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Who are practice supervisors and how are they prepared?

Reference: PS1 Last Updated: 23/07/2018

The practice supervisor can be [any registered health and social care professional](#) working in a practice environment. They've been [prepared and supported](#) to take up their role and have [up-to-date knowledge and experience](#) relevant to the student they are supervising.

All nurses, midwives and nursing associates in any practice learning environment should be able to undertake a practice supervisor role.

Relevant NMC standards for this section:

Standards for student supervision and assessment: [1.8](#) (page 5), [1.11](#) (page 5), [2.7](#) (page 6), [3.4](#) (page 6), [3.5](#) (page 6), [5.1](#) (page 7), [5.2](#) (page 7)

Standards framework for nursing and midwifery education: [R3.3](#) (page 9), [R3.16](#) (page 10), [S4.1](#) (page 11)

Who can be a practice supervisor?

Reference: PS1-A Last Updated: 23/07/2018

Practice supervisors must be registered with a professional regulator like the NMC, GMC or HCPC. Health and social care professionals who are not registered with a professional regulator can not be practice supervisors.

Others who are not registered health and social care professionals but are working in a practice learning environment, such as phlebotomists, teachers (in a primary or secondary school) or maternity support workers, may also contribute to student supervision. The role that non-registered professionals play depends on a number of things, including what skill is being taught, the experience and skills of the professional, what oversight there is, and the environment where learning is taking place. Further information will be provided on this in the section on the practice environment.

It's the approved education institution's (AEI's) responsibility, with its practice learning partners, to make sure that practice supervision and learning are delivered in a way that enables students to meet their learning outcomes, and does not compromise public protection.

Practice supervisor preparation

Reference: PS1-B Last Updated: 23/07/2018

All nurses, midwives and nursing associates should be capable of fulfilling a practice supervisor role, as is [set out in the NMC Code](#).

While a practice supervisor may need to be 'prepared' in some way before supervising students, this does not necessarily mean they must undergo a formal preparatory course. Practice supervision forms an important part of many professionals' roles, including registered professionals who are not nurses and midwives. Supervision is included in the new [future nurse, future midwives](#) and [nursing associate](#) proficiencies.

The preparation required will differ depending on the student they are supporting and the programme they are on. Many practice supervisors will be highly trained and experienced in supervising and supporting students, and in some cases a practice supervisor may not need any additional preparation, as long as they understand the outcomes that the student is hoping to achieve.

The practice supervisor should be able to think about their own previous and current experience, scope of practice, education and training and ways that this may help them to carry out their role. They should also be able to think about how they may want and need to develop their skills, and what additional training they may need.

[Download an overview of implementation strands for new roles to support SSSA](#)

These are the standards that set out what we expect of practice supervisors' preparation:

Standards for student supervision and assessment:

Approved education institutions, together with practice learning partners, must ensure that practice supervisors:

5.1 receive ongoing support to prepare, reflect and develop for effective supervision and contribution to, student learning and assessment, and

5.2 have understanding of the proficiencies and programme outcomes they are supporting students to achieve

Standards framework for nursing and midwifery education:

Approved education institutions, together with practice learning partners must ensure that all educators and assessors:

R4.3 receive relevant induction, ongoing support and access to education and training which includes training in equality and diversity

Any support, education or training provided should enable practice supervisors to meet sections two to five of our [Standards for student supervision and assessment](#) and to perform within the scope of their role. It should enable them to know what the student outcomes are and how they can supervise students in practice.

Support, education or training should be tailored depending on the practice supervisor's previous experience and current learning needs, and the learning needs and programme outcomes of their students. Previous experience can include any formal training courses, including those completed by registered professionals who are not nurses, midwives or nursing associates, and 'on the job' training.

Practice supervision

The level and depth of understanding of proficiencies may differ depending on the student, their learning need, the stage of learning, the placement, and the role that the practice supervisor is playing in the education of students.

The AEI, with its practice learning partners, is responsible for making sure the right support, education or training is provided. They should be able to give evidence that the preparation upholds public protection and enables practice supervisors to support students to meet their programme outcomes and our standards. More information on their responsibilities can be found within the new [Quality assurance framework](#).

What is current knowledge and experience?

Reference: PS1-C Last Updated: 23/07/2018

Standards for student supervision and assessment:

Approved education institutions, together with practice learning partners, must ensure that practice supervisors:

3.2 support learning in line with their scope of practice to enable the student to meet their learning outcomes

3.4 have current knowledge and experience of the area in which they are providing support, supervision and feedback

If a registered professional is competent in an area of practice, they should be able to supervise and support a nursing or midwifery student for that area, providing feedback on their progress towards, and achievement of, proficiencies and skills. The practice supervisor's knowledge and experience should enable the student to meet their learning needs and outcomes, and enhance the student learning experience.

What this means in practice may differ depending on a number of different factors, such as the student's overall capability (competence) and learning needs, and the scope of practice of the individual practice supervisor.

It's the AEI's responsibility, with its practice learning partners, to determine what this might mean in practice, provided public protection is upheld and students are supported to meet their learning outcomes.

Practice supervisors should be able to judge whether their own knowledge and experience is relevant for the students they are supervising. For nurses and midwives this aligns with [Standard 13 in the Code](#).

The Code:

13: Recognise and work within the limits of your competence

Who identifies who the practice supervisors are?

Reference: PS2 Last Updated: 23/07/2018

The AEI, with its practice learning partners, is responsible for identifying which professionals may be suitable practice supervisors for nursing and midwifery students in a practice learning environment. This can be done continuously throughout the student's programme.

Factors that AEIs and practice learning partners should take into account when identifying practice supervisors include:

- public protection
- the relevant standards as detailed below
- student learning needs, and
- programme outcomes.

The AEI and its practice learning partners should be able to demonstrate that their decisions uphold public protection and enable students to meet their learning outcomes.

Relevant NMC standards for this section:

Standards for student supervision and assessment: [1.4](#) (page 5), [1.8](#) (page 5), [2.1](#) (page 6)

Standards framework for nursing and midwifery education: [R3.3](#) (page 9), [R3.5](#) (page 9), [R.4.1](#) (page 11)

What do practice supervisors do?

Reference: PS3 Last Updated: 23/07/2018

Practice supervisors' role is to support and supervise nursing and midwifery students in the practice learning environment. All students must be supervised while learning in practice environments.

Practice supervisors can provide supervision in different ways. These depend on different things – it's the AEI's responsibility to decide what supervision is appropriate, with its practice learning partners.

Factors that AEIs and their practice learning partners should take into account when considering the way in which supervision may be delivered include:

- public protection
- student learning needs – both the level of learning required (student competence) and the student's programme outcomes
- student and practice supervisor equality and diversity needs
- the availability of practice supervisors and their skills and knowledge.

Practice supervisors should also be able to judge what kind of supervision and support they are able to provide.

Equality and diversity needs

The AEI, with its practice learning partners, is responsible for ensuring that the equality and diversity needs of students and practice supervisors are taken into account. If needed, they should make reasonable adjustments. The AEI and its practice learning partners should have policies and procedures in place for this to happen.

Click on a link below for more information about practice supervisors' possible responsibilities. These are only suggestions, different practice supervisors may have different responsibilities.

- [Upholding public protection](#)
- [Providing inclusive and tailored learning experiences that enable students to meet their learning outcomes](#)
- [Tailored learning](#)
- ['Continuous' learning](#)
- [Giving feedback](#)
- [Contributing to decisions on assessment for progression](#)
- [Raising concerns about student performance and behaviour](#)

Relevant NMC standards for this section:

Standards for student supervision and assessment: [1.7](#) (page 5), [1.9](#) (page 5), [1.10](#) (page 5), [2.3-2.6](#) (page 6), [3.1-3.4](#) (page 6), [4.1-4.4](#) (page 7)

Standards framework for nursing and midwifery education: [R1.9](#) (page 6), [S3.1](#) (page 9), [S3.2](#) (page 9), [R3.1](#) (page 9), [R3.6](#) (page 9), [R3.4](#) (page 9), [R3.12](#) (page 10), [R3.14](#) (page 10), [R3.16](#) (page 10), [R4.2](#) (page 11), [R4.5-R4.11](#) (page 11)

Upholding public protection

Reference: PS3-A Last Updated: 23/07/2018

All practice supervisors are responsible for upholding public protection when supporting and supervising students. This means that they must ensure that the supervision and support they provide protects the public. It can be done in a number of ways, including:

- ensuring that students are not placed with a person or in a situation that is outside of their capability without suitable support
- understanding and making clear that a person has the right to refuse having a student observe or participate in their care
- serving as a role model for safe and effective practice in line with their professional codes of conduct (including the relevant codes as set by the regulator(s) for each profession)
- **raising concerns** about any impacts to public protection from student learning. This can mean risks to public protection from the student, but also any risks to people arising from the environment in which the student is placed, including if the practice supervisor has been asked to practice beyond their competence.

All practice supervisors also have a responsibility to abide by the **duty of candour**, as part of their role as a registered professional.

Providing inclusive and tailored learning experiences that enable students to meet their learning outcomes

Reference: PS3-B Last Updated: 23/07/2018

Practice supervisors provide learning experiences for nursing and midwifery students within the practice learning environment.

Learning experiences could include:

- providing and facilitating opportunities for students to practise skills
- sharing knowledge with the student and effectively demonstrating how to put that knowledge into practice safely
- observing students
- giving constructive feedback on student performance
- empowering students to take advantage of available resources and learning opportunities
- delegating learning opportunities to other practice supervisors and anyone else who may suitably enable learning
- providing opportunities for students to learn 'independently' through less 'hands on' supervision, where appropriate
- empowering students to take responsibility for their own learning.

It's up to the AEI and its practice learning partners to decide whether a learning experience is 'suitable' or not. They should be able to demonstrate that the learning experiences uphold public protection and enable students to meet their learning outcomes.

When providing learning experiences the practice supervisor should draw on their knowledge and experience to judge what may be appropriate for each student or environment.

Tailored learning

Reference: PS3-C Last Updated: 23/07/2018

The practice supervisor ensures the learning they provide, organise, or delegate is tailored to enable the student to meet their learning outcomes and learn 'independently' where appropriate.

These are the standards that set out our expectations of tailored practice supervision:

Standards for student supervision and assessment:

1.9 learning experiences are inclusive and support the diverse needs of individual students.

1.10 learning experiences are tailored to the student's stage of learning, proficiencies and programme outcomes.

2.3 the level of supervision provided to students reflects their learning needs and stage of learning

Standards framework for nursing and midwifery education:

Approved education institutions, together with practice learning partners, must ensure that all educators and assessors:

R4.5 respond effectively to the learning needs of individuals.

Practice supervision may be tailored to the student by taking into account their programme outcomes, stage of learning, confidence and independence, and any equality and diversity considerations, alongside an understanding of the learning opportunities available and the knowledge and skills of the practice supervisor.

It's possible to tailor both the type of experience provided and the level of practice supervision. Practice supervision can be either direct or indirect, or the practice supervisor can support independent learning as appropriate. The level of practice supervision for a student might change depending on their increasing proficiency in an area.

‘Continuous’ learning

Reference: PS3-D Last Updated: 23/07/2018

Practice supervision should be ‘sufficiently continuous’, so it upholds public protection and enables the student to meet their learning outcomes.

These are the standards that set out our expectations of continuity of support and practice supervision:

Standards for student supervision and assessment:

2.5 there is sufficient coordination and continuity of support and supervision of students to ensure safe and effective learning experiences

What is ‘sufficient’ coordination and continuity of practice supervision will change depending on the circumstances. ‘Continuity’ need not mean a student having the same practice supervisor for a period of time. It may be fulfilled by good record keeping and handover between practice supervisors, if appropriate.

A decision on what’s appropriate in what circumstances can be reached by taking into account the student’s learning outcomes, confidence, competence and increasing independence, and any equality and diversity considerations alongside an understanding of the knowledge, skills and availability of practice supervisors.

When supervising students practice supervisors should decide what level of continuity is appropriate for each individual student at each point in their learning or programme.

Giving feedback

Reference: PS3-E Last Updated: 23/07/2018

Giving feedback is a fundamental part of practice supervision, as set out within this standard:

Standards for student supervision and assessment:

Approved education institutions, together with practice learning partners must ensure that practice supervisors:

3.3 support and supervise students, providing feedback on their progress towards, and achievement of, proficiencies and skills

This feedback can take different forms depending on the role that the practice supervisor is playing in student education, including;

- providing direct feedback to nursing and midwifery students on their conduct and achievement of proficiencies and skills, including where they don't think the achievement has been met, or could be improved on
- providing constructive feedback to improve overall student performance
- depending on the role of the practice supervisor in the student's education, potentially putting action plans in place to improve student performance

This process should be a collaborative one between the practice supervisor and the student. The way in which it will be done will depend on the role of the practice supervisor and their level of responsibility for student learning.

A key part of giving feedback is adding relevant observations on the student's conduct, proficiency and achievement to the student's record(s) of achievement.

These observations may include the observations of anyone else who has taken part in the student's education, depending on the way in which practice supervision has been organised.

Practice supervisors should be able to judge what is appropriate for each student, based on their knowledge and experience.

Contributing to recommendations for progression

Reference: PS3-F Last Updated: 23/07/2018

Practice supervisors also contribute to recommendations for student progression. As is set out within the following standard:

Standards for student supervision and assessment:

Approved education institutions, together with practice learning partners must ensure that practice supervisors:

4.2 contribute to student assessments to inform decisions for progression

Recommendations for progression are made by the practice assessor and academic assessor working together. Further information will be provided on the practice and academic assessor roles, and how they make recommendations for assessment, in the coming months.

Contributing to student assessments can take different forms depending on the role of the practice supervisor in student learning, the stage of learning, student competence, and other considerations. It can include:

- direct communication with practice and academic assessors to share their views on student achievement, underachievement or areas to continue to work on
- inputting into student documentation with their views on student achievement.

Raising concerns about student performance and behaviour

Reference: PS3-G Last Updated: 23/07/2018

Practice supervisors have a responsibility to raise concerns about nursing and midwifery student conduct and competence, in a timely and responsible manner. This should be done with relevant people, such as the student's practice and academic assessors, where appropriate.

Practice supervisors should raise concerns directly with the student first, if appropriate, and take steps to improve student performance. If this has been done and the student has not improved the practice supervisor may need to escalate a concern.

The practice supervisor should escalate their concerns immediately if it's urgently needed to protect the public.

What constitutes a concern and when and how to raise it depends on a number of factors, including the individual situation of the student, any equality and diversity considerations, and the existence of organisational processes for raising concerns about student performance.

The practice supervisor must decide when and how to raise concerns about student conduct and competence, based on the relevant circumstances and their own experience.

It's the AEI's responsibility, with its practice learning partners, to ensure that suitable processes and support are in place for this to happen.

Support for the practice supervisor role

Reference: PS4 Last Updated: 23/07/2018

Practice supervisors must be given the ongoing support and time necessary for them to develop and perform their role, and to train as needed. This support can take a number of forms but must allow for [our standards](#) to be met and for practice supervisors to prepare for and contribute to student learning and assessment.

Where possible, it should be tailored to the practice supervisor's [needs and requirements](#) and the setting they work in. It should include any reasonable adjustments or [equality and diversity considerations](#) that may need to be met.

Relevant NMC standards for this section:

Standards for student supervision and assessment: [1.5](#) (page 5), [2.3](#) (page 6), [4.3](#) (page 7)

Standards framework for nursing and midwifery education: [R1.5](#) (page 6), [R1.6](#) (page 6), [R1.7](#) (page 6), [R2.1](#) (page 7), [R4.4](#) (page 11)

What our standards say

Reference: PS4-A Last Updated: 23/07/2018

We have several requirements in this area that must be met. The following standard is particularly relevant:

Standards framework for nursing and midwifery education:

Approved education institutions, together with practice learning partners, must ensure that all educators and assessors:

R4.4: have supported time and resources to enable them to fulfil their roles in addition to their other professional responsibilities

The definition of 'educator' in this context includes practice supervisors, so this standard sets out our expectations of the supported time and resources provided for practice supervisors. What 'supported time and resources' might mean will be different depending on the needs and ability of individual practice supervisors, student learning needs and programme outcomes, and any equality and diversity considerations.

It's the AEI's responsibility, with its practice learning partners, to ensure the supported time and resources provided upholds public protection and enables practice supervisors to support students to meet their learning outcomes.

What can 'support' mean?

Reference: PS4-B Last Updated: 23/07/2018

Support for practice supervisors can take a number of different forms from the practical, such as access to student documentation, to knowing what the student is expected to achieve, to recognising and prioritising all training needs, and support for raising concerns. What support is proportionate will depend on the individual practice supervisor and what is needed for them to perform their role, to enable the student to meet their learning needs, and to provide safer, better care.

Equality and diversity needs

Reference: PS4-C Last Updated: 23/07/2018

The AEI, with its practice learning partners, is responsible for ensuring that practice supervisors' equality and diversity needs are taken into account when deciding what support is needed. If needed, they should make reasonable adjustments. The AEI and its practice learning partners should have policies and procedures in place for this to happen.