



**Northumbria  
University**  
NEWCASTLE

# **Practice Learning Handbook: Practice Supervisors, Practice Assessors and Academic Assessors**



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Thank you for supporting Northumbria University students.

2020 was an exciting yet challenging time for nursing and midwifery education. Northumbria University, in partnership with our practice learning partners, moved to the new *Future Nurse* standards and 'moved away from mentorship' for all our programmes which lead to registration or a recorded qualification with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC). The speed of change was increased by the covid pandemic and the publication of the NMC (2020) Emergency Standards which allowed all NMC programmes to move to the NMC (2018) *Standards for Student Supervision and Assessment* without a major modification or full approval event:

*R2. All students will receive support, supervision and assessments in line with the Standards for student supervision and assessment (SSSA, 2018).*

This change has impacted on Northumbria University midwifery programmes. The NMC *Future Midwife standards* were introduced in November 2019 and, initially, change was planned for 2022.

This handbook has been written to help you in the transition from NMC (2008) *Standards for learning and assessment in practice* to the NMC (2018) *Standards for Student Supervision and Assessment* (SSSA). Our aim is to clarify the new roles of:

- Student
- Nominated Person
- Practice Supervisor
- Practice Assessor
- Academic Assessor for you.

Above all, we want to show how, by working as a team, we can ensure all students receive a positive learning experience and a valid and reliable assessment of their progress in practice.

We hope you find it useful but do contact the Placements Team at [practiceplacements@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:practiceplacements@northumbria.ac.uk) or one of the key contacts if you need more information or would like to discuss further.

Carole Proud  
Director of Placements and Employability

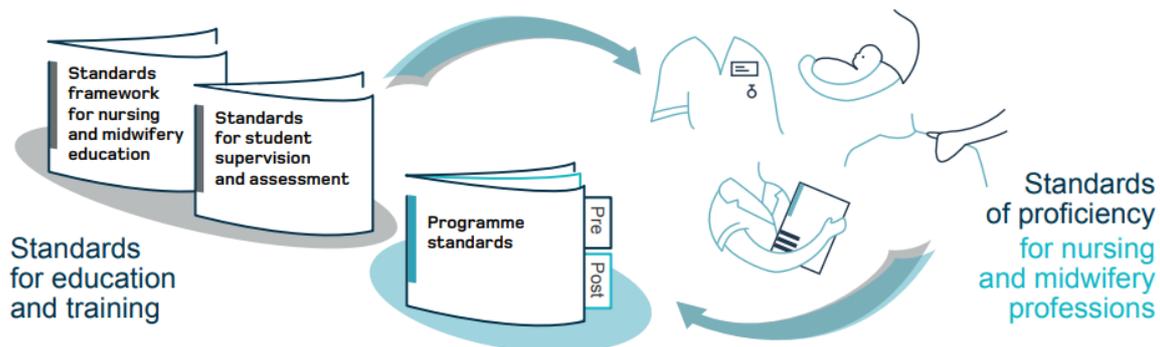
## About the Standards: a brief introduction

Article 15(1) of the Nursing and Midwifery Order 2001 ('the Order') requires the Nursing and Midwifery Council to establish standards for the education and training which are necessary to achieve the standards of proficiency for admission to the register, as required by Article 5(2) of the Order. There are three parts to the education and training standards:

Part 1 – *Standards framework for nursing and midwifery education*

Part 2 – *Standards for student supervision and assessment*

Part 3 - *Programme standards (specific to pre or post registration programmes)*



Together the standards aim to provide Northumbria University (as an Approved Education Institution – AEI) and their practice learning partners with the flexibility to develop innovative approaches to nurse and midwifery education, whilst maintaining the set standards. Overall responsibility for the day to day management of the quality of any educational programme lies with an AEI in partnership with practice learning partners who provide opportunities for practice experience to nursing and midwifery students.

Copies of the standards for education and training and the standards of proficiency for nursing can be found on the NMC website:

<https://www.nmc.org.uk/standards/standards-for-nurses/>

For midwifery:

<https://www.nmc.org.uk/standards/standards-for-midwives/>

## The Northeast Regional Approach

What is the regional approach? It is simply Teesside University, the University of Sunderland and Northumbria University collaborating to streamline and simplify processes in practice learning. So instead of three Practice Assessment Documents for student nurses from the three universities there is one. Instead of three different audits for student placements and three separate student evaluations there will be one. We will keep our logos.... But they may appear together:



So we now have:

- Northeast Practice Assessment Document (NE PAD)
- Northeast education audit of practice (NE EAP)

And for 2021 our placement management system (ARC) will join with Teesside and Sunderland's to create a practice environment profile (PEP) which can be accessed by all students at Northeast Universities – the ARC NEPEP. After ARC NEPEP we have asked ARC to design an electronic PAD for us. So no more coffee stains or lost documents, we will have ARC NEE PAD to support your assessment of the 'Future Nurse'.

And for midwifery we are adopting the national *Midwifery Ongoing Record of Achievement* (MORA). We are, currently, consulting about a regional e platform to house it on.

## The student nurse or midwife

The *Standards framework for nursing and midwifery education* is quite clear:

*Students are empowered and supported to become resilient, caring, reflective and lifelong learners who are capable of working in inter-professional and inter-agency teams.*

Standard 3.2

Student empowerment is a part of the quality framework. The 'Future Nurse' and 'Future Midwife' standards require students to take control of their learning and actively plan their evidence collection for assessment. They remain *supernumerary* in practice but this does not equate to passive observation. Supernumerary has been described as 'not in the numbers but they are in the team'. As such, we will be using coaching approaches both to prepare and support students in practice.

The coaching approach is based on allowing the student to step forward whilst the supervisor steps back. We envisage students actively supporting fellow students and having the opportunity to practice and gain proficiency in the skills required for the 'Future Nurse/ Midwife'.

## Moving on from mentorship

Since 2008 the NMC *Standards for learning and assessment in practice* have guided how we support students, facilitate their learning and assess their competency. SSSA sets out a different approach to facilitating learning and assessing proficiency. This reflects the NMC's aim for an empowered, resilient practitioner prepared for practice at the point of registration.

Northumbria University is moved to the new standards in 2020. With the emergency covid regulations, all nursing and midwifery students – both pre-registration and post registration were 'flipped' to SSSA. NMC mentors no longer exist, their role and responsibilities has been taken over by:

- Nominated lead
- Practice supervisor (s) (PS)
- Practice assessor (PA)
- Academic assessor (AA)

There are three questions which are often asked about SSSA:

1. What are these new roles?
2. How will this work on my ward or department?

### 3. Will I be supported to take on one of the new roles?

The handbook will try and answer the questions but if you are unsure, please email or telephone the Practice Placement Facilitator (PPF) in your organisation or the Practice Education Facilitator (PEF) who supports your organisation.

## The SSSA roles

### ***i) Nominated lead:***

*There is a nominated person for each practice setting to actively support students and address student concerns.*

#### Standard 1.5

We have been working with our placement providers to 'unpick' the responsibilities behind this role. There are three:

- Co-ordinating student placements – off duty and allocation of supervisors and assessors
- Leading on quality – the education audit of practice (EAP) and development of learning opportunities.
- Addressing student concerns. Concerns may be about their learning or about patient safety.

Most of our areas have an 'education lead'. The education lead is the key ARC user who co-ordinates student activity and leads on developing the placement area. Addressing student concerns is an additional role and a role which would be challenging for a single person, placement providers have requested two tiers. The student is made aware of two nominated leads:

1. At ward / department level – the education lead
2. At organisational level – the PPF/ PEF.

Despite the additional challenges of covid, we are finding that the education leads and PPFs are working together to co-ordinate, develop the placement area and address concerns.

### ***ii) Practice Supervisor:***

*All students on an NMC approved programme are supervised whilst learning in practice.*

#### Standard 2.1

*What are the expectations of practice supervision?*

Patient safety is key, as such the level of supervision will reflect the students learning needs and stage of learning. Ultimately, practice supervision facilitates independent learning.

*Who can be a practice supervisor?*

All NMC registered nurses and midwives are capable of supervising students, serving as role models for practice. However, other registered health and social care professionals may also take on the role.

*What are the responsibilities of a practice supervisor?*

They must act as a role model for safe and effective practice, acting always within their scope of practice. They must support and supervise students, providing feedback on progress and achievement of skills.

*Can practice supervisors contribute to the assessment?*

Yes, it is expected that the practice supervisor will contribute to the student's record of achievement and communicate with the practice assessor and academic assessor to share relevant observations on the conduct, proficiency and achievement of the students they are supervising.

*Will the practice supervisor receive any support or training?*

Yes, ongoing updates and supervision sessions will ensure that the practice supervisor is able to effectively support students in practice - it is an essential role.

### **iii) Practice Assessor:**

*All students on an NMC approved programme are assigned to a nominated practice assessor for a practice placement or a series of practice placements.*

Standard 6.2

*Who can be a practice assessor?*

A practice assessor is an NMC registrant with *appropriate experience* for the programme or field of practice. But note, a midwifery student must be assigned to practice assessors who are registered midwives ( SSSA: 6.4).

*What are the responsibilities of the practice assessor?*

The PA conducts assessments to confirm student achievement of proficiencies and programme outcomes in practice. They make and record objective evidence based assessments on conduct, proficiency and achievement drawing on student records, direct observations and student self – reflection. They work in partnership with the nominated academic assessor to recommend the student for progression for each part of the programme.

*Can the practice assessor be the practice supervisor and/or academic assessor?*

No. In standard 7.10 the NMC is clear that the PA is not simultaneously the PS or AA for a single student.

However, there is one exception! Practice assessors for students on NMC approved prescribing programmes may support learning in line with NMC *Standards for prescribing programmes* (7.11).

*Will the practice assessor receive any support or preparation?*

Yes, practice assessors are expected to build on and maintain current knowledge in the proficiencies and programme outcomes they are assessing. To support this, there will be:

- preparation for mentors transitioning to PA
- preparation for registrants who have not completed a mentorship programme but have been nominated as a practice assessor.

It is anticipated that PAs will have annual supervision sessions to help them reflect and develop in their roles.

Day to day support will be available from the nominated lead and/ or academic assessor.

### **iv) Academic Assessor:**

*All students on an NMC approved programme are assigned to a different nominated academic assessor for each part of the programme.*

Standard 6.1

*Who can be an academic assessor?*

An academic assessors is employed by Northumbria University and holds, or is working towards, fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (HEA). They are an NMC registrant with appropriate experience for the programme or field of practice. For example: a midwifery student with be assessed by a registered midwife, a Specialist Community Public Health Nurse (health visiting) by a SCPHN (HV) and a pre-registration mental health nurse by a registered mental health nurse.

*What are the responsibilities of an academic assessor?*

The academic assessor must collate and confirm student achievement of proficiencies and programme outcomes in the academic environment for each part of the programme. They must also work with the nominated practice assessor to recommend student progression for each part of the programme.

Communication and collaboration between PA and AA is scheduled for relevant points in the programme. This may be virtual or face to face.

*Can the academic assessor be the practice supervisor or practice assessor?*

No academic assessors are not simultaneously the practice supervisor and practice assessor for the student.

*Will the academic assessor receive any support and training?*

Yes, all academic assessors will be required to participate in an online or face to face workshop before commencing the role.

The academic assessors with be embedded within the practice module team, they will receive ongoing support and training to reflect and develop their role.

It is expected that the AA will proactively develop their professional practice and knowledge in order to fulfil their role.

## SSSA in practice

In preparation for the change in standards, there have been:

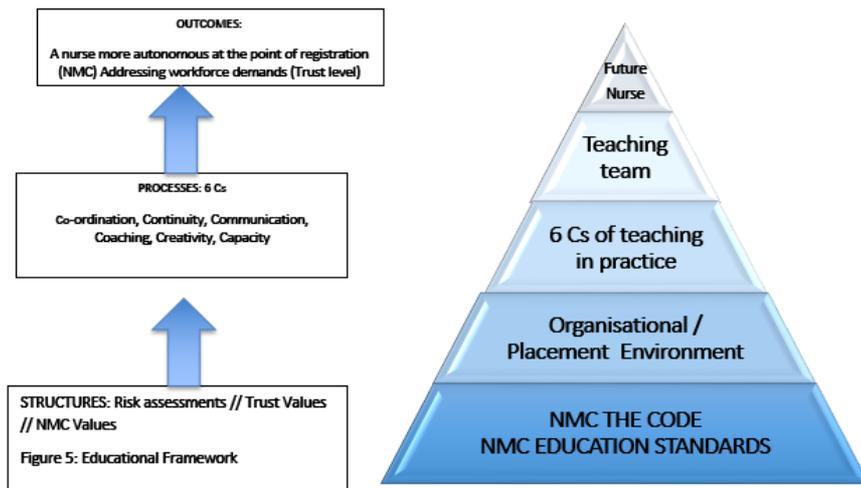
- pilot projects and
- briefing sessions have been included in annual mentor updates

You may have been involved in one of the pilot projects, these include TEAM in South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS FT; a group coaching model based on Collaborative Learning in Practice (CLIP) at Newcastle Hospitals NHS FT and the 'New models of mentorship' pilot based in Northumbria Healthcare NHS FT.

Experience and feedback, from this work, has helped us model how the new standards may work in practice. In particular, the work with Northumbria Healthcare NHS FT has helped us acknowledge that different models are needed for different areas but, to ensure a successful learning experience for the student, maintain patient safety and achieve a valid and reliable assessment, six key principles should be followed – the six 'C's' for practice learning:

1. *Co-ordination* - the nominated educational lead is a key role in the team. Support, develop and nurture this role.
2. *Continuity* – Plan the student experience. Unplanned or frequent changes in supervisor or the team led to student anxiety and a decrease in supervisor satisfaction.
3. *Communication* – Supervisors and students need to provide evidence to the assessor. This may be via assessment tools and feedback sheets or clarity about responsibility within the team.

4. *Coaching* – To empower students, embed coaching models in supervisor preparation and for students before, during and after practice. The coaching may be on a one to one basis (the ‘new’ mentorship) or as a group activity.
5. *Creativity* – Be solution focused. A teaching unit has the confidence to create learning opportunities with other students and outside the team.
6. *Capacity*- Ability to flex up and down i.e. to safely and effectively supervise and assess additional students if required by the curriculum.

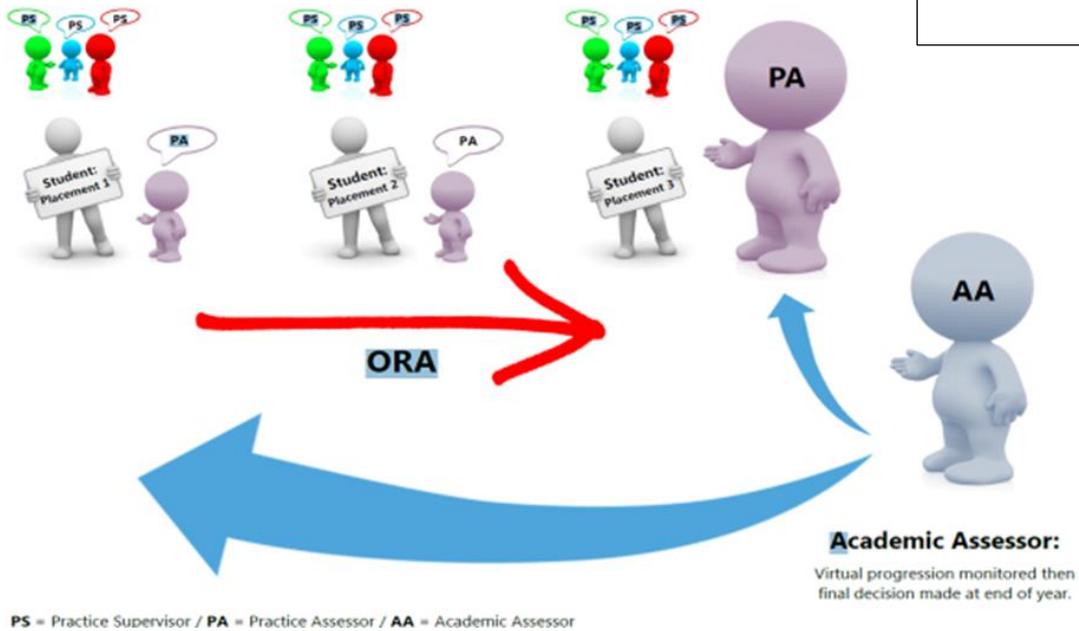


Northumbria HCT New models of mentorship pilot: Acute, Community and Learning Disabilities Nursing

From this, over the next year we are asking the ‘nominated person’ i.e. the education lead to add extra questions to their audit (EAP) namely how the new standards will work on your department?

During the first year of implementation SSSA has been working in differently according to the practice area. Diagram one is a ward / department based scenario where the student may work with a series of supervisors over the placement. There are three practice learning experience in the progression period (academic year) and the decision regarding progression is made by the PA and AA in the final placement.

Diagram One



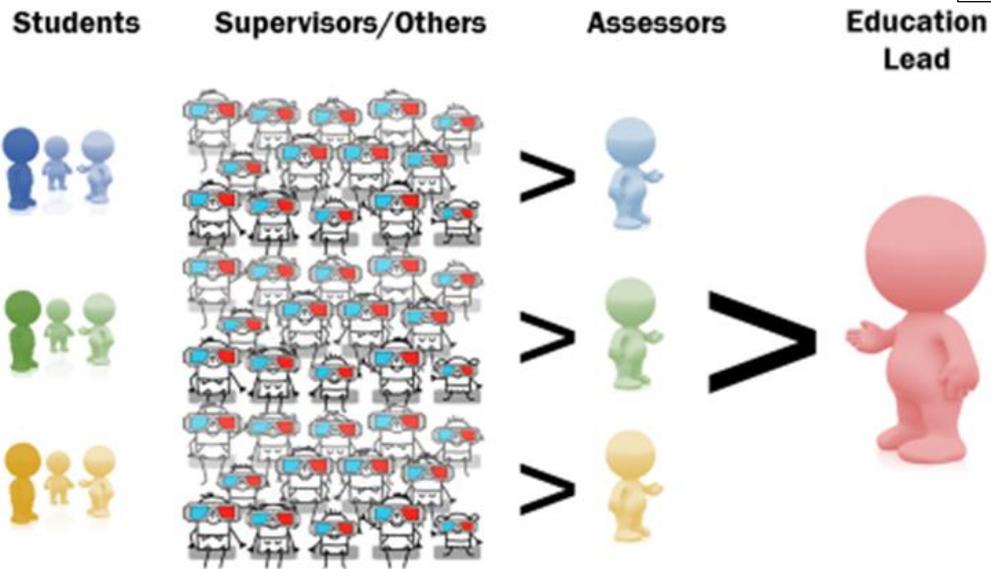
In Diagram two, the setting is either a pre-registration placement with a traditional community midwifery, district nursing or health visiting team or a post registration SCPHN or SPQ programme. It was suggested that the practice supervisor may remain a constant through the placement. This would, also, give the student continuity of patient and neighbourhood. Again the practice assessor was seen to be part of the same team:

Diagram Two



Sunderland and South Tyneside have moved to integrated multi-disciplinary community teams. They trialled the TEAM approach with these teams. In this case, (Diagram three) they are able to support a wide range of students, with the practice learning co-ordinated by the education lead for the area and excellent communication tools held by the student:

Diagram Three



Hope these ideas help you plan how the new roles will work within your area. Do feed into the discussion before your next education audit of practice.

## Preparation for the new roles to support SSSA

Training and support is ongoing, the majority of NMC registrants, who support students, have undertaken either face to face or online training.

Online training to prepare practice supervisors is available on the regional 'prac-ed' site:

<https://www.pracedne.com/>

Whilst support to become a practice assessor is available at Northumbria University:

<https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/study-at-northumbria/continuing-professional-development-short-courses-specialist-training/mentor-educator-preparation---non-accredited---ac1000/>

The education lead in your area or your practice placement facilitator will direct you to the right programme for yourself and to in house updates and discussions.

## Contacts

Practice Placement Facilitator within your organisation:

Northumbria University Placements team [practiceplacements@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:practiceplacements@northumbria.ac.uk)

Telephone 0191 215 6300

For any student concerns

[Ask4Help@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:Ask4Help@northumbria.ac.uk)

Telephone 0191 227 4646