence-based learning opportunities for post-registration SCPHN or SPQ students.

The student undertaking an NMC approved independent/supplementary prescribing qualification as part of a SPQ or stand-alone prescribing programme must have at least one practice supervisor, who is a registered health care professional and a registered prescriber. They must have the skills to supervise and educate in order to help the student meet the outcomes of the NMC Standards for Prescribing Programmes (NMC, 2024b) and the RPS Competency Framework for all Prescribers (RPS, 2021)<sup>1</sup>.

The same person cannot fulfil the role of practice supervisor and practice assessor for the same student. There are exceptional circumstances to this rule (see Section 4), however, the same person may undertake each role simultaneously for separate students.

Preparation programmes will be delivered via eLearning or face-to-face platforms. There may be different models of supervision within the PLE such as 1:1 or Hub and Spoke<sup>2</sup>.

Practice supervisors will provide assurances that they maintain their professional knowledge and skills and critically reflect on their role through a range of processes which includes NMC revalidation, reflective supervision and appraisal.

It is anticipated that students will also work with and learn from a range of people who may not be registered healthcare professionals but who can positively contribute to their learning; this practice learning experience will be coordinated by practice supervisor/s.

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<sup>1</sup> The prescribing practice assessor however, should be a registered healthcare professional and an experienced prescriber with the V300 qualification.

<sup>2</sup> Hub and Spoke is defined as a base practice learning environment/experience (the hub) from which the student's learning is complemented by additional activities (the spoke).

The supervisory role that non-registered healthcare support staff play in supervising students will be dependent on their skill, knowledge and experience. They will be prepared for this role and receive ongoing support.

### **3.3. Assessment of Students**

During the student's summative point/s in their programme the nominated practice assessor and nominated academic assessor will work in partnership, informed by feedback sought from practice supervisor/s and practice assessor/s to evaluate and recommend the student for progression to the next part of the programme or onto the NMC professional register.

The academic assessor and the practice assessor will work in partnership to undertake the assessment with the student in line with AEI/organisation's policy.

Assessment outcome is provisional until all practice hours are completed and there are no emerging professional/performance issues.

#### **3.3.1. Practice Assessor**

The student will have a nominated practice assessor, identified by the nominated person, for each practice learning experience or series of practice learning experiences.

Each PLE will provide opportunities for the practice assessor to observe the student across a range of environments in order to inform decisions for assessment and progression.

To assess a:

- nursing student, the practice assessor must be a registered nurse with appropriate equivalent experience for the student's field of practice.
- a midwifery student, the practice assessor must be a registered midwife.
- Specialist Community Public Health Nurse (SCPHN) student the practice assessor must be an experienced registered SCPHN with appropriate equivalent experience for the student's field of practice (refer to Appendix Three for additional guidance). The practice assessor must also have undertaken a period of preceptorship in line with the NMC principles for preceptorship (NMC, 2022) as a SCPHN or can evidence prior learning and relevant practice assessor experience that enables them to engage in fair, reliable and valid assessment processes in the context of SCPHN.
- SPQ student, the practice assessor must be an experienced registered SPQ nurse for the programme the student is undertaking (refer to Appendix Three for additional guidance). The practice assessor must have also undertaken a period of preceptorship in line with the NMC principles for preceptorship (NMC, 2022) as a SPQ or can evidence prior learning and relevant practice assessor experience that enables them to engage in fair, reliable and valid assessment processes in the context of SPQ.
- student undertaking an NMC approved independent/supplementary prescribing qualification as part of a SPQ or stand-alone prescribing programme, the practice assessor must be a registered health care professional and an experienced prescriber<sup>3</sup> with suitable equivalent qualifications for the programme the student is undertaking (NMC, 2024b). The same person cannot fulfil the role of the practice

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<sup>3</sup> An experienced prescriber is an active prescriber who would normally have at least 3 years' recent prescribing experience. An active prescriber consults with patients and makes prescribing decisions based on clinical assessment with sufficient frequency to maintain competence. Reflects and audits prescribing practice to identify developmental needs (RPS, 2019).

assessor and practice supervisor for the same student. There are exceptional circumstances to this rule (see Section 4), however, the same person may undertake each role simultaneously but for separate students.

Practice assessor/s will complete a supervisor/assessor preparation programme by either an e-Learning or face to face platforms to evidence they meet the NMC Standards Framework for Nursing and Midwifery Education (NMC, 2023b) outcomes for the role. Preparation programmes will be supported in practice and education environments.

### **3.3.2. Academic Assessor**

The student will have a nominated academic assessor for the summative points in the programme. The academic assessor will be a member of staff or an affiliated member of staff from the student's AEI and hold relevant qualifications as required by their AEI. All link lecturers/practice tutors will transition to the role of academic assessor following completion of a preparation programme or equivalent.

Each AEI will allocate an appropriate academic assessor for each student. Students will not be assigned the same academic assessor on consecutive parts of the programme and the academic assessor will not simultaneously be the practice supervisor and practice assessor for the same student.

The academic assessor will receive on-going preparation and support from their AEI to develop their professional practice and knowledge in order to fulfil their role.

### **3.3.3. Assessor Databases**

HSC Trusts will maintain their own practice assessor database and AEIs will maintain a practice assessor database for the Independent Sector. A practice assessor database will record the following details:

- Name
- NMC PIN
- Part of NMC Register
- Field of Practice
- Date of Preparation for Role.

AEIs will maintain an academic assessor database.

### **3.4. Practice Education Team**

Practice Education Teams (PETs) provide professional support, advice and guidance to the nominated person, practice supervisors, practice assessors and in partnership with AEIs support students to ensure that the NMC Standards Framework for Nursing and Midwifery Education (NMC, 2023b), the NMC Standards for Student Supervision and Assessment (NMC, 2023a) and programme standards are met.

The PET is responsible for working in partnership with others to contribute to systems that monitor the effectiveness of learning and education activities for all NMC approved and non-NMC approved education programmes.

### **3.5.Link Lecturer/Practice Tutor**

AEIs operate a link lecturer/practice tutor system within PLEs. The link lecturer/practice tutor will guide and monitor student progression, development and achievement. They will be available to support and advise students and practice supervisors in relation to any challenges to student learning within the PLE. They will also provide feedback to the academic assessor regarding student progression as and when appropriate.

## **4. Roles - Exceptional Circumstances**

In exceptional circumstances, the same person may fulfil the role of the practice supervisor and practice assessor for students on post-registration programmes. The rationale being that there may only be one individual in the PLE who can fulfil both roles.

In such instances, the Practice Education Facilitator, nominated person and the AEI will need to evidence why it is necessary for the practice supervisor and assessor role to be carried out by the same person and recorded in the student's practice assessment document. This request will be considered, discussed and agreed with the AEI in advance of the student commencing the programme.

These situations will be monitored collaboratively by the nominated person and the AEI.

## **5. Escalating Concerns Regarding a Student in the Practice Learning Environment**

Any concerns raised about the student in the practice learning environment should be managed in a timely manner in line with the guidance in Appendix One and if appropriate refer to the NMC Raising Concerns: Guidance for Nurses, Midwives and Nursing Associates (NMC, 2019) document.

If using the Hub and Spoke model where the Spoke practice learning experience is a different organisation to the Hub, any concerns that arise will be managed by the nominated person and the link lecturer/practice tutor who will be the first point of contact.

## **6. Support Systems**

Support systems will be in place for all practice supervisors and practice assessors when supervising students. The PLEEA defines and records the number of students that can be supported. Appendix Two provides detail of the ongoing and ad-hoc support systems in place to support the individuals undertaking these roles.



## 7. Glossary of Terms

**Active prescriber:** Consults with patients and makes prescribing decisions based on clinical assessment with sufficient frequency to maintain competence. Reflects and audits prescribing practice to identify developmental needs.

**Approved Education Institutions (AEI):** the status awarded by the NMC to an institution or part of an institution, or combination of institutions that work in partnership with practice placement and work placed learning providers. AEIs will have provided the NMC with assurance that they are accountable and capable of delivering NMC approved education programmes.

**Experienced prescriber:** An active prescriber who would normally have at least 3 years' recent prescribing experience.

**GDPR:** General Data Protection Regulation.

**Hub and Spoke:** Hub and Spoke is defined as a base practice learning environment/experience (the hub) from which the students learning is complemented by additional activities (the spoke) provided outside the Hub placement.

**Non-registered health care support staff:** (In the context of supporting students) Students will work with and learn from a range of people who may not be registered healthcare professionals but who can positively contribute to their learning; this learning experience will be coordinated by practice supervisor/s. The supervisory role that non-registered professionals play will be dependent on their skills, knowledge and experience.

**Other registered health and social care professionals:** Health and social care professionals registered with a regulated health and social care body i.e GMC, HCPC, GPhC, NISCC.

**Practice Assessment Document:** Provides evidence of the student's ongoing record of achievement.

**Parts of a programme:** One part will usually constitute one year of a programme (parts 1-3) however; this will vary depending on what programme the student is studying and at which AEI. This detail will be included in the programme specific preparation.

**Practice assessor/Academic assessor database:** The collection of information specially organised to store limited specific information relating to practice assessors/academic assessors.

**Practice learning environment (PLE):** A setting/ward/unit (etc.) which has been audited by practice and AEI/s and approved for students to undertake a practice learning experience as part of their programme. Learning environment includes any physical location where learning takes place as well as the system of shared values, beliefs and behaviours.

**Practice Learning Environment Educational Audit (PLEEA):** The NMC requires that approved education institutions (AEIs), together with practice learning partners, regularly review all learning environments and provide assurance that they are safe and effective through proper oversight and effective governance processes, with clear lines of responsibility and accountability especially in responding to standards that are not met.

**Practice learning experience:** Students are supported to gain experiences and skills whilst in a practice learning environment. Multiple practice learning experiences could be acquired whilst the student works under different practice supervisors in one practice learning environment, for example, using a hub and spoke model.

**Practice learning partners:** Organisations that provide practice learning necessary for supporting pre- registration and post-registration students in meeting proficiencies and programme outcomes.

**Protected learning time:** Time in a health, care or other setting during which students are learning and are supported to learn. Students must be supervised during protected learning time. The level of supervision required is a matter of professional judgment and will depend on the competence and confidence of the student, and the risks associated with the intervention being delivered.

**Scope of practice:** Scope of practice is the person's limit of knowledge, skills and experience and is made up of the activities carried out within their professional role. Health care professionals must keep within their scope of practice at all times to ensure they are practising safely, lawfully and effectively.

**Supernumerary:** Supported to learn without being counted as part of the staffing required for safe and effective care in that setting.

## 8. References

Department of Health (DoH) and Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council for Nursing and Midwifery (NIPEC) (DoH and NIPEC, 2021). *The NI Model for Future Nurse Future Midwife, Standards for Student Supervision and Assessment*. Accessed at:

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Accessed at: [Part 3: Standards for post-registration programmes](#)

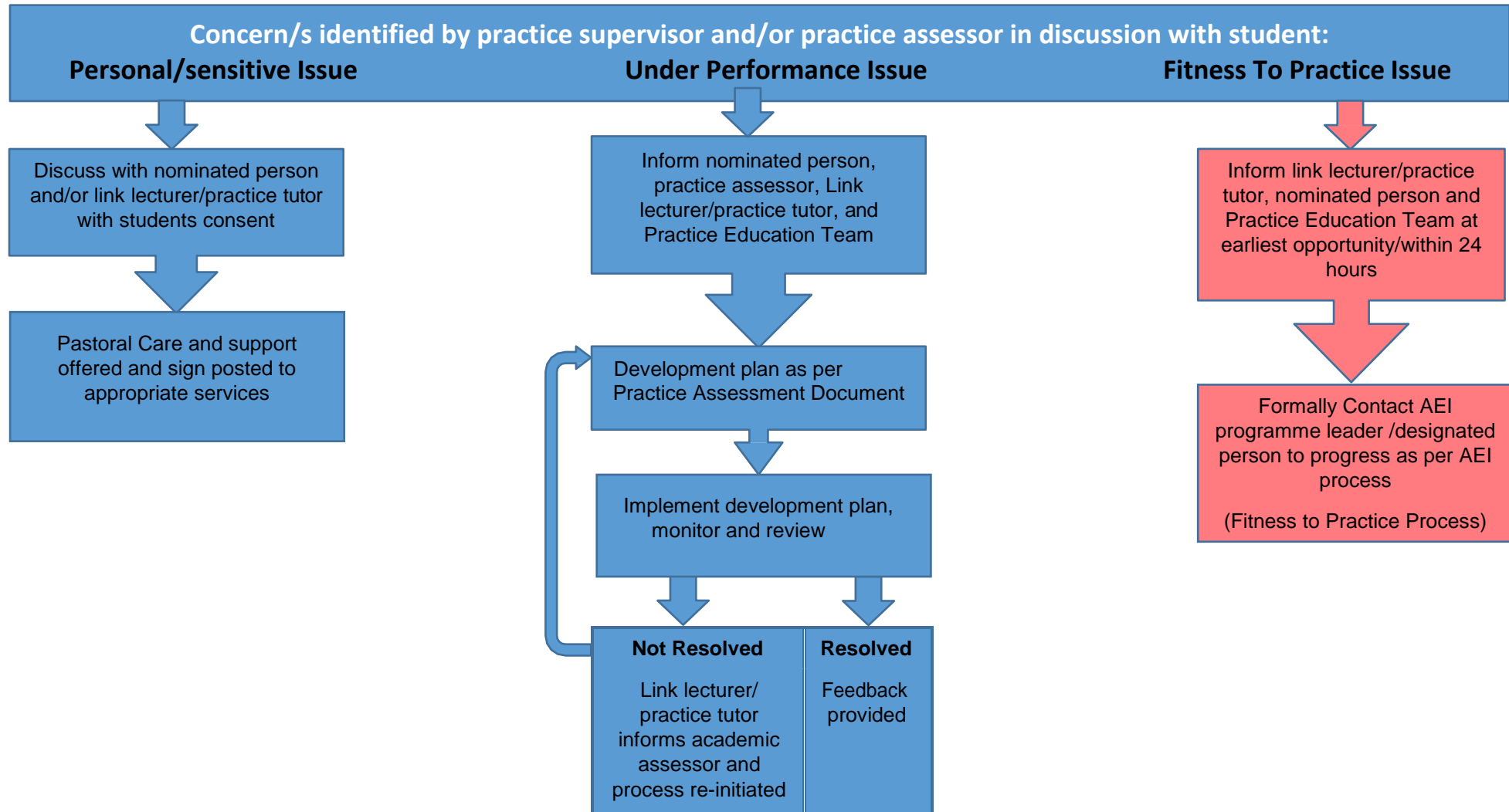
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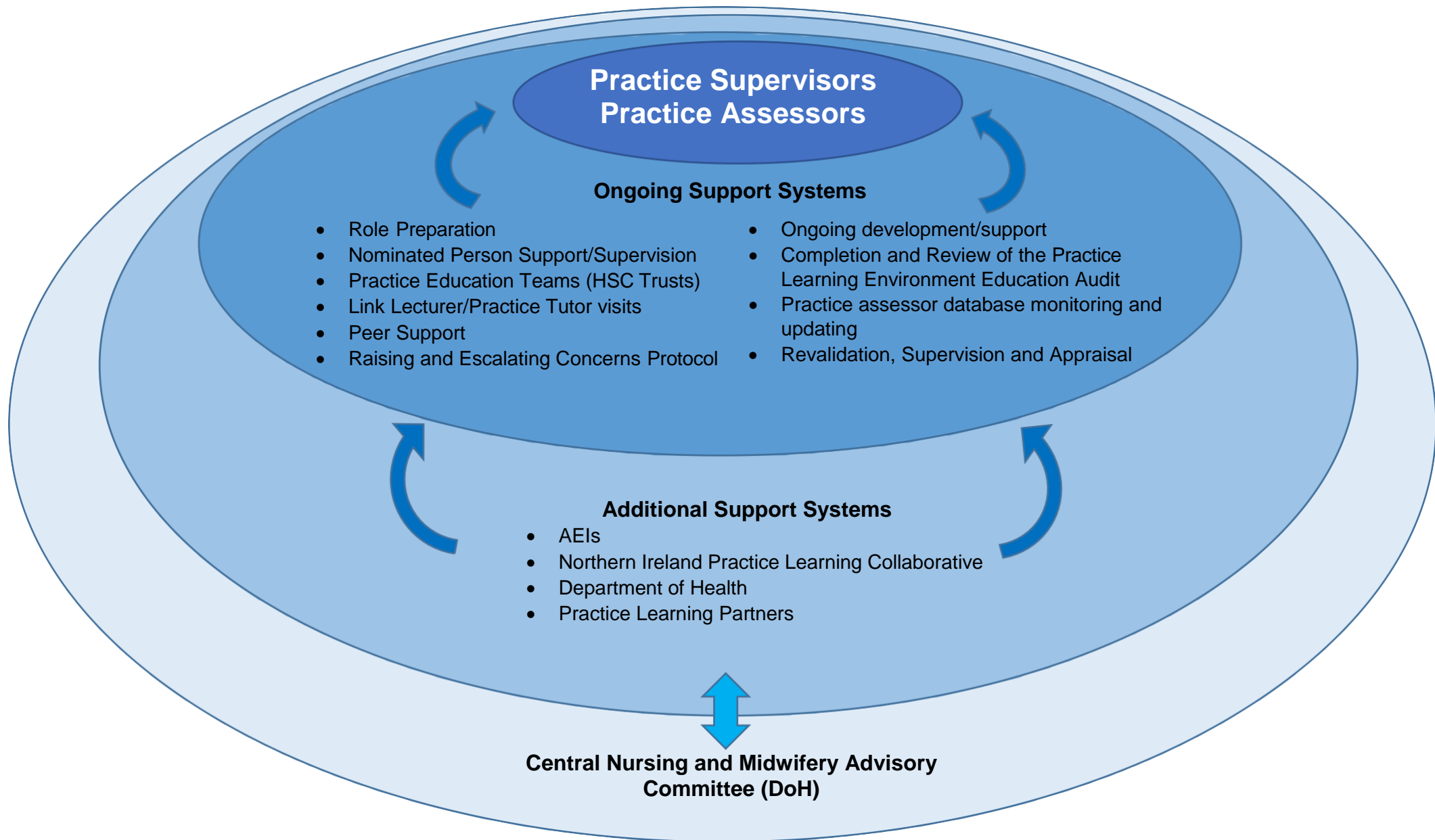
Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS, 2021) *Competency Framework for all Prescribers*.

Available from: [RPS English Competency Framework 3.pdf \(rpharms.com\)](#)

## Appendix One: Escalating Concerns Regarding a Student in Practice Learning Environments



## Appendix Two: Support Systems for Practice Supervisors and Assessors



## **Appendix Three: Additional Guidance regarding Practice Assessors**

### **Practice Assessors for students undertaking Specialist Community Public Health Nursing (SCPHN) programmes**

All practice assessors involved in SCPHN student support must attend a SCPHN induction programme (which will include the programme specific curriculum and practice assessment document update) provided by the Approved Education Institutions (AEIs), to ensure they understand the proficiencies and programme outcomes that the student they assess is aiming to achieve.

The student should be assigned to a practice assessor who is an experienced registered SCPHN qualified in the same field of the programme the student is undertaking. If this is not achievable; in agreement with the AEI and practice learning partners, the student should be assigned to a registered SCPHN who has extensive experience in the student's intended field of SCPHN practice.

### **Practice Assessors for students undertaking Specialist Practice Qualification (SPQ) programmes**

All practice assessors involved in SPQ student support must attend a SPQ induction programme (which will include the programme specific curriculum and practice assessment document update) provided by the AEI to ensure they understand the proficiencies and programme outcomes that the student they assess is aiming to achieve.

The student should be assigned to a practice assessor who is an experienced registered SPQ for the programme the student is undertaking. If this is not achievable; in agreement with the AEI and practice learning partners the student should be assigned to a registered nurse (without a SPQ qualification) who has extensive experience in the student's intended field of SPQ practice.

All Practice Assessors for SCPHN and SPQ programmes must also have:

- undertaken a period of preceptorship in line with the NMC principles for preceptorship (NMC, 2022) as SCPHNs or SPQ, or
- can evidence prior learning and relevant practice assessor experience that enables them to engage in fair, reliable and valid assessment processes in the context of SCPHN or SPQ.

Where the SPQ practice assessor does not hold a prescribing qualification, a different practice assessor should be identified, who must be a registered health care professional and an experienced prescriber with suitable equivalent qualifications for the programme the student is undertaking (NMC, 2024b).

In exceptional circumstances, as set out in the NMC Standards for post-registration (NMC, 2024a) the same person may fulfil the role of the practice supervisor and practice assessor for the SPQ, SCPHN and prescribing students undergoing training in a practice learning environment.

In such instances, the Practice Education Facilitator, nominated person and the AEI will need to evidence why it was necessary for the practice supervisor and practice assessor roles to be carried out by the same person and recorded in the practice assessment document. This request will be discussed and agreed with the AEI in advance of the student commencing the programme. These requests will also be monitored by the practice learning partners and the AEI.



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