Future Nurse Future Midwife
Northern Ireland

Standards for
Student Supervision and Assessment

A Guide for those Responsible for
Student Supervision and Assessment
in Practice
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1. Introduction

Northern Ireland has three Approved Education Institutions (AEIs), The Open University, Queen’s University Belfast and Ulster University who deliver NMC approved programmes. Through partnership working the NI regional Model was developed to implement and deliver the NMC Education Standards (2018), which includes the Standards for Student Supervision and Assessment (SSSA).

The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) Realising professionalism: Standards for education and training - Part 2: Standards for student supervision and assessment sets out the expectation for the learning, support and supervision of students in the practice learning environment (PLE).

This guide provides details on the various roles and how they work together to ensure practice supervision and assessment meets the NMC Education Standards (2018) for SSSA. It will outline the responsibilities, preparation and support for these roles.

It also includes details on the regional approach to the practice assessor database, the roles of the Practice Education Teams or equivalent, and link lecturer/practice tutors.

2. The Northern Ireland Regional Model - Standards for Student Supervision and Assessment

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

Students experiencing practice or work placed learning must be supported to learn without being counted as part of the staffing levels required for safe effective care in that setting. While students will maintain supernumerary status they should always be considered part of the team and integral to the workforce through their contribution in providing safe and effective care. Students should be observing and participating in practice and should add real value to care while evidencing their learning.

The agreed model for SSSA will reflect the new roles of the:

- nominated person (ward sister/charge nurse/team leader/manager)
- practice supervisor (all registered nurses/midwives & other healthcare professionals)
- practice assessor (registered nurse/midwife, designated medical prescribers)
- academic assessor (link lecturer/practice tutor).
Every student will be allocated:

- at least one practice supervisor for every practice learning experience
- a practice assessor for each practice learning experience or series of practice learning experiences
- an academic assessor for each part of the programme.

Separating out the supervision and assessment roles ensures greater consistency and objectivity in the assessment process. The academic assessor works in partnership with the practice assessor to evaluate and recommend the student for progression for each part of the programme informed by feedback sought and received from practice supervisor/s and practice assessors as illustrated in Diagram 1.

Diagram 1
The shared responsibility of the practice assessor and the academic assessor ensures that robust, objective, fair and transparent assessments and shared decision-making will uphold public protection and ensure only those students who have met all the programme requirements and proficiencies and are clearly able to demonstrate the principles of The Code (2018) are entered onto the NMC professional register.

3. **The Nominated Person**

3.1. **Who can be the Nominated Person?**

The nominated person for each practice learning environment will normally be the ward sister/charge nurse/team leader/manager. The name of the nominated person will be detailed on the Practice Learning Environment Educational Audit (PLEEA).

3.2. **What is the role of the Nominated Person?**

The nominated person will:

- ensure continuity of the practice learning experience for the student
- actively support student learning
- be responsible for assigning students to each practice supervisor and practice assessor
- consider the registrant’s scope of practice when assigning practice supervisors and practice assessors
- support the practice supervisor/s and practice assessor/s to manage student underperformance or concerns in collaboration with the Practice Education Team (when appropriate), the link lecturer and academic assessor
- ensure the practice assessor/s and practice supervisor/s receive appropriate preparation and have ongoing access to support
- liaise with the Practice Education Team (when appropriate) or AEI
- co-ordinate and monitor quality assurance processes to support the PLE meet the NMC Education Standards (2018) i.e. student evaluation, educational audit, maintenance of the practice assessor database and continuing professional development requirements for the practice supervisor and practice assessor.

3.3. **Who will support the Nominated Person?**

The nominated person will be supported by the:

- line manager
- link lecturer/practice tutor
- academic assessor
- peers
- Practice Education Team or equivalent.
4. Supervision of Students

Practice supervision enables students to learn safely and achieve proficiency and autonomy in their professional role. Every student will be allocated at least one practice supervisor for each PLE however there could be multiple practice supervisors in the same PLE to support the student achieve a range of learning outcomes. When identifying the practice supervisor/s the registrant’s scope of practice will be considered. There may be different models of supervision within the PLE such as 1:1 or Hub and Spoke ¹.

It is anticipated that 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 practice learning experience will be coordinated by the practice supervisor/s.

4.1. Who can be the Practice Supervisor/s?

All NMC registered nurses and midwives are capable of supervising students and serving as role models for safe and effective practice. Students may also be supervised by other registered health and social care professionals. 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 supervise a prescribing student the practice supervisor must:

- be a registered health care professional on a professional register with equivalent prescribing qualifications [notated on a professional register where relevant]
- be able to evidence active prescribing
- have completed a preparation programme to support them undertake the role.

4.2. What is the role of the Practice Supervisor?

The practice supervisor will:

- have current knowledge and experience of the area in which they are providing support, supervision and feedback
- serve as role models for safe and effective practice in line with The Code (2018) and their professional duty of candour
- organise and co-ordinate student learning activities in practice, ensuring quality, safe and effective practice learning experiences that uphold public protection and the safety of people
- ensure the level of supervision provided to students reflects their learning needs and stage of learning
- support learning in line with their scope of practice to enable the student meet their proficiencies and programme outcomes
- ensure requirement and rights around informed consent are implemented and that public protection is maintained

¹ Hub and Spoke is defined as a base practice learning environment/experience, (the hub) from which the students learning is complemented by additional activities in the spoke).
• use their professional judgment and local/national policy to determine where activities may be safely delegated to students and the level of supervision required
• be accountable for their decisions
• support and supervise students, providing feedback on their progress towards achievement of proficiencies and skills
• set and monitor realistic achievement of proficiencies through the development of evidence identified within the programme specific Northern Ireland Practice Assessment Document (NIPAD) for nursing or the Midwifery Ongoing record of Achievement (MORA).
• contribute to the student’s ongoing record of achievement in the student’s NIPAD / MORA by periodically recording relevant observations on the conduct, proficiency and achievement of the students they are supervising
• facilitate practice based independent learning as appropriate
• support learning in an inter-professional environment, selecting and supporting a range of learning opportunities for students with other professions
• encourage and coordinate students to work with and learn from a number of people who are not registered healthcare professionals but who can positively contribute to their learning
• contribute to student assessments to inform decisions for progression at summative assessment through reviewing evidence to ensure its authenticity, standard and completeness
• liaise with others (e.g. Practice Education Team, practice assessor, link lecturer/practice tutor, academic assessor, nominated person) to provide feedback and identify any concerns about the student’s performance and agree action as appropriate
• identify when a student is underperforming, or where there are professional concerns. Take prompt action to notify the appropriate key persons and document the concerns/underperformance in the student’s NIPAD / MORA.
  o for further information, refer to Escalating Concerns/Issues Regarding a Student in Practice Learning Environments (Appendix Two).
  o the student’s practice assessor must also be notified.

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

4.3 Who will support the Practice Supervisor?

The practice supervisor can access support from the:

• nominated person
• link lecturer for the student
• other practice supervisors
• practice assessor
• academic assessor
• Practice Education Team or equivalent
• Trust nurse prescribing lead2
• supervision and annual appraisal process
• reflective discussion during the revalidation process
4.4. Preparation for the Role of Practice Supervisor/s

There will be an opportunity for mentors, sign-off mentors and practice teachers to have recognition of prior learning and move directly to the new role of practice supervisor following completion of a practice supervisor practice assessor transitioning programme. Practice supervisors will have the knowledge and experience that meets the NMC Education Standards (2018) and have an understanding of the proficiencies and programme outcomes that they are supporting students to achieve.

- Preparation programmes will be available, delivered and supported by key personnel in both practice and education environments (Appendix One)
- Preparation programmes will be delivered via e-Learning and/or face-to-face
- The opportunities to prepare for the role will be flexible and designed to meet the needs of practice supervisors.

5. Assessment of Students

The student will have a practice assessor for each practice learning experience or series of practice learning experiences and an academic assessor for each part of the programme. The academic assessor will not simultaneously be the practice supervisor and practice assessor for the same student. Students will not be assigned the same academic assessor on concurrent parts of the programme. The practice assessor will not simultaneously be the practice supervisor and practice assessor for the same student except in exceptional circumstances.

5.1. Assessment Process

Practice assessors will conduct all assessments. During the final stage of each part of the programme or at agreed progression points depending on the programme, the practice assessor will work in partnership with the academic assessor to undertake student assessment. They will take into account feedback from practice supervisor/s and other practice assessors to evaluate and recommend the student for progression to the next part of the programme and ultimately onto the NMC professional register. Assessment and confirmation of proficiencies are based on an understanding of the student’s achievement across theory and practice and is provisional until all practice hours are completed and there are no emerging professional/performance issues.

The joint assessment will be face to face; however, in exceptional circumstances, for example inclement weather or illness other communication media will be acceptable including Zoom, Face-time and Skype.

5.2. Assessor Database

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 and Date of Preparation for Role.

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3 In exceptional circumstances the same individual may fulfil the role of practice assessor and practice supervisor for NMP, SCPHN & SPQ
All existing mentors, sign off mentors and practice teachers will automatically transition onto a practice assessor database following suitable preparation. The current mentor register will also be maintained until all students are transitioned onto the NMC Education Standards (2018) programme/s.

The AEIs will maintain an academic assessor database.

5.3. Practice Assessor

5.3.1. Who can be the Practice Assessor?

There will be an opportunity for mentors, sign-off mentors and practice teachers to have recognition of prior learning and move directly into the new role of practice assessor following a preparation programme. It is expected that all practice supervisors will progress to take on the role of practice assessor.

All practice assessors will have completed the practice assessor preparation programme and evidenced that they meet the NMC Education Standards (2018) outcomes for the role. There are some specific programme requirements depending on the practice assessor’s registration and the programme the student is studying:

- to assess a nursing student, you must be a registered nurse with appropriate equivalent experience for the student’s field of practice.
- to assess a midwifery student you must be a registered midwife.
- to assess a specialist community public health nurse (SCPHN) student you must be a registered SCPHN with appropriate equivalent experience for the student’s field of practice.
- to assess a Specialist Practice student you must have a SPQ annotation and have appropriate equivalent experience for the student’s field of practice.
- to assess a prescribing student you must be:
  - a registered healthcare professional and an experienced and current prescriber with suitable equivalent qualifications for the programme the student is undertaking
  - able to evidence active prescribing for a minimum of three years (usually)
  - able to confirm that your scope of prescribing practice aligns to, or exceeds that of the prescribing student.

In exceptional circumstances, the same person may fulfil the role of the practice supervisor and practice assessor for Prescribing Programmes, Specialist Practice and SCPHN. In such instances, the student, practice supervisor/practice assessor and the AEI representative will need to evidence why it is necessary for the practice supervisor and practice assessor role to be carried out by the same person.

5.3.2. What is the role of the Practice Assessor?

The practice assessor will:

- conduct all assessments and work in partnership with the academic assessor to evaluate and recommend the student for progression for each part of the programme in line with programme standards
- make and record objective, evidenced-based assessments on conduct, proficiency and achievement, drawing on student records, direct observations, student self-reflection, and other resources
• periodically observe the student across environments in order to inform decisions for assessment and progression in partnership with the academic assessor
• ensure that assessment decisions are informed by feedback sought and received from practice supervisor/s
• confirm that all the evidence required for the specific part of the programme has been provided by the student and authenticated by practice assessors and practice supervisor/s. This will include evidence of authenticity, standard of completeness and relevancy to the claimed proficiencies
• in exceptional circumstances, agree alternative arrangements with the academic assessor, link lecturer/practice tutor and student if all three parties cannot be present at the assessment
• maintain current knowledge and expertise relevant to the proficiencies and programme outcomes they are assessing
• 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, supervision and appraisals.

5.3.3. Who will support the Practice Assessor?

The practice assessor can access support from the:

• person
• link lecturer/practice tutor for the practice area
• academic assessor for student/s
• relevant programme leader
• Practice Education Team or equivalent
• Trust nurse prescribing lead (if relevant)

The practice assessor can gain additional support during discussions at supervision, annual appraisals, revalidation- by the use of critical reflection on their role and with other practice assessors and academic assessors in sharing best practice and discussing assessment decisions (group supervision/learning sets).

To note: practice assessors new to the role may wish to shadow an experienced practice assessor, this should be discussed with the nominated person.

There will be an opportunity on an annual basis to participate in discussions and updates on the role of the practice assessor. This updating may be accessed in a variety of ways including discussions with one of the individuals listed above, drop in sessions, teaching/assessing events and online learning etc.

5.3.4. Preparation for the role of Practice Assessor

There will be an opportunity for current mentors, sign-off mentors and practice teachers to have recognition of prior learning and move directly into the new role of practice assessor. The opportunities to prepare for the role will be flexible and designed to meet the needs of the practice assessor depending on their previous experience and identified learning needs.
Preparation programmes can be accessed in two ways:

- The nominated person will recommend the practice supervisor for the role of practice assessor at supervision/appraisal.
- Self-nomination validated by the line manager.

Preparation programmes will be delivered and supported by key personnel in practice and education environments using a range of learning methods including face-to-face and an e-Learning package which can be accessed via the HSC Learning with additional resources available on the NIPEC website.

5.4. Academic Assessors

The programme lead for each NMC programme will allocate an appropriate academic assessor for each part of the student’s programme. AEIs will identify the academic assessor for each part of the programme through their local clinical allocation system and the academic assessor will be advised of their student’s practice assessor.

5.4.1. Who can be the Academic Assessor?

The academic assessor will:

- be an affiliated member of staff from the student’s AEI
- be a registered nurse or midwife
- hold relevant qualifications as required by their AEI
- have completed an academic assessor preparation programme or equivalent.

To note: the academic assessor for prescribing programmes may be a registered healthcare professional with appropriate equivalent experience for the student’s field of practice. Students will not be assigned the same academic assessor for concurrent parts of the programme. The academic assessor will not simultaneously be the practice supervisor and practice assessor for the same student.

5.4.2. What is the role of the Academic Assessor?

The academic assessor will:

- maintain current knowledge and expertise relevant to the proficiencies and programme outcomes they are assessing and confirming
- collate and confirm student achievement of proficiencies and programme outcomes in the academic environment for each part of the programme
- communicate and collaborate with the practice assessor at scheduled relevant points during the student’s programme
- make and record objective, evidence-based decisions on conduct, proficiency and achievement, and make recommendations for progression drawing on student records and other resources
- have an understanding of the student’s learning and achievement in practice including any concerns around underperformance
- liaise with the link lecturer concerning any student underperformance issues
- work in partnership with the practice assessor to evaluate and recommend the student for progression for each part of the programme in line with programme standards and for entry
(or additional entry) to the NMC professional register.

- forward the outcome of summative assessments to the appropriate person in a timely manner and advise the appropriate AEI personnel of any issues concerning the student’s progress.

5.4.3. Who will support the Academic Assessor?

The opportunities to prepare for the role will be flexible and designed to meet the needs of the academic assessor. Link lecturers/practice tutors will simultaneously undertake the role of academic assessor following completion of a preparation programme or equivalent (Appendix One).

5.4.4. Preparation for the role of Academic Assessor

In order to fulfil their role the academic assessor will receive on-going training and support from their AEI to develop their professional practice and knowledge.

6. Link Lecturer/Practice Tutor

The Schools of Nursing in each of Northern Ireland’s three AEIs operate a link lecturer/practice tutor system with an identified member of staff allocated to each PLE. All current link lecturers/practice tutors will transition to the role of academic assessor following completion of the academic assessor preparation programme.

6.1. What is the role of the Link Lecturer/Practice Tutor?

The link lecturer/practice tutor will:

- undertake the role of academic assessor for allocated students
- support students and practice supervisors in clarifying the learning opportunities available to develop evidence for the NIPAD/ MORA
- be available to support and advise students and practice supervisor/s in relation to challenges to student learning within the PLE
- ensure that necessary measures are taken to make effective use of the learning potential in PLEs
- maintain accurate and appropriate records as required
- assure quality practice learning environments through the PLEEA and monitor the quality of the learning experience in collaboration with practice partners
- ensure the relevant process is followed in the event of concerns/issues regarding a student (Appendix Two)
- collaborate with the appropriate AEI personnel, nominated person, practice supervisor and the Practice Education Team (where applicable) regarding issues which may impact on students learning experiences or performance
- encourage students to complete evaluation questionnaires
- 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, supervision and appraisals.
6.1.1. Independent Sector: Link Lecturer/Practice Tutor

Within the Independent Sector the link lecturer in addition to the above list is responsible for:

- providing professional support to the nominated person or equivalent, the practice supervisor, the practice assessor and students
- ensuring quality practice learning environments through the PLEEA
- monitoring the quality of the practice learning experience in collaboration with the AEIs and through student evaluation questionnaires.

7. Practice Education Teams

Practice Education Teams provide professional support, advice and guidance to the nominated person, practice supervisors and practice assessors. In partnership with AEIs, they will support students to ensure that the NMC Education Standards (2018) are met including the SSSA.

The Practice Education Team will:

- work in partnership with others to contribute to systems that monitor the effectiveness of learning and education activities within all NMC approved programmes
- collate and maintain the practice assessor database and facilitate a process to share required information with AEIs within GDPR regulations
- ensure the quality of the PLE through the completion and monitoring/updating of the PLEEA
- monitor the quality of the practice learning experience in collaboration with the AEIs and through student evaluations.

Where there are no Practice Education Teams, e.g. Independent Sector, the link lecturer/practice tutor will provide this support.

8. Raising Concerns Regarding Student Progress

In the event of student concerns, issues or underachievement there is an expectation that communication will take place face to face in a timely manner. If the practice supervisor or practice assessor requires support to engage in a courageous conversation they should inform the nominated person and seek guidance from the Practice Education Team (or equivalent) and/or the academic assessor. For further details refer to Escalating Concerns/Issues Regarding a Student in Practice Learning Environments (Appendix Two).

9. Glossary of Terms

**Academic assessor**: A registrant who collates and confirms the student’s achievement of proficiencies and programme outcomes in the academic environment for each part of the programme.

**Approved Education Institutions (AEI)**: The status awarded to an institution that works in partnership with practice learning providers in delivering NMC approved programmes.

**Duty of candour**: The professional duty of candour -“Every healthcare professional must be open and honest when things go wrong”. [https://www.nmc.org.uk/standards/guidance/the-professional-duty-of-candour/](https://www.nmc.org.uk/standards/guidance/the-professional-duty-of-candour/)
GDPR: General Data Protection Regulation

Hub and Spoke: A base practice learning experience, the hub, from which the student’s learning is complemented by additional activities, the spoke.

Mentor: A registrant who facilitates learning, supervises and assesses students in a practice setting.

NIPAD: Northern Ireland Practice Assessment Document – a tool to guide learning and a record of a student’s learning and achievement in practice.

NMC Education Standards: The standards that are required to be met by all nursing and midwifery students on NMC approved programmes prior to entry to the register.

NMC Professional Register: Shows who can practise as a nurse or midwife in the UK.

NMP: Non–Medical Prescribing / Nursing and Midwifery Prescribing also referred to as Prescribing Programmes. 

MORA: Midwifery On-going Record of Achievement- a tool to guide learning and a record of student midwifes’ learning and achievement in practice.

Nominated person: Usually the ward sister/charge nurse/team leader/manager or an identified suitable person who will actively supports student learning.

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. In the context of the SSSA they will be suitably prepared to undertake the role of practice supervisor.

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: Registrants who assess and confirm the student’s achievement of practice learning for a practice learning experience or a series of practice learning experiences.

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

Practice Education Team: Indirectly support students through providing direct support to staff involved in supervision and assessment in practice activities to develop quality practice learning experiences for students
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 Partners: Organisations that provide practice learning necessary for supporting pre-registration and post-registration students in meeting proficiencies and programme outcomes.

Practice supervisor: Any registered health and social care professional working in a practice environment. They will have been prepared and supported to take up their role and have up-to-date knowledge and experience relevant to the student they are supervising.

Scope of Practice: exercise professional judgement and be accountable for all work.

SCPHN: Specialist Community Public Health Nurse.

Sign-off mentor: Registrants who meet specified criteria in order to be able to sign-off a student’s practice proficiency at the end of an NMC approved programme.

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

SPQ: Specialist Practice Qualification

# Appendix One – Training Requirements: Roles

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<th>Training Requirements</th>
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## 2020 Curriculum - all NMC Approved Programmes

Links to NMC proficiencies are available on the NMC website

- **Undergraduate Nursing Programmes**: four fields of practice
  - Standards for midwives
  - Prescribing Programmes
  - Post Graduate Specialist Community Public Health Nurse (SCPHN) not yet published
  - Post Graduate Specialist Practice Qualification (SPQ) not yet published
  - Return to Practice
Appendix Two - Escalating Concerns/Issues Regarding a Student in Practice Learning Environments

**Issue or concern identified by practice supervisor and/or practice assessor in discussion with student:**

**Personal/sensitive Issue**
- Discuss with nominated person and/or link lecturer/practice tutor with students consent
- Pastoral Care and support offered and sign posted to appropriate services

**Under Performance Issue**
- Inform nominated person practice assessor, Link lecturer/practice tutor, and Practice Education Team
- Development/action plan as per NIPAD/MORA
- Implement development/action plan, monitor and review
- Not Resolved: Link lecturer/practice tutor informs academic assessor and process re-initiated
- Resolved: Feedback provided

**Fitness To Practice Issue**
- Inform link lecturer/practice tutor, nominated person and Practice Education Team at earliest opportunity/within 24 hours
- Formally Contact AEI programme leader/designated person to progress as per AEI process
  - (Fitness to Practice Process)