

Nursing Midwifery and Allied Health Professions (NMAHP) Directorate

Executive Summary

The Development of a Scottish tool for Student Practice Learning Experience Feedback (SPLEF)

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Glossary of Report Terms

CHEF	Care Home Education Facilitator
CNO	Chief Nursing Officer
HEI	Higher Education Institution
NES	NHS Education for Scotland
NMAHP	Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professions
NMC	Nursing and Midwifery Council
NSGPL	National Strategic Group for Practice Learning
PEF	Practice Education Facilitator
PLE	Practice Learning Experience
QMPLE	Quality Management of the Practice Learning Environment
QSPP	Quality Standards for Practice Placements
SCEPRN	Scottish Collaboration for the Enhancement of Pre-Registration Nursing
SG	Scottish Government
SPLEF	Scottish tool for Student Practice Learning Experience Feedback

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Context

Both policy and standards have highlighted that feedback from the student practice learning experience (PLE) is recognised by stakeholders as an invaluable quality improvement mechanism (NHS Education for Scotland (NES) 2011, NES 2008, Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) 2014 and NMC 2010). NMC (2014; p20) best articulate the need for collaborative working by stating *'When students from more than one AEI are allocated to individual placements, joint arrangements for compliance with SLAIP, educational audit and QA must be known and understood by all'*. Furthermore, NMC (2014; p22) also stipulate that *'regular monitoring, reporting and updating of progress against actions plans (including feedback from students and mentors) is used to inform the programme outcomes and enhance the practice learning experience'*. These regulatory requirements, in line with the responsibility assumed by higher education institutions (HEIs) and NHS Boards to provide practice learning experiences, lend weight to the stance that student PLE feedback should be recognised as integral to professional and regulatory quality assurance mechanisms.

Alongside these professional and regulatory requirements, NES (2008) *Quality Standards for Practice Placements (QSPP)* reinforces the need for student evaluation and feedback by delineating this requirement as part of the QSPP standards. An adjunct to this is *Article 13 for NHS Education for Scotland* (NES 2011; p4) which presents work designed to develop and progress a national student engagement model. Here it is identified that *'stakeholders stressed the crucial importance of ensuring adequate feedback mechanisms to reassure students that their voice has been heard and is valued'*. This evidence, when considered in tandem with professional and regulatory requirements, only serves to confirm the crucial nature of student PLE feedback and the need for mechanisms founded in collaboration and consensus. The development and implementation of a Scottish student PLE feedback approach was therefore recognised as a means to ensure consistency in terms of both PLE feedback question content and format. This collaborative project was designed to support the development of a tool with these characteristics, in turn supporting the retrieval of student PLE feedback nationally. This would potentially provide greater opportunities for HEI/service collaboration, enhancing the effectiveness of actions taken to improve the quality of the student PLE across Scotland.

The Literature

As a means of informing this work, a rapid appraisal of the literature was undertaken (spanning 1990 – 2014) with specific focus on the following areas:

1. The development of practice learning evaluation tools across health care professions **(14 papers reviewed)**
2. Factors which potentially influence the student PLE **(15 papers reviewed)**
3. Management and quality assurance of the PLE, including reference to policy, professional standards and regulation **(11 documents reviewed)**

The literature highlighted a degree of evaluation tool variation in relation to format, content and purpose. It became apparent however that many practice learning evaluation tools had been developed with the common goal of discovering what makes a positive PLE. A number of tools presented in the literature also tend to focus on elements considered as key indicators of a positive PLE including; individualisation, innovation, involvement, personalisation and task orientation.

When considering the student perspective, the rapid appraisal identified that students need to feel motivated and included when learning in practice. Students also value the opportunity to develop relationships with others across practice learning environments. The literature suggests that these relationships not only help to build student confidence, but also help students to feel it is safe to question and explore practice. Opportunities to observe, practice and refine skills in a safe and

secure environment and exposure to positive role models was also highlighted with regularity in the literature as a student priority.

When reviewing key policy and professional regulation documentation, the emphasis lay with an ever increasing drive towards clearer lines of communication, collaboration and transparency in terms of student practice learning. It became clear that there is a direct steer to incorporate the viewpoints and experiences of students as an integral part of quality assurance mechanisms and safeguards. The student voice is alluded to with regularity, as is the suggestion that this must be heard, fed back and valued to ensure that students can make a contribution to the development of a workplace culture where learning is not only valued but encouraged.

Summary of Stakeholder Consultation and Tool Development

Strategic and operational stakeholders were invited to participate in the development of the tool. This involved establishing of a consultation process across discreet groups of stakeholders including; pre-registration nursing and midwifery student, mentors, Practice Education Facilitators (PEFs) and Care Home Education Facilitators (CHEFs), NHS Board Leads for practice learning and HEI academics. Methods of consultation were dictated by the availability and accessibility of each stakeholder group and included; the dissemination of scoping templates, drop-in meetings and a combined HEI/NHS service provider workshop. Each consultation with stakeholders, with the exception of students, began with the following trigger questions:

- **What questions do you think we should ask students about their practice learning experience?**
- **Why do you think each question is important?**

The consultation process with pre-registration students began with a modified trigger question:

- **What aspects of your PLE would you like to/do you feel it's important to feedback to the university and the practice learning environment?'**

Consultation outputs were collated and reviewed in light of the evidence stemming from the rapid appraisal of the literature. Student feedback tools already in use across the 11 Scottish HEIs responsible for the delivery of pre-registration nursing and midwifery programmes also served as an additional source of evidence when delineating potential questions for inclusion in a new Scottish student feedback tool.

Work to produce a concise fit for purpose tool that would have the capacity to generate meaningful data involved a series of fully auditable steps, all of which incorporated ongoing stakeholder consultation. These included:

- The rapid appraisal of the literature
- Scoping and review of feedback tools currently in use across the 11 HEIs in Scotland responsible for the provision of pre-registration nursing and midwifery education
- Collating of potential questions for inclusion in the tool.
- Exclusion of potentially ambiguous questions and merging of questions which were similar in terms of content
- Mapping of questions to NMC (2013/14) *Quality Assurance Framework*, NMC (2010) *Standards for pre-registration nursing education* and NES (2008) *QSPP*, determining the legitimacy of each question in terms of information governance
- Consultation with strategic stakeholders via a joint HEI/service workshop to review remaining questions and to consider the legitimacy/usefulness of each when considering student feedback
- Consultation with an external research/evaluation company to facilitate the revision of the tool questions and tool format in line with the requirements of a survey questionnaire

- Further consultation with pre-registration students to support cognitive review of the tool questions and tool format

Piloting the Tool and Creation of the Final Version

The questionnaire was developed as an online version for use in a pilot that would simulate live electronic delivery and data collection. This exercise underwent ethical review and approval to run in one Scottish HEI responsible for the delivery of pre-registration nursing education.

The questionnaire was made available to approximately 1000 pre-registration nursing/midwifery students (spanning years 1 – 3 of two pre-registration nursing programmes and all four fields of nursing practice; adult, mental health, child, learning disabilities).

185 students completed the questionnaire. Relative frequency charts were created for each question and visually checked for any instances of high proportions of “Don’t know”, “can’t remember”, or mid-point responses that may have indicated difficulty in answering a question or engaging with the questionnaire itself. All open-ended questions were read to check for any comments made about the questions or the questionnaire. This inspection of the data did not highlight any concerns either with individual questions or the questionnaire overall. Given the quantitative nature of most of the questions, there was also an opportunity to conduct some statistical testing of questionnaire reliability.

The online piloting and subsequent analysis, when considered in tandem with the preceding cognitive review of the questionnaire, pointed to a well-designed and well-understood questionnaire with little need for further redesign. Elements of the statistical analysis provided some very useful pointers in terms of future data management and analysis, but did not point to any redundant or superfluous questions in the questionnaire itself. The online pilot also confirmed the suitability of the questionnaire for online delivery using a system that can handle question logic (branching) and provide stakeholders with preformatted reports and raw data in standard formats for easy sharing and analysis.

It was deemed worthwhile to explicitly group questions under headings in the questionnaire to improve readability for respondents. Reviewing the set of working headings created during the stakeholder engagement phases of development in tandem with the final questions, the following headings were created and added to the questionnaire script:

- *Your practice learning experience*
- *Preparation for practice learning*
- *The learning environment*
- *Mentor support*
- *Additional support needs*
- *Additional information*

Key Messages

Throughout the project, stakeholder consultation served to guide the development process and ultimately shaped the final version of the Scottish feedback tool. This has been designed to accurately reflect stakeholder requirements. Project activity also led to the emergence of key messages for consideration. It is recommended that these are considered if employing the Scottish feedback tool as a means of retrieving student PLE feedback in the future.

1. Key Message 1: Maximising Student Engagement and Disseminating Feedback

All stakeholders highlighted the risk of student non-engagement/lack of desire to feedback. Indeed, students anecdotally reported that they did not always take the time to feedback about their experiences in practice. Although by no means guaranteed, working to highlight to students that their feedback is both valued and may lead to improvements in future

PLEs, could potentially help to encourage student engagement and effort when seeking their PLE feedback.

Stakeholders (including students) also highlighted, as part of this consultation, that students could potentially be encouraged to engage if completion of online feedback included a mechanism to automatically generate a certificate for inclusion in the students' Ongoing Achievement Record (OAR) documentation. The provision of a certificate could provide students with evidence of their contribution, via feedback, to the quality enhancement of the practice learning experience and environment for future students and is perhaps worth considering.

2. Key Message 2: Student Feedback to Enhance the Quality of the PLE

A key benefit of a Scottish student feedback tool is the potential for stakeholders to retrieve feedback in a consistent format from pre-registration nursing and midwifery students pan Scotland. Through the use of questions founded in consensus and underpinned by the literature, practice learning environments and HEIs can potentially collaborate to begin to establish a longitudinal national and local picture of the student experience in each practice learning environment. This could support the generation of evidence to underpin improvements in practice learning and teaching strategies, both locally and nationally. Furthermore, and of equal importance, a Scottish approach could also serve to promote and highlight areas of practice excellence pan Scotland through the use of agreed evaluation criteria.

3. Key Message 3: Supporting Mentors

The mentorship role has been highlighted as a crucial element of the student PLE, both in the literature reviewed and by all stakeholders involved in the development of the Scottish tool. The benefits to be attained for mentors through the national implementation of this tool relate to consistency of feedback which could be achieved as a consequence of consistent question content, structure and format. The provision of feedback in a consistent format for mentors, and other practice learning staff, could potentially lead to an enhanced longitudinal local measurement of the student experience in Scotland, irrespective of which HEI delivers the students' programme. A consistent feedback format could also support all staff, including mentors, to reflect more effectively on their own practice and practice learning environment, enabling both the adaptation or strengthening of practice or the recognition and sharing of practice excellence. When considering the more frequent migration of students across NHS Board/practice learning geographical areas, a Scottish feedback tool, completed by each student irrespective of the HEI, could also potentially support mentors to develop a better understanding of their own practice as a mentor across the student population. This could also support more strategic practice learning discussions pan Scotland.

4. Key Message 4: NMC Requirements and PLE Quality Assurance

NMC (2014; p22) quality assurance requirements, and the way in which this is linked to student feedback, are emphasised when it is stated that *'regular monitoring, reporting and updating of progress against actions plans (including feedback from students and mentors) is used to inform the programme outcomes and enhance the practice learning experience'*. As already identified through the mapping of the Scottish student evaluation questions to the NMC (2014) *Quality Assurance Framework* (please refer to full report, Appendix 1, p 34), feedback from students can now potentially be presented as a specific source of quality assurance evidence by programme providers, should they choose to do so, as part of monitoring and reapproval events conducted by the NMC and their representatives.

NES (2008) *QSPP* also highlights both the standards and precepts which can help to quality assure the PLE for all stakeholders. As the Scottish tool questions have also been mapped to both *QSPP* standards and precepts, placement providers and HEIs can review student feedback in light of these to help determine the efficacy of PLE quality assurance mechanisms.

5. Key Message 5: Equality and Diversity Requirements

NMC (2010) *Standards for pre-registration nursing education* detail specific requirements in terms of equality and diversity and pre-registration nursing programmes. In particular, the requirements, and guidance, identified as 'R' and 'G' respectively below served to guide the development of the Scottish tool:

R2.1.1 *'Programme providers must treat all students fairly, and ensure equality of opportunity regardless of race, gender, disability, age, religion or sexual orientation'* (NMC 2010; p52)

R2.2 *'Programme providers must ensure that programmes comply with current equality and diversity legislation, including making reasonable adjustments without compromising safety.'* (NMC 2010; p53)

G2.2a *'Programme providers should consider how reasonable adjustments can be made to ensure that applicants with disabilities can fully participate in both theory and practice aspects of the programme. In the case of increasing disability, it may not always be possible to make an adjustment or a further adjustment.'* (NMC 2010; p53)

Consultation with the research and evaluation company and NES Equality and Diversity Advisor emphasised these considerations. Key demographic questions that should ideally be incorporated as part of the tool were identified as; age, gender, ethnicity and disability status. Inclusion of these questions would help in some way to demonstrate recognition of the diversity of the student population, and the potential for this diversity to lead to varying student PLEs. This, in tandem with collation of information regarding the implementation of reasonable adjustment measures in practice, would also support consideration of individual student characteristics. Although the rationale for the inclusion of these questions, in terms of equality and diversity, is clear, there was similarly recognition that some students may prefer not to disclose this information. Providing the response option of *'prefer not to say'* was therefore deemed an appropriate means of supporting student non-disclosure.

References

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