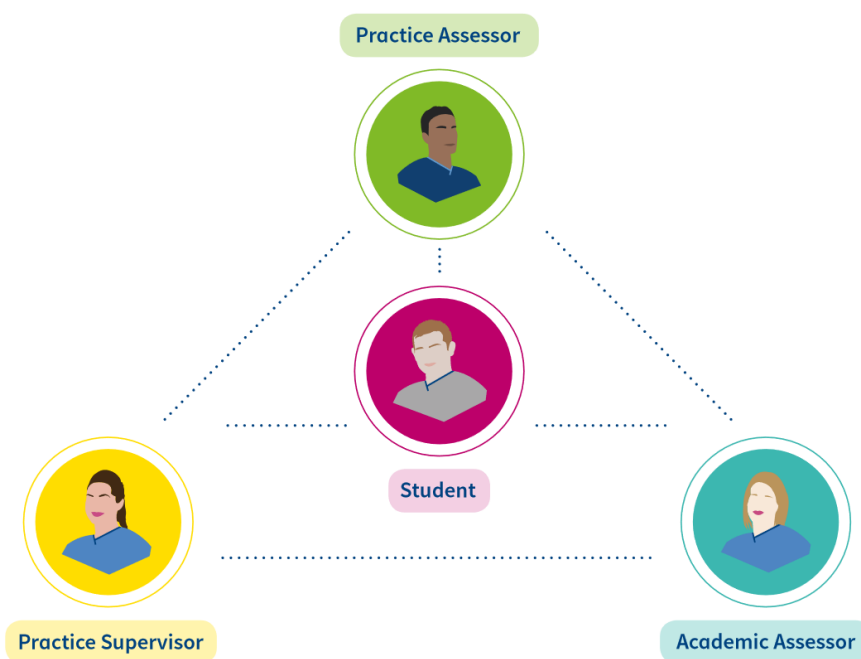


# Practice Learning Handbook: for Practice Supervisors and Practice Assessors

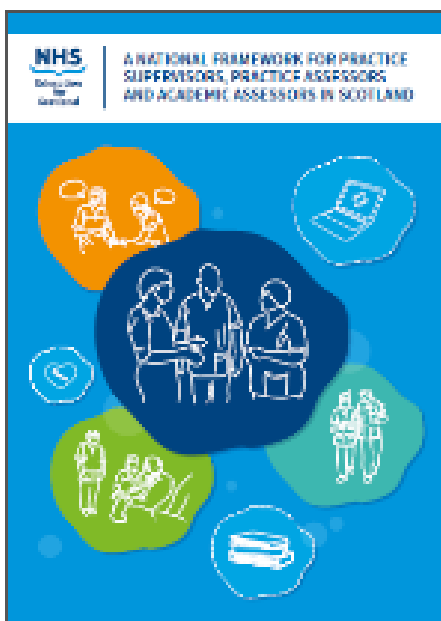


## Introduction

The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) published [new standards for student supervision and assessment](#) in May 2018 which introduced three new roles: practice supervisor, practice assessor and academic assessor to support the learning, supervision and assessment of students in practice. These new standards apply to all NMC approved pre and post-registration programmes and will begin to come into effect in Scotland from September 2020 onwards.



This handbook aims to provide an overview of the roles and how they work together to ensure practice supervision and assessment meet the NMC Standards for student supervision and assessment. In Scotland, to support the transition to these new roles '[A national framework for practice supervisors, practice assessors and academic assessors in Scotland](#)' has been developed and provides further detail on the introduction of the regulatory changes for student supervision and assessment in the context of health and social care in Scotland. This was developed in partnership with practice learning partners, approved education institutions and NHS Education for Scotland



It provides guidance for current mentors, sign-off mentors, practice teachers and teachers who will transition into the new NMC roles for student supervision and assessment. It also outlines how other registered nurses and midwives, health and social care professionals, practitioners and academic colleagues who may also undertake the roles of practice supervisor, practice assessor or academic assessor will be prepared, supported and developed within Scotland.

Therefore, at points throughout this handbook, you will be signposted to the relevant sections within the national framework where you can read more detailed information on each of the three roles.

## Some facts associated with the changes to student support, supervision and assessment:

- The role of mentor/sign off mentor and practice teacher under the current standards for supporting learning and assessment in practice encompasses both supervision and assessment. The new standards differentiate these roles to strengthen assessment decision-making thus introducing the role of practice supervisor and practice assessor
- The role of academic assessor is presented within the new standards. Within this role academic assessors communicate and collaborate with practice assessors to make a recommendation for student progression for each part of the programme
- Practitioners cannot be the practice supervisor and practice assessor for the same student. The exception to this is nurses and midwives undertaking NMC approved post registration prescribing programmes, where, “in exceptional circumstances”, the same person may fulfil the role of practice supervisor and practice assessor for that part of the programme where the prescribing student is undergoing training in a practice learning setting.
- Practice supervision forms an important part of many professionals’ roles, including registered professionals who are not nurses and midwives. The new standards allow for other registered health and social care professionals to undertake the role of practice supervisor affording the opportunity to widen students’ learning experiences.



Practice Supervisor

### Who can be a practice supervisor?

Practice supervisors can be any registered health and social care professional working in a practice environment who has been prepared and supported to take up their role and have up-to-date knowledge and experience relevant to the student they are supervising.

Section 3.2 within the [national framework for practice supervisors, practice assessors and academic assessors within Scotland](#) provides more detail on who can be a practice supervisor and which categories of health and social care professionals registered with the Scottish Social Services Council can undertake the role of practice supervisors. This section of the framework also provides some examples of how this may work in practice.

## Can I be a practice supervisor?

Use the table chart below to help you find out.

<b>Are you registered with either the NMC, GMC, HCPC, GPhC or Scottish Social Services Council?</b>	
<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
Once you have been prepared and supported you can fulfil the role of practice supervisor	You are not able to act in the role of a practice supervisor but can still make a valuable contribution to students' learning and development.
<b>Have you had previous preparation to provide supervision and facilitate learning for students?</b>	
<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
You will need to undertake a practice supervisor update programme	You will need to undertake a practice supervisor preparation programme
<b>Are you a registrant who has previously completed a course or equivalent in relation to the NMC Standards for Learning and Assessment in Practice (SLAiP) (2008)?</b>	
<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
You will need to undertake a practice supervisor update programme	You will need to undertake a practice supervisor preparation programme

## What is the preparation for the role?

Update and preparation programmes will be available, delivered and supported by key persons in both practice and education environments. However, the opportunities for you to prepare for this role will be flexible and designed to meet the needs of practice supervisors from various professions and those practice supervisors supporting different student groups.

The knowledge, skills and experience of nurses and midwives who have previously undertaken the roles of mentor, sign-off mentor, practice teacher and teacher are compatible with the new NMC roles, enabling you, following suitable preparation, to undertake the role of practice supervisor. A mapping exercise which demonstrates how your prior learning is compatible with the new standards is available [here](#). Suitable preparation to update you for the practice supervisor role will be available in your local

NHS Board/education provider and will consist of: details of the pre or post registration programme you will be supporting students for; information in relation to the practice supervisor contribution towards the practice assessment documentation and the relationship between the roles of the practice supervisor, practice assessor and academic assessor. You will need to cover this for all programmes for which you are supporting students. For example, you may be supporting nursing, prescribing and Specialist Community Public Health Nurse (SCPHN) students and therefore will need an understanding of all three programme requirements. Table 1 within section 2.3 from the [national framework for practice supervisors, practice assessors and academic assessors within Scotland](#) further explains the transition arrangements in Scotland to this new role.

The NMC have set out standards for what is expected for the preparation of practice supervisors. Follow this [link](#) for more information, while section 3.3 within the [national framework for practice supervisors, practice assessors and academic assessors within Scotland](#) provides detail of the preparation for those practitioners who have not previously supported or supervised students.

## **What will I do as a practice supervisor?**

As a practice supervisor you will contribute to the student's learning journey through:

- providing the student with a sense of belonging, ensuring that the learning environment is welcoming and supports the student's learning experience
- serve as a role model for safe and effective practice in line with professional codes of conduct
- providing feedback in a constructive, honest and timely manner
- supporting the student using action planning
- liaising with others who have contributed to the student's learning
- contributing to the student's practice assessment documentation as required
- raising concerns about student performance and behaviour
- communicating with the practice assessor and at times academic assessor to share views on how the student is progressing
- uphold public protection when supporting and supervising students

In Scotland, it has been agreed that each student will have a practice supervisor who will be their nominated person for student support and to address student concerns. If you are the student's nominated supervisor, you will conduct the student's initial orientation and support them to develop an action plan of their learning needs.

Follow this [link](#) for further information provided by the NMC on the practice supervisor role. Access section 3.6 within the [national framework for practice supervisors, practice assessors and academic assessors within Scotland](#) as to how the NMC requirements for the role may be undertaken in Scotland.

## What support will I get?

As a practice supervisor you will receive ongoing support and updating for the role by one or more of the following:

- practice assessor for the student(s)
- academic assessor for the student(s)
- your practice supervisor peers
- PEF/CHEF/PEL team (see below)
- your manager and other ward/unit/operational managers
- link lecturer / tutor for the practice area
- personal tutor for the student(s) you are supervising

Further information about the roles of PEFs, CHEFs, Allied Health Professional Practice Education Lead (AHP PEL) and Practice Educators (PE) can be accessed via the NES website at:

[PEFs](#)

[CHEFs](#)

[AHP PELs](#)

[NMAHP PEs](#)

## How will I maintain competence?

There are several ways that you can maintain your competence as a practice supervisor:

- Through continuous professional development (CPD) activities related to your role as practice supervisor. Topics may include equality and diversity, reasonable adjustments in practice placements, making non-biased decisions, providing feedback about poor performance and raising a cause for concern about a student's conduct or competence. Follow this [link](#) to view some recommended learning resources currently available to support development within the role
- Discussion about your role as practice supervisor should be integral to your annual appraisal discussion and you may wish to set yourself an objective via your appraisal to support your development in relation to supervision and assessment skills
- Seek feedback from students and others on your role as a practice supervisor and use this to reflect on, and explore, learning for revalidation purposes
- Participate in an ongoing updates and development opportunities relevant to the role.

## How am I allocated a student?

Each practice learning area has a nominated person responsible for allocating a student(s) to you, however, you may still play a role in supporting all students.

## Practice Assessor



### Who can be a practice assessor?

A practice assessor must be a registered nurse, midwife, or specialist community public health nurse (SCPHN). You must have appropriate equivalent knowledge and experience for the student's field of practice. For prescribing programmes, the practice assessor can be any qualified and experienced prescriber. Who the practice assessor is will be dependent on the student they are assigned to.

Follow this [link](#) to see details provided by the NMC as to who they expect the practice assessor to be for each student. Section 4.2 within the [national framework for practice supervisors, practice assessors and academic assessors within Scotland](#) provides some practical examples of who can be a practice assessor.

### Can I be a practice assessor?

Use the table below to help you find out.

Are you a registered nurse?	
YES	NO
Once you have completed the required update preparation you can fulfil the role of practice assessor for a nursing student.  See also * below	You are not able to act in the role of a practice assessor for a nursing student but can still make a valuable contribution to students learning and development and may be able to fulfil the role of a practice supervisor if you are a registered health or social care professional.
Are you a registered midwife?	
YES	NO
Once you have completed the required update preparation you can fulfil the role	You are not able to act in the role of a practice assessor for a midwifery student but can still make a valuable contribution to students learning and development and

of practice assessor for a midwifery student.	may be able to fulfil the role of a practice supervisor if you are a registered health or social care professional.
<b>Are you a registered Specialist Community Public Health Nurse (SCPHN)?</b>	
<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
Once you have completed the required update preparation you can fulfil the role of practice assessor for a student studying the SCPHN programme  See also ** below	You are not able to act in the role of a practice assessor for a SCPHN student but can still make a valuable contribution to students learning and development and may be able to fulfil the role of a practice supervisor if you are a registered health or social care professional.
<b>Are you a registered nurse with a Specialist Practitioner Qualification (SPQ)?</b>	
<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
Once you have completed the required update preparation you can fulfil the role of practice assessor for a student studying for a SPQ.	You are not able to act in the role of a practice assessor for a student studying for a SPQ but can still make a valuable contribution to students learning and development and may be able to fulfil the role of a practice supervisor if you are a registered health or social care professional.
<b>Are you a registered prescriber – this may be with the NMC, HCPC, GMC or GPhC?</b>	
<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
Once you have completed the required update preparation you can fulfil the role of practice assessor for a student studying towards a prescribing qualification for which you have the appropriate equivalent experience.	You are not able to act in the role of a practice assessor for a prescribing student but can still make a valuable contribution to students learning and development.
<b>Are you a registrant who has previously completed a course or equivalent in relation to the NMC Standards for Learning and Assessment in Practice (SLAiP) (2008)?</b>	
<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
You will need to undertake the practice assessor update preparation programme.	You will need to undertake the full practice assessor preparation programme
*nursing students are assigned to practice and academic assessors who are registered nurses with appropriate equivalent experience of the student's field of practice.	



\*\*specialist community public health nurse (SCPHN) students are assigned to practice and academic assessors who are registered SCPHNs with appropriate equivalent experience of the student's field of practice.

## How do I become a practice assessor?

To be a practice assessor you must be a registered nurse or midwife and have completed preparation for the role and have prior experience as a practice supervisor, mentor/sign off mentor or practice teacher. The NMC have set out standards for what is expected for the preparation of practice assessors. Follow this [link](#) for more information.

The level of preparation will be different for different people depending on knowledge and experience. Update and preparation programmes are available, delivered and supported by key persons in both practice and education environments locally. The preparation programmes vary from enabling practice assessors who already meet the role requirements to become familiar with the practice assessment documents / course requirements and NMC Standards for that specific programme for the students you will be supporting, to a full preparation programme for those new to the role.

The knowledge, skills and experience of nurses and midwives who have previously undertaken the roles of mentor, sign-off mentor, practice teacher and teacher are compatible with the new standards enabling you, following suitable preparation, to undertake the role of practice assessor. A mapping exercise which demonstrates how your prior learning is compatible with the new standards is available [here](#). Suitable preparation to update you for the practice assessor role will be available in your local NHS Board/education provider and will consist of: details of the pre or post registration programme you will be supporting students for; information in relation to the practice assessor role and responsibilities in completing the practice assessment documentation; points of assessment/part criteria; specific models of supervision and assessment and the relationship between the roles of the practice supervisor, practice assessor and academic assessor. You will need to cover this for all programmes for which you are supporting students. For example, you may be assessing nursing, prescribing and SCPHN students and therefore will need an understanding of all three programme requirements. Table 1 within section 2.3 of the [national framework for practice supervisors, practice assessors and academic assessors within Scotland](#) further explains the transition arrangements in Scotland to this new role.

Section 4.3 within the [national framework for practice supervisors, practice assessors and academic assessors within Scotland](#) provides detail of the preparation for those practitioners who have not previously been in the role of assessing students.

## What will I do as a practice assessor?

As a practice assessor you can be assigned to a student for a placement or a series of placements. This can mean that you will be assigned to a student for a single placement, more than one placement, or for

the whole of the academic or practice year depending upon the programme the student is undertaking. As a practice assessor you assess and confirm the student's achievement of practice learning for a placement or a series of placements. As a nominated practice assessor, you will also work with the nominated academic assessor to make a recommendation for student progression. However not all practice assessors will be required to perform this aspect of the role.

As a practice assessor you may:

- Contribute towards students' induction and orientation to the practice placement as required by practice supervisors. This may include contributing to an initial meeting with the student, identifying student learning outcomes and agreeing dates for the interim and final performance review meetings
- Contribute towards the continuity and coordination of supervision through liaison with practice supervisors, students and other members of the team
- Establish and maintain effective communication and collaboration with practice supervisors (information seeking and feedback) and the nominated academic assessor (making progression decisions) for the individual student
- Discuss and agree the practice supervisor's contribution to the student's review meetings
- Contribute towards student practice placement review meetings
- Undertake objective and evidence-based assessment decisions and accurately record the rationale and outcome of these decisions in the student's practice assessment document
- Provide feedback to practice supervisors on key aspects of their role
- Raise concerns about student competence and conduct.

Section 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6 within the [national framework for practice supervisors, practice assessors and academic assessors within Scotland](#) provides further detail on what the NMC expects of a practice assessor, how the role might be undertaken in Scotland and a practical interpretation of the practice assessor role. Follow this [link](#) for further information provided by the NMC on the practice assessor role.

## What support will I get?

As a practice assessor, you will receive ongoing support and updating for the role by one or more of the following:

- academic assessor for the student(s)
- PEF/CHEF/PEL team
- your managers and other unit/ward/operational managers
- link lecturer / tutor for the practice area
- personal tutor for the student(s) you are assessing
- relevant programme leaders
- during discussions at your annual appraisal
- during revalidation by use of critical reflection on your role in student supervision and assessment
- during discussions with other practice assessors and academic assessors to share best practice and discuss assessment decisions.

## How will I maintain competence?

There are several ways that you can maintain your competence as a practice assessor:

- Through CPD activities focused on supporting your role as practice assessor. Topics may include equality and diversity, reasonable adjustments in practice placements, making non-biased decisions, providing feedback about poor performance and raising a cause for concern about a student's conduct or competence. Follow this [link](#) to view some recommended learning resources.
- Prioritise discussion of practice assessor role and potential development needs within your appraisal and set objectives to support your continued development
- Reflect on your role as practice assessor and seek feedback from students and practice supervisors or academic assessors and use this to explore learning for revalidation purposes.
- Participate in ongoing development activity.

## How am I allocated a student?

Each practice learning area has a nominated person responsible for allocating student(s).

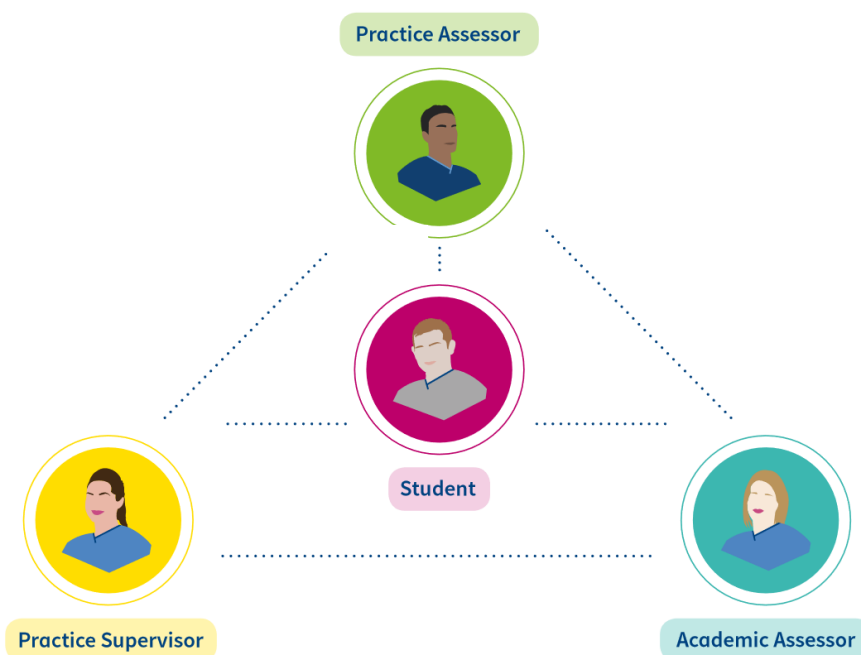
## Who are the academic assessors that I will be collaborating with?

The academic assessor is usually a member of staff from the University. They are registered health care professionals who have completed an academic assessor preparation programme or have equivalent qualifications / experience. The programme leader for each NMC approved programme will allocate an appropriate academic assessor for each part of the students' programme. You will be advised as to who the academic assessor is for the student(s) you are assessing.

You will work in partnership to evaluate and recommend the student for progression for each part of the programme, in line with programme standards and for entry (or additional entry) to the NMC professional register on successful completion of the programme.

For more information on the academic assessor role read section 5 within the [national framework for practice supervisors, practice assessors and academic assessors within Scotland](#) or access the NMC supporting information in relation to this role [here](#).

## Contributing to and undertaking assessment



The practice assessment documentation for each programme details the exact roles and responsibilities of the practice supervisor, practice assessor and academic assessor, at what point assessments will occur and how the evidence of development, progression and achievement is documented and communicated.

There is different practice assessment documentation for each NMC approved programme. However, all these documents detail the proficiencies, skills and professional attitudes, values and behaviours to be assessed as part of the programme requirements. They also detail the student's role in producing evidence of progression and achievement and how they are developing critical reflective skills to enhance their development.

For example, if you are a practice assessor or practice supervisor for a pre-registration nursing student, their practice assessment document identifies how they will be assessed in achieving the proficiencies, divided into seven platforms and the communication and relationship management skills and nursing procedures detailed within the annexes of the [future nurse proficiencies](#).

The practice assessment document will also identify the action to take if a student is failing to make progress or if you have any concerns about a student's professional behaviour or ability. If you have any concerns as either a practice supervisor or practice assessor, then the first step is to seek guidance from the PEF/CHEF team (or equivalent) and the academic assessor. The action required will depend on the nature of the concern.

The process of supervising and assessing students is one of partnership to ensure a safe and effective learning and assessment that upholds public protection. It is also a process which fosters a positive learning relationship with the student and enhances their professional and personal development, empowering the student to become a resilient critical thinker and decision maker who can analyse, reflect on and improve their practice.

Key to your role is facilitating the students move from dependence on you as a supervisor/assessor to working safely but more independently. The PAD outlines the expected student performance for each part of a programme. The stage at which you move from directly supervising/guiding the student to more of a distant supervision also depends on the competence, proficiency and confidence of the student. This can be a challenge, but the student is still required to inform you if you ask them to perform or undertake a task that is beyond their level of competence/proficiency.

As a practice supervisor or nominated practice assessor you will, along with academic assessor work together to ensure safe and effective learning experiences that upholds public protection and safety of people. Separating out the supervision and assessment roles ensures greater consistency and more objectivity in the assessment process. The shared responsibility particularly between the practice assessor and academic assessor ensures robust, objective, fair and transparent assessments and shared decision making to ensure that only those who have met all programme requirements and proficiencies are entered to the NMC professional register.

The NMC supporting information webpage for student supervision and assessment provides further information on the roles of the practice supervisor, practice assessors and academic assessors role in contributing to, and undertaking, assessment of students. Click [here](#).

## Further reading and additional information

Please see list of resources that you may find useful:

- Recommend learning resources [link](#)
- NMC <https://www.nmc.org.uk/>
- NMC Code <https://www.nmc.org.uk/globalassets/sitedocuments/nmc-publications/nmc-code.pdf>
- NMC guidance in relation to delegation and accountability <https://www.nmc.org.uk/globalassets/sitedocuments/nmc-publications/delegation-and-accountability-supplementary-information-to-the-nmc-code.pdf>
- NMC guidance relating to professionalism as they develop during the course <https://www.nmc.org.uk/standards/guidance/professionalism/>
- Turas Learn
- [Future Nurse and Midwife Programme Board](#)

## References

Nursing and Midwifery Council (2008) *Standards to support learning and assessment in practice*. NMC. London

Nursing and Midwifery Council (2018) *Realising professionalism: Standards framework for education and training. Part 2: Standards for student supervision and assessment*. NMC. London.

This resource may be made available, in full or summary form, in alternative formats and community languages. Please contact us on **0131 656 3200** or email **altformats@nes.scot.nhs.uk** to discuss how we can best meet your requirements.



NHS Education for Scotland  
Westport 102  
West Port  
Edinburgh  
EH3 9DN  
[www.nes.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk)