Nursing & Midwifery Council

NMC

Standards to support learning and assessment in practice

NMC standards for mentors, practice teachers and teachers

Front cover, from left to right: Julie Dalphinis, Clinical Learning Environment Lead (West) at the East of England Multi Professional Deanery; Edward Phillips, Practice Development Nurse for Nursing and Patient Services at Bedford Hospital; Dr Anna Brown, Director of Studies for Midwifery Degree Programmes at the University of Surrey.

Photographer: Sam Shiell

Foreword

Welcome to the second edition of Standards to support learning and assessment in practice (the standards). A series of NMC Circulars has been produced following an assessment of the impact of the 2006 edition, and as a result of a high volume of enquiries received by the NMC. Whilst there is no fundamental change to the standards themselves, the additional information is intended to support easier application in practice. The decision has been taken to incorporate the information into this version of the standards. The opportunity has also been taken to provide an update on wider policy developments which have impacted on the standards. An overview of the revisions is provided on page 7.

The standards have outcomes for mentors, practice teachers and teachers, and take the form of a single developmental framework, outlined in Annexe 1. The framework defines and describes the knowledge and skills nurses and midwives need to apply in practice when they support and assess students undertaking NMC approved programmes that lead to registration or a recordable qualification on the register. The NMC has agreed mandatory requirements for each part of the register, summarised below. The outcomes for each role are identified as different stages within the framework. It is possible to enter or exit the framework at any stage, and each stage is not dependent on having met the outcomes of a previous stage.

A range of information including an electronic version of the standards themselves, the Circulars which support implementation and responses to frequently asked questions is also provided on the NMC's website at www.nmc-uk.org

The NMC has agreed mandatory requirements for each part of the register. These are:

Nursing

- Students on NMC approved pre-registration nursing education programmes, leading to registration on the nurses' part of the register, must be supported and assessed by mentors.
- From September 2007 a sign-off mentor, who has met additional criteria (paragraph 2.1.3), must make the final assessment of practice and confirm that the required proficiencies for entry to the register have been achieved (paragraph 3.2.6).
- From September 2007 students on NMC approved specialist practice programmes leading to a recordable qualification on the nurses' part of the register must be supported and assessed by sign-off mentors who have met additional criteria (paragraph 2.1.3), or practice teachers where this is a requirement by commissioners. The sign-off mentor must make the final assessment of practice and confirm that the required proficiencies for recording a specialist practice qualification have been achieved (paragraph 3.2.6).

Midwifery

- Students on NMC approved pre-registration midwifery education programmes, leading to registration on the midwives' part of the register, can only be supported and assessed by mentors who have met the additional sign-off criteria (paragraph 2.1.3). Sign-off mentors must also make the final assessment of practice and confirm that the required proficiencies for entry to the register have been achieved (paragraph 3.2.6).

Specialist community public health nursing (SCPHN)

- Students on NMC approved specialist community public health nursing programmes, leading to registration on the specialist community public health nurses' part of the register, must be supported and assessed by practice teachers. Where education providers are unable to meet this standard they have been able to make an application to the NMC for a temporary deferment up to 2010. From September 2007 the practice teacher must make the final assessment of practice and confirm that the required proficiencies for entry to the register have been achieved (paragraph 3.3.6). All practice teachers are required to meet the additional sign-off criteria (paragraph 2.1.3).

NMC requirements for implementing the standards

The standards update the previously published Standards to support learning and assessment in practice (NMC 2006) which replaced the previously published Standards for the preparation of teachers of nurses, midwives and specialist community public health nurses (NMC 2004).

Nurses and midwives who started teacher preparation programmes prior to 1 September 2007 may complete them – meeting the outcomes of the 2004 standard.

All new entrants to mentor, practice teacher or teacher preparation programmes from 1 September 2007 must meet the requirements of the standards.

The standards will be further reviewed once the UK-wide outcomes of Modernising Nursing Careers: Setting the Direction (DH 2006) and the Government White Paper Trust, Assurance and Safety – The Regulation of Health Professionals in the 21st Century (DH 2007) are known and at least every five years thereafter.

Contents

Introduction

Background
Revisions within this edition
The framework to support learning and assessment in practice
Programme level and length
Recognition of prior learning
Local register of mentors and practice teachers
Review and maintenance of mentor/practice teacher qualifications
Triennial review of mentors and practice teachers
Roles to support learning and assessment in practice
Preceptors
Fitness for practice
Equality and diversity
Supporting students who have a disability

Section 1: The developmental framework and its underpinning principles

1.1 The developmental framework
1.2 The underpinning principles
1.3 Advice and guidance for applying the underpinning principles

Section 2: Standards for mentors, practice teachers and teachers

2.1 NMC mentor standard
- 2.1.1 Criteria for supporting learning and assessing in practice: mentors
- 2.1.2 Competence and outcomes for a mentor
- 2.1.3 Criteria for a sign-off mentor

2.2 NMC practice teacher standard
- 2.2.1 Criteria for supporting learning and assessing in practice: practice teacher
- 2.2.2 Competence and outcomes for a practice teacher

2.3 NMC teacher standard
- 2.3.1 Criteria for supporting learning and assessment in practice: teachers
- 2.3.2 Competence and outcomes for a teacher

Section 3: Applying the standards to support learning and assessment in practice

3.1 Applying the standards to nursing, midwifery and specialist community public health nursing educational programmes
3.2 Applying the mentor standard in practice
- 3.2.1 Mentor preparation programmes
- 3.2.2 Continuing professional development for mentors
- 3.2.3 Allocated learning time for mentor activity
- 3.2.4 Supporting learning in practice
- 3.2.5 Assessing learning in practice
- 3.2.6 Signing off practice proficiency

3.3 Applying the practice teacher standard in practice
- 3.3.1 Practice teacher preparation programmes
- 3.3.2 Continuing professional development for practice teachers
- 3.3.3 Allocated learning time for practice teacher activity
- 3.3.4 Supporting learning in practice
- 3.3.5 Assessing learning in practice
- 3.3.6 Signing off practice proficiency

3.4 Applying the teacher standard in practice
3.4.1 Teacher preparation programmes
3.4.2 Continuing professional development for teachers
3.4.3 Signing off proficiency
3.4.4 Allocated learning time for teaching activity

Section 4: Approval and monitoring of mentor, practice teacher and teacher preparation programmes

4.1 NMC approval of mentor/practice teacher preparation programmes
4.2 NMC approval of teacher preparation programmes
4.3 NMC monitoring arrangements
4.4 NMC recognition of other teaching qualifications

Section 5: Glossary, references and annexes

Glossary
References
Annexe 1: The developmental framework to support learning and assessment in practice
Annexe 2: The UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education
Annexe 3: NMC Circulars
26/2007 Applying due regard to learning and assessment in practice
02/2008 Applying due regard to learning and assessment in practice for student midwives
33/2007 Ensuring continuity of practice assessment through the ongoing achievement record

Introduction

Background

The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) is the regulator for two professions: nursing and midwifery. The primary purpose of the NMC is to safeguard the health and wellbeing of the public. It does this through maintaining a register of all nurses, midwives and specialist community public health nurses (SCPHN) eligible to practise within the UK, and by setting standards for their education, training, conduct, performance and ethics. When setting standards, or issuing any guidance, the NMC consults nurses and midwives on the register, the public, employers, those involved in the education and training of nurses and midwives, and prospective nurses and midwives. Once standards have been set they are reviewed on a regular basis – at least once in every five years.

The Council published standards for the preparation of teachers of nursing, midwifery and specialist community public health nursing in 2004. The standards were originally set by the United Kingdom Central Council for Nurses, Midwives and Health Visitors (UKCC) in 1999, adopted and republished by the NMC in April 2002, and had a minor review to bring them in line with the new register in August 2004. A complete review of the standards began in 2003, with a consultation on the proposed new standards closing in October 2004.

The NMC also considered fitness for practice at the point of registration as a separate project (consulting from October to December 2005). There were overlapping issues between both consultations in relation to the quality and nature of support for learning and assessment in practice.

In August 2006 the NMC published standards to support learning and assessment in practice, reflecting the responses to both consultations, and the final standards approved by Council in March 2006. The standards replaced those previously published for the preparation of teachers of nurses, midwives and specialist community public health nurses (NMC 2004) and included new standards for mentors and practice teachers. NMC Circular 17/2007 made explicit the requirement for programme and placement providers to implement the standards, which have been mandatory since 1 September 2007. This included the requirement for mentor, practice teacher, and teacher programmes to have gained NMC approval prior to accepting students on to such programmes from 1 September 2007.

Revisions within this edition

1. Equality and diversity

The standards have been reviewed to ensure they meet the requirements of the NMC equality and diversity schemes implemented in 2007/8.

These are concerned with promoting equality of opportunity on the grounds of race, gender, and disability, and treating individuals with fairness, respect and understanding. They include principles that enhance equal opportunities and recognition of diversity, such as emphasising the need to tailor learning and assessment in an appropriate way, recognising that students have many different learning needs and preferences. Further details can be found on the NMC website, and on page 15.

2. Post qualifying nursing programmes

2.1 Review of specialist practice qualifications

In the previous edition, a number of references were made to a proposed NMC review of Specialist Practice Qualifications (SPQ) and the implications for the introduction of the practice teacher standard. This work will now be informed in the longer term once the future framework for post-registration qualifications is established by the four UK Government health departments as outlined in Modernising Nursing Careers (DH 2006). The NMC will then determine whether regulation will need to be applied and standards will be set accordingly. The framework for supporting learning and assessment of any post-registration programmes for which the NMC set standards will subsequently need to be determined. Until such a time as new arrangements are in place, all reference to requiring practice teachers to supervise and assess students on SPQ

programmes has been removed from the standards. However, where commissioners of SPQ programmes require the involvement of practice teachers this should continue e.g. for district nursing.

2.2 Review of the implementation of the standard for advanced nursing practice
In the previous edition, a number of references were made to the proposed review of the implementation of the 'Standard for advanced nursing practice'. An application was made to the Privy Council in December 2005 to open a subpart of the register. It was stated within the Government White Paper Trust, Assurance and Safety – The Regulation of Health Professionals in the 21st Century (DH 2007) that the Department of Health would discuss the next steps with the NMC.
The White Paper Implementation Plan is awaited and has identified that there will be cross-over work on revalidation. Until the NMC has received further detail regarding this work all references to advanced nursing practice have been removed from the standards.

3. Revised arrangements for the practice teacher standard

Revised arrangements for the introduction of the practice teacher standard were introduced in April 2007 (NMC Circular 08/2007), which changed the time allowed to complete a practice teacher qualification from six months to it being normally completed within six months as detailed in paragraph 3.3.1.

The Circular confirmed that practice teachers were required to be in place to supervise and assess SCPHN students from September 2007. Where education providers were unable to meet this standard they have been able to make an application to the NMC for a temporary deferment up to 2010.

Also, the requirements for practice teachers for SPQs and ANP were deferred, as explained above.

The practice teacher standard in its entirety will be reviewed in the future in light of the outcomes of points 2.1 and 2.2 above, and further guidance will be issued at that time.

Currently, practice teacher preparation programmes including arrangements for the preceptorship period can be implemented flexibly to meet local circumstances such as the structure of SCPHN programmes, and placement arrangements.

4. Applying due regard to learning and assessment in practice (see glossary for definition of due regard)

Since the previous edition of these standards, NMC Circulars 26/2007 (for nursing and SCPHN) and 02/2008 (for midwifery) (Annexe 3) were issued setting out the ways in which the principle of due regard may be applied more flexibly (see paragraphs 1.2 and 2.1.3).

5. Sign-off mentors and/or practice teachers

5.1 Confirmation of proficiency
The role of the sign-off mentor and /or practice teacher is to make judgments about whether a student has achieved the required standards of proficiency for safe and effective practice for entry to the NMC register. The previous version of the standards implied that the sign-off mentor and/or practice teacher should provide confirmation of achievement of practice proficiency directly to the NMC. The sign-off process is integral to the overall programme assessment requirements which the NMC endorse as part of programme approval. The programme leader, or lead midwife for education, confirms to the approved education institution assessment board that both the theoretical and practice elements have been achieved on completion of the programme. Sign-off mentors and/or practice teachers are therefore not required to directly inform the NMC of the practice assessment outcomes. References to the role of sign-off mentor and/or practice teacher have been modified accordingly (see pages 3,13 and 14).

5.2 Implementation of the sign-off mentor and /or practice teacher role across the three parts of the NMC register
Sign-off mentors and/or practice teachers have been a requirement for all students commencing NMC approved programmes from September 2007.

All sign-off mentors are nurses or midwives who having met the additional criteria (see paragraph 2.1.3) can make judgements about whether a student has achieved the required standards of proficiency for safe and effective practice for entry to the NMC register. However, the role is applied slightly differently across the three parts of the NMC register. The process for achieving sign-off status for new mentors/practice teachers is also slightly different. These differences have been set out in this version of the standards and are summarised below.

5.2.1 Sign-off mentors in nursing

a. Sign-off mentors for pre-registration nursing students

Sign-off mentors are required only for students on final placements.[1] This means that only mentors who support pre-registration nursing students on final placements are required to meet the sign-off criteria (see paragraph 2.1.3).

From September 2007 those mentors who are subsequently required to become sign-off mentors must demonstrate that they have met the sign-off mentor criteria in full (see paragraph 2.1.3), including having been supervised on at least three occasions for signing off proficiency (at the end of a final placement) by an existing sign-off mentor before being annotated as such on the local mentor register.

b. Sign-off mentors for students on specialist practice programmes

The requirement for the introduction of Practice Teachers for specialist practice programmes was revised in NMC Circular 08/2007. As a result sign-off mentors are required for all students on specialist practice programmes leading to a recordable qualification on the nurses' part of the register.

From September 2007 students on NMC approved specialist practice programmes leading to a recordable qualification on the nurses' part of the register must be supported and assessed by sign-off mentors who have met additional criteria (paragraph 2.1.3) or by practice teachers where this is required by commissioners. For sign–off mentors this includes having been supervised on at least three occasions for signing off proficiency at the end of a final placement by an existing sign-off mentor before being annotated as such on the local register. (This can occur with a student on any NMC approved programme).

5.2.2 Sign-off mentors in midwifery

a. Sign-off mentors for pre-registration midwifery students

Sign-off mentors are required for all students on pre-registration midwifery programmes.

From September 2007 all midwives who undertake mentor preparation programmes are required to have met the additional sign-off criteria (paragraph 2.1.3) including having been supervised on at least three occasions for signing off proficiency by an existing sign-off midwifery mentor during the programme.

Since the previous edition of the standards, the NMC has outlined in NMC Circular 13/2007 how sign-off at progression points within a pre-registration midwifery programme can be used for making summative judgments about safe and effective practice. This is clarified in NMC Circular 02/2008 and outlined at 3.2.6.

b. Triennial review requirements for midwife sign-off mentors who support midwives undertaking the Standards for the preparation and practice of supervisor of midwives programmes (NMC 2006)

All midwives undertaking the supervisor of midwives programme are required to have an allocated supervisor of midwives who is also a sign-off mentor.

The NMC recognises that many supervisors of midwives are working in senior roles and may mentor student supervisors of midwives infrequently. However, it is acknowledged that in their role they are using many of the skills of a sign-off mentor on an ongoing basis. It was therefore agreed that those supervisors of midwives who only mentor student supervisors of midwives, are required to mentor at least one student in the three year period prior to triennial review, as outlined in NMC Circular 01/2008. The standards have been amended to reflect this.

---

1. Sign-off will normally take place in the full placement or period of practice learning. Occasionally this may occur slightly earlier, especially if the final experience is an elective.

5.2.3 Practice teachers for students on SCPHN programmes
Practice teachers are required for all students on SCPHN programmes unless a deferment application has been approved by the NMC as stated in NMC Circular 08/2007.

From September 2007 all nurses who undertake practice teacher preparation programmes are required to have met the additional sign-off criteria (paragraph 2.1.3). The process by which nurses and midwives undertaking practice teacher preparation programmes should consolidate their training and achieve sign-off status was clarified in NMC Circular 27/2007 and is outlined at paragraph 2.2.

6. Guidance for small scale service providers in applying the NMC's Standards to support learning and assessment in practice

The standards (NMC 2006) introduced local registers of mentors and practice teachers and processes for review and maintenance of mentor/practice teachers qualifications including annual updating and triennial review (see pages 12 and 13).

Placement providers were identified as being responsible for developing and maintaining the local registers and undertaking triennial review.

Since the introduction of the standards, however, it has become clear that some smaller scale placement providers, particularly in the independent sector (e.g. nursing homes), may not be best placed to undertake this responsibility. NMC Circular 28/2007 enabled education providers to take responsibility for developing and maintaining local registers of mentors/practice teachers, providing annual updates, and undertaking triennial reviews, as appropriate, through negotiation with small scale providers with whom they work in partnership.

7. The ongoing achievement record and sharing of personal information

The standards have been updated in respect of principles for sharing personal information necessary to maintain continuity of assessment and to ensure safe and effective practice through the ongoing achievement record, as outlined in NMC Circular 33/2007 (Annexe 3). The term 'student passport' is no longer being applied to the ongoing achievement record.

8. Good health and good character

The standards should be read in association with Good Health and Good Character: Guidance for educational institutions (NMC 2007).

9. Previous discrepancies in Annexe 1

A number of inconsistencies have been corrected relating to Annexe 1 regarding the outcomes for mentors and practice teachers.

In the table on page 55 (Mentor – stage 2, domain Creating an environment for learning) the words 'development of others' were inadvertently omitted from the last bullet point and have been added.

At 2.1.2 in the text (Mentor – stage 2, domain Establishing effective working relationships) the outcome 'develop effective working relationships based on mutual trust and respect' has been removed from the text. In the table on page 50 this outcome appears in its correct place under stage 1 of the framework (registered nurses and midwives).

At 2.1.2 in the text (Mentor – stage 2, domain Evaluation of learning) the wording of outcome 'contribute to evaluation of student learning and assessment experiences – proposing aspects for change resulting from such evaluation' has been amended slightly to ensure consistency with this outcome in the table on page 54.

At 2.2.2 in the text (Practice teacher – stage 3, domain Establishing effective working relationships) outcome 'have effective professional and interprofessional working relationships to support learning for entry to the register and education at a level beyond initial registration' appeared in the text at practice teacher – stage 3, and in the table at mentor – stage 2. This outcome applies to practice teacher – stage 3 and has been inserted into the table on page 50. For mentor – stage 2, the outcome should read 'have effective professional and interprofessional working relationships to support learning for entry to the register' and has been inserted into the text at 2.1.2, and amended in the table on page 50.

At 2.2.2 in the text (Practice teacher – stage 3, domain Facilitation of learning) outcome 'foster professional growth and personal development by use of effective communication and facilitation skills' has replaced the previous wording to ensure consistency with that in the table on page 51.

At 2.2.2 in the text (Practice teacher – stage 3, domain Leadership) outcome 'lead and contribute to evaluation of the effectiveness of learning and assessment in practice' has been inserted into the table on page 58 as this had been inadvertently omitted in the previous version.

The framework to support learning and assessment in practice

There is a single developmental framework to support learning and assessment in practice. It defines and describes the knowledge and skills nurses and midwives need to apply in practice when they support and assess students undertaking NMC approved programmes that lead to registration or a recordable qualification. The NMC has identified outcomes for mentors, practice teachers and teachers so that there is clear accountability for making decisions that lead to entry to the register.

There are eight domains in the framework, each with identified outcomes at the four developmental stages. The domains are:

1 Establishing effective working relationships

2 Facilitation of learning

3 Assessment and accountability

4 Evaluation of learning

5 Creating an environment for learning

6 Context of practice

7 Evidence-based practice

8 Leadership

The framework has been designed for application within the context of inter-professional learning and working in modern healthcare.

The way the framework has been designed makes Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning (AP(E)L) possible. Approved educational institutions (AEIs) can use their own AP(E)L processes to map prior learning from other qualifications or work experience. These processes are confirmed at programme approval. AP(E)L provides the facility for stepping on or stepping off the framework at various points of development, as well as recognition of existing qualifications.

The developmental framework takes account of the NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework and standards set by other health and social care regulators for supporting learning and assessment in practice. It also recognises the HE Academy requirements for teachers working in higher education settings, ensuring that there is a fit between the NMC requirements for teacher preparation and those defined by the HE Academy.

The developmental framework gives service and education providers opportunities to develop other roles that meet local requirements for supporting learning and assessment in practice – such as practice education facilitator or lecturer practitioner.

Programme level and length

The NMC has determined minimum lengths and academic levels for programmes to prepare mentors, practice teachers and teachers. It is expected that all preparation programmes include work-based learning to enable new knowledge, skills and competencies to be applied in practice. These requirements are set out in section 3 in relation to each outcome in the framework.

Recognition of prior learning

The NMC does not expect mentors, practice teachers and teachers who have undertaken a preparation programme previously approved by one of the National Boards, or since April 2002 undertaken preparation approved by programme providers to have to repeat such preparation. The NMC advises that:

- Nurses and midwives already holding a mentor or practice teacher qualification recognised by programme providers, should map their current qualification and experience against the new

NMC standard and meet any outstanding outcomes through continuing professional development (CPD).

- Nurses and midwives who have existing teaching qualifications recorded on the NMC register and who are actively engaged in teaching students on NMC approved programmes should, by virtue of their qualifications and experience, already meet the new standard. However they are advised to use the outcomes for teachers in the framework to guide their CPD.
- Nurses and midwives who hold qualifications that may be considered comparable to mentors or practice teachers, and which were not previously approved by one of the previous National Boards or by a programme provider, e.g. NVQ assessor, must use the AP(E)L processes available as specified previously and undertake any further education as required by the programme providers to ensure that they meet the standard. The nature of such education may be academic, work-based or a combination of both.

Local registers of mentors and practice teachers

Placement providers are responsible for ensuring that:

- An up-to-date local register of current mentors and practice teachers is held and maintained.
- They have currency by regularly reviewing the local register and adding or removing names of nurses and midwives as necessary.

Education providers should use the (local) register to confirm that there are sufficient mentors and practice teachers who meet the NMC standards to support learning and assessment in practice, to adequately support the number of students undertaking the range of NMC approved programmes currently being offered.

Mentors who are designated as being able to sign-off proficiency at the end of a programme (to be known as 'sign-off mentors') must be annotated as such on the local register. While all mentors may assess individual competencies, only those who have met additional NMC criteria to be a sign-off mentor (paragraph 2.1.3) are entitled to sign-off practice.

All midwifery mentors will have met the sign-off criteria as part of their preparation programme.

Practice teachers will have this authority assigned following a period of preceptorship after having successfully completed the practice teacher programme (NMC Circular 27/2007).

Teachers who work in both practice and academic settings, e.g. lecturer practitioners, must have met the additional sign-off criteria and have a current practice-based role in order to be annotated on the local register. These teachers will be subject to triennial review (see Triennial review of mentor and practice teacher below) in the same way as mentors and practice teachers.

Review and maintenance of mentor or practice teacher qualifications

Mentors or practice teachers must demonstrate their knowledge, skills and competence on an ongoing basis. Placement providers must ensure that:

- Each mentor or practice teacher is reviewed every three years (triennial review) to ensure that only those who continue to meet the mentor/practice teacher requirements remain on the local register.
- Mentors who meet the criteria for signing-off proficiency in practice at the end of a programme are annotated on the local register.
- Arrangements are in place for appraising mentor/practice teacher performance, addressing concern where appropriate, and for adding and removing individuals from the local register – including mentors identified as having met the criteria to be able to sign-off proficiency.

Triennial review of mentors and practice teachers

The nature of the triennial review of mentors and practice teachers is for the placement providers to determine but may form part of an employer-led personal development appraisal.

To be maintained on the local register the individual must have evidence of having:

- Mentored at least two students (practice teachers to have supervised at least one student)[2] with due regard (extenuating circumstances permitting) within the three year period. Supervisors of midwives are required to mentor at least one student undertaking a supervisor of midwives programme during the three year period relating to triennial review as outlined in NMC Circular 01/2008.
- Participated in annual updating – to include an opportunity to meet and explore assessment and supervision issues with other mentors/practice teachers.
- Explored as a group activity the validity and reliability of judgements made when assessing practice in challenging circumstances.
- Mapped ongoing development in their role against the current NMC mentor/practice teacher standards.
- Been deemed to have met all requirements needed to be maintained on the local register as a mentor, sign-off mentor or practice teacher.

Roles to support learning and assessment in practice

As a result of consultation the NMC has set standards for mentors, practice teachers and teachers that must be achieved to support and assess students undertaking NMC approved pre-registration nursing and midwifery, and SCPHN programmes. The NMC has determined mandatory requirements for each part of the register.

These are:

Nursing

- Students on NMC approved pre-registration nursing education programmes, leading to registration on the nurses' part of the register, must be supported and assessed by mentors.
- From September 2007 a sign-off mentor, who has met additional criteria (paragraph 2.1.3), must make the final assessment of practice and confirm that the required proficiencies for entry to the register have been achieved (paragraph 3.2.6).
- From September 2007 students on NMC approved specialist practice programmes leading to a recordable qualification on the nurses' part of the register must be supported and assessed by sign-off mentors who have met additional criteria (paragraph 2.1.3) or practice teachers where this is a requirement by commisisioners. The sign-off mentor must make the final assessment of practice and confirm that the required proficiencies for recording a specialist practice qualification have been achieved (paragraph 3.2.6).

Midwifery

- Students on NMC approved pre-registration midwifery education programmes, leading to registration on the midwives' part of the register, can only be supported and assessed by mentors who have met the additional criteria for sign off (paragraph 2.1.3). Sign-off mentors must make the final assessment of practice and confirm that the required proficiencies for entry to the register have been achieved (paragraph 3.2.6).

Specialist community public health nursing

Students on NMC approved specialist community public health nursing programmes, leading to registration on the specialist community public health nurses' part of the register, must be supported and assessed by practice teachers. All practice teachers will be required to meet the additional sign-off criteria (paragraph 2.1.3) on successful completion of the practice teacher programme, and following a period of preceptorship (NMC Circular 27/2007).

2. This must be a student intending to enter the SCPHN part of the register.

Where education providers are unable to meet this standard they have been able to make an application to the NMC for a temporary deferment up to 2010. From September 2007 the practice teacher must make the final assessment of practice and confirm that the required proficiencies for entry to the register have been achieved (paragraph 3.3.6). Where deferment has been given, sign off may be undertaken by sign-off mentor.

Preceptors

The original standard for teachers included an advisory standard for preceptors. The NMC supports and strongly recommends that preceptorship be made available to nurses and midwives following initial registration. The original standard has been strengthened and guidelines published in NMC Circular (NMC 21/2006).

Fitness for practice

The purpose of the standards to support learning and assessment in practice is to assure the Council that those who make judgements of students have been appropriately prepared to assess performance in practice against the relevant NMC standards. Overall achievement of relevant standards of proficiency leads to registration or a qualification that is recorded on the register.

Throughout an NMC approved programme, mentors/practice teachers (who are on the local register) will assess competence in practice and confirm that students are capable of safe and effective practice. Specific competencies for entry to the register or recording a qualification are clearly identified within each of the Standards of proficiency for nursing, midwifery or specialist community public health nursing (NMC 2004) and Standards for specialist education and practice (UKCC 1994).

The NMC requires confirmation at the end of such programmes that both practice and theory parts of the programme have been successfully achieved. In practice settings a sign-off mentor or practice teacher will consider the practice evidence to make a judgement that all competencies have been met and that the student is considered proficient. They will then sign off the practice part of the programme.

Sign-off mentors and practice teachers who sign off students as being proficient in practice are confirming to the programme provider that the student has met the defined NMC standards of proficiency and is capable of safe and effective practice. In addition, teachers of nurses, midwives and specialist community public health nurses who sign off successful completion of the approved programme for registration, or for recording a qualification, are confirming that all of the NMC programme requirements have been met.

Mentors, practice teachers and teachers who sign off all, or part of the practice component of a programme leading to registration are accountable to the Council for their decisions. Confirmation by the mentor or practice teacher that the student is capable of safe and effective practice will be considered by the assessment board along with other assessed outcomes to determine whether the student has met all requirements for successful programme completion.

Equality and diversity

All public bodies including the NMC, health providers and education establishments have a duty to promote equality of opportunity on the grounds of race, gender and disability, whilst within the private sector it has long been recognised that best practice in promoting equality and diversity has many benefits. Mentors, practice teachers, and teachers through their role-modelling of best practice play a vital role in promoting equality of opportunity by treating students with fairness, respect and understanding. Mentors, practice teachers, and teachers will also bring their own experiences and perspectives and these standards will help ensure that discrimination however unintentional is less likely to occur.

The NMC recognises the importance of supporting all students to achieve their full potential in both practice and academic learning environments. NMC approved programmes are open to all applicants providing that they are able to meet the defined selection criteria. This includes the NMC entry requirements for literacy, numeracy, good health and good character as specified in the standards of proficiency for the relevant programme, and any educational requirements set by programme providers.

Supporting students who have a disability

Programme providers will have made decisions related to any declared disabilities or health conditions when undertaking selection processes. They are bound by the general duties of the Disability Discrimination Acts (1995 and 2005) and will have determined the nature of any reasonable adjustments to support achievement of programme requirements.

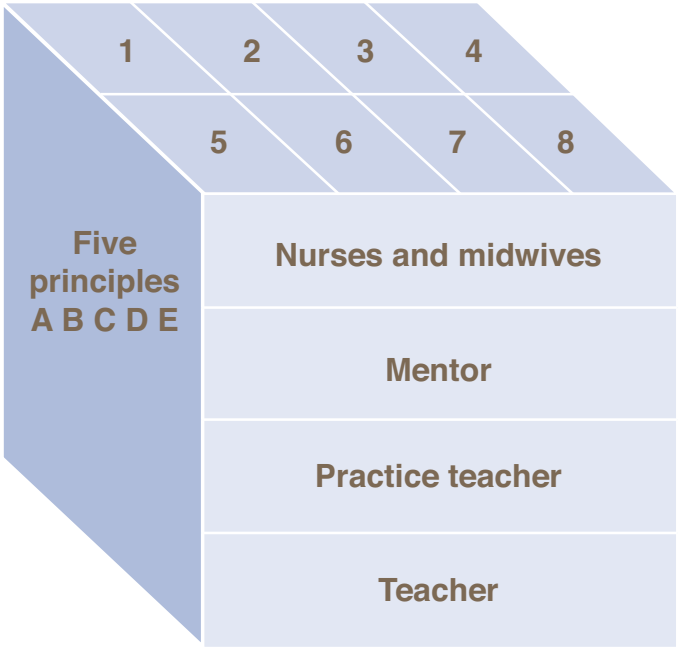
The NMC advises that all mentors, practice teachers and teachers should receive disability equality training. Programme providers should work in partnership to prepare placement areas for supporting students with disabilities and prepare students for the demands the placements will make of them. In particular, the learning environments in practice and academic settings should enable students to be confident that disclosure of their specific needs will not lead to discrimination. Consideration should be given to allocating time for mentors, practice teachers and teachers to meet the special needs of students with disabilities.

1.1 The developmental framework

The framework has been designed to facilitate personal and professional development. The domains and outcomes enable nurses and midwives to plan and measure their achievement and progress. The framework enables nurses and midwives and approved educational institutions to map other learning, such as previous preparation programmes e.g. NVQ Assessor or Verifier, in order to determine credit for prior learning. The NMC expects nurses and midwives to include CPD for their teaching roles in their personal development plans. Nurses and midwives may wish to develop a portfolio of evidence mapped against the outcomes of particular stages of the framework to demonstrate how they are developing the knowledge, skills and competence related to supporting learning and assessment in practice. Not all of the stages in the framework apply to all parts of the NMC register; this is clarified in Section 3 related to applying the standards.

The framework (see Annexe 1) is underpinned by five principles (paragraph 1.2). It has eight domains, each with an overall descriptor. There are four stages setting out the supervision, teaching and ongoing requirements of mentors, practice teachers or teachers each with more specific outcomes relevant to one of the eight domain descriptors. The NMC would expect that the majority of nurses and midwives would at least meet the outcomes of a mentor.

It is possible to enter and exit the framework at any stage; this means that no one stage is a pre-requisite for a subsequent stage. If a decision is taken to use the framework developmentally, credit should be awarded for prior knowledge, skills and experience achieved in a previous stage.



Stage 1 reflects the requirements of The Code: Standards of conduct, performance and ethics for nurses and midwives (2008)[3]. All nurses and midwives must meet the defined requirements, in particular:

'You must facilitate students and others to develop their competence.'

Stage 2 identifies the standard for mentors. Nurses and midwives can become a mentor when they have successfully achieved all of the outcomes of this stage. This qualification is recorded on the local register of mentors

Stage 3 identifies the standard for a practice teacher for nursing[4] or specialist community public health nursing. Nurses and midwives can become a practice teacher when they have successfully achieved all of the outcomes of this stage. This qualification is recorded on the local register of practice teachers

Stage 4 identifies the standard for a teacher of nurses, midwives or specialist community public health nurses. Nurses and midwives can become a teacher when they have successfully achieved all of the outcomes of this stage. This qualification may be recorded on the NMC register on application to the NMC and payment of the relevant fee.

The NMC will approve preparation programmes for these standards and monitor their implementation (section 4: Approval and monitoring of mentor, practice teacher and teacher preparation programmes).

1.2 The underpinning principles

The underpinning principles for supporting learning and assessment in practice for any student undertaking an NMC approved programme leading to registration or a qualification that is recordable on the register are that nurses and midwives who make judgments about whether a student has achieved the required standards of proficiency for safe and effective practice must:

A be on the same part or sub-part of the register as that which the student is intending to enter. NMC Circulars 26/2007 (for nursing and SCPHN) and 02/2008 (for midwifery) (Annexe 3) set out the ways in which the principle of due regard may be applied more flexibly without reducing the degree of rigour applied to assessing student competence. (See glossary for definition of due regard);

B have developed their own knowledge, skills and competency beyond that of registration through CPD – either formal or experiential learning – as appropriate to their support role;

C hold professional qualifications at an appropriate level to support and assess the students they mentor/teach, i.e. professional qualifications equal to, or at a higher level than, the students they are supporting and assessing and;

D have been prepared for their role to support and assess learning and met NMC defined outcomes. Also, that such outcomes have been achieved in practice and, where relevant, in academic settings, including abilities to support interprofessional learning. In addition:

E Nurses and midwives who have completed an NMC approved teacher preparation programme may record their qualification on the NMC register. Other teaching qualifications may be assessed against the NMC teacher outcomes through the NMC accreditation route.

3. Any subsequent changes to this document must be considered in the context of the most up to date version.

4. For nursing this would apply to SPQ programmes where commissioners require practice teachers to be used.

1.3 Advice and guidance for applying the underpinning principles

Principle A

Nurses and midwives who make judgements about whether a student has achieved the required standards of proficiency for safe and effective practice must be on the same part or sub-part of the register as that which the student is intending to enter.

The NMC recognises that, as part of interprofessional learning and working, others will contribute to learning and assessment in practice. These may be nurses and midwives from other professions. However to ensure public protection, only those who are NMC sign-off mentors or practice teachers may confirm overall achievement of proficiency that demonstrates a students' fitness for practice. They determine that the student has met the relevant competencies or standards of proficiency for entry to the register or for a qualification that is recordable on the register (see circular 26/2007 in Annexe 3 for further information on interprofessional placements).

Other mentors, practice teachers or teachers may be involved in developmental (formative) assessment where the student is gaining a breadth of experience but where their learning is not intended to demonstrate competence as a nurse, midwife or specialist community public health nurse. For example, midwifery students may have a placement in a nursing environment, nursing students may have a social work placement, specialist community public health nurses may spend time with other professionals involved in child protection or public health. These placements are to gain a breadth of experience and normally do not involve assessment of competence related to the professions they intend to enter. In such placements the right person to assess outcomes (developed as part of the whole programme) would be the professional who has the knowledge, competence and experience in that area of practice.

In relation to nursing students the standards of proficiency have to be achieved within the context of the branch programme they are studying – adult, mental health, learning disability and children's nursing. The NMC recognises that within every field of practice, and between professional groups, there will be areas of shared competence.

The mentors or practice teachers who sign off proficiency for nursing students must have a mark on the register that corresponds with the branch programme the student is studying.

Principle B

They must have developed their own knowledge, skills and competency beyond that of registration through CPD – either formal or experiential learning – as appropriate to their support role.

The NMC supports and advocates lifelong learning for all nurses and midwives and requires evidence of CPD for mandatory renewal of registration. Mentors and practice teachers, acting as role models, will be able to demonstrate clinical decision-making abilities, enabling students to gain a holistic view of professional roles. The increased evidence-base that mentors and practice teachers have developed and shared with their students will help students to learn how to justify decision-making in their own practice and to begin to take responsibility for these decisions.

Principle C

Their professional qualifications will be at an appropriate level to support and assess the students they mentor/teach, i.e. they must hold professional qualifications equal to, or at a higher level than, the students they are supporting and assessing.

Mentors, practice teachers and teachers must hold professional qualifications that are at least equal[5] to the students for whom they support learning and are assessing. Equal in this context

5. With regard to initial registration the NMC no longer offers second level preparation and accepts that those registrants on the second level sub-part of the nurses' part of the register will, through meeting NMC renewal of registration requirements for CPD, have developed their knowledge, skills and competence beyond their initial registration. Programme/placement providers must satisfy themselves that second level nurses who will be involved in supporting and assessing students have the knowledge, skills and competence to do so.

means registration level, i.e. initial registration or SCPHN. Students benefit from being exposed to mentors, practice teachers and teachers who have developed themselves to a standard beyond that at which they are learning, in both academic and practice qualifications.

Principle D

They have been prepared for their role to support and assess learning and met NMC defined outcomes. Also, that such outcomes have been achieved in practice and, where relevant, in academic settings, including abilities to support interprofessional learning.

The NMC has agreed that it will approve mentor and practice teacher preparation programmes so that that they can be assured of the consistency of preparation for supporting learning and assessment in practice. Preparation programmes for teachers are already approved by the NMC and will continue to be so. Principle D is achieved within the context of interprofessional learning and working – therefore the advice and guidance given for Principle A applies. However the NMC would expect that the majority of mentors, practice teachers and teachers would be nurses and midwives and would have been prepared to meet the NMC outcomes defined in this framework, and that this would be a requirement where proficiency is being assessed.

Principle E

Nurses and midwives who have completed an NMC approved teacher preparation programme may record their qualification on the NMC register. Other teaching qualifications may be assessed against the NMC teacher outcomes through the NMC accreditation route.

The NMC will record a teaching qualification for those who have undertaken an NMC approved teacher preparation programme and successfully achieved the outcomes of stage 4 of the framework. Recognition of prior learning will be in accordance with the process detailed in paragraph 4.4.

Section 2 – NMC standards for mentors, practice teachers and teachers

2.1 NMC mentor standard

An NMC mentor is a registrant who, following successful completion of an NMC approved mentor preparation programme – or comparable preparation that has been accredited by an AEI as meeting the NMC mentor requirements – has achieved the knowledge, skills and competence required to meet the defined outcomes.

A mentor is a mandatory requirement for pre-registration nursing and midwifery students.

Mentors who are assessing competence must have met the NMC outcomes defined in stage 2 of this standard, or be supervised by a mentor who has met these outcomes. Those who sign off proficiency must have met the additional criteria to be a sign-off mentor (see section 2.1.3). All midwife mentors must have met the additional criteria to be a sign-off mentor.

Once mentors have been entered on the local register (normally held by placement providers) they are subject to triennial review (see Roles to support learning and assessment in practice in the introduction).

Mentors are responsible and accountable for:

- Organising and co-ordinating student learning activities in practice.
- Supervising students in learning situations and providing them with constructive feedback on their achievements.
- Setting and monitoring achievement of realistic learning objectives.
- Assessing total performance – including skills, attitudes and behaviours.
- Providing evidence as required by programme providers of student achievement or lack of achievement.
- Liaising with others (e.g. mentors, sign-off mentors, practice facilitators, practice teachers, personal tutors, programme leaders) to provide feedback, identify any concerns about the student's performance and agree action as appropriate.
- Providing evidence for, or acting as, sign-off mentors with regard to making decisions about achievement of proficiency at the end of a programme.

2.1.1 Criteria for supporting learning and assessing in practice – mentors

Nurses and midwives who intend to take on the role of mentor must fulfil the following criteria:

- Be registered in the same part or sub-part of the register as the student they are to assess and for the nurses' part of the register be in the same field of practice (adult, mental health, learning disability or children's). See Circular 26/2007 for further information (Annexe 3).
- Have developed their own knowledge, skills and competence beyond registration i.e. been registered for at least one year.
- Have successfully completed an NMC approved mentor preparation programme (or a comparable programme which has been accredited by an AEI as meeting the NMC mentor requirements).
- Have the ability to select, support and assess a range of learning opportunities in their area of practice for students undertaking NMC approved programmes.
- Be able to support learning in an interprofessional environment – selecting and supporting a range of learning opportunities for students from other professions.
- Have the ability to contribute to the assessment of other professionals under the supervision of an experienced assessor from that profession.
- Be able to make judgements about competence/proficiency of NMC students on the same part of the register, and in the same field of practice, and be accountable for such decisions.
- Be able to support other nurses and midwives in meeting CPD needs in accordance with the Code: Standards for conduct, performance and ethics for nurses and midwives (NMC 2008).

2.1.2 Competence and outcomes for a mentor

Mentor competencies are achieved by successful completion of an NMC approved mentor preparation programme that achieves all of the outcomes of stage 2. These outcomes are as follows:

Establishing effective working relationships

- Demonstrate an understanding of factors that influence how students integrate into practice settings.
- Provide ongoing and constructive support to facilitate transition from one learning environment to another.
- Have effective professional and interprofessional working relationships to support learning for entry to the register.

Facilitation of learning

- Use knowledge of the student's stage of learning to select appropriate learning opportunities to meet individual needs.
- Facilitate the selection of appropriate learning strategies to integrate learning from practice and academic experiences.
- Support students in critically reflecting upon their learning experiences in order to enhance future learning.

Assessment and accountability

- Foster professional growth, personal development and accountability through support of students in practice.
- Demonstrate a breadth of understanding of assessment strategies and the ability to contribute to the total assessment process as part of the teaching team.
- Provide constructive feedback to students and assist them in identifying future learning needs and actions. Manage failing students so that they may enhance their performance and capabilities for safe and effective practice or be able to understand their failure and the implications of this for their future.
- Be accountable for confirming that students have met, or not met, the NMC competencies in practice. As a sign-off mentor confirm that students have met, or not met, the NMC standards of proficiency in practice and are capable of safe and effective practice.

Evaluation of learning

- Contribute to evaluation of student learning and assessment experiences – proposing aspects for change resulting from such evaluation.
- Participate in self and peer evaluation to facilitate personal development, and contribute to the development of others.

Creating an environment for learning

- Support students to identify both learning needs and experiences that are appropriate to their level of learning.
- Use a range of learning experiences, involving patients, clients, carers and the professional team, to meet defined learning needs.
- Identify aspects of the learning environment which could be enhanced – negotiating with others to make appropriate changes.
- Act as a resource to facilitate personal and professional development of others.

Context of practice

- Contribute to the development of an environment in which effective practice is fostered, implemented, evaluated and disseminated.
- Set and maintain professional boundaries that are sufficiently flexible for providing interprofessional care.

- Initiate and respond to practice developments to ensure safe and effective care is achieved and an effective learning environment is maintained.

Evidence-based practice

- Identify and apply research and evidence-based practice to their area of practice.
- Contribute to strategies to increase or review the evidence-base used to support practice.
- Support students in applying an evidence base to their own practice.

Leadership

- Plan a series of learning experiences that will meet students defined learning needs.
- Be an advocate for students to support them accessing learning opportunities that meet their individual needs – involving a range of other professionals, patients, clients and carers.
- Prioritise work to accommodate support of students within their practice roles.
- Provide feedback about the effectiveness of learning and assessment in practice.

2.1.3 Criteria for a sign-off mentor

Underpinned by principle A which states that:

Nurses and midwives who make judgements about whether a student has achieved the required standards of proficiency for safe and effective practice must be on the same part or sub-part of the register as that which the student is intending to enter.

Only sign-off mentors[6] and practice teachers that are on the same part of the register and in the same field of practice may confirm that students have met the relevant standards of proficiency for the particular programme leading to registration or a qualification that is recordable on the NMC register.

Placement providers must ensure that a nurse or midwife designated to sign-off proficiency for a particular student at the end of a programme is:

- Identified on the local register as a sign-off mentor or a practice teacher.
- Registered on the same part of the register.
- Working in the same field of practice as that in which the student intends to qualify.

And additionally to be a sign-off mentor they must have:

- Clinical currency and capability in the field in which the student is being assessed.
- A working knowledge of current programme requirements, practice assessment strategies and relevant changes in education and practice for the student they are assessing.
- An understanding of the NMC registration requirements and the contribution they make to the achievement of these requirements.
- An in-depth understanding of their accountability to the NMC for the decision they must make to pass or fail a student when assessing proficiency requirements at the end of a programme.
- Been supervised on at least three occasions for signing off proficiency by an existing sign-off mentor (see paragraph 5.2 in introduction).
- A working knowledge of current programme requirements, practice assessment strategies and relevant changes in education and practice for the student they are assessing.
- The achievement of these requirements.
- An understanding of the NMC registration requirements and the contribution they make to meeting these requirements.
- An in-depth understanding of their accountability to the NMC for the decision they make to pass or fail a student when assessing proficiency requirements at the end of a programme.

6. Placement providers will decide in the first instance who may be considered as a sign-off mentor and annotate these mentors accordingly. The NMC would expect that such mentors would meet all criteria except that of being supervised by an existing sign-off mentor. All midwife mentors will be sign-off mentors.

2.2 NMC practice teacher standard

An NMC practice teacher is a registrant who normally will have previously fulfilled the NMC requirements to become a mentor, and who has received further preparation to achieve the knowledge, skills and competence required to meet the NMC defined outcomes for a practice teacher.

The NMC requires all students undertaking a programme leading to registration as a specialist community public health nurse (SCPHN) to have a named practice teacher. Practice teachers must have met NMC requirements defined in this standard, or be supervised by a practice teacher who has met them. Once practice teachers have been entered on the local register (which will be held by placement providers) they are subject to triennial review (see Triennial review of mentor and practice teacher in the introduction).

In September 2007 the process by which nurses undertaking practice teacher preparation programmes should achieve sign-off status was clarified (NMC Circular 27/2007). Trainee practice teachers must be supervised by an existing sign off practice teacher on at least one occasion for signing off proficiency of a SCPHN student at the end of their final placement.

Following successful completion of the programme the trainee practice teacher can be entered on the local register as a practice teacher. They should then undertake a period of preceptorship supported by an existing sign-off practice teacher. The nature of the period of preceptorship should be determined by the local placement provider, but would normally be for a year during which time further supervised sign-offs of SCPHN students should be undertaken.

Once the period of preceptorship is completed and the preceptor is satisfied that the preceptee is competent in signing off proficiency, the preceptee can be annotated as a sign-off practice teacher. The period of preceptorship can then be extended if necessary, but this should not continue beyond the date of their first triennial review.

The practice teacher should continue to receive support from other experienced practice teachers when making final placement assessment decisions, until they have received the first triennial review and been identified as continuing to meet the criteria to be able to sign off proficiency.

NMC practice teachers are responsible and accountable for:

- Organising and co-ordinating learning activities, primarily in practice learning environments for pre-registration students, and those intending to register as a specialist community public health nurse (SCPHN) and specialist practice qualifications where this is a local requirement.
- Supervising students and providing them with constructive feedback on their achievements.
- Setting and monitoring achievement of realistic learning objectives in practice.
- Assessing total performance – including skills, attitudes and behaviours.
- Providing evidence as required by programme providers of the student's achievement or lack of achievement.
- Liaising with others (e.g. mentors, sign-off mentors, supervisors, personal tutors, the programme leader, other professionals) to provide feedback and identify any concerns about the student's performance and agree action as appropriate.
- Signing off achievement of proficiency at the end of the final period of practice learning or a period of supervised practice.

The practice teaching role will be supported by appropriate professional and academic qualifications, and practice development activity, to provide an evidence-base for teaching. Practice teachers will have met the additional criteria for a sign-off mentor (section 2.1 .3) as part of their preparation. The practice teacher role may vary according to the nature of the student they are supporting. Specific additional criteria, where appropriate, are identified in the relevant standards of proficiency for nurses, midwives and specialist community public health nurses.

2.2.1 Criteria for supporting learning and assessing in practice – practice teacher

Nurses who intend to take on the role of practice teacher, and who will be assessing the student's fitness for practice, must fulfil the following criteria:

- Be registered in the same part of the register, i.e. SCPHN, and from the same field of practice e.g. school nursing, health visiting, occupational health nursing (or relevant SPQ where this is a local requirement) as the student they are to assess (see NMC Circular 26/2007 Annexe 3).
- Have developed their own knowledge, skills and competence beyond registration i.e. registered and worked for at least two years, and gained additional qualifications that will support students in SCPHN, or SPQ where this is a local requirement.
- Have successfully completed an NMC approved practice teacher preparation programme or a comparable programme that has been accredited by an AEI as meeting the NMC practice teacher requirements. And, normally, having previously met the outcomes for acting as a mentor and gained experience in this role.
- Have the abilities to design, deliver and assess programmes of learning in practice settings – supporting a range of students in their area of practice, i.e. pre-registration, SCPHN, CPD of peers, other professionals.
- Be able to support learning in an interprofessional environment – selecting and supporting a range of learning opportunities for students from all professions – relevant to their level of practice and specialist expertise.
- Be able to use agreed criteria for cross-professional assessment and supervise NMC mentors and other professionals using such criteria.
- Be able to make judgements about the competence/proficiency of NMC students, for registration on the same part of the register and be accountable to the NMC for such decisions.
- Be able to provide leadership to all those involved in supporting learning and assessing in practice for NMC students – enabling effective learning environments to be developed.

2.2.2 Competence and outcomes for a practice teacher

The competencies of a practice teacher are achieved by successful completion of an NMC approved practice teacher preparation programme achieving all of the outcomes of stage 3. These outcomes are as follows:

Establishing effective working relationships

- Have effective professional and interprofessional working relationships to support learning for entry to the register, and education at a level beyond initial registration
- Be able to support students moving into specific areas of practice – or a level of practice beyond initial registration, identifying their individual needs in moving to a different level of practice.
- Support mentors and other professionals in their roles to support learning across practice and academic learning environments.

Facilitation of learning

- Enable students to relate theory to practice whilst developing critically reflective skills.
- Foster professional growth and personal development by use of effective communication and facilitation skills.
- Facilitate and develop the ethos of interprofessional learning and working.

Assessment and accountability

- Set effective professional boundaries whilst creating a dynamic, constructive teacher-student relationship.
- In partnership with other members of the teaching team, use knowledge and experience to design and implement assessment frameworks.
- Be able to assess practice for registration, and also at a level beyond that of initial registration.

- Provide constructive feedback to students and assist in identifying future learning needs and actions, managing failing students so that they may either enhance their performance and capabilities for safe and effective practice, or are able to understand their failure and the implications of this for their future.
- Be accountable for confirming that students have met, or not met, the NMC standards of proficiency in practice for registration, at a level beyond initial registration, and are capable of safe and effective practice.

Evaluation of learning

- Design evaluation strategies to determine the effectiveness of practice and academic experience, accessed by students, at both registration level and those in education at a level beyond initial registration.
- Collaborate with other members of the teaching team to judge and develop learning, assessment and to support appropriate practice and levels of education.
- Collect evidence on the quality of education in practice, and determine how well NMC requirements for standards of proficiency are being achieved.

Creating an environment for learning

- Enable students to access opportunities to learn and work within interprofessional teams.
- Initiate the creation of optimum learning environments for students at registration level and for those in education at a level beyond initial registration.
- Work closely with others involved in education – in practice and academic settings – to adapt to change and inform curriculum development.

Context of practice

- Recognise the unique needs of practice and contribute to development of an environment that supports achievement of NMC standards of proficiency.
- Set and maintain professional boundaries, whilst at the same time recognising the contribution of the wider interprofessional team and the context of care delivery.
- Support students in exploring new ways of working, and the impact this may have on established professional roles.

Evidence based practice

- Identify areas for research and practice development based on interpretation of existing evidence.
- Use local and national health frameworks to review and identify developmental needs.
- Advance their own knowledge and practice in order to develop new practitioners, at both registration level and education at a level beyond initial registration, to be able to meet changes in practice roles and care delivery.
- Disseminate findings from research and practice development to enhance practice and the quality of learning experiences.

Leadership

- Provide practice leadership and expertise in application of knowledge and skills based on evidence.
- Demonstrate the ability to lead education in practice, working across practice and academic settings.
- Manage competing demands of practice and education related to supporting different practice levels of students.
- Lead and contribute to evaluation of the effectiveness of learning and assessment in practice

2.3 NMC teacher standard

An NMC teacher is an NMC registrant who, following successful completion of an NMC approved teacher preparation programme, has achieved the knowledge, skills and competence required to meet the NMC defined outcomes of stage 4 of the developmental framework.

The NMC teacher standard is mandatory for those nurses and midwives based in higher education who support learning and assessment in practice settings for students on NMC approved programmes. The NMC recognises that some academic teachers will not be nurses or midwives, but will instead have specialist knowledge and expertise that contributes to professional education. The NMC will, through its quality assurance processes, verify that the majority of teachers who make a major contribution to NMC approved programmes hold, or are working towards, a teaching qualification that meets the outcomes of stage 4 of the developmental framework.

NMC teachers are responsible for:

- Organising and co-ordinating learning activities in both academic and practice environments.
- Supervising students in learning situations and providing them with constructive feedback on their achievements.
- Setting and monitoring achievement of realistic learning objectives in theory and practice.
- Assessing performance and providing evidence as required of student achievement.

Their teaching role will be supported by appropriate professional and academic qualifications and ongoing research, education and/or practice development activity to provide an evidence base for their teaching. Only teachers who work in both practice and academic settings e.g. lecturer practitioners may assess practice.

2.3.1 Criteria for supporting learning and assessing in practice – teachers

Nurses and midwives who intend to take on the role of teacher must fulfil the following criteria:

- Be registered in the same part or sub-part of the register as the students they support.
- Have completed at least three years post-registration experience, gained additional professional knowledge and skills, and have experience in an area where students are gaining practice experience relevant to their registration.
- Have extended their professional knowledge, relevant to their field of practice, to at least first degree level, prior to undertaking an NMC approved post-graduate teacher preparation programme.
- Have the abilities to lead programme development and co-ordinate the work of others in delivering and assessing programmes of learning in practice and academic settings -– supporting a wide range of students.
- Able to support interprofessional learning and working, selecting and supporting a range of learning opportunities for students from all professions, and supporting practice development.
- Have the ability to generate and use cross-professional assessment criteria, supervising mentors, practice teachers and teachers from other professions in the implementation of such criteria.
- Able to teach and assess in both practice and academic settings, contributing to decisions about fitness for practice of NMC students for both registration and qualifications at a level beyond initial registration – and be accountable to the NMC for such decisions.
- Able to provide leadership in education in both practice and academic settings, e.g. nurse/midwife consultant roles, clinical academic roles, programme leader, etc.

2.3.2 Competence and outcomes for a teacher

The competencies of a teacher are achieved by successful completion of an NMC approved teacher preparation programme achieving all of the outcomes of stage 4 of the developmental framework. This preparation programme must have included, as part of the overall programme, a period of assessed teaching activity to include experience in both academic and practice settings, at least equivalent to a minimum of 12 weeks (or 360 hours), with students studying an NMC approved programme.

The competencies of a teacher are:

- Demonstrate effective relationship building skills sufficient to support learning, as part of a wider interprofessional team, for a range of students in both practice and academic learning environments and supporting mentors and practice teachers.
- Facilitate learning for a range of students, within a particular area of practice and where appropriate, encourage self-management of learning opportunities and provide support to maximise individual potential.
- Assess learning, in order to make judgements related to the NMC standards of proficiency for entry to the register or, for recording a qualification at a level beyond initial registration, being the final point of accountability for 'fitness for practice' decisions.
- Determine strategies for evaluating learning in practice and academic settings to ensure that the NMC standards of proficiency for recording a qualification at a level beyond initial registration have been met.
- Create an environment for learning, where practice is valued and developed, that provides appropriate professional and interprofessional learning opportunities and support for learning to maximise achievement for individuals.
- Support learning within a context of practice that reflects healthcare and educational policies, managing change to ensure that particular professional needs are met within a learning environment that also supports practice development.
- Apply a knowledge and practice evidence-base to their own work and contribute to the further development of such an evidence-base for practice.
- Demonstrate leadership skills for education within practice and academic settings,
- The outcomes for a teacher to meet the competencies are as follows:

Establishing effective working relationships

- Demonstrate effective relationships with other members of the teaching teams, in practice and academic settings, based on mutual trust and respect.
- Maintain appropriate supportive relationships with a range of students, mentors, practice teachers and other professionals.
- Foster peer support and learning in practice and academic settings for all students.
- Support students to integrate into new environments and working teams to enhance access to learning.

Facilitation of learning

- Promote development of enquiring, reflective, critical and innovative approaches to learning.
- Implement a range of learning and teaching strategies across a wide range of settings.
- Provide support and advice, with ongoing and constructive feedback to students, to maximise individual potential.
- Co-ordinate learning within an interprofessional learning and working environment.
- Facilitate integration of learning from practice and academic settings.
- Act as a practice expert to support development of knowledge and skills for practice.

Assessment and accountability

- Set and maintain professional boundaries that are sufficiently flexible for interprofessional learning.
- Develop, with others, effective assessment strategies to ensure that standards of proficiency for registration, or recordable qualifications at a level beyond initial registration, are met.
- Support others involved in the assessment process – students, mentors and peers.
- Provide constructive feedback to students and assist them in identifying future learning needs

and actions, managing failing students so that they may either enhance their performance and capabilities for safe and effective practice, or be able to understand their failure and the implications of this for their future.

- Be accountable for their decisions related to fitness for practice for registration or recordable qualifications – underpinning such decisions with an evidence-base derived from appropriate and effective monitoring of performance.[7]

Evaluation of learning

- Determine and use criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of learning environments – acting on findings, with others, to enhance quality.
- Foster and participate in self and peer evaluation to enable students to manage their own learning in practice and academic settings and to enhance personal professional development.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of assessment strategies in providing evidence to make judgements on fitness for practice.
- Report on the quality of practice and academic learning environments to demonstrate that NMC requirements have been met, particularly in relation to support of students and achievement of standards of proficiency.

Creating an environment for learning

- Develop, in partnership with others, opportunities for students to identify and access learning experiences that meet their individual needs.
- Ensure such opportunities maintain the integrity of the student's professional role whilst responding to the interprofessional context of practice.
- Determine, with others, audit criteria against which learning environments may be judged for their effectiveness in meeting NMC requirements.
- Support and develop others involved to ensure that learning needs are effectively met in a safe environment.
- Explore and implement strategies for continuous quality improvement of the learning environment.

Context of practice

- Support students in identifying ways in which policy impacts on practice.
- Contribute effectively to processes of change and innovation – implementing new ways of working that maintain the integrity of professional roles.
- Negotiate ways of providing support to students so that they can achieve their learning needs within the context of professional and interprofessional practice.
- Act as a role model to enable students to learn professional responsibilities and how to be accountable for their own practice.
- Adapt to change, demonstrating to students how flexibility may be incorporated whilst maintaining safe and effective practice.

Evidence-based practice

- Advance their own knowledge and practice abilities through access to, and involvement in – where appropriate – research and practice development.
- Consider how evidence-based practice, involving patients, clients, carers and other members of the health and social care team, enhances care delivery and learning opportunities.
- Empower individuals, groups and organisations to develop the evidence-base for practice.
- Disseminate findings from research and practice development to enhance the quality of learning, care delivery and academic environments.

7. Only those teachers with a practice role and who have met the additional criteria for a sign-off mentor may assess students in practice settings.

Leadership

- Demonstrate effective communication skills to facilitate delivery of educational programmes that lead to registration or a recordable qualification.
- Initiate and lead programme development and review processes to enhance quality and effectiveness.
- Develop effective relationships with practice and academic staff, who are involved in programme delivery, to ensure clarity of contribution and strategies to respond to evaluation of learning experiences.
- Demonstrate strategic vision for practice and academic development relevant to meeting NMC requirements.
- Manage competing demands to ensure effectiveness of learning experiences for students.
- Lead, contribute to, analyse and act on the findings of evaluation of learning and assessment to develop programmes.
- Provide feedback about the effectiveness of learning and assessment in practice.

Section 3 – Applying the standards to support learning and assessment in practice

3.1 Applying the standards to nursing, midwifery and specialist community public health nursing education programmes

The NMC has acknowledged that nurses, midwives and specialist community public health nurses have different needs when applying the standards to support learning and assessment in practice.

These are clarified as:

- Nursing education – requires mentors, practice teachers and teachers to provide the full range of support and assessment required to meet the needs of pre-registration , and specialist practice education
- Midwifery education – requires only mentors and teachers.
- Specialist community public health nursing education – requires practice teachers and teachers.

3.2 Applying the NMC mentor standard in practice

From 1 September 2007 the NMC mentor standard is mandatory for supporting the learning and assessment of pre-registration nursing and midwifery students. NMC requirements will be updated in the future in the light of the review of specialist practice qualification and advanced nursing practice, as explained in the introduction to this document.

The standard for mentors needs to be read in conjunction with the relevant Standards of proficiency for pre-registration nursing (or midwifery) education (NMC 2004), Standards for specialist education and practice (UKCC 1994), and Good health and good character: Guidance for educational institutions (NMC 2007), and also with respect to the Nursing and Midwifery Council (Education, Registration and Registrations Appeals) Rules Order of Council 2004 (SI 2004 No 1767) hereafter referred to as the Education Rules; and the Nursing and Midwifery Council (Midwives) Rules Order of Council 2004 (SI 2004 No 1764) hereafter known as the Midwives Rules.

The following requirements are set by the NMC for implementing the mentor standard. Advice and guidance is provided to help interpret the requirements.

3.2.1 Mentor preparation programmes

Mentor preparation programmes must be:

- At a minimum academic level of HE Intermediate level (previously known as level 2) or SCQF Level 8.
- A minimum of 10 days, of which at least five days are protected learning time.
- Include learning in both academic and practice settings.
- Include relevant work-based learning, e.g. experience in mentoring a student under the supervision of a qualified mentor, and have the opportunity to critically reflect on such an experience.
- Normally, be completed within three months.[8]
- Should provide a foundation for undertaking an NMC approved practice teacher programme.
- Allow AP(E)L to be applied to up to 100% of the programme, and recognise previous preparation of an equivalent nature and standard. It is for placement providers to determine if an individual meets the NMC additional criteria to sign-off a student's proficiency (section 3.2.6), and therefore they may be placed immediately on the local register with an annotation to identify this.

8. All midwifery mentors are required to meet the additional criteria to be a sign-off mentor (see section 3.2.6) as part of their preparation programme; the length of this programme should be adjusted to take account of this requirement to allow time for midwifery mentors to be supervised as a sign-off mentor on at least three occasions.

3.2.2 Continuing professional development for mentors

The NMC requires all qualified mentors to maintain and develop their knowledge, skills and competence as a mentor through regular updating. The NMC requires placement providers to maintain a record of current mentors and, where appropriate, (and in partnership with local education providers) to make provisions for annual updating of these nurses and midwives.

The purpose of annual updating is to ensure that mentors:

- Have current knowledge of NMC approved programmes.
- Are able to discuss the implications of changes to NMC requirements.
- Have an opportunity to discuss issues related to mentoring, assessment of competence and fitness for safe and effective practice.

Mentors should be prepared to demonstrate to their employers, and NMC quality assurance agents as appropriate,[9] how they have maintained and developed their knowledge, skills and competence as a mentor. Placement providers will consider evidence of updating as part of triennial review.

3.2.3 Allocated learning time for mentor activity

The NMC recognises that nurses and midwives who are mentors are primarily employed to provide care for patients and clients. Pre-registration students have supernumerary status and can expect to be able to work with mentors. All students must be supervised at all times, either directly or indirectly. Being a mentor requires a commitment. The NMC requires that as a minimum:

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

The nature of supervision will vary from direct to indirect depending upon the:

- Nature of the activity the student is engaged in.
- Evidence of their current competence.
- Need to assess achievement of NMC outcomes or competencies for progression on the programme.

Mentors will use their professional judgment and local/national policy to determine where activities may be safely delegated to students and the level of supervision required.
They are accountable for such decisions and for ensuring public protection.

They will need time, when undertaking work with a student, to be able to explain, question, assess performance and provide feedback to the student in a meaningful way.

9. All NMC approved programmes are monitored regularly. This may involve NMC quality assurance agents in practice and education visits to examine evidence that NMC requirements are being met.

3.2.4 Supporting learning in practice

The NMC requires mentors to support learning in practice for several reasons (section 2.1):

- Provide support and guidance to the student when learning new skills or applying new knowledge.
- Act as a resource to the student to facilitate learning and professional growth.
- Directly manage the student's learning in practice to ensure public protection.
- Directly observe the student's practice, or use indirect observation where appropriate, in order to ensure that NMC defined outcomes and competencies are met.

The following requirements enable effective mentorship to be realised:

NMC Requirements	Advice and guidance
Every student has a named mentor for each period of practice learning.	Mentors should be allocated prior to commencement of a placement. This should be sufficiently in advance of the placement to enable both the student and their mentor to prepare adequately for the placement. The NMC would recommend that, at a minimum, this should be one week prior to commencement of the placement.
Mentors should not normally support more than three students, from any discipline, at any point in time.	Mentors need to be able to commit themselves to supporting learning and assessment in practice. Their workload need to reflect the demands of being a mentor.
Whilst giving direct care in the practice setting at least 40% of the student's time must be spent being supervised (directly or indirectly) by a mentor/practice teacher.[10] When in a final placement this 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 (paragraph 3.2.6)	At all times students must be directly or indirectly supervised in the practice setting. The mentor's responsibility is to plan and co-ordinate the student's whole learning experience, determining the amount of direct supervision required by the mentor, and what experience may be through indirect supervision (student working independently). Some experience may be supervised by others (other professionals, mentors or practice teachers). The named mentor is accountable for their decisions to let the student work independently or with others.
An ongoing achievement record including comments from mentors must be passed from one placement to the next to enable judgements to be made on the student's progress. (Further detail: see circular 33/2007 in annexe 3)	Students are expected to keep a record of their learning experiences, identifying evidence to support achievement of NMC outcomes and competencies and where further support and supervision is required. This record should be made available to the named mentor at the beginning of a new experience to enable discussion of strengths and areas for improvement. Students must be kept fully informed regarding the ways in which information is intended to be shared, used and stored, including the length of time it is to be retained and when it will be destroyed. (Data Protection Act 1998)

10. In some NMC approved programme there is a specified requirement for the amount of practice that is supervised to exceed 40%.

NMC Requirements	Advice and guidance
The mentor should have access to a network of support and supervision to enable them to fulfil their mentoring responsibilities, assist them in making complex judgements regarding competence such as failing a student and to support their professional development.	Support and supervision may be provided by, for example, other mentors, practice facilitators, practice teachers or link tutors, with due regard to the part of the register and field of practice. Where necessary, inexperienced mentors should seek support from a sign-off mentor who has met the NMC additional criteria for assessing proficiency.
Placement providers are responsible for ensuring that an up-to-date local register of mentors is maintained, with annotations of those who have met the NMC additional criteria for assessing proficiency (sign-off mentors).	The register will provide evidence for quality assurance purposes that there are a sufficient number of mentors, who met the NMC standards, to support learning and assessment in practice related to NMC approved programmes.
Placement providers are responsible for triennial review of mentors to ensure that only those who continue to meet the NMC's mentor requirements remain on the local register.	The NMC sets general requirements for remaining on the local register (see introduction – triennial review). It would be a matter for placement providers to determine locally any additional criteria needed for mentors to remain on the register.

3.2.5 Assessing learning in practice

Mentors will have been prepared to assess student performance in practice and will be accountable for their decisions to pass, refer or fail a student. The NMC recognises that failing students may be difficult and that all assessment decisions must be evidence-based. Sign-off mentors who assess proficiency in the final placement or at the end of a period of supervised practice will have met additional criteria set by the NMC (section 3.2.6).

NMC Requirements	Advice and guidance
Most assessment of competence should be undertaken through direct observation in practice.	Students must normally demonstrate their competence in the practice setting. However, where experience is limited, e.g. basic life support skills, simulated experience or OSCEs may be used. The majority of assessment should be through direct observation.
Mentors should be involved wherever possible, when competence is assessed through simulation.	Summative assessment using simulation may occur where opportunities to demonstrate competence in practice are limited. Mentors should be involved in designing, using and evaluating such assessment strategies.
Mentors should consider how evidence from various sources might contribute to making a judgement on performance and competence.	The NMC recognises that the total assessment strategy would include assessment through various means i.e. direct care, simulation, OSCEs and other strategies.

NMC Requirements	Advice and guidance
Mentors should seek advice and guidance from a sign-off mentor or a practice teacher when dealing with failing students.	Inexperienced mentors may require support from a sign-off mentor or practice teacher when faced with a failing student to help them to communicate concerns, identify action and evaluate progress.

3.2.6 Signing off practice proficiency

In order to ensure public protection the NMC needs to be assured that students have been assessed and signed off as capable of safe and effective practice at the end of a programme. Additional criteria have been defined for the mentor to be able to sign-off proficiency in practice at the end of a programme (paragraph 2.1.3).

Placement providers will determine when a mentor has met the additional criteria and will be annotated as a sign-off mentor on the local register. The NMC statutory midwifery committee has decided that all midwife mentors must have met the additional criteria to be sign-off mentors.

Due regard

In accordance with underpinning principle A (paragraph 1.2):

- Only a registered nurse may sign off a nursing student (the nurse must have a mark on the nurses' part of the register that coincides with the branch programme the student has undertaken).
- Only a registrant with the same SPQ may sign off a SPQ student
- Only a registered midwife may sign off a midwifery student.

Confirmation of proficiency

The sign-off mentor, who has met the NMC additional criteria for assessing proficiency, is responsible and accountable for making the final sign-off in practice – confirming that a student has successfully completed all practice requirements. This confirmation will contribute to the portfolio of evidence considered by the AEI's examination and assessment board. The NMC requires mentors who have not yet met the additional criteria to be supported by a sign-off mentor or a practice teacher if it is the student's final placement, or when failing a student.

NMC Requirements	Advice and guidance
The NMC has identified progression points within each approved programme where confirmation is required that students have met specified outcomes and competencies. For pre–registration midwifery programmes a sign-off mentor is required to confirm the outcomes at each progression point – NMC Circulars 24/2007 and 13/2007. For progression points for nursing and SCPHN see the relevant standards of proficiency for nursing and SCPHN (NMC 2004). For these programmes a sign-off mentor/practice teacher is required to confirm the outcomes only at the end of the programme.[11]	Confirmation is required at points where a student may not progress without a formal decision that they have met the outcomes or competencies of a previous part of the programme.

11. For pre-registration nursing, mentors rather than sign-off mentors are required to sign-off outcomes for entry to the branch.

NMC Requirements	Advice and guidance
All mentors may assess specific competencies throughout the programme.	NMC competencies may be achieved throughout the programme, unless otherwise indicated in programme standards. A mentor may confirm achievement of competencies, including those to be achieved at, or by, a progression point. Only a sign-off mentor, who has met the additional criteria, may sign-off proficiency at the end of a final period of practice learning.
Mentors must keep sufficient records to support and justify their decisions on whether a student is, or is not, competent/proficient.	The NMC considers it important that mentors have an audit trail to support their decisions. Throughout a placement where a critical decision on progress is to be made the mentor should ensure that regular feedback is given to the student and that records are kept of guidance given.
In the final placement of a pre-registration programme, mentors are required to be either a sign-off mentor, or supported by a sign-off mentor or a practice teacher, in order to make final decisions on proficiency.	Mentors are responsible and accountable for making decisions on the student's achievement of outcomes and competencies. They may assess competencies throughout the programme but only a sign-off mentor or a practice teacher may make final assessment of proficiency.
Sign-off mentors must have time allocated to reflect, give feedback and keep records of student achievements in their final period of practice learning. This will be the equivalent of an hour per student per week. This time is in addition to the 40% of the student's time to be supervised by a mentor (paragraph 3.2.4).	Sign-off mentors will require allocated time to ensure that students have effective feedback on their performance so that the ultimate decision on their proficiency is not unexpected. The time allocated may need to be greater earlier in the placement and reduced as they become more confident and competent.
Only sign-off mentors, who have met the additional criteria, must sign off achievement of proficiency at the end of the programme, unless the mentor is being supervised by a sign-off mentor or practice teacher who should countersign that the proficiency has been achieved by the student.	The final assessment of proficiency draws on evidence of assessment over a sustained period of time. The sign-off mentor may use the student passport and other evidence to see if competence has been achieved and maintained previously, as well as demonstrated in the current placement.
The programme leader/lead midwife for education must confirm to the AEI Examination/Assessment Board that all NMC requirements have been met (to the best of their knowledge) for individual students presenting evidence of sign-off practice from a sign-off mentor or practice teacher.	AEI Examination or Assessment Boards should ensure that confirmation is received, based on recorded evidence, that all NMC requirements have been met. The AEI examination board must consider the record of achievement of practice proficiency, signed at the end of the final period of practice learning by a mentor who has met the NMC additional criteria.

NMC Requirements	Advice and guidance
The student must self-declare their good health and good character for entry to the register.	Good health and good character will have been assessed for admission to, and continued participation in, the programme. Students should be encouraged to advise their personal tutors of any issues that may affect this. They are responsible and accountable for their self-declaration to the NMC when applying for registration.
The programme leader/lead midwife for education must provide a supporting declaration of good health and good character of the student for registration.	A registrant who is the programme leader/lead midwife for education, or their designated deputy, whose name has been previously notified to the NMC, must complete a declaration in support of the student's self-declaration. There should be an audit trail of evidence (normally in the student's record).

3.3 Applying the NMC practice teacher standard in practice

The NMC practice teacher standard is mandatory for supporting learning and assessing nurses and midwives studying for registration as a specialist community public health nurse (SCPHN), and also for specialist practice qualifications where this is a local requirement.

The NMC standard for practice teachers needs to be read in conjunction with Standards of proficiency for specialist community public health nursing (NMC 2004) and Standards for specialist education and practice (UKCC 1994), and also with respect to the Education Rules (SI 2004 No 1767). The following requirements are set by the NMC for implementing the practice teacher standard. Advice and guidance is provided to assist interpretation of the requirements.

3.3.1 Practice teacher preparation programmes

Practice teacher preparation programmes must:

- Be a minimum academic level of HE Honours (previously known as level 3) or SCQF Level 9.[12]
- Include at least 30 days protected learning time – to include learning in both academic and practice settings.
- Include relevant work-based learning with the opportunity to critically reflect on such an experience, e.g. acting as a practice teacher to a student in specialist practice under the supervision of a qualified practice teacher.
- Meet the additional criteria for a sign-off mentor.
- Normally be completed within six months.
- Should provide a foundation for undertaking an NMC approved teacher preparation programme.
- Allow AP(E)L to be applied to up to 100% of the programme. Previous preparation of an equivalent nature and standard should be recognised. It is for the education provider to determine if this allows the individual to be placed immediately on the practice teacher register without the need for further preparation.
- The content of a previous mentor programme, where appropriate, may be accredited, enabling the practice teacher programme to be completed in less time.

3.3.2 Continuing professional development for practice teachers

The NMC requires all practice teachers to maintain and develop their knowledge, skills and competence through annual updating. Additionally they would need to maintain and develop their extended knowledge and skills gained for practice in a specialist area. The NMC requires

12. This may vary according to the needs of specific professions and any additional requirement will be identified within the Standards of proficiency for each part of the NMC register.

placement providers to maintain a record of current practice teachers and, where appropriate – in partnership with local education providers, to make provisions for annual updating of these nurses (see section 2 and Triennial review of mentor and practice teacher in the introduction).

The purpose of annual updating is to ensure that practice teachers:

- Have current knowledge of NMC approved programmes.
- Are able to discuss the implications of changes to NMC requirements.
- Have an opportunity to discuss issues relating to supervision, assessment of competence and fitness for safe and effective practice.

Practice teachers should be prepared to demonstrate to their employers, and NMC quality assurance agents, as appropriate,[13] how they have maintained and developed their knowledge, skills and competence as a practice teacher. Placement providers will consider evidence of updating as part of triennial review.

3.3.3 Allocated learning time for practice teacher activity

The NMC recognises that nurses and midwives who are practice teachers are primarily employed to provide care for patients and clients. Students gaining registration as a specialist community public health nurse, are required to undertake a period of practice during which they would normally work on a one-to-one basis with their practice teachers

The nature of supervision will vary from direct to indirect depending upon the:

- Nature of the activity the student is engaged in.
- Evidence of their current competence.
- Need to assess achievement of NMC outcomes or competencies for progression on the programme.

Practice teachers will use their professional judgment and local/national policy to determine where activities may be safely delegated to students and the level of supervision required. They are accountable for such decisions.

Practice teachers will need time, when undertaking work with a student, to be able to explain, question, assess performance, and provide feedback to the student in a meaningful way.
A practice teacher should be allocated to a SCPHN student throughout the programme (or sign-off mentor where this has been agreed through the deferral process – see NMC circular 08/2007.

3.3.4 Supporting learning in practice

The NMC requires practice teachers to support learning for several reasons (section 2.2):

- Provide support and guidance to the student when learning new skills, applying new knowledge and transferring existing knowledge and competence to a new context of practice.
- Act as a resource to the student to facilitate learning and professional growth.
- Manage the student's learning in practice in order to ensure public protection.
- Directly observe the student's practice, or use indirect observation where appropriate, to ensure that NMC defined outcomes and competencies are met.

The following requirements enable effective practice teaching to be realised:

NMC Requirements	Advice and guidance
Every SCPHN student (and SPQ student where this is a local requirement) has a named practice teacher.	Practice teachers should be allocated prior to commencement of supervised practice. This should be sufficiently in advance of the placement to enable both the student and their practice teacher to prepare adequately for the placement.
Practice teachers should support only one SCPHN student (or SPQ student) at any point in time.	Practice teachers need to be able to commit themselves to supporting learning and assessment in practice. Their workload needs to reflect the demands of being a practice teacher.

13. All NMC approved programmes are monitored regularly. This may involve NMC quality assurance agents in practice and education visits to examine evidence that NMC requirements are being met.

NMC Requirements	Advice and guidance
An ongoing achievement record must be maintained and reviewed regularly throughout the student's supervised practice experience to enable judgements to be made on the students. For further details see Circular 33/2007 in annexe 3	Students are expected to keep a record of their learning experiences, identifying evidence to support achievement of NMC outcomes and competencies and where further support and supervision is required. This record should be reviewed at intervals by their named practice teacher during their supervised practice experience to enable discussion of strengths and areas for improvement.
Placement providers are responsible for ensuring that an up-to-date local register of practice teachers is maintained	The register will provide evidence for quality assurance purposes that there are a sufficient number of practice teachers, who meet the NMC standards, to support NMC approved programmes leading to a recordable specialist practice qualification or SCPHN registration. Students must be kept fully informed regarding the ways in which information is intended to be shared, used and stored, including the length of time to be retained and when it will be destroyed. (Data Protection Act 1998)
Placement providers are responsible for triennial review of practice teachers to ensure that only those who continue to meet the NMC practice teacher requirements remain on the local register.	The NMC sets general requirements for remaining on the local register (see introduction – triennial review). It would be a matter for programme providers to determine any additional criteria for practice teachers to remain on the local register.

Students must be kept fully informed regarding the ways in which information is intended to be shared, used and stored, including the length of time it is to be retained and when it will be destroyed. (Data Protection Act 1998)

3.3.5 Assessing learning in practice

Practice teachers will have been prepared to assess student performance in practice in programmes leading to registration as a SCPHN. They will be accountable for their decisions to pass, refer or fail a student. The NMC recognises that failing students may be difficult and that all assessment decisions must be evidence-based. All practice teachers will be deemed to have met the NMC additional criteria for signing off proficiency (section 3.3.6) at the end of a programme by virtue of, where relevant, their previous mentor experience and the preparation they have undertaken for their practice teacher role.

NMC Requirements	Advice and guidance
Assessment of competence should be undertaken through both direct observation in practice and evidence gained from indirect observation.	Students must demonstrate their competence in the practice setting. The nature of their programme may require that they are able to work autonomously with a defined caseload by the end of the programme. Practice teachers will seek evidence of their performance from patient/user satisfaction reports, self-reports from students, observation by other colleagues and their own direct observation.

NMC Requirements	Advice and guidance
Practice teachers should be directly involved in assessing competence through simulation.	Summative assessment using simulation may occur where opportunities to demonstrate competence in practice is limited, e.g. a simulated case conference for child protection.
Practice teachers should consider how evidence from various sources might contribute towards making a judgement on performance and competence.	The NMC recognises that the total assessment strategy would include evidence from direct observation, witness statements from other professionals, contributions from patients/clients and other strategies.
Inexperienced practice teachers should seek advice and guidance from experienced practice teachers/teachers when making complex judgements, such as failing a student.	Inexperienced practice teachers may require particular support from experienced practice teachers/teachers when faced with a failing student to help them to communicate concerns, identify action and evaluate progress.

3.3.6 Signing off practice proficiency

In order to ensure public protection the NMC needs to be assured that students have been assessed and signed off as being capable of safe and effective practice at the end of a programme. Practice teachers must have met the additional criteria to be able to sign-off proficiency in practice at the end of a programme (section 2.1.3).

Due regard

In accordance with underpinning principle A (section 1.2):

- Only a registered SCPHN may sign-off a SCPHN student. The SCPHN must also be from the same field of practice that coincides with the field that the student has undertaken (see NMC Circular 26/2007, Annexe 3).

Confirmation of proficiency

The practice teacher is responsible and accountable for making the final sign-off in practice confirming that a student has successfully completed all practice requirements for a SCPHN qualification. This confirmation will contribute to the portfolio of evidence considered by the approved educational institution's examination/assessment board, who will confirm to the NMC that the proficiencies in relation to both theory and practice and programme requirements have been successfully achieved.

NMC Requirements	Advice and guidance
Practice teachers must keep sufficient records to support and justify their decisions on whether a student is or is not competent/proficient.	The NMC considers it is important that practice teachers have an audit trail to support their decisions.
Practice teachers must have time allocated to reflect, give feedback and keep records of student achievement in the final period of practice learning. This will be the equivalent of an hour per student per week.	Throughout supervised practice experience the practice teacher will require time to ensure that the student has effective feedback on their performance so that the ultimate decision on their proficiency is not unexpected.
The practice teacher must sign-off achievement of practice outcomes, competencies and final proficiency.	The practice teacher is responsible and accountable to the NMC for confirming that outcomes, competencies and NMC standards of proficiency have been met, which take account of outstanding issues e.g. a repeat placement.

NMC Requirements	Advice and guidance
The programme leader must confirm to the AEI Examination Board that all NMC requirements have been met (to the best of their knowledge) for individual students presenting evidence of sign-off of practice from the student's named practice teacher.	AEI Examination and Assessment Boards should ensure that confirmation is received, based on recorded evidence of both theory and practice assessment, that all NMC requirements have been met and proficiency achieved.
The student must self-declare their good health and good character for entry to a new part of the register.	Good health and good character will have been assessed for admission to and maintenance on the register at initial registration, and again for entry to and continued participation in the current programme. Students should advise their Personal Tutors of any issues that may affect this. They are responsible and accountable for their self-declaration to the NMC when applying for registration in a new part of the register.
The programme leader/official correspondent must provide a supporting declaration of good health and good character of the student for registration.	A declaration of the student's self-declaration must be completed by a registrant who is the programme leader/official correspondent (or her deputy), whose name has been previously notified to the NMC, There should be an audit trail of evidence (normally in the student's record).

3.4 Applying the NMC teacher standard in practice settings

The NMC teacher standard is mandatory for those nurses and midwives who are teachers employed in higher education and who support students on NMC approved programmes in practice settings. The NMC recognises that AEIs will have other teachers, who are not nurses and midwives, who will contribute to teaching on NMC approved programmes in their area of specialist expertise. The NMC will, through its quality assurance processes verify that the majority of HE teachers who support NMC students in practice settings have attained, or are working towards, a teaching qualification that meets the NMC outcomes from stage 4.

Approved educational institutions that employ teachers holding an NMC approved qualification will determine the requirements for applying the standard in academic settings. The NMC is concerned that those nurses and midwives who meet the outcomes of stage 4 of the framework are able to apply their knowledge, skills and competence in practice and academic settings. The NMC requires that 50% of learning for its approved pre-registration and specialist practice programmes takes place in practice.

NMC nurse, midwife and specialist community public health nurse teachers must have contemporary experience to be able to support learning and assessment in practice settings. Such experience may take a variety of forms, such as: acting as a link tutor, supporting mentor development and updating, having an active clinical role for a part of their time, supporting clinical staff in their professional development in practice, being involved in practice development to support the evidence-base from which students draw, and contributing to practice-based research.

3.4.1 Teacher preparation programmes NMC approved teacher programmes must:

- Be at a minimum academic level of postgraduate study, i.e. postgraduate certificate, diploma or degree (M level), according to the requirements of programme providers.
- Be at least one academic year in duration.
- Include a minimum of 12 weeks (360 hours) teaching practice.
- Demonstrate achievement of all of the outcomes of stage 4.

Programme providers should take account of the UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education (HE Academy, February 2006 – see Annexe 2). This framework was developed by the Higher Education Academy on behalf of the Higher Education sector and commissioned by Universities UK, the Standing Conference of Principals (SCOP) and the UK HE funding councils. The model provides a descriptor-based approach for HE institutions to determine their own criteria in the application of the standards framework. It is based upon applying areas of activity, core knowledge and professional values.

The UK Professional Standards Framework (above) complements the NMC Standards to support learning and assessment in practice. The framework is designed to be sector owned and applied to various staff groups from teaching assistants to those who have a substantive teaching role. This would allow programme providers to seek accreditation of their NMC approved teacher preparation programmes and, potentially, to have outcomes for mentors and practice teachers recognised by the HE Academy.

3.4.2 Continuing professional development for teachers

The NMC requires all NMC teachers to maintain and develop their knowledge, skills and competence as a teacher through regular updating. Those teachers employed in approved educational institutions will need to meet the requirements of their employers for scholarly activity. The NMC also requires that teachers focus on the practice aspects of their roles and ensure their knowledge of practice is contemporaneous and that, where appropriate, their skills are fit for safe and effective practice.

Teachers should be prepared to demonstrate to their employers, and NMC quality assurance agents, as appropriate,[14] how they have maintained and developed their knowledge, skills and competence as teachers.

3.4.3 Signing off proficiency

Teachers are responsible for signing off the academic component of the programme. Many teachers will be involved in supporting learning and assessing assignments throughout the programme. The Programme Leader for Nursing or the Lead Midwife for Education, whose name has previously been notified to the Council, will make the final sign-off for the programme. They must ensure that they have seen evidence that the practice component of the programme has been signed off by a sign-off mentor or a practice teacher.

Only teachers who have a practice-based role, and who have met the additional criteria for a sign-off mentor (section 2.1.3) may undertake sign-off of practice. This may apply where teachers have a role requiring them to take a practice caseload, as well as work in academic settings.

3.4.4 Allocated time for practice teaching activity

Approved educational institutions will employ nurses and midwives who have successfully met the outcomes of stage 4 and recorded their qualification on the register, and other teachers who are not nurses and midwives. The NMC expects teachers who are nurses and midwives to be able to support learning and assessment in both academic and practice learning environments. Teachers are therefore expected to spend a proportion of their time supporting student learning in practice (Recommendation 26 from Fitness for Practice, UKCC 1999). The NMC advises that this should be approximately 20% of their normal teaching hours.

Teachers in HE might specialise in teaching, research or practice and these specialities may at times be in conflict. The NMC requirement for teachers to support practice-based learning may be achieved through a variety of strategies such as:

- Acting as a clinical teacher or a link tutor.
- Preparing, supporting and updating mentors and practice teachers.
- Taking part in practice-based action learning groups.
- Contributing to practice development.

14. NMC approved programmes and providers are subject to monitoring as part of the NMC's UK wide QA framework.

• Undertaking practice-based research activity.

• Any other strategies that would enable teachers to maintain practice knowledge and awareness, and where appropriate, practice skills, i.e. midwifery teachers would require effective registration as a midwife, specialist community public health nurses teachers would normally have a limited caseload, nurse teachers working in specialist areas may similarly wish to maintain a limited caseload.

It is for programme providers to ensure that students have access to a sufficient number of teachers with expertise in practice, teaching, research and development to support their learning in both practice and academic learning environments.

Section 4 – Approval and monitoring of mentor, practice teacher and teacher standards

4.1 NMC approval of mentor/practice teacher preparation programmes

The NMC has agreed two routes for the approval of mentor/practice teacher preparation programmes. Programme providers may choose the option best suited to their purposes. The routes are:

Route 1

Route 1 would be suited to NMC programme providers seeking approval for NMC programmes leading to registration: Nursing, Midwifery and SCPHN. A combined event could consider the pre-registration programme and a mentor/practice teacher programme. Separate documentation would be necessary for the mentor/practice teacher preparation programme.

Route 2

Framework approval events allowing one event to approve all standards set by the NMC as teaching roles. Route 2 would be best suited to those programme providers who already offer an NMC approved teacher preparation programme and who would be interested in developing these further to provide outcomes for mentors and practice teachers. Such programmes should provide stepping on and stepping off points and processes for AP(E)L to recognise achievement of previous stages (or equivalent) in the developmental framework. This route would also be suitable to those who do not offer an NMC approved pre-registration programme but who would wish to have approved mentors – such as those programme providers offering return to practice programmes or the overseas nurses programme.

4.2 NMC approval of teacher preparation programmes

The NMC already approves teacher preparation programmes leading to a recordable qualification on the register as part of its quality assurance processes. This arrangement will continue unchanged.

4.3 NMC monitoring arrangements

Reports of quality assurance activities, annual monitoring, and list of approved programmes are published on the NMC website at www.nmc-uk.org

4.4 NMC recognition of other teaching qualifications

The NMC recognises that some nurses and midwives may undertake teacher preparation programmes for their own interest and career development before making the decision to become a nurse, midwife or specialist community public health teacher. The NMC has previously offered a route for recording such a teaching qualification where it is deemed comparable to the NMC standard for the preparation of teachers. The NMC has agreed that this route should continue.

In such cases, the NMC requires sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the entry criteria for teacher preparation have been met, that the programme undertaken is comparable to that of an NMC approved programme in nature and content and that the registrant can provide evidence of mapping their learning and experience to demonstrate the current NMC requirements have been met. This includes evidence of assessed teaching activity, comparable with students studying an NMC approved programme for a period equivalent to a minimum of 12 weeks (or 360 hours). Such evidence must be verified by a nurse, midwife or specialist community public health nurse teacher, who has a recorded teaching qualification on the NMC register.

Nurses and midwives intending to use the NMC recognition route to record a teaching qualification must be able to provide evidence that they:

- Meet NMC criteria for entry to a teacher preparation programme.
- Have undertaken continuing professional development, at least to first degree level, relevant to their area of practice.
- Have undertaken a post-graduate programme of teacher preparation.
- Have mapped their learning and experience to demonstrate that the outcomes of stage 4 have been met. This must be verified by a registrant who already has a teaching qualification recorded on the register and is currently employed to teach students in education leading to registration or a recorded qualification with the NMC.
- Are able to supply a reference from practice to support that they have the ability to teach students in practice.
- Confirm that they have undertaken at least 12 weeks (or 360 hours) of assessed teaching activity with students on an NMC approved programme leading to registration or a recordable qualification. An NMC registrant who has a recorded teaching qualification on the register must have assessed such teaching activity.
- Such nurses and midwives would need to prepare a portfolio of evidence for local assessment by an NMC registrant who has a teaching qualification recorded on the register and who is employed at an NMC approved educational institution. This registrant will confirm to the NMC that evidence has been provided that all stage 4 outcomes have been met.

Section 5 – Glossary, references and annexes

Glossary

Glossary of terms	Advice and guidance
Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning (AP(E)L)	Process of awarding credit for formal or experiential learning by mapping it against defined learning outcomes of the programme offered (see NMC QA Factsheet I/2004).
Approved Educational Institutions (AEI)	An institution recognised by the NMC to provide NMC approved programmes. Normally these are in higher education, however the Nursing and Midwifery Order 2001 allows the NMC to approve other institutions to deliver programmes that meet NMC standards.
Approval	A process whereby the partners (see below) present their programme for external scrutiny (or validation) which, if successful, leads to joint approval by the NMC and the approved educational institution.
Competency	A competency describes the skills and abilities to practise safely and effectively without the need for direct supervision. Competencies are achieved incrementally throughout periods of practice experience during a programme. At the end of the final period of practice experience or supervised practice it is the evidence of achievement of all competencies that enables sign-off mentors or practice teachers to decide whether proficiency has been achieved.
Due regard	Differentiates between the nurses', midwives' and specialist community public health nurses' parts of the NMC register as well as specific fields of practice within nursing, e.g. adult, children, mental health and learning disability. Mentors and practice teachers normally assess others only with due regard to the parts on which they, themselves, are registered.
Fitness for practice	Requires the student to demonstrate that they are practising safely and effectively, have met the standards of proficiency and all other requirements to become registered.
Lead Midwife for Education	Named person within an approved educational institution responsible for leading midwifery education and involved in all processes relating to the approval and monitoring of NMC approved midwifery programmes.
Local register of mentors/practice teachers	Placement providers hold a register of all current mentors, including sign-off mentors and practice teachers, that have met the NMC outcomes for these roles and have additionally met the NMC requirements for maintenance on the register.
Mentor	A registrant who has met the outcomes of stage 2 and who facilitates learning, and supervises and assesses students in a practice setting.
Nurses and midwives	This term refers to a nurses and midwives whose names are held on the NMC register. There are three parts of the register: nursing, midwifery and specialist community public health nursing. In addition, the term midwife has a legal definition: "A midwife is a person who having been regularly admitted to a midwifery education programme, duly recognised in the country in which it is located, has successfully completed the prescribed course of studies in midwifery and has acquired the requisite qualifications to be registered and/or legally licensed to practise midwifery." (ICM 2005).
Outcomes	Outcomes identify the skills required at each stage of the framework to meet the defined final competencies.

Glossary of terms	Advice and guidance
Parts of the register	The NMC register, which opened on 1 August 2004, has three parts: nurse, midwife and specialist community public health nurse. A mark on the register identifies the field of practice, i.e. adult, children, mental health and learning disability nurses.
Postgraduate	A postgraduate preparation programme is normally undertaken following graduation from a first degree (or equivalent) and, normally, at Master's level. Academic outcomes may be of postgraduate certificate, diploma, degree or a specified number of M level credits.
Practice proficiency	A student is deemed proficient when they have successfully met all of the NMC standards of proficiency for nursing, midwifery or specialist community public health nursing, at the end of an NMC approved programme. Practice proficiency may only be signed off by a practice teacher or a mentor who has met the NMC additional criteria.
Practice teacher	A registrant who has gained knowledge, skills and competence in both their specialist area of practice and in their teaching role, meeting the outcomes of stage 3, and who facilitates learning, supervises and assesses students in a practice setting.
Preceptorship	The process through which existing nurses and midwives provide support to newly qualified nurses and midwives.
Proficiencies	These are contained within the standards of proficiency for each of the three parts of the register. Fitness for practice is demonstrated by meeting all NMC proficiencies and other requirements by the end of the programme.
Programme providers	Programme providers are partnerships formed between AEIs and service partners providers who provide placement opportunities for students on NMC approved programmes. Normally these programmes are 50% theory and 50% practice. All partners are responsible for ensuring that learning opportunities and support for learning and assessment is available in both theory and practice learning environments.
Quality Assurance (QA)	The initial approval to allow a programme to be delivered and ongoing monitoring during the lifespan of NMC approved programmes.
Recordable qualification	A qualification, approved by the NMC that may be recorded on the NMC register.
Registrable qualification	A qualification approved by the NMC that enables admission to a part of the NMC professional register.
Registrants	Previously used by the NMC to describe nurses and midwives whose names are held on the NMC register.
Rules	Rules are established through legislation and they provide the legal strategic framework from which the NMC develops standards, e.g. Education, Registration and Registration Appeals Rules 2004 (SI 2004/1 767).
Sign-off mentor	Mentors are required to meet specified criteria in order to be able to sign-off a student's practice proficiency at the end of an NMC approved programme. All midwife mentors and practice teachers will have met the requirements through their preparation programme.

Glossary of terms	Advice and guidance
Specialist Community Public Health Nurse	The NMC register has a part for registered specialist community public health nurses (SCPHN). The Council has agreed standards of proficiency for entry to this part of the register. Existing groups of nurses have migrated to this part of the register; these include health visitors, school nurses (who hold a specialist practice qualification) and occupational health nurses (who hold a specialist practice qualification). Nurses and midwives who work in public health roles, and can demonstrate that they have met the academic and practice standards of proficiency for this part of the register, may be able to apply to be registered as SCPHN.
Standards	The NMC is required by the Nursing and Midwifery Order 2001 to establish standards of proficiency to be met by applicants to different parts of the register. The standards are considered to be necessary for safe and effective practice [Article 5(2)(a)]. These are set out within the standards of proficiency for each of the three parts of the register. The standards support the rules, are mandatory and gain their authority from the legislation.
Teacher	A registrant who has undertaken an NMC approved teacher preparation programme, or equivalent and successfully achieved the outcomes defined in stage 4 of the developmental framework.

References

Department of Health (2004) The NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework, London, HMSO

Department of Health (2006) Modernising Nursing Careers Setting the Direction, London, Department of Health

Department of Health (2007) Trust, assurance and safety: the regulation of health professionals in the 21st Century, London: The Stationery Office (Cm 7013)

Disability Discrimination Act (1995), Norwich, HMSO

Disability Discrimination Act (2005) An act to amend the DDA 1995: and for connected purposes, Norwich, HMSO

Higher Education Academy (2006) The UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education, London, HE Academy

International Confederation of Midwives (2005) Definition of the Midwife, The Netherlands, ICM

The Nursing and Midwifery Council (Education, Registration and Registration Appeals) Rules Order of Council 2004 (SI 2004 No 1767), Norwich, Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI)

The Nursing and Midwifery Council (Midwives) Rules Order of Council 2004 (SI 2004 No 1764), Norwich, Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI)

Nursing and Midwifery Council (2004) Consultation on a standard to support learning and assessment in practice, London, NMC

Nursing and Midwifery Council (2004) Standards for the preparation of teachers on nurses, midwives and specialist community public health nurses, London, NMC

Nursing and Midwifery Council (2004) Standards of proficiency for pre-registration nursing education, London, NMC

Nursing and Midwifery Council (2004) Standards of proficiency for pre-registration midwifery education, London, NMC

Nursing and Midwifery Council (2004) Standards of proficiency for specialist community public health nurses, London, NMC

Nursing and Midwifery Council (2005) Consultation on fitness for practice at the point of registration, London, NMC

Nursing and Midwifery Council (2006) Standards for the preparation and practice of supervisor of midwives programme, London, NMC

Nursing and Midwifery Council (2006) Triennial review requirements for midwife sign-off mentors who support midwives undertaking the Standards for the preparation and practice of supervisor of midwives programmes, London, NMC

Nursing and Midwifery Council (2007) Good health and good character guidance for educational institutions, London, NMC

Nursing and Midwifery Council (2008) The Code: Standards for conduct, performance and ethics for nurses and midwives, London, NMC

Nursing and Midwifery Council (2008) The Prep handbook, London, NMC

United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting (1994) Standards for specialist education and practice, London, UKCC

United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting (1999) Fitness for Practice, London, UKCC

NMC Circulars

20/2006 Introduction of the Standards to support learning and assessment in practice

21/2006 Preceptorship Guidelines

08/2007 Revised arrangements for the introduction of the practice teacher standard in relation to specialist community public health nursing programmes

13/2007 Preparing midwife mentors to meet the NMC's Standards to support learning and assessment in practice

17/2007 Approval process and timetable to implement the Standards to support learning and assessment in practice for NMC Approved Programme Providers

26/2007 Applying due regard to learning and assessment in practice

27/2007 Sign-off status and preceptorship for Practice Teacher students

28/2007 Guidance for small scale service providers in applying the NMC's Standards to support learning and assessment in practice

33/2007 Ensuring continuity of practice assessment through the ongoing achievement record

01/2008 Meeting the triennial review requirements for midwife sign-off mentors who support midwives undertaking the Standards for the preparation and practice of supervisor of midwives programmes

02/2008 Applying due regard to learning and assessment in practice for student midwives

Annexe 1

The developmental framework to support learning and assessment in practice

Domain	Stage 1 Nurses and midwives	Stage 2 Mentor	Stage 3 Practice teacher	Stage 4 Teacher
Demonstrate effective relationship building skills sufficient to support learning, as part of a wider interprofessional team, for a range of students in both practice and academic learning environments				
Establishing effective working relationships	• work as a member of a multi-professional team, contributing effectively to team working • support those who are new to the team in integrating into the practice learning environment • act as a role model for safe and effective practice • develop effective working relationships based on mutual trust and respect	• demonstrate an understanding of factors that influence how students integrate into practice settings • providing ongoing and constructive support to facilitate transition from one learning environment to another • have effective professional and interprofessional working relationships to support learning for entry to the register	• have effective professional and inter-professional working relationships to support learning for entry to the register and education at a level beyond initial registration • be able to support students moving into specific areas of practice or a level of practice beyond initial registration, identifying their individual needs in moving to a different level of practice • support mentors and other professionals in their roles to support learning across practice and academic learning environments	• demonstrate effective relationships with other members of the teaching teams in practice and academic settings based on mutual trust and respect • maintain appropriate supportive relationships with a range of students, mentors, practice teachers and other professionals • foster peer support and peer learning in practice and academic settings for all students • support students to integrate into new environments and working teams to enhance access to learning

Domain	Stage 1 Nurses and midwives	Stage 2 Mentor	Stage 3 Practice teacher	Stage 4 Teacher
Facilitate learning for a range of students, within a particular area of practice where appropriate, encouraging self-management of learning opportunities and providing support to maximise individual potential				
Facilitation of learning	• co-operate with those who have defined support roles contributing towards the provision of effective learning experiences • share their own knowledge and skills to enable others to learn in practice settings	• use knowledge of the student's stage of learning to select appropriate learning opportunities to meet individual needs • facilitate the selection of appropriate learning strategies to integrate learning from practice and academic experience • support students in critically reflecting upon their learning experiences in order to enhance future learning	• enable students to relate theory to practice whilst developing critically reflective skills • foster professional growth and personal development by use of effective communication and facilitation skills • facilitate and develop the ethos of interprofessional learning and working	• promote development of enquiring, reflective, critical and innovative approaches to learning • implement a range of learning and teaching strategies across a wide range of settings • provide support and advice, with ongoing and constructive feedback to students, to maximise individual potential • co-ordinate learning within an interprofessional learning and working environment • facilitate integration of learning from practice and academic settings • act as a practice expert to support development of knowledge and skills for practice

Domain	Stage 1 Nurses and midwives	Stage 2 Mentor	Stage 3 Practice teacher	Stage 4 Teacher
Assess learning in order to make judgements related to the NMC standards of proficiency for entry to the register or for recording a qualification at a level above initial registration				
Assessment and accountability	• work to the NMC Code for nurses and midwives in maintaining own knowledge and proficiency for safe and effective practice • provide feedback to others in learning situations and to those who are supporting them so that learning is effectively assessed	• foster professional growth, personal development and accountability through support of students in practice • demonstrate a breadth of understanding of assessment strategies and ability to contribute to the total assessment process as part of the teaching team • provide constructive feedback to students and assist them in identifying future learning needs and actions. Manage failing students so that they may enhance their performance and capabilities for safe and effective practice or be able to understand their failure and the implications of this for their future	• set effective professional boundaries whilst creating a dynamic, constructive teacher-student relationship • in partnership with other members of the teaching team use knowledge and experience to design and implement assessment frameworks • be able to assess practice for registration and also at a level beyond that of initial registration	• set and maintain professional boundaries that are sufficiently flexible for interprofessional learning • develop, with others, effective assessment strategies to ensure that standards of proficiency for registration or recordable qualifications at a level beyond initial registration are met • support others involved in the assessment process, students, mentors and peers

Continued over

Continued

Domain	Stage 1 Nurses and midwives	Stage 2 Mentor	Stage 3 Practice teacher	Stage 4 Teacher
Assess learning in order to make judgements related to the NMC standards of proficiency for entry to the register or for recording a qualification at a level above initial registration				
Assessment and accountability		• be accountable for confirming that students have met or not met the NMC competencies in practice and as a sign-off mentor confirm that students have met or not met the NMC standards of proficiency and are capable of safe and effective practice	• provide constructive feedback to students and assist them in identifying future learning needs and actions, manage failing students so that they may enhance their performance and capabilities for safe and effective practice or be able to understand their failure and the implications of this for their future • be accountable for confirming that students have met or not met the NMC standards of proficiency in practice for registration at a level beyond initial registration and are capable of safe and effective practice	• provide constructive feedback to students and assist them in identifying future learning needs and actions, manage failing students so that they may enhance their performance and capabilities for safe and effective practice or be able to understand their failure and the implications of this for their future • be accountable for their decisions related to fitness for practice for registration or recordable qualifications, underpinning such decisions with an evidence base derived from appropriate and effective monitoring of performance

Domain	Stage 1 Nurses and midwives	Stage 2 Mentor	Stage 3 Practice teacher	Stage 4 Teacher
Determine strategies for evaluating learning in practice and academic settings to ensure that the NMC standards of proficiency for registration or recording a qualification at a level above initial registration have been met				
Evaluation of learning	• contribute information related to those learning in practice, and about the nature of learning experiences, to enable those supporting students to make judgements on the quality of the learning environment	• contribute to evaluation of student learning and assessment experiences, proposing aspects for change resulting from such evaluation • participate in self and peer evaluation to facilitate personal development and contribute to the development of others	• design evaluation strategies to determine the effectiveness of practice and academic experience accessed by students at both registration level and those in education at a level beyond initial registration • collaborate with other members of the teaching team to judge and develop learning, assessment and support appropriate to practice and levels of education • collect evidence on the quality of education in practice, and determine how well NMC requirements for standards of proficiency are being achieved	• determine and use criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of learning environments, acting on findings, with others, to enhance quality • foster and participate in self and peer evaluation to enable students to manage their own learning in practice and academic settings and to enhance personal professional development • evaluate the effectiveness of assessment strategies in providing evidence to make judgements on fitness for practice • report on the quality of practice and academic learning environments to demonstrate that NMC requirements have been met, particularly in relation to support of students and achievement of standards of proficiency

Domain	Stage 1 Nurses and midwives	Stage 2 Mentor	Stage 3 Practice teacher	Stage 4 Teacher
Create an environment for learning, where practice is valued and developed, that provides appropriate professional and interprofessional learning opportunities and support for learning to maximise achievement for individuals				
Create an environment for learning	• demonstrate a commitment to continuing professional development to enhance own knowledge and proficiency • provide peer support to others to facilitate their learning	• support students to identify both learning needs and experiences that are appropriate to their level of learning • use a range of learning experiences, involving patients, clients, carers an the professional team, to meet defined learning needs • identify aspects of the learning environment which could be enhanced negotiating with others to make appropriate changes • act as a resource to facilitate personal and professional development of others	• enable students to access opportunities to learn and work within interprofessional teams • initiate the creation of optimum learning environments for students at registration level and for those in education at a level beyond initial registration • work closely with others involved in education, in practice and academic settings, to adapt to change and inform curriculum development	• in partnership with others, opportunities for students to identify and access learning experiences that meet their individual needs • ensure such opportunities maintain the integrity of the student's professional role whilst responding to the interprofessional context of practice • determine with others, audit criteria against which learning environments may be judged for their effectiveness in meeting NMC requirements • support and develop others involved to ensure that learning needs are effectively met in a safe environment • explore and implement strategies for continuous quality improvement of the learning environment

Domain	Stage 1 Nurses and midwives	Stage 2 Mentor	Stage 3 Practice teacher	Stage 4 Teacher
Support learning within a context of practice that reflects health care and educational policies, managing change to ensure that particular professional needs are met within a learning environment that also supports practice development				
Context of practice	• whilst enhancing their own practice and proficiency, a registered nurse or midwife, act as a role model to others to enable them to learn their unique professional role	• contribute to the development of an environment in which effective practice is fostered, implemented, evaluated and disseminated • set and maintain professional boundaries that are sufficiently flexible for providing interprofessional care • initiate and respond to practice developments to ensure safe and effective care is achieved and an effective learning environment is maintained	• recognise the unique needs of practice and contribute to development of an environment that supports achievement of NMC standards of proficiency • set and maintain professional boundaries, whilst at the same time recognising the contribution of the wider interprofessional team and the context of care delivery • support students in exploring new ways of working and the impact this may have on established professional roles	• support students in identifying ways in which policy impacts on practice • contribute effectively to processes of change and innovation, implementing new ways of working that maintain the integrity of professional roles • negotiate ways of providing support to students so that they can achieve their learning needs within the context of professional and interprofessional practice • act as a role model to enable students to learn professional responsibilities and how to be accountable for their own practice • adapt to change, demonstrating to students how flexibility may be incorporated whilst maintaining safe and effective practice

Domain	Stage 1 Nurses and midwives	Stage 2 Mentor	Stage 3 Practice teacher	Stage 4 Teacher
Apply evidence-based practice to their own work and contribute to the further development of such a knowledge and practice evidence base				
Evidence-based practice	• further develop their evidence base for practice to support their own personal and professional development and to contribute to the development of others	• identify and apply research and evidence based practice to their area of practice • contribute to strategies to increase or review the evidence base used to support practice • support students in applying an evidence base to their own practice	• identify areas of research and practice development based on interpretation of existing evidence • use local and national health frameworks to review and identify developmental needs • advance their own knowledge and practice in order to develop new practitioners, at both registration levels and education at a level beyond initial registration, to be able to meet changes in practice roles and care delivery • disseminate findings from research and practice development to enhance practice and the quality of learning experiences	• advance their own knowledge and practice abilities through access to and involvement in, where appropriate, research and practice development • consider how evidence-based practice, involving patients, clients, carers and other members of the health and social care team, enhances care delivery and learning opportunities • empower individuals, groups and organisations to develop the evidence-base for practice • disseminate findings from the research and practice development to enhance the quality of learning and care delivery and academic environments

Domain	Stage 1 Nurses and midwives	Stage 2 Mentor	Stage 3 Practice teacher	Stage 4 Teacher
Demonstrate leadership skills for education within practice and academic settings				
Leadership	• use communication skills effectively to ensure that those in learning experiences understand their contribution and limitations to care delivery	• plan a series of learning experiences that will meet students' defined learning needs • be an advocate for students to support them accessing learning opportunities that meet their individual needs, involving a range of other professionals, patients, clients and carers • prioritise work to accommodate support of students within their practice roles • provide feedback about the effectiveness of learning and assessment in practice	• provide practice leadership and expertise in application of knowledge and skills based on evidence • demonstrate the ability to lead education on practice, working across practice and academic settings • manage competing demands of practice and education related to supporting different practice levels of students • lead and contribute to the evaluation of effectiveness of learning and assessment in practice	• demonstrate effective communication skills to facilitate delivery of educational programmes leading to registration or a recordable qualification • initiate and lead programme development and review processes to enhance quality and effectiveness • develop effective relationships with practice and academic staff involved in programme delivery to ensure clarity of contribution and strategies to respond to evaluation of learning experiences • demonstrate strategic vision for practice and academic development relevant to meeting NMC requirements • manage competing demands to ensure effectiveness of learning experiences for students • lead, contribute to, analyse and act on the findings of evaluation of learning and assessment to develop programmes • provide feedback about the effectiveness of learning and assessment in practice

Annexe 2

The UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education

HE sector-owned standards

The HE Academy has developed a National Professional Standards Framework for Teaching and Supporting Learning in Higher Education. The framework was developed by the Higher Education Academy on behalf of the Higher Education sector and commissioned by Universities UK, SCOP and the UK HE funding councils. The model provides a descriptor-based approach for HE institutions to determine their own criteria in the application of the standards framework. It is based upon applying areas of activity, core knowledge and professional values. These areas are applied to learning outcomes and assessment activities within professional development programmes in order to demonstrate application of the standards.

Areas of activity, core knowledge and professional values within the framework

Areas of activity

1 Design and planning of learning activities and/or programmes of study

2 Teaching and/or supporting student learning

3 Assessment and giving feedback to learners

4 Developing effective environments and student support and guidance

5 Integration of scholarship, research and professional activities with teaching and supporting learning

6 Evaluation of practice and continuing professional development

Core knowledge

Knowledge and understanding of:

1 The subject material

2 Appropriate methods for teaching and learning in the subject area and at the level of the academic programme

3 How students learn, both generally and in the subject

4 The use of appropriate learning technologies

5 Methods for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching

6 The implications of quality assurance and enhancement for professional practice

Professional values

1 Respect for individual learners

2 Commitment to incorporating the process and outcomes of relevant research scholarship, and/or professional practice

3 Commitment to development of learning communities

4 Commitment to encouraging participation in higher education, acknowledging diversity and promoting equality of opportunity

5 Commitment to continuing professional development and evaluation of practice

Please see www.heacademy.ac.uk for further details.

Annexe 3: Circulars

Circular: Applying due regard to learning and assessment in practice.

Nursing and Midwifery Council Circular
Index Number: NMC Circular 26/2007
Issue Date: 21 Sept 2007
Review Date: 21 Sept 2008
Replaces: New circular
Category: Nursing General/Specialist Community Public Health Nurses
Status: Action

Summary

This circular:

- responds to challenges currently experienced in the application of due regard in meeting the Standards to support learning and assessment in practice (NMC August 2006) hereafter referred to as 'the Standards'.

(The definition of due regard is given in bold text in the background section below).

- sets out ways in which the principle of due regard may be applied more flexibly without reducing the degree of rigour applied to assessing student competence.
- may be applied with immediate effect in relation to nursing and specialist community public health programmes as indicated below.
- does not apply to pre-registration midwifery programmes. Further information related to the assessment of pre-registration midwifery students will follow.

This circular should be read in conjunction with:

- The Standards to support learning and assessment in practice (NMC August 2006)
- NMC Circular 20/2006

Background

The NMC has addressed some challenges in the application of due regard in the assessment of practice of approved nursing and specialist community public health nursing programmes. This includes issues relating to available resource and the need to make use of inter-professional shared learning opportunities.

Principle A (para 1.2) of the Standards states that NMC registrants:

'who make judgements about whether a student has achieved the required standards of proficiency for safe and effective practice must be on the same part or sub-part of the register as that which the student is intending to enter'

It has been reported that in some circumstances the current application of due regard for learning and assessment has become either impractical or impossible due to workforce issues and employment practices. Equally, it is important that students can be placed with a professional from a different part of the register or a different profession in order to meet programme outcomes.

As a consequence, the ways in which due regard can be applied have been reviewed and requirements may now be met by applying the principles set out in Methods 1 to 2c below.

Education providers may apply these principles as described below with immediate effect without need for programme modification.

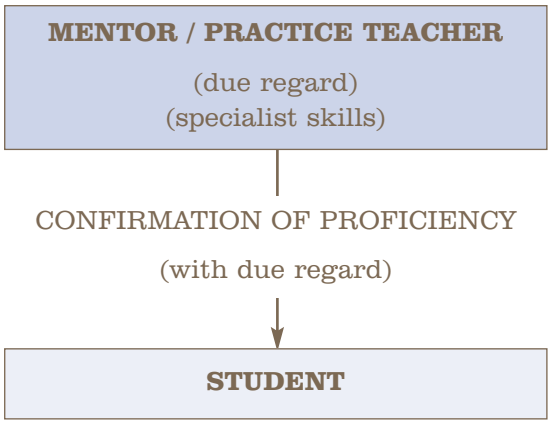
Principles to be applied

Method 1: Existing application

This method is the way in which due regard is currently applied and will likely remain the most frequently used method. It is also the only method which will apply in pre-registration midwifery programmes.

The student's mentor or practice teacher:

- has the specialist skills required to support the placement learning outcomes
- is from the same part of the register and field of practice as the student.
- supervises and monitors progress throughout this period
- assesses component skills related to the programme outcomes.



Judgements are informed by feedback from colleagues and evidence from other sources leading to an assessment determining whether the student has achieved the required standard for safe and effective practice in relation to the particular field of practice. Fields of practice are usually indicated by marks on the register as representing the nursing branches but they can also be applied more broadly, e.g. in relation to a specialist area of practice.

Method 2: Modified application

Three variations of method 2 are set out below and address the complexity of the types of placements within the different parts of the register and fields of practice.

Method 2a is intended to support the increasing need for nursing and specialist community public health nursing students to appreciate the interprofessional context in which they will be working as registrants and the need for placements to be undertaken in this way may increase. However, methods 2b and 2c are intended as interim measures to allow programme providers, placement providers and commissioners time to work together to ensure that adequate numbers of mentors and practice teachers from all parts of the register and fields of practice are prepared for these roles.

Method 2a: Where learning and assessment particularly requires specialist field input

This method enables due regard to be applied where students need to gain experience with somebody from a specialist field of practice who is not a mentor/practice teacher from the same part of the register and same field of practice as that which they intend to enter.

Examples could include:

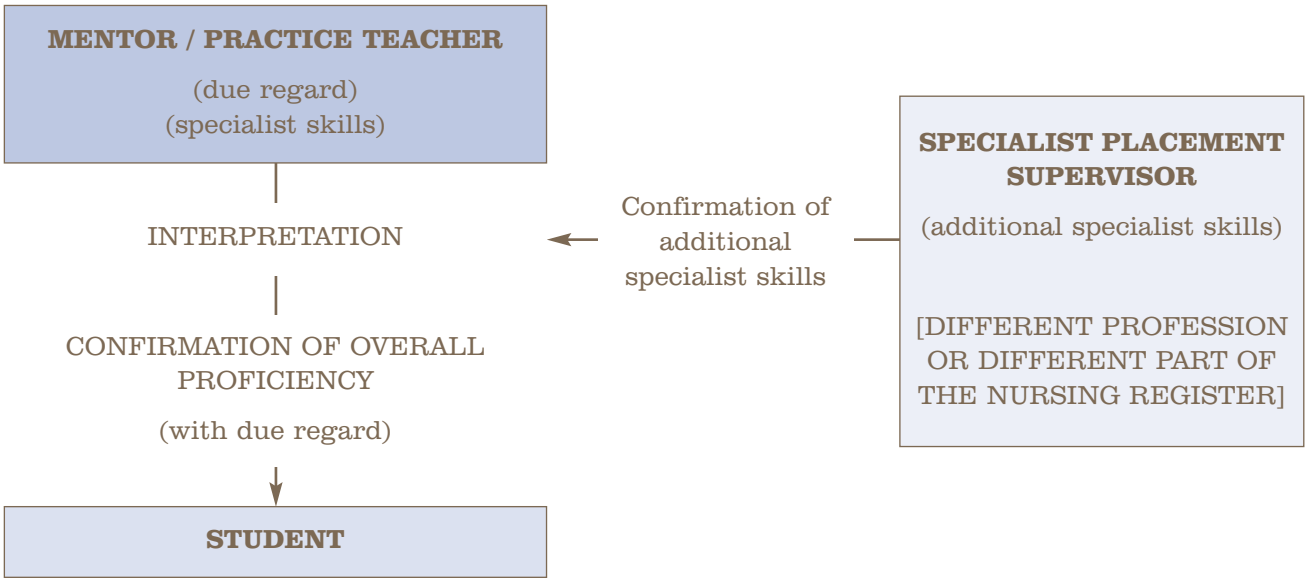
- a specialist community public health nursing student who undertakes a placement within a social work environment,

- a mental health nursing student placed within a criminal justice environment
- a learning disability nursing student placed within an adult nursing environment
- a child branch nursing student placed with a specialist community public health nurse

In these circumstances the student is placed with a specialist placement supervisor who is a designated practitioner with the skills that the student needs to acquire or be exposed to. The specialist placement supervisor is normally a professional who has received preparation in supervising and assessing students in practice settings.

The specialist placement supervisor from a different part of the register or profession:

- directly supervises the student in the required activities that address the specified learning outcomes related to the specialist experience.
- assesses component skills directly related to the professional's own area of competence and scope of practice.



The placement must be overseen by a NMC registrant mentor or practice teacher with due regard who meets with the student and placement supervisor at agreed predetermined points to monitor the student's achievement in the context of the part of the register that the student intends to enter. The mentor/ practice teacher is accountable for assessment with due regard and confirming overall proficiency (or not) at the end of the placement.

NB. Practice assessment in independent/supplementary prescribing programmes is the legal responsibility of a designated medical practitioner who supports, teaches and supervises the student with, where possible, an experienced nurse prescriber who should ensure that learning is applied to specific areas of nursing practice.

Method 2b: Where mentors and practice teachers with due regard are scarce.
This method enables due regard to be applied where students need to gain experience within a required field of practice or part of the register where there are limited numbers of mentors/ practice teachers available from their part of the register and/or field of practice. Direct supervision and assessment in the specialist area is provided by other NMC mentors/ practice teachers without due regard.

Examples could include a:

- mental health branch student supervised by an adult nurse in a general accident and emergency unit
- general practice nurse student supervised by an adult nurse in a minor injuries unit.

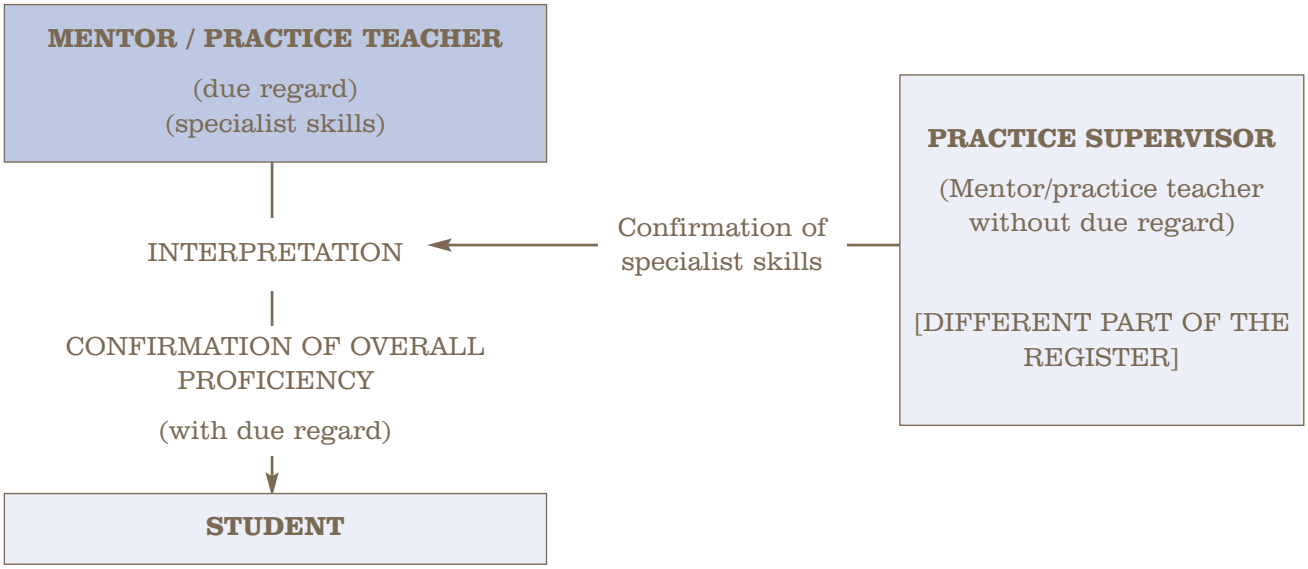
• child branch student supervised by a learning disability nurse in a unit for challenging behaviour

• learning disability nurse supervised by a health visitor in a baby clinic

A practice supervisor (mentor/practice teacher without due regard)

• directly supervises the student in the required activities that address the specified learning outcomes related to the specialist experience.

• assesses component skills directly related to the professional's own area of competence and scope of practice.



The placement must be overseen by an NMC registrant mentor or practice teacher with due regard who meets with the practice supervisor providing direct supervision at agreed predetermined points to monitor the student's achievement in the context of the part of the register that the student intends to enter. The overseeing mentor/ practice teacher is accountable for assessment with due regard and confirming overall proficiency (or not) at the end of the placement.

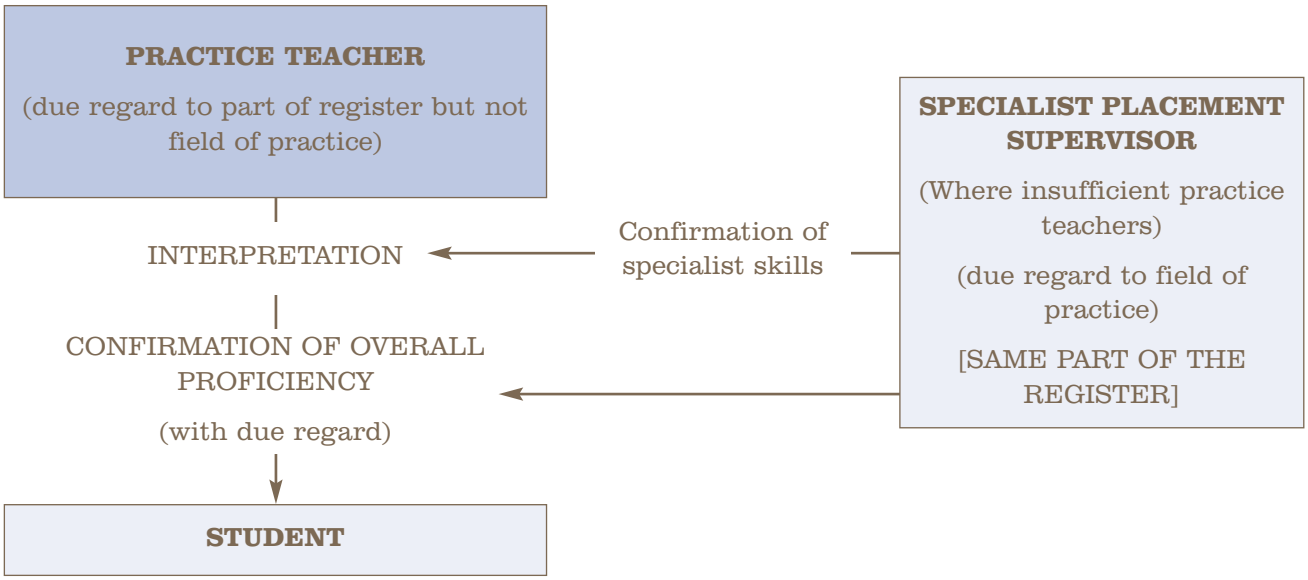
Method 2c: In specialist community public health nursing programmes where practice teachers are available from the part of the register but not the specific field of practice.
This enables due regard to be applied where specialist community public health nursing students are placed within a required field of practice, where there are no practice teachers from that part of the register to provide direct supervision. Specialist community public health nurse (SCPHN) registrants from the field of practice provide direct supervision and assessment in the specialist area.

An example is where there are several health visitor practice teachers but no practice teachers within the occupational health nursing field of practice. Under these circumstances:

• an occupational health student is directly supervised by a SCPHN registrant from the occupational health field of practice

• the placement is overseen by a health visitor practice teacher who meets with the student and placement supervisor at agreed predetermined points to monitor the student's achievement

• the health visitor practice teacher (from the SCPHN part of the register together with the SCPHN specialist supervisor from the specialist occupational health field of practice) jointly assess overall proficiency within context of the SCPHN part of the register and specific field of practice.



The placement supervisor and the overseeing practice teacher must both take accountability for the confirmation of proficiency at the end of the placement or programme.

N.B. The placement supervisor would normally be a registrant on the SCPHN part of the register who would also be entered on the local mentor register.

Circumstances where due regard need not apply
There are two circumstances where due regard need not apply:

- in the common foundation programme within pre-registration nursing programmes where the placement is not branch (field) specific. In these circumstances a mentor from any part of the nursing register may confirm that outcomes have been achieved.
- in formative placements where proficiencies/learning outcomes are not being assessed.

Required action
Providers of nursing and specialist community public health nursing programmes may now apply the principles in this circular in the application of due regard for the respective parts of the register and fields of practice. In applying the principles, the most important consideration is safety, public protection and confirmation of overall proficiency. This requires the specialist placement provider, mentor/practice teacher and student to work together in determining the overall practice assessment outcome.

All placement arrangements will continue to be monitored through existing practice placement audit and quality assurance mechanisms.

This circular may be reproduced by all to whom it is addressed

This circular has been issued by:

Sarah Thewlis
Chief Executive and Registrar
Nursing and Midwifery Council

Circular: Applying due regard to learning and assessment in practice for student midwives

Nursing and Midwifery Council Circular
Index Number: NMC Circular 02/2008
Issue Date: 25 January 2008
Review Date: 1 January 2010
Replaces: New Circular
Category: Midwifery
Status: Action

Summary
This circular:

- responds to challenges currently experienced in the application of due regard in meeting the Standards to support learning and assessment in practice (NMC August 2006) hereafter referred to as 'the Standards'.
- sets out ways in which the principle of due regard may be applied more flexibly without reducing the degree of rigour applied to assessing student competence.

Applying due regard to learning and assessment in practice for student midwives
This circular clarifies the principle of applying due regard in a safe and effective way across a range of different placements where student midwives may achieve competence. It should be read in conjunction with the Standards to support learning and assessment in practice. The content of the circular should be applied with immediate effect.

Due regard
The principle of due regard underpins the NMC Standards to support learning and assessment in practice. Principle A (paragraph 1.2 of the Standards) states that NMC registrants:

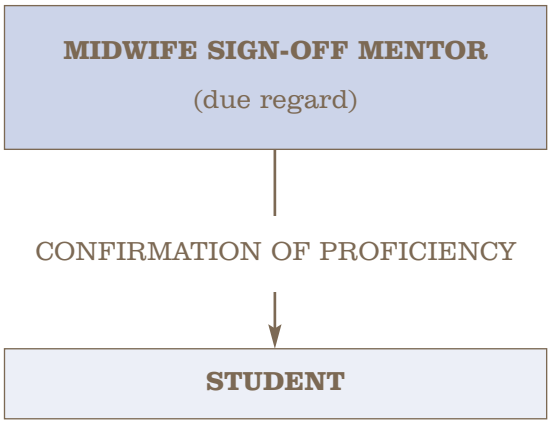
'who make judgments about whether a student has achieved the required standards of proficiency for safe and effective practice must be on the same part or sub-part of the register as that which the student is intending to enter'

Existing application of applying due regard
Applying due regard is illustrated in the diagram below. In this model the student midwife is placed with a midwife sign-off mentor (who must have achieved the NMC requirements for sign-off). This person undertakes a number of functions. These include:

- managing the placement
- planning the student's learning experiences
- working with them on a day-to-day basis.

In so doing, the midwife sign-off mentor develops an opinion on the student's performance and learning progression throughout a practice placement which may be informed by the assessment of specific tasks and skills. Their opinion is also normally informed by feedback from colleagues and evidence from other sources. This process leads to a judgment being made as to whether the student has achieved competence by reaching the requirements for safe and effective practice set out in the NMC Standards of proficiency for pre-registration midwifery education.

The existing application of due regard

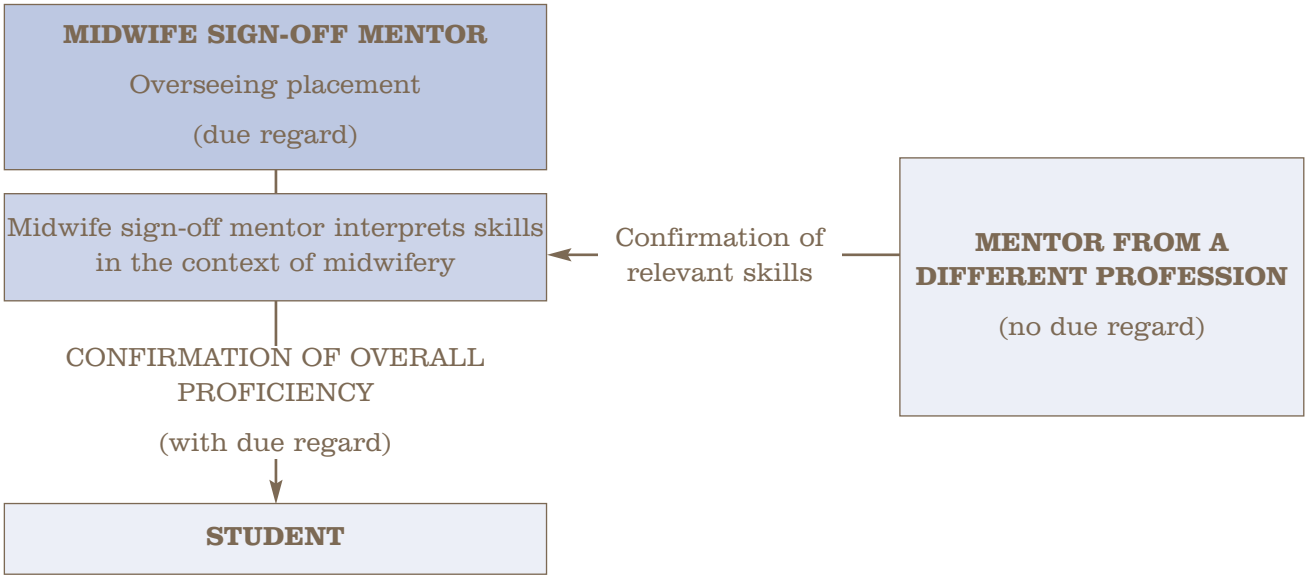


Applying due regard where mentors are available but do not meet NMC requirements for due regard

There are circumstances where it is appropriate for a student midwife to gain experience by being placed with someone form a different profession who would feedback to the student and sign-off mentor.

The final judgement as to whether the student midwife has achieved the required standard for safe and effective practice in relation to a particular aspect of the standards of proficiency, is made by a midwife sign-off mentor with due regard 'overseeing' the placement.

Applying due regard where mentors are available who do not meet NMC requirements for due regard.



In applying the above framework, the most important consideration is safety, public protection and confirmation of competence . This will be achieved by the mentor (no due regard), midwife sign-off mentor overseeing the placement (with due regard) and student working together in detailing the practice assessment outcome.

For further information about this circular please contact the midwifery department via midwiferyadvice@nmc-uk.org or by telephone at 020 7333 6692.

Action Required

• may be applied with immediate effect in relation to midwifery

This circular may be reproduced by all to whom it is addressed

This circular has been issued by:

Sarah Thewlis
Chief Executive and Registrar
Nursing and Midwifery Council

Circular: Ensuring continuity of practice assessment through the ongoing achievement record.

Nursing and Midwifery Council Circular

Index number: NMC Circular 33/2007
Issue Date: October 2007
Review Date: October 2010
Supports: Standards to support learning and assessment in practice (NMC 2006)
Category: Standards
Status: Action

Summary

The circular sets out the principles for sharing of personal information necessary to maintain continuity of assessment and to ensure safe and effective practice through the 'ongoing achievement record'. This forms part of the assessment of practice arrangements for all approved programmes.

The Standards to support learning and assessment in practice (NMC 2006, page 30) requires that:

'An ongoing achievement record (student passport) including comments from mentors, must be passed from one placement to the next to enable judgments to be made on the student's progress'.

The term 'student passport' is no longer being applied to this process due to differing interpretations and meaning and will in future be referred to as the 'ongoing achievement record'.

Education providers must ensure that:

- student's consent to the processing of confidential data about him or her to be shared between successive mentors and with the relevant education providers in the process of assessing fitness for practice.
- robust processes are in place to ensure that where there are issues or concerns about a student's progress that these are promptly and appropriately dealt with
- where there are serious concerns about a student's health or character this should be reported promptly using established University procedures
- students are actively supported in addressing issues and concerns through a well defined and time limited development plan, either within a placement or across successive placements.
- disabled students needs are assessed and student's are appropriately supported in addressing the requirements of any development plan.

The Circular should also be read in association with Good health and good character Guidance for educational institutions (NMC 2007).

Requirements

The vehicle for sharing information regarding student progress in practice settings will normally be through the 'ongoing achievement record' that forms part of the assessment of practice document.

Consent

Legal advice relating to the Data Protection Act 1998 has confirmed that the NMC 'is perfectly competent to require the nurse to consent to the processing of confidential data about him or her in the process of assessing her fitness to be a nurse'. This data might include both 'personal data' and 'sensitive personal data' as described within Sections 1 and 2 of the Data Protection Act 1998. (In this context 'nurse' relates to student nurse and also applies to student 'midwife').

Should the student not consent to the sharing of confidential data, then this would be incompatible with ensuring fitness for practice and therefore the student would be unable to

meet programme requirements.

Students must be kept fully informed regarding the ways in which information is intended to be shared, used and stored, including the length of time it is to be retained and when it will be destroyed.

'Ongoing achievement record'
Education providers must ensure that:

- student's consent has been obtained allowing the processing of confidential data about him or her to be shared between successive mentors and with the relevant education providers in the process of assessing fitness for practice.
- an 'ongoing achievement record', including comments from mentors is passed from one placement to the next to enable judgements to be made on the student's progress.
- student concerns are addressed and where relevant shared with others, including academic staff.
- sign-off mentors can access records of achievement to inform signing off proficiency, confirming that ongoing competence and any concerns have been addressed since the last progression point.

The 'ongoing achievement record' forms part of the assessment of practice document and needs to be of sufficient detail to enable the sign off mentor to confirm proficiency at the designated point of the programme. All actions must be taken with the full knowledge of the student. Mentors should not keep their own separate student progress records, everything should be contained within the assessment of practice document.

The following applies to all assessed placements but may be interpreted more flexibly for placements of less than four weeks, or for observational experience:

- the student and mentor meet together at the end of a placement to document strengths, development needs, and any concerns. The document to be shared with the education provider.
- the student to be responsible for carrying the documentation from placement to placement with copies retained by the education provider
- within 5 days of commencing a placement the documentation to be used by the student and mentor to develop a development plan and set goals that take account of strengths, issues and concerns raised in previous placements.
- regular meetings are scheduled to evaluate progress by student and mentor throughout a placement, (involving academic staff when appropriate) at least at the mid point and at the end of a placement where strengths and any issues for development are addressed.
- a specific development plan to address needs and/or concerns can be established at any point and must set out clear timescales for addressing the needs/concerns
- where a specific development plan has been put in place and concerns remain then an evaluation session with the mentor must be urgently scheduled and others involved as appropriate e.g. academic staff.
- where there are causes for concern a student representative might also be present.

The above needs to be considered in relation to the NMC's requirements for local 'fitness to practise' panels as set out in the Good health and good character Guidance for educational institutions (NMC 2007).

Action Required
The above requirements apply to all NMC approved programmes and are effective from the date of this Circular. They support the requirements set out within the Standards to support learning and assessment in practice (NMC 2006)

This circular may be reproduced by all to whom it is addressed

This circular has been issued by:

Sarah Thewlis
Chief Executive and Registrar
Nursing and Midwifery Council

Contacts

Nursing & Midwifery
Council

23 Portland Place
London W1B 1PZ

020 7333 9333
advice@nmc-uk.org
www.nmc-uk.org

Standards to support learning and assessment in practice was first published in August 2006. This second edition was published in July 2008.

PB-STLAIP-A4-0708