Helping Nursing Students Get the Best from Their Practice Placements

Practice Placement Quality System (PPQA)
www.healthcareplacements.com

University of Sheffield Mentor Support
www.sheffield.ac.uk/snm/mentors/pgdip
A practice placement is where students have the opportunity to apply knowledge learnt in university, learn key skills, and achieve the required proficiency for registration. Learning in clinical practice enables you to confront the many challenges and issues related to caring, and is where lifelong learning is promoted and enhanced.

This handbook is designed to enable and encourage you, as a student of nursing, to have a central role in getting the most out of your practice placement.

The importance of effective practice placements

They should help you:

• Meet the *Standards for pre-registration nursing education*” (NMC 2010).
• Recognise the diversity of learning opportunities available within health and social care environments.
• Work within a wide range of rapidly changing health and social services that recognise the continuing nature of care.
• Provide the full range of nursing care to patients.
• Demonstrate an appreciation of the unpredictable and dynamic nature of the clinical setting as a learning environment within the multi-professional approach to care.
• Feel valued and safe within a culture that recognises the importance of adult learning.
• Maintain your supernumerary status.
• Work alongside mentors who are appropriately prepared, creating a partnership with them.
• Identify appropriate learning opportunities to meet your learning needs, linking general learning objectives to specific experiences within the practice context.
• Use time effectively, creating opportunities to enable the application of theory to practice and visa versa.
• Apply knowledge gained in problem based learning within the practice context.
• Reflect contemporary thinking within modern health care to evaluate the effectiveness of care provided, based on research evidence.
• Continue to develop proficiency in interpersonal and practical skills.
• Give an honest, evaluative feedback of your practice experiences to aid the audit process for the practice placement.
Placement allocation

- All students will be allocated placements on a “Home Trust” basis, which means that you will complete all your clinical experience within one locality and that Trust will be responsible for your clinical learning. This is a contracted arrangement between each Trust and the university and therefore it is not possible to be placed in another area, or experience something outside that Trust (unless in exceptional circumstances).

- Practice placements during pre-registration will be provided with a community focus; continuing care setting; acute and critical care area; and ones that give a multi-professional approach to care. The details of your allocated practice and mentor support will be given to you 2-3 weeks prior to the start of placement. Only in exceptional circumstances will it be possible to change this or swap this.

- Remember you have supernumerary status, which means that students are “in addition” to the workforce requirements and staffing establishment figures. However, you need to contribute to the work of the practice area in order to learn, and in most instances you should be working alongside your mentor, and the same shifts as them for the majority of the time.

- Once you receive your placement allocation you can find out more about the actual clinical environment by going to the Practice Placement Quality Assurance (PPQA) website at www.healthcareplacements.com

Responsibility of the student

Before Placement

- Read and familiarise yourself with the documentation and with the assessment process.
- Recognise the purpose of the practice placement experience and ensure that you are clear about the expectations regarding professional conduct and behaviour.
- Contact the placement: specific expectations of clinical area; care speciality; dress code; induction process; shift patterns and rota; what learning opportunities are available.
- Identify your specific learning needs and how you intend to work towards the achievement of knowledge and the required outcomes and proficiencies.
- Ensure that you know who your University of Sheffield placement tutor is and how to contact them.

During Placement

- Maintain confidentiality.
- Maintain effective communication with patients, clients, personal tutors, link tutors, mentors and the rest of the multi-disciplinary team.
• Be proactive in seeking experiences for your level of practice and proficiency with the support of your mentor.
• If you spend time with other practitioners (for example attend a clinic, shadow a practitioner for half a day), ask them to complete a testimony sheet, or sign a plan of learning, or reflections that you have written and also sign your “hours worked” sheet.
• Demonstrate a willingness to work as part of the team in the delivery of safe patient care.
• Learn to express your needs and adopt a questioning, reflective approach to your learning within the team.
• Use your mentor for guidance and support to enable you to achieve your learning outcomes and satisfactorily complete your practice assessments.
• Discuss issues of care, practice, safety, learning opportunities with your mentor.
• Seek help from the UoS placement tutor, placement lead or personal tutor if there are concerns or problems either with placement or of a personal nature.
• Ensure that clinical skills are attempted under supervision of a skilled practitioner.
• Give and receive constructive feedback.
• Reflect on your progress to increase self-awareness, confidence and competence.
• Contact both the practice placement and university if you are unable to attend for work.
• Keep an accurate and up-to-date record of your shifts and hours worked.

After Placement

• Evaluate your achievements, looking at what you enjoyed and benefited from during practice placement.
• Welcome feedback from those you have worked with, listen carefully to what they say about how well you have done, and learn from it.
• Evaluate the placement, honestly, reflectively and sensitively. This is done via the PPQA website www.healthcareplacements.com and must be completed within 2 weeks of leaving the placement area.
• Prepare yourself for meetings with your personal tutor and for classroom discussion.
• Ensure that all documentation and assessments of practice are submitted to university on the due date. An evaluation of the placement should be completed and submitted along with the assessment documentation.
• If you fail to meet your proficiencies, ensure that the UoS placement tutor, placement lead and your personal tutor is aware and that you are clear about arrangements for support in practice and resubmission.

Responsibility of the university
• Ensure that capacity and quality of placements meet statutory and professional body requirements.
• Check that the system of annual audits of practice placements is being maintained.
• Provide tutor support for students and staff in placement.
• Ensure that students and mentors can readily access support whilst in practice.
• Ensure that mentors are prepared for receiving students and are familiar with the documentation.
• Include placement partners in programme planning or changes to the curriculum.
• Jointly monitor feedback from students about their practice placement experiences.
• Students will be notified of any concerns, issues and changes via the student reps.
• Ensure that a robust system of clinical placement evaluations are in place and the evaluation guidelines are followed.

Responsibility of personal tutors

• Take an active role in facilitating a student’s learning as a matter of standard practice, throughout the programme.
• Provide a sustained point of contact on any personal, academic or practice placement issue throughout the programme.
• Maintain regular accurate records on student progress and feedback they have been given.
• Have knowledge of student support systems available and contact them when needed.
• Monitor student progress and attainment of proficiency standards.
• Provide honest feedback.
• Liaise with the placement lead and programme leader should the need arise.

Responsibility of service providers

• Recognise the student’s supernumerary status.
• Maintain an up-to-date register of all mentors, recording their annual updates and triennial review.
• Ensure that mentors are available for the allocated students.
• Ensure that the environment has appropriate policies and guidelines in place, and that where-ever possible practice is underpinned by research.
• Support meaningful mentorship.
• Ensure that students receive effective orientation and induction into the practice area.
• Ensure that duty rotas ensure students and mentors work together wherever possible.
• Provide opportunities for students to experience the 24 hour, 7 days a week patterns of care where appropriate.
• Support students to have appropriate learning opportunities.
• Monitor and evaluate feedback from students.
• Maintain close and effective links with the university.
• Support LEM when dealing with issues raised by student evaluations.

Responsibility of the mentor

• Identify appropriate learning opportunities that are available.
• Plan the student’s placement experience with the student.
• Ensure that time is allocated for the initial, interim and final interviews with students in order to: identify core proficiencies and outcomes; assess learning needs and agreements.
• Make time to observe, monitor, give feedback and allow reflective discussion with the student.
• Give honest constructive feedback, with suggestions on how to progress, both verbally and when completing the documentation.
• Be approachable, supportive and aware of how students learn best, and be willing to share their knowledge and skills.
• Have knowledge and information of the students’ programme of study and practice assessment tools.
• Encourage enquiry-based and problem solving learning, as well as giving factual information.
• Ensure students have experience of the multi-disciplinary nature of care.
• Contact the university tutor or placement lead should any problems arise.
• Support students to learn professional conduct.
• Attend for annual mentor up-dating and have a triennial review.
• A “Sign Off Mentor” must make the final assessment of practice and confirm that the required proficiencies for entry onto the professional nursing register have been achieved. (This is required for students on their final placements.
• Read the student evaluation form and discuss with the LEM any actions that may be required.

Responsibility of the University placement tutor

• Arrange meetings with the mentor and the student at regular intervals
• Ensure that each mentor has knowledge and information about the programme and assessment documentation. Further information can be obtained from the university of Sheffield mentor website at www.sheffield.ac.uk/snm/mentors/pgdip
• Ensure that the relationship between the mentor and the student is an effective one for learning.

• Respond to any issues identified by the mentor, student or placement provider relating to the effective learning environment, progression of the student, or personal issues. Refer onto the programme leader, personal tutor or relevant staff member as appropriate.

• Read the student evaluation form and discuss with the mentor, LEM, Director of placements, or programme Leader as appropriate. Follow the guidelines for dealing with negative evaluation comments.