

## **FAQs – Practice Learning Review**

The following frequently asked questions (FAQs) are for professionals, students, practice learning partners, educators, our stakeholders and the public. This is a live document, which means it will be reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis as we receive more questions about the work.

### **Practice learning review and the independent findings into the NMC's culture**

**Q. Do you anticipate that the independent findings into the NMC's culture will impact the work that is produced as part of the practice learning review?**

The practice learning review continues as planned. There is a governance structure in place which includes a project board, the independent steering group, and public and student advisory groups to ensure the work is of a high quality.

Please note that the NMC and its Council accepted all 36 of the report's recommendations in full. We have incorporated the independent culture review recommendations into our Culture Transformation and Fitness to Practise plans – we have major strides through these plans, including completing 24 of the 37 recommendations. More information can be found [here](#).

### **Scope of practice learning review**

**Q. Is the standards for student supervision and assessment (SSSA) model within scope for review?**

The SSSA model is not specifically in scope but will be considered within the context of practice learning. We have reviewed international models and gained feedback about the UK approach. The discovery phase of the review examined the evidence to inform the [key lines of enquiry](#) which we are now taking forward.

**Q. Practice learning research isn't as prominent as academic education research. How can this be addressed?**

The NMC commissions its own research into its standards and works collaboratively with a variety of key stakeholders. Co-production between key stakeholders in practice and academia will drive this agenda.

**Q. Will a review of nursing and midwifery educator roles be included in the practice learning review, including investment and parity of roles within health and social care?**

The Royal College of Midwives previously completed [some work](#) on this.

During the discovery phase of the practice learning review, we examined the evidence to inform the [key lines of enquiry](#) which we are now taking forward.

**Q. Academic assessors cannot be the same person for all three years. Smaller universities with small teams can find this difficult. Will this be reviewed?**

We are reviewing practice learning as a whole rather than the specifics set out in the standards for student supervision and assessment (SSSA).

**Q: Will the NMC be reviewing practice assessor and practice supervisor responsibilities as part of this review?**

The SSSA model is not specifically in scope but will be considered within the context of practice learning. We have reviewed international models and gained feedback about the UK approach. The discovery phase of the review examined the evidence to inform the [key lines of enquiry](#) which we are now taking forward.

**Q. Do you think that the removal of the 40 percent standard for working with a mentor has left students feeling as though they do not 'belong' to a particular supervisor? Has this led to a deterioration of the student learning experience and will this be explored as part of the review?**

We are exploring the experiences of students, practice supervisors and practice assessors as part of this review. During the discovery phase of the practice learning review, we examined the evidence to inform the [key lines of enquiry](#) which we are now taking forward.

**Q. Will the review revisit the supervision requirements for elective and overseas placements?**

Elective opportunities are to be encouraged. The standards for supervision and assessment (SSSA) must be in place otherwise it is an observational placement, albeit with value.

**Q. Will proficiency attainment be part of the review, for example, achieving 40 births in midwifery?**

This review is looking at practice learning in its entirety for nursing, midwifery and nursing associate students. During the discovery phase of the review, we examined the evidence to inform the [key lines of enquiry](#) which we are now taking forward.

**Q. Will the review consider a system-wide experience for practice learning to enable students to understand and consider roles in primary care/social care, private, voluntary and independent organisations?**

This is a review of all aspects of practice learning and the elements within it for nursing, midwifery and nursing associate students. As part of the [independent research](#) by the Nuffield Trust in partnership with the Florence Nightingale Foundation, which we commissioned, we asked them to include a range of practice learning experiences alongside the NHS including social care, primary care and a range of private, voluntary and independent organisations.

**Q. How does the NHS England work 'Developing a National Framework to Embed the NMC Standards for Student Supervision and Assessment across Nursing and Midwifery' fit alongside the practice learning review?**

We will consider this work as part of our review of practice learning.

**Q. Will the use of digital clinical learning be considered as part of the review?**

We will consider digital learning as part of the review. During the discovery phase of the practice learning review, we examined the evidence to inform the [key lines of enquiry](#) which we are now taking forward.

**Q. The quality of the learning experience is impacted by many factors. For example, culture can influence the student experience, and practice learning is a vital conversation for placement providers' development. How can we influence this more effectively?**

The education standards require co-production between approved education institutions (AEIs) and practice learning partners (PLPs) to ensure appropriate practice learning experience. However, this review is looking at all aspects of practice learning and the elements within it for nursing, midwifery and nursing associate students, and has informed our [key lines of enquiry](#) going forward.

**Q: How will the NMC ensure consistency around practice learning governance across AEIs?**

Our education standards are outcome focused and therefore offer an element of creativity for AEIs in how they meet our standards. We appreciate this may not help AEIs in adopting a consistent approach, but there are many elements and differences across the UK that will dictate inconsistencies between programmes. We encourage AEIs to work collaboratively (i.e. those in neighbouring localities) to share experiences and identify best practices.

## Practice learning review findings

### **Q. Have your findings indicated anything about which factors enable and inhibit practice learning?**

The findings from the [Nuffield Trust's report](#) which we commissioned, the [evaluation of simulated practice learning](#) for pre-registration nursing programmes, and the NMC's [education quality assurance work](#) informed our key lines of enquiry as approved by our Council in early 2025.

Initial desktop research has highlighted issues that we will be investigating further in our ongoing engagement with stakeholders.

### **Q. What have your findings shown in terms of nursing-field specific proficiencies and will there be any recommendations based on this?**

The Nuffield Trust has conducted field specific focus groups as part of their independent research. [Key line of enquiry](#) (KLOE) five focuses on the evaluation of key aspects of the nursing curricula that supports attainment of proficiencies for their intended field of nursing – findings within this KLOE will be shared in due course.

### **Q. Will the NMC support practice learning opportunities within other pillars of practice for nursing for example, more leadership, management, research and education opportunities?**

Students can undertake practice learning opportunities in any health and care settings where they can meet the proficiencies needed to join the register. All practice learning opportunities must be in line with the SSSA. However, we will use the practice learning review to explore this further. During the discovery phase of the practice learning review, we examined the evidence to inform the [key lines of enquiry](#) which we are now taking forward.

### **Q. Have any findings emerged about the impact of cost of living on practice learning for students?**

Some findings from the review may touch on areas that are outside of the NMC's remit as an independent regulator, such as financial support. However, we will continue to work with our stakeholders to feedback intelligence in this area.

During the discovery phase of the practice learning review, we examined the evidence to inform the [key lines of enquiry](#) which we are now taking forward.

## Implementation of changes

### **Q. When do you anticipate that any changes will be integrated into practice?**

The findings from the [Nuffield Trust's report](#) which we commissioned, the [evaluation of simulated practice learning](#) for pre-registration nursing programmes, and the NMC's

[education quality assurance work](#) informed our [key lines of enquiry](#) as approved by our Council in January 2025. Our current phase of work and outcomes will be going back to Council in late 2025.

After bringing these recommendations to Council, we will identify innovative and collaborative approaches to supporting practice learning that are currently being used within nursing and midwifery programmes. This will enable AELs and their PLPs to share insights into the ways they support students and manage student learning in practice.

**Q: Can the NMC provide specific guidance around proposed changes and how these should be implemented?**

We will provide specific guidance around any recommended changes that are mandatory. However, our education standards are outcome focused and therefore offer an element of creativity for AELs in how they meet these standards.

We appreciate that this may not help AELs in adopting a consistent approach, but there are many elements and differences across the UK that will dictate variations between programmes. We encourage AELs to work collaboratively (i.e. those in neighbouring localities) in order to share experiences and identify best practices.

## **Simulated practice learning (SPL)**

**Q. Why is there such a difference between the acceptance of SPL hours in nursing compared to midwifery?**

Midwifery education uses simulation extensively within theory and for certain elements such as some proficiencies. During our last public consultation, we found that using simulation to contribute to practice learning hours within midwifery was not supported. We will revisit this matter as part of the practice learning review.

**Q. Do you anticipate any changes to [guidance](#) around SPL hours, and would these changes be implemented?**

Our [evaluation of simulated practice learning for pre-registration nursing programmes](#) contributed to the discovery phase of the practice learning review and informed the [key lines of enquiry](#) which we are now taking forward.

**Q. How will you assure equity within SPL?**

It is for AELs working in partnership with their PLPs and employer partners to ensure equality, diversity and inclusion is not impacted within their curricula, as reflected in [part one of our standards](#).

Our [evaluation of simulated practice learning for pre-registration nursing programmes](#) contributed to the discovery phase of the practice learning review and informed our key lines of enquiry.

**Q. How will AEs be supported to provide any recommendations that come out for simulated practice?**

The findings from our [evaluation of simulated practice learning for pre-registration nursing programmes](#) are based on the experiences of 19 AEs that are approved to deliver up to 600 hours of SPL. It includes feedback from students, people who use services and their carers, practice supervisors and assessors, PLPs and academic staff.

We've considered this evaluation alongside the [independent research](#) by the Nuffield Trust in partnership with the Florence Nightingale Foundation, which we commissioned.

It will support and inform AEs, employers, PLPs and other stakeholders in their development, implementation and evaluation of simulated practice. We will also have a communication strategy which will include further webinars.

**Q. Midwifery practice learning is centred around meeting proficiencies. If students are carrying out SPL, as was introduced during COVID, can this continue and can those hours count?**

During the Covid-19 pandemic, for nursing programmes only, we introduced emergency standards allowing education institutions and their PLPs to deliver a proportion of practice learning through simulation. Following an extensive review, we made this a permanent standard.

Meanwhile, the midwifery standards are clear that whilst simulation is limited in practice, innovative theoretical learning is encouraged. Midwifery uses simulation extensively within theory and for specific elements including hard to achieve proficiencies, but it doesn't count towards practice learning hours in the current standards.

SPL for pre-registration nursing programmes must meet the NMC standards and we must approve them.

Nursing and midwifery students must meet all the proficiencies we set to complete their programme and join our register.

During the discovery phase of the practice learning review, we examined the evidence to inform the [key lines of enquiry](#) which we are now taking forward.

**Q. How can we ensure that our SPL is acceptable seeing as the NMC do not have standards for SPL in the same way that the [Association for Simulated Practice in Healthcare](#) (ASPiH) and the [International Nursing Association for Clinical Simulation and Learning](#) (INACSL) do?**

SPL must meet the same standards as any other form of practice learning – in particular, it must meet the requirements of SSSA. We also set out [principles for SPL](#) which must be met.

However, the way SPL is delivered can be supported by standards such as those set out by ASPiH and INACSL. Our [supporting information](#) provides guidance for the implementation of simulation and SPL.

## Practice learning hours

**Q. Do you anticipate that there will be a reduction in clinical practice hours? If so, how do you anticipate increasing the quality of the remaining education and learning opportunities?**

We are considering practice learning in its entirety and not for practice learning hours alone. We will communicate our next steps and future work after considering the findings of our work – this includes the [independent research](#) by the Nuffield Trust in partnership with the Florence Nightingale Foundation, which we commissioned, [our evaluation of simulated practice learning for pre-registration nursing programmes](#), and work undertaken as part of education quality assurance.

**Q. What is the NMC's stance on student self-directed and homebased learning being included in practice hours?**

We have begun the process of co-producing policy statements on reflection and simulated practice learning with stakeholders. Practice learning must meet the standards for practice learning within the pre-registration programme standards, and the SSSA.

**Q. Do you anticipate any changes to practice learning hours? If so, will that impact simulated practice learning (SPL) hours?**

We are considering practice learning in its entirety and not practice learning hours alone. We will communicate our next steps and future work after considering our findings – this includes the [independent research](#) by the Nuffield Trust in partnership with the Florence Nightingale Foundation, which we commissioned, [our evaluation of simulated practice learning for pre-registration nursing programmes](#), and work undertaken as part of education quality assurance., and work undertaken as part of education quality assurance.

**Q. How will you make sure students are not disadvantaged if the research suggests lowering the number of practice learning hours?**

We are considering practice learning in its entirety and not practice learning hours alone. Equitable experiences and ensuring students are not disadvantaged is integral to our education and training standards. During the discovery phase of the practice learning review, we examined the evidence to inform the [key lines of enquiry](#) which we are now taking forward.

## Equality, diversity and inclusion

**Q. How will you ensure stakeholder involvement represents a diverse population?**

We have an independent steering group made up of members who represent the four countries across the UK. Two advisory groups also feed into the independent steering



group; a public advisory group and a student advisory group. Details about these groups can be found [here](#).

The [independent research](#) by the Nuffield Trust in partnership with the Florence Nightingale Foundation, which we commissioned also involved active steps to engage with a diverse group of stakeholders.

**Q. What do you mean by the term ‘reasonable adjustments’ and does this cover all types of adjustments?**

Reasonable adjustments are modifications to a provision, criterion, or practice to remove disadvantages faced by individuals with disabilities. This ensures that students with disabilities or health conditions are not disadvantaged in their education or practice learning placements compared to their peers. For example, adjusting placement schedules to accommodate medical appointments, allowing the use of assistive technology like computers during exams, providing access to ergonomic equipment, and flexible placement hours.

Reasonable adjustments must be completed in collaboration between AEIs and PLPs. AEIs are responsible for ensuring reasonable adjustments are implemented effectively, but PLPs hosting practice-based learning experiences (placements) also have a duty to consider reasonable adjustments. Reasonable adjustments are a crucial to ensuring all students can succeed, regardless of any disability or health condition.

The NMC emphasises that while adjustments can be made to the way a student meets a standard, the competence standard itself cannot be adjusted. The focus is on adapting the method of learning and assessment, not on lowering the standards themselves.

## **Curriculum**

**Q. How will this review help AEIs and PLPs to modernise the nursing and midwifery curricula to ensure our workforce is fit for purpose for our future demographics?**

The NMC sets the standards on which curricula are based. We expect programmes to include an evidence-based curricula which takes account of the local context and population. The [standards framework for nursing and midwifery education](#) requires that programmes are designed, developed, delivered, evaluated and co-produced with people who use service and other stakeholders (1.12).

**Q: Will the NMC review current curricula to reflect the reality of practice?**

The NMC sets the standards on which curricula are based. We expect programmes to include evidence-based curricula which takes account of the local context and population. The [standards framework for nursing and midwifery education](#) requires that programmes are designed, developed, delivered, evaluated and co-produced with people who use service and other stakeholders (1.12).



## Apprenticeships

**Q. With the increased emphasis on apprenticeships, are you reviewing the need for pre-registration nurses to have supernumerary practice learning time ? It would be good to have consistency among the professions backed up by evidence of effectiveness.**

The practice learning review is exploring all aspects of practice learning. This includes supernumerary status and protected learning time. The discovery phase of the review gathered evidence to inform the [key lines of enquiry](#) which we are now taking forward.

**Q. Will there be any research into the difference between direct entry and apprenticeship students, and the disparity around practice learning/placements, particularly for students in private, independent and voluntary organisation settings, and the barriers to accessing external placements?**

This is not in scope at present, but we are cognisant that work is being done in this area by our stakeholders.

## Test of Competence

**Q. How far is evidence from Test of Competence (TOC) outcomes for nurses who do not have the required number of hours, but pass the TOC, being utilised?**

The TOC is a separate process we use to assess the skills and knowledge of internationally educated professionals applying to join our register for the first time, or for professionals from the UK rejoining the register after a long period away from practice. There is no link between the number of practice learning hours required for undergraduate programmes.

## Education quality assurance

**Q. How will the NMC education quality assurance (EdQA) and practice learning evaluation dovetail or align with work undertaken regarding workforce, training and education at NHS England and equivalents in the three other nations?**

We are undertaking a separate review of EdQA and working with our new partner, the Quality Assurance Agency, on improving our EdQA processes.

The [independent research](#) by the Nuffield Trust in partnership with the Florence Nightingale Foundation, which we commissioned, has explored the quality assurance of practice learning across the four countries of the UK, and internationally. We will also be including evidence and findings from mandatory exceptional reporting as part of the review.

During the discovery phase of the practice learning review, we examined the evidence to inform the [key lines of enquiry](#) which we are now taking forward

## Financial support

**Q. What assurances can the NMC give on its commitment to work with central Government on any findings which may involve the need for financial investment for, AEs such as resourcing for simulated practice learning?**

Some findings from the review may touch on areas that are outside of the NMC's remit as an independent regulator, such as financial support. However, we will continue to work with our stakeholders to feedback intelligence in this area.

**Q: Will the NMC be exploring the financial hardship that students face?**

Some findings from the review may touch on areas that are outside of the NMC's remit as an independent regulator, such as financial support. However, we will continue to work with our stakeholders to feedback intelligence in this area.

During the discovery phase of the practice learning review, we examined evidence to inform the [key lines of enquiry](#) which we are now taking forward.

## Staying informed

**Q. Will the initial key findings from the individual workstreams be shared as they are reported?**

Yes, we will continue to share our findings and next steps over the coming months. We also share updates with our Community of Interest. You can sign up to the Community of Interest [here](#)