

From the Chief Nursing Officer
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BY EMAIL

Directors of Nursing

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Dear Colleague

**EMERGENCY STANDARDS FOR NURSING AND MIDWIFERY PREREGISTRATION
EDUCATION : COVID-19**

On the 25 March the NMC published Emergency Standards for Nursing and Midwifery Education (Attached). These standards are intended to provide flexibility during the situation regarding Covid19 to allow for learning in practice to continue. Full details are available through the NMC at:-

<https://www.nmc.org.uk/news/coronavirus/>

Following agreement and discussion with the DoH, AEs, Practice Partners and the NMC, the following arrangements, aligned to the NMC Emergency Standards, have been agreed, for implementation in Northern Ireland with immediate effect.

1. Students in the final six months of the preregistration undergraduate and postgraduate nursing –

- a. These students will **complete** their programmes in clinical practice while ensuring all learning outcomes are met but will require protected time to learn (AEs to liaise with Trusts). They will still be students and must have access to supervision and support during this period. Hours in practice, during this period, will be counted toward the hours of their programme to meet the requirement for entry unto the NMC register, when the emergency situation ceases. AEs will provide pastoral support to students.
- b. These students will not be supernumerary and any student who does not move to the extended placement programme will have a position agreed with the relevant University (e.g they may pause from the programme)

2. **2nd year student's third and or final year students on the first six months of study and first-year postgraduate students of preregistration nursing and midwifery programmes-**
 - a. These students will spend no more than 80% of their hours in clinical placements and 20% of their hours in theoretical learning. Universities and Practice Partners will work together to make the relevant arrangements for their clinical placements.
 - b. These students must have access to supervision and support during their hours in clinical practice
 - c. They will not be supernumerary, but will require protected time to learn.

3. **First-year students in the preregistration undergraduate nursing and midwifery programmes-**
 - a. **These students** may spend 100% of their programme in theory/academic learning, which may be virtual or distance learning.

Please note that the adoption of the emergency standards means it is not possible to continue students within the existing programme delivery

Supervision and Support for Students in Clinical Placements

Standards for Student Supervision and Assessment (SSSA NMC 2018)

- To support practice learning under the COVID emergency arrangements the SLAiP has been stood down, Northern Ireland, will align to Emergency Standard E5. **As such the Standards for Student Supervision and Assessment (SSSA NMC 2018) will be put in place across all programmes for pre-registration education of nurses and midwives**

- The rationale is that under the emergency standards the SSSA standards offer more flexibility to support students and will reduce the pressure on staff as follows:-
 - a. There will no longer be a requirement for staff to spend one hour protected time per week with students,
 - b. Students will not be required to spend 40% of their time with a mentor.
 - c. Under the emergency education standards the SSSA (2018) standard in relation to practice supervisor & practice assessor not being the same person, this has been waived by the NMC (Emergency Standards E5.1) for the period of the emergency situation. This means that registrants transitioning to the roles during this period can undertake dual roles for the same student significantly increasing capacity for student supervision and assessment.

With immediate effect for nursing students (for midwives see below) the following arrangements will apply.

- Mentors and sign off mentors will automatically transition to the roles of practice supervisor and practice assessor. The NMC have advised the following in regard to this:-
 - a. Staff who are already mentors have the skill set to support students
 - b. As such there is flexibility for staff in these new roles who are working within the COVID-19 response to undertake fuller preparation at a later more appropriate time when this emergency period has passed. At that time preparation of FNFM Practice Supervisor Practice Assessor roles for all staff will be taken forward as originally planned through the FNFM Project and FNFM Local Implementation Groups.
 - c. For nurses who have not been prepared as mentors and are required to support students, this can be done under the NMC Code (2018), section 9.4, *'.. support students' and colleagues' learning to help them develop their professional competence and confidence'*
In this role they can support Supervisors and Assessors.
 - d. AELs can notify the NMC at any time of risks to student learning in an environment so that this can be noted by the NMC on a risk register.
 - e. These interim arrangements will be reviewed and monitored on an ongoing basis through the emergency arrangements by Practice Education Teams who will be required to liaise closely with practice areas and AELs to gauge levels of risks for students.
- **Midwifery:** The above arrangements will apply to all NMC preregistration Midwifery programmes from June 2020. This will accommodate final practice based assessments due to take place in May 2020 for final year pre-registration Midwifery student and students on the shortened programme, as it would be too disruptive for them to change at this stage.

These are unprecedented times, and there may be concern about staff preparation to undertake the SSA role and the timing of this change. The NMC have recognised, as do we all, that we already have a critical mass of very skilled staff who currently support students, and who can with confidence and the right support move immediately into the roles of Practice Supervisor and Practice Assessor.

The role of Trust Practice Education Teams is particularly important at this time to support the implementation of these new Emergency Standards across all settings.

The attached FAQs on **Supervision and Support for Students in Clinical Placements: Covid-19** at **Appendix A** should be circulated to staff for information.

Full information on Standards for Student Supervision and Assessment (SSSA NMC 2018) and preparation for the role for those in a position to undertake awareness training, this is available through Practice Education Teams

Emergency Temporary Register

Regarding Nursing students being enabled to join the NMC Emergency Register, the NMC have not reached any decision about this at this time. Whilst there is provision for this on the register, you are asked to note this remains under consideration by the NMC and will be reviewed in response to the requirement to respond to COVID-19 Emergency arrangements. No consideration is being given by the NMC to student midwives joining the emergency register.

Through NIPEC, the FNFM Project lead will link with Trust Practice Education Teams and liaise closely with FNFM Professional Officers to support this regional approach.

Yours sincerely



Professor Charlotte McArdle
Chief Nursing Officer

cc Angela McLernon

Appendix 1: COVID-19: Supervision and Support-Students in Clinical Placement

On the 25th March the NMC published Emergency Standards for Nursing and Midwifery Education (Attached). These standards are intended to provide flexibility during the situation regarding Covid19 to allow for learning in practice to continue.

Full details are available through the NMC at:-

<https://www.nmc.org.uk/news/coronavirus/>

Please note that with the adoption of the emergency standards it is not possible to continue students within the existing programme delivery model.

In summary the delivery of existing preregistration programmes has been redesigned and students will spend more time in clinical placement during the emergency period of response to COVID-19. Details are as follows:-

Students in the final six months of the preregistration programme –

- These students will complete their programmes in clinical practice while ensuring all learning outcomes are met but will require protected time to learn (AEIs to liaise with Trusts). They will still be students and must have access to supervision and support during this period. Hours in practice, during this period, will be counted toward the hours of their programme to meet the requirement for entry onto the NMC register, when the emergency situation ceases. AEIs will provide pastoral support to students.
- These students will not be supernumerary and any student who does not move to the extended placement programme will have a position agreed with the AEI (e.g they may pause from the programme)

Students in 2nd year, final year students on the first six months of study and first-year postgraduate students of preregistration nursing and midwifery programmes -

- These students will spend no more than 80% of their hours in clinical placements and 20% of their hours in theoretical learning. Universities and Practice Partners will work together to make the relevant arrangements for their clinical placements.
- These students must have access to supervision and support during their hours in clinical practice
- They will not be supernumerary, but will require protected time to learn.

First-year students in the preregistration undergraduate nursing and midwifery programmes -

- These students may spend 100% of their programme in theory/academic learning, which may be virtual or distance learning.

Standards for Student Supervision and Assessment (SSSA NMC 2018) will now be put in place across all programmes for pre-registration education and under the emergency education standards a range of flexibilities can be offered to support students in clinical practice. Substantial work has already been done in Northern Ireland to prepare for this through Future Nurse Future Midwife however it has been recognised that nurses and midwives will not have time to undertake preparation programmes until after COVID-19 emergency arrangements are stood down.

COVID-19 Standards for Student Supervision and Assessment

These are unprecedented times, and there may be concern about staff preparation to undertake the SSA role and the timing of this change. The NMC have recognised we already have a critical mass of very skilled staff who currently support students, and who can with confidence and the right support move immediately into the roles of Practice Supervisor and Practice Assessor.

What does this mean?

- As the SLAiP standards cannot offer flexibility in how they are delivered these are to be stood down with immediate effect for nursing students (for midwives see below).
- Mentors and sign off mentors will automatically transition to the roles of practice supervisor and practice assessor.
- The NMC have advised that regarding nurses and midwives who have not been prepared as mentors and are required to support students, this can be done under the NMC Code (2018), section 9.4, ‘.. support students’ and colleagues’ learning to help them develop their professional competence and confidence’

In this role they can support Supervisors and Assessors.

- There will no longer be a requirement for staff to spend one hour protected time per week with students
- Students will not be required to spend 40% of their time with a mentor.
- Under the emergency education standards the SSSA (2018) standard in relation to practice supervisor & practice assessor this can be the same person so this should significantly reduce the individual time needed for student supervision and assessment.

Midwifery: The above arrangements will apply to all NMC preregistration Midwifery programmes from June 2020. This will accommodate final practice based assessments due to take place in May 2020 for final year pre-registration Midwifery student and students on the shortened programme as it would be too disruptive as this stage for them to change at this time.

These interim arrangements will be reviewed and monitored on an ongoing basis by Practice Education Teams who will liaise closely with practice areas and Universities

In Summary

Main Changes	What Stays the Same
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current mentors and sign-off mentors will transition across to SSSA and assume the dual role of practice supervisor and practice assessor • Each student will be allocated a practice assessor and at least one practice supervisor (may be dual roles) • Students will no longer be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ supernumerary however they will require protected time to support their learning ➢ required to spend 40% of their time with a mentor ➢ required to spend one hour protected time per week with a mentor • The ward sister, charge nurse, team leader i.e. the nominated person, will maintain a locally held practice assessor record to support allocation of students. Universities will continue to maintain a practice assessor record for the independent and voluntary sector • Registrants who have not been prepared as mentors or sign-off mentors and are required to support students can do so under the NMC Code (2018). They will provide feedback about the student to the practice supervisors and/or practice assessor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will be supported to achieve their learning objectives through the identification of learning opportunities, whilst maintaining safe and effective care • Induction, learning contracts, mid-point (formative) assessment, action plans and summative assessment will continue and will be co-ordinated by the person assuming the role of practice assessor linking with university/academic staff where relevant • Students will receive constructive feedback to inform their progress • The need to identify and manage underperformance or arising issues • Support for staff and students in the form of the Practice Education Teams, link lecturer/practice teacher remains • In line with the NIPEC delegation Framework for Nursing and Midwifery Practice (2017) should use professional judgement, local and national policy to determine where activities may be safely delegated to students while being accountable for your decisions • The student portfolio/practice assessment document/on-going record of achievement remains in place with minimal changes and will be available electronically.

Full preparation can be undertaken at a later more appropriate time when this emergency period has passed. At that time preparation of FNFM Practice Supervisor Practice Assessor roles for all staff will be taken forward as originally planned through the FNFM Project and FNFM Local Implementation Groups.

In the interim full information on *Standards for Student Supervision and Assessment (SSSA NMC 2018)* and preparation for the role is available through your Practice Education Teams and through:-

- NIPEC Website – [FNFM Products and Resources](#)

Another useful link is:-

- [Emergency Standards for Nursing and Midwifery Education](#). (NMC 2020)

Student Supervision and Assessment Roles

The Practice Assessor: All current mentors and sign-off mentors can undertake this role. Each student will have a nominated practice assessor. The practice assessor will:

- agree learning objectives with students at the start of their placement and undertake the mid and final review meetings
- liaise with the practice supervisor/s to identify suitable learning opportunities
- receive feedback from practice supervisor/s and service users on students' performance which will inform their progress
- observe students in practice
- undertake students' formative and summative assessments in partnership with the academic assessor, mutually agreeing progression
- use the NMC Code (2018) to inform all decisions and support students to develop if concerns are escalated.

The practice assessor is required to have appropriate experience in relation to the field or area of practice for the student/s they are assessing

During this emergency period the practice assessor can also be the practice supervisor for the same student as outlined in the Emergency Standards for Nursing and Midwifery Education (NMC 2020)

The Practice Supervisor: All mentors and sign-off mentors can be practice supervisors. Students will be allocated at least one practice supervisor but can work with several supervisors who will support them to meet their learning objectives. The practice supervisor will:

- support students to seek out learning opportunities
- provide protected learning time for students i.e. working alongside them and providing feedback
- use questioning and constructive feedback to support student learning
- actively support students and provide feedback to the practice assessor to inform progress
- address any student concerns with the practice assessor, the manager and the practice education team.

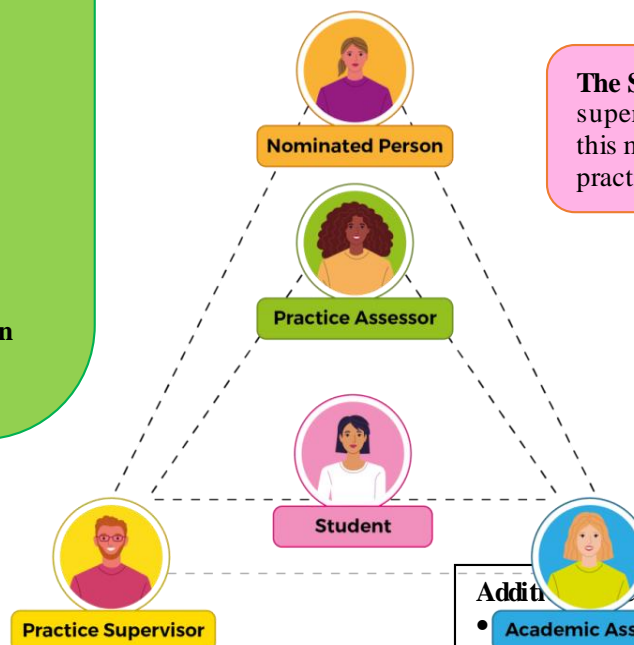
The Nominated Person: is the ward sister, charge nurse, team leader or manager. The nominated person will:

- promote a quality practice learning environment
- ensure students are allocated to a practice supervisor and a practice assessor
- actively support students and address their concerns
- act as a point of contact for practice supervisors and practice assessors.

The Student: Students in placement will no longer be supernumerary but should be afforded protected time to learn - this may be time to work along-side and learn from the practice supervisor and practice assessor.

The Academic Assessor: will be the link lecturer/practice tutor. The academic assessor will:

- work with the practice assessor to evaluate and recommend students for progression at agreed progression points
- The role of the link lecturer will remain



Additional sources

- **Academic Assessor** on Teams and Link Lecturers will play a crucial role, providing support and guidance to staff as they transition to these new roles
- NIPEC Website – [FNFM Products and Resources](#)
- [Emergency Standards for Nursing and Midwifery Education](#). (NMC 2020)