NHS Education for Scotland

Preparation for Practice Supervisors and Practice Assessors

Supporting Effective Practice Learning

Unit 6

Supporting Learners: Responding to performance concerns and supporting development and progression

Introduction

This unit is for practitioners preparing to be a practice supervisor and/or practice assessor and will take approximately 3 hours to complete.

The aim of this unit is to support practice supervisors (PS) and practice assessors (PA) in raising and responding to conduct and competence concerns of learners within pre-registration and post-registration NMC programmes.

Learning Outcomes

On completion of this unit you should be able to:

⊕ Understand your professional responsibilities in raising and responding to concerns regarding learner performance, both conduct and competence.

⊕ Recognise the importance of clear verbal and written communication between the learners, practice supervisors and practice assessors.

⊕ Identify and manage strategies to support learners, including managing courageous conversations, creating Specific Measurable Achievable Realistic Timely action plans and evaluating student progress.

⊕ Reflect on the skills and experience you currently have and identify the support available to you when supporting learners (PEF/CHEF, HEI staff, peers).

Supporting Effective Practice Learning | **Unit 6: Supporting Learners: Responding to performance concerns and supporting development and progression**

2

Preparing to be a Practice Supervisor or Practice Assessor – Raising concerns

Where are you now?

Raising concerns when you have a student that is not performing to the expected standard can be distressing and challenging. However, by recognising and addressing concerns at an early stage, measures can be put in place to support your student's development which may enable them to meet the standards and proficiencies expected of them.

Take time

Take some time to consider where your learning needs are in relation to the aims and learning outcomes for this unit.

What knowledge and skills do you currently possess in relation to raising concerns regarding a learner's competence?

Write down the key points.

This unit should provide you with useful new learning, or simply build upon your existing knowledge and expertise, to support you in your role as a PS or PA. Although the content within this unit is mostly pre-registration focused, the principles are transferable to post-registration learners.

Remember you are not alone when supporting learners. Support can be sought from other PS/PAs in your area, your line manager, the PEF or CHEF for your clinical environment or your students' HEI.

Supporting Effective Practice Learning | **Unit 6: Supporting Learners: Responding to performance concerns and supporting development and progression**

3

Concerns with the student's performance

As a practice supervisor or practice assessor you may become concerned regarding your student's development. These performance concerns will often fall into one of two categories.

➕ Concerns with behaviour or professionalism **conduct**.

➕ Concerns with the learner's ability to demonstrate knowledge and skill related to their practice **proficiency**.

Within the following sections we will explore each of these in more detail.

What are some common reasons for concern?

Professionalism:

➕ showing unenthusiastic attitude and behaviour

➕ lack of motivation, aggressive, confrontational

➕ unable/unwilling to communicate effectively with patients, carers and staff

➕ apathetic

➕ turning up late consistently

➕ repeated sickness

➕ stress and anxiety inhibiting your student's ability to perform

➕ lack of trustworthiness

➕ absence of professional boundaries

➕ engagement with digital technology and social media which does not comply with local policy and professional body guidance

Uniform standards lacking:

➕ not complying with organisational uniform policy

➕ personal hygiene needing addressed

➕ uniform crushed

➕ inappropriate or insensitive clothing choices when no uniform required

Supporting Effective Practice Learning | **Unit 6: Supporting Learners: Responding to performance concerns and supporting development and progression**

4

Failing to meet the learning outcomes/ platforms required for their level:

- lack of personal insight into development
- poor/weak clinical performance
- unsafe practice
- unable to link theory to practice
- non-application of skills
- poor management of personal care of service users
- unable to progress and develop skills and competencies at initial and interim interviews
- difficulty in organising work
- poor time management

Communication:

- lack of appropriate communication skills
- inappropriate comments
- lack of confidence and initiative
- avoiding or not working with their PS
- unable to hand over important information to their PS or other health and social care professionals
- unable to respond or take advice/feedback from their PS or others

Supporting Effective Practice Learning | **Unit 6: Supporting Learners: Responding to performance concerns and supporting development and progression**

5

Let's now consider specific situations you may face as a PS and consider how you might address these.

There is always more than one solution, so try and think how else you might manage these scenarios.

Scenario 1 - Pre-registration

After two weeks in the practice learning environment your year two student Carol has two days of absence and has failed to inform the clinical area or the HEI. When she returns you inform Carol of the HEI absence policy and she appears disinterested and walks away.

How would you approach this scenario. **Please record your answers.**

Possible solutions

➕ You could explain professional expectations of a student.

➕ You could ask Carol to review the absence policy.

➕ You could have a discussion with Carol to identify any health and wellbeing or personal concerns? Is an occupational health referral required via the HEI?

➕ You could raise concerns with Carol's PA.

➕ If you continue to have concerns, then you could follow the HEI raising concerns protocol.

➕ Remember to document in your student's practice assessment documentation the advice, supportive measure you have taken, and any actions being taken forward.

Supporting the underperforming student

Early Intervention Steps

You may find that during a practice learning experience that your student may require more support to achieve particular learning outcomes or professional standards.

It is important to identify concerns with your student at the earliest opportunity, issues must not be ignored.

Raising awareness and early discussion can prompt your student to consider their practice, thus facilitating satisfactory progress.

Supporting Effective Practice Learning | **Unit 6: Supporting Learners: Responding to performance concerns and supporting development and progression**

6

Scenario 2 - Early Intervention

Staff in your team have fed back that your Year 1 student Amanda seems to lack motivation and does not initiate opportunities for her learning.

How might you as the PS intervene early to prevent this issue escalating?

Write down your thoughts.

Practice Supervisor Actions:

When you first identify that a student like Amanda requires extra support to meet learning outcomes or proficiencies you should:

- ⊕ familiarise yourself with the required support process
- ⊕ discuss your observations with Amanda without delay
- ⊕ advise Amanda on how to make improvements
- ⊕ liaise with HEI if an occupational health referral is required
- ⊕ give time frames within which improvement is expected
- ⊕ inform Amanda of the consequences should the required improvement not occur e.g. formal development support plan
- ⊕ ensure that the PA and other supervisors who are supporting Amanda are aware and make note the discussion

What if the situation does not get resolved with your early intervention? What should you do now?

If you, as the PS, have concerns, it would be prudent to discuss these with the PA. Not all concerns require a formal Developmental Support Plan; this will be explored later in the unit.

However, good practice would be to document any conversations you have with your student, or the PA, within the practice assessment documentation in the additional notes section. Honest and transparent communication supports a positive learning environment.

Now consider what your role as Practice Assessor might be in this scenario.

Possible solutions:

➕ As the PA you should be up to date on the progress of Amanda and have regular communication with the PS and Amanda to support you with your assessment decisions. Feedback to Amanda about her achievements and collaborate with her to review possible areas for improvement also forms a fundamental part of the assessment process.

➕ You would need to ensure that you had access to Amanda's documentation and spend time working directly with Amanda to establish levels of competence. It is also important to ensure that Amanda is aware of what she is expected to achieve and have supportive discussions to raise your concerns about areas of development.

Raising and responding to proficiency concerns

Occasionally, students do not meet the required standard of proficiency and it is necessary to provide additional support so that they can develop and progress.

However, if the student continues to be unable to demonstrate the required level of proficiency, despite this support, they will fail their practice placement.

In this event, it is important that students are well informed as to why they have not met the threshold to pass their placement based on assessment against the required learning outcomes, and the feedback provided is supportive for their future resit placement.

In the following sections we will explore how the PS and PA can provide this support.

Supporting Effective Practice Learning | **Unit 6: Supporting Learners: Responding to performance concerns and supporting development and progression**

8

Supporting the learner with proficiency concerns

PS role:

- Explore early why your student may be having difficulties including any possible reasonable adjustments that have not previously been disclosed. For more information on reasonable adjustments please refer to Unit 3.
- Document your discussions and concerns clearly- this will form your supporting evidence.
- Utilise support networks early like the PA, academic assessor, PEF/CHEF.
- Make explicit developmental support plans in partnership with the PA.
- Set objectives and outcomes.
- Set review dates.

PA role:

- Early discussion with PS and student.
- Regular meetings with all parties.
- Clearly identify deficits and learning needs with both student and PS.
- Give support and guidance on available resources.
- Involve PS and AA.
- Regularly review and update the development support plan.

Supporting Effective Practice Learning | **Unit 6: Supporting Learners: Responding to performance concerns and supporting development and progression**

9

Creating a Development Support Plan

Although a Development Support Plan is more commonly used within the pre-registration programmes, the principles discussed are applicable for all learners.
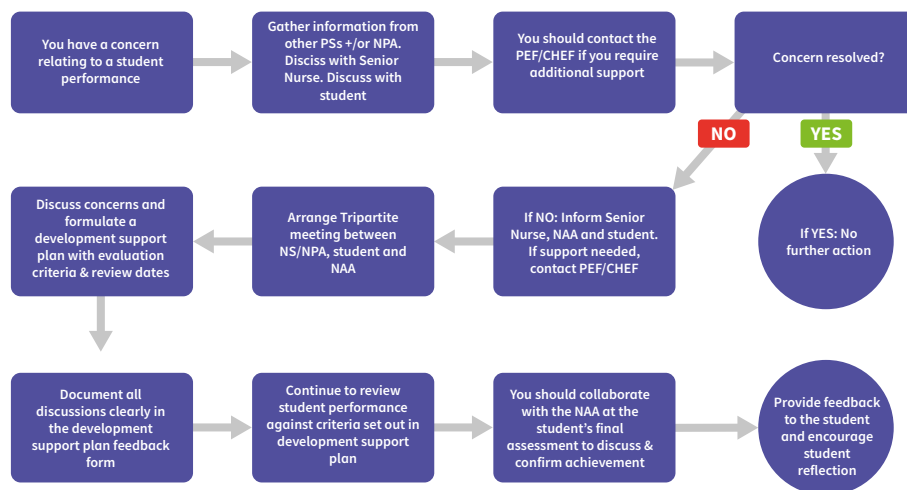
In post-registration programmes, a plan of support would be documented within your student's practice portfolio, following a tripartite discussion between the PS/PA, HEI staff and the student.

The following sections use examples from the pre-registration practice assessment document (PAD) and will provide helpful guidance on how these plans can be created and reviewed.

In addition, a generic example of a post-registration action plan is provided for comparison.

HEI SPECIFIC FLOWCHART FOR RAISING PROFICIENCY CONCERNS

This flow chart highlights the process that should be followed when a PS has concerns regarding their student's performance.

You have a concern relating to a student performance → Gather information from other PSs +/or NPA. Disciss with Senior Nurse. Discuss with student → You should contact the PEF/CHEF if you require additional support → Concern resolved?

NO / **YES**

Discuss concerns and formulate a development support plan with evaluation criteria & review dates ← Arrange Tripartite meeting between NS/NPA, student and NAA ← If NO: Inform Senior Nurse, NAA and student. If support needed, contact PEF/CHEF

If YES: No further action

Document all discussions clearly in the development support plan feedback form → Continue to review student performance against criteria set out in development support plan → You should collaborate with the NAA at the student's final assessment to discuss & confirm achievement → Provide feedback to the student and encourage student reflection

NPS = Nominated Practice Supervisor; NPA = Nominated Practice Assessor; NAA = Nominated AcademicAssessor; PEF/CHEF = Practice/Care Home Education Facilitator

In the following section we will examine the development support plan in more detail.

Supporting Effective Practice Learning | **Unit 6: Supporting Learners: Responding to performance concerns and supporting development and progression**

10

Activity

Review the Development Support Plan Template for pre-registration (nursing & midwifery) students below, available within the PAD and consider each section.

Development Need Identified:

Be specific and expilicit in relation to the area for development

Specific areas to be addressed	Related Platform number/ proficiency	Participation in Care level	Learning resources/ actions	Evidence of achievement	Achievement/ Review date
What will the learner need to accomplish or achieve?	Linked to the PAD	Linked to the PAD	Can you idenify a policy/ protocol they should read and consider, then discuss with you?	How will you measure their engagement with this and their successful achievement?	Set a realistic timeframe

Practice Assessor and Supervisor Signature:	Student Signature:	Academic Assessor Signature:	Date ___/___/___
Development support plan outcome:	Achieved / Not Achieved (please circle)		Date ___/___/___

Post-registration

In this instance a revised learning needs analysis and action plan would be compiled, and your student would be given a time scaled period by which they must have attained the required standard. This is similar to the example provided for the pre-registration programmes and would be completed by making specific reference to the areas for improvement, linking this to the specific components or proficiencies within the practice portfolio.

It is also worth considering that with issues of student conduct for post-registration nurses and midwives there may be wider ramifications in terms of professional practice.

No.	Area for Improvement	Action required by student	Action required by Practice Assessor	Timeframe
1.				
Review Date		Outcome		

Think SMART!

When creating a development support plan, it is important to think 'SMART' and ensure the plan is specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely.

Specific

State clearly what this development plan relates to- e.g. linked to the proficiencies.

Measurable

How will achievement be evaluated? Observation, documentation, simulation?

Achievable

Is this realistic for the student and appropriate to their level of training?

Realistic

Ensure the goal of the plan is not too easy or too hard.

Time-bound

Can this be accomplished in the time available?

An example of a completed plan is on the next page.

Supporting Effective Practice Learning | **Unit 6: Supporting Learners: Responding to performance concerns and supporting development and progression**

13

Development support plan

Development Need Identified: Student demonstrates a very limited theory, knowledge and skills in relation to medicine administration for current stage of pre reg nursing programme					
Specific areas to be addressed	Related Platform number / proficiency	Participation in Care level	Learning Resources/actions	Evidence of achievement	Achievement/ Review date
Student is required to enhance their skills and knowledge to the required level in relation to medicine administration	Platform 1.15/1.20 Platform 3.3 Platform 4.5/4.14/4.15	Developing independence	Revisit The Code (NMC) Review PAD/procedures Read the NHS policy of medication management and administration	Explain via discussion your understanding of the code in relation to the areas of development Through discussion explain the policy and the importance for this policy	Completed action and Review by 1/1/2020 Completed action and Review by 1/1/2020
		Developing independence	With your supervisor/assessor participate in medication administration Under supervision safely administer and record the prescribed medication for 5 consecutive drug administrations Identify 5 common drugs each week understanding what they are used for, side effects and contraindications	Through participation/ observation/discussion demonstrate proficiency Discussion, Q & A sessions. Evidence within medicine management workbook	Complete action and Review by 7/1/2020 On-going/ complete for end of placement

Development Plan Feedback

DATE	PROGRESS	SIGNATURE: Student & P. Supervisor P. Assessor
3/1/2020	Development Plan was agreed on 1/1/2020 Student nurse has accessed and reviewed the NMC Code and through discussion with myself the student was able to highlight the 4 pillars and identify the key areas that are required for a registrant nurse in relation to medicine management and administration. This learning action has been achieved The student is still reviewing the NHS policy, is able to provide limited information so this learning action will be reviewed at the next review meeting 7/1/2020 Participation/shadowing of medicine administration is ongoing. The student is able to explain the process and safety checks required. This learning action is still ongoing.	

Supporting learners who have witnessed poor care

Speaking up and the reporting of concerns in practice is a crucial element of patient safety. As part of the placement process learners both observe and participate in a diverse range of care and treatment interventions. It is possible that learners will encounter differing levels of quality within clinical and other therapeutic environments, and some may fall below the standards they believe should apply. Learners, like others delivering care and treatment, are obligated to report and report early.

There are differences in the process for pre and post-registration learners.

Follow this link to access the **NES guidance for pre-registration learners who have witnessed poor care** and follow this link to the **NMC guidance for post-registration learners**.

Supporting Effective Practice Learning | **Unit 6: Supporting Learners: Responding to performance concerns and supporting development and progression**

15

Support Networks

Activity

These are examples of support available in many practice learning environments.

➕ PEF/CHEF

➕ Liaison or Link Lecturer/Academic Assessor

➕ Other PS or PA.

➕ Senior Charge Nurse/Midwife

➕ Team Leader

Can you think of other local examples available to you? **Record your findings.**

End of unit summary and assessment guidance

Following the completion of this unit you should now have an understanding of your role in raising and responding to learner conduct and proficiency concerns in both pre-registration and post-registration NMC programmes.

Have your learning needs been met? The following section provides an opportunity to complete an assessment of your learning to identify if you may need further support or development to prepare you for your role.

Remember, it is always a positive step to seek out opportunities for continued professional development speak to your local PEF or CHEF or colleagues to see what might work best for you.

Supporting Effective Practice Learning | **Unit 6: Supporting Learners: Responding to performance concerns and supporting development and progression**

16

Unit 6
Summary of learning

Now you have completed Unit 6, the following is a summary of the information you will have learned.

➕ You should highlight a concern **as soon as possible**

➕ As a PS, the **Practise Assessor and Academic Assessor/Liaison Lecturer, Team Lead and colleagues, PEF/CHEF** are all available to support you when you have a concern

➕ Support a failing student by having regular meetings with explicit support plans and use support network

➕ Use a **Development Support Plan** to support a pre-registration student?

➕ Review a Development Support Plan **as often as you think it requires**

Helpful Resources

Healthcare Improvement Scotland (2020) **How NHS staff can raise patient safety concerns**. Healthcare Improvement Scotland, Edinburgh.

Mind Tools (2018) **How to Set SMART Goals - video**.

NHS Education for Scotland (2018) **Newsroom: Duty of Candour**. NHS Education for Scotland, Edinburgh

NHS Education for Scotland (2019) **Nursing and Midwifery National Framework for SSSA**. NHS Education for Scotland, Edinburgh.

NHS Education for Scotland (2020) **Nursing and Midwifery The Practice Education Network Who we are?** NHS Education for Scotland, Edinburgh

Nursing and Midwifery Council (2018) **The Code: Professional standards of practice and behaviour for nurses, midwives and nursing associates**. Nursing and Midwifery Council, London.

Nursing and Midwifery Council (2015) **Duty of candour**. Nursing and Midwifery Council, London.

Supporting Effective Practice Learning | **Unit 6: Supporting Learners: Responding to performance concerns and supporting development and progression**

17

Nursing and Midwifery Council (2019) **Raising concerns. Guidance for nurses, midwives and nursing associates**. Nursing and Midwifery Council, London.

Nursing and Midwifery Council (2020) **Raising concerns as a student**. Nursing and Midwifery Council, London.

Nursing and Midwifery Council (2020) **Read the Duty of Candour**. Nursing and Midwifery Council, London.

Nursing and Midwifery Council (2019) **Royal Pharmaceutical Society's Competency Framework for all Prescribers**. Nursing and Midwifery Council, London.

Nursing and Midwifery Council (2019) **Social media guidance**. Nursing and Midwifery Council, London.

Nursing and Midwifery Council (2020) **Standards for nurses**. Nursing and Midwifery Council, London.

Nursing and Midwifery Council (2018) **What do practice supervisors do?** Nursing and Midwifery Council, London.

Nursing and Midwifery Council (2018) **What do practice assessors do?** Nursing and Midwifery Council, London.

Royal College of Nursing (2017) **Helping Students Get the Best from their Practice Placements**. Royal College of Nursing, London.

Royal College of Nursing (2019) **Professional Duty of Candour**. Royal College of Nursing, London.

Strachen E, Ion R, Roxburgh M (2019) **Raising Concerns in Practice: Student Guidance A National Approach for students, practice learning experience providers and higher education institutes in Scotland.**

ALTERNATIVE FORMATS

This resource may be made available, in full or summary form, in alternative formats and community languages. Please contact us on **0131 656 3200** or e-mail: **altformats@nes.scot.nhs.uk** to discuss how we can best meet your requirements.

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