

Objective and fair assessments

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All student assessments must be objective and fair.

An objective and fair assessment should assure that the student has met all the intended proficiencies as set out in their programme and is safe and competent to practise in their intended area practice.

An objective and fair assessment takes into account the individual needs and circumstances of the student, while providing a consistent standard to be met. All students are individuals with different needs and abilities and should be treated as such.

A key feature of assessment will be the facilitation of reasonable adjustments when required. All environments will have a responsibility to provide reasonable adjustments for students. This will be the responsibility of the AEI, with their practice learning partners, to manage. If a student has not been given the right adjustments to remove barriers to their learning, this may lead to unfair assessments and affect their ability to complete the programme.

Students should also be challenged and given the opportunity to improve and reflect, if appropriate, for an assessment to be considered objective and fair. If a student poses a clear and present risk to patient safety, it may be appropriate to remove them from a programme immediately. However, this must be supported by evidence and proper record keeping, following AEI processes.

Assessors have a responsibility only to 'pass' or recommend a student for progression when this is supported by evidence.

A fair assessment is transparent. It is evidenced based, and supported by clear and reliable documentation, and includes a variety of viewpoints. The student is communicated with appropriately and in a timely way about what the decision is, and clear reasons are given for the decision.

There may be circumstances in which the student feels that they have not been treated fairly. The AEI, with its practice learning partners, should have fair and transparent processes in place to manage student complaints or concerns about their learning and assessment.

Individual Assessors should also reflect on how they are interacting with students, and be aware of how various things, such as learning styles, personal attributes, generational and cultural differences, or conscious or unconscious bias, may affect their decisions.

The AEI, with its practice learning partners, is responsible for ensuring that assessments are fair, objective and evidence based. They do this by ensuring that assessors meet our standards, and through audits of student learning and assessment.

What to do if the evidence is not considered fair and reliable, or due process has not been followed

In order to make an evidence-based assessment the evidence collated must be fair and reliable. The assessor should be able to make a judgement about what constitutes fair and reliable evidence based on their experience and our standards and expectations.

The assessor may come across times in which the evidence that has been presented to them is not in their view reliable or fair. For instance, student documentation may be incomplete, or the student or assessor may feel that the feedback received is not accurate.

When this happens the practice assessor may want to do one or more of the following things:

- Seek further evidence or clarify the existing evidence: If the evidence is not sufficient to make a fair and reliable assessment, the practice assessor should improve and supplement the evidence or support the practice supervisor to do so. This may be done by talking to the student's practice supervisors, anyone else involved in the education of students, anyone who has been coordinating the learning experience, and the academic assessor. They may also choose to further observe the student to ensure they have the required evidence.

- Raise concerns: If the evidence is not reliable due to a perceived issue, for example a practice supervisor has not performed their role properly, or the environment in which the student has been placed was not conducive to effective learning and assessment, the practice assessor has a responsibility to raise these issues in a timely and appropriate way. More information on how to raise concerns can be found on our [website](#).
- Refer their concerns: Following the internal processes of their AEI for dealing with gaps or inconsistencies in student records. Academic assessors should ensure they are working within and taking account of these processes where relevant

The assessor should be continually reviewing the evidence throughout the time they are assigned to the student, in order to decide if they need take action to enhance the evidence.

What to do if the student considers the assessment process has not been fair and reliable, or due process has not been followed

The student may also feel that they have been treated unfairly during their education and assessment. There may be situations when the student may perceive that the assessment process was not fair and reliable, or that due process has not been followed. This is one of the areas that the NMC is regularly approached about. We must emphasise that this is the AEI's responsibility rather than ours, so any grievances/complaints by students must in the first instance be addressed through the internal processes of their AEI. If that is unable to resolve the matter satisfactorily, the matter may be pursued via the OfS or the relevant HE regulatory bodies depending on the country the student is studying in.

For example, in this scenario a student on a SCPHN OHN programme has completed some practice learning in a corporate setting of a pharmaceutical company; however due to the company's occupational health service being provided by a third party some of the evidence to support the student's achievement in practice does not get submitted in time for the practice assessor's decision. The practice assessor informs the student about the potential for that placement experience to not 'count' towards their practice hours as a result. This decision is challenged by the student who seeks an extension to secure the necessary evidence in collaboration with the practice supervisor. The AEI provides approves the additional time and subsequently the assessment is completed.

More information can be found on what students can do in circumstances where they feel that the assessment process has not been fair and reliable, or due process has not been followed, in the section on student empowerment.

Reasonable adjustments

Applying reasonable adjustments is a legal requirement and is applicable not merely to students but also to those involved in education and training, including practice supervisors, practice assessors and academic assessors. Consideration of whether reasonable adjustments are required, to what extent and what form those adjustments should take is an ongoing process and should be discussed, reviewed and may be subject to change over a period of time.

Specifically focusing on reasonable adjustments for students, further information is available from a range of sources.

This includes information about reasonable adjustments produced by the RCN, which includes a section on [reasonable adjustments for students](#).

In addition, the organisations linked below also provide advice specifically targeted at making reasonable adjustments for students in higher education and apprentices which may be useful.

- [Advance HE](#)
- [the Office for Students](#)
- [Disability Rights UK](#)
- [Scope](#)
- [the British Dyslexia Association](#)
- [the Equality and Human Rights Commission](#)
- [the Scottish Association for Mental Health](#)