A Mentor Guide to the NMC Standards to support learning and assessment in practice and triennial review compliance at COCH

In July 2008 the NMC published the second edition of ‘Standards to support learning and assessment in practice’ document (NMC July 2008 2nd edition). The standards identify the roles and responsibilities of the mentor and the implementation of the sign-off mentor for any learner undertaking an NMC professional qualification leading to registration on the NMC register. These standards aim to support mentors in ensuring that all learners are fit for practice upon point of registration.

An NMC mentor is a registrant who has achieved the knowledge, skills and competence required to meet the defined outcomes, following successful completion of an NMC-approved mentor preparation programme, or comparable preparation that has been accredited by an Approved Educational Institute (AEI) as meeting the NMC mentor requirements.

Being supported and assessed by mentors is a mandatory requirement for pre-registration nursing and midwifery students on programmes leading to registration. Mentors who are assessing competence must have met the NMC (2008) outcomes defined in stage 2 (see section 2.1 page 19) of this standard, or be supervised by a mentor who has met these outcomes. Those who sign off proficiency (at the progressions points within programmes where a sign-off mentor is to be accountable for the judgement) must have met the additional criteria to be a sign-off mentor (see section 2.1.3 page 21). All midwife mentors must have met the additional criteria to be a sign-off mentor. Once mentors have been entered on the local register (Practice Learning Support System [PLSS]) as an active mentor/sign-off mentor, they are subject to triennial review (see ‘Roles to support learning and assessment in practice’ on Page 12).

Mentors are responsible and accountable for:

- Organising and co-ordinating student learning activities in practice.
- Supervising students in learning situations and providing them with constructive feedback on their achievements.
- Setting and monitoring achievement of realistic learning objectives.
- Assessing total performance – including skills, attitudes and behaviours.
- Providing evidence as required by programme providers of student achievement or lack of achievement.
- Liaising with others (e.g. mentors, sign-off mentors, practice facilitators, practice teachers, personal tutors, programme leaders) to provide feedback, identify any concerns about the student’s performance and agree action as appropriate.
- Providing evidence for, or acting as, sign-off mentors with regard to making decisions about achievement of proficiency at the end of a programme.

As a placement provider, the trust’s Practice Education Facilitators must ensure that:

- An up-to-date local register of current mentors and practice teachers (PLSS) is held and maintained.
- The trust has currency by them regularly reviewing the local register and adding or removing names of nurses and midwives as necessary. This relies on the accurate staff updates from placement managers, when information is requested.
- Each mentor or practice teacher is reviewed every three years (triennial review) to ensure that only those who continue to meet the mentor/practice teacher requirements remain on the local register.
• Mentors who meet the criteria for signing-off proficiency in practice at the end of a student’s programme are annotated on the local register as being a sign-off mentor.
• Arrangements are in place for appraising mentor/practice teacher performance, addressing concern where appropriate, and for adding and removing individuals from the local register – including mentors identified as having met the criteria to be able to sign-off proficiency.

Education providers should use the PLSS to confirm that there are sufficient mentors and practice teachers who meet the NMC standards to support learning and assessment in practice, to adequately support the number of students undertaking the range of NMC-approved programmes currently being offered. Mentors who are designated as being able to sign-off proficiency at the end of a programme (known as ‘sign-off mentors’) must be annotated as such on the local register. While all mentors may assess individual competencies, only those who have met additional NMC criteria to be a sign-off mentor (see section 2.1.3) are entitled to sign-off practice. All midwifery mentors will be required to meet the sign-off criteria as part of their mentor preparation programme.

Triennial review of mentors and practice teachers

In order to meet triennial review requirements, and to be maintained on the local PLSS register, the individual must have evidence of having:

• Mentored at least two students (practice teachers to have supervised at least one student) with due regard (extenuating circumstances permitting) within the three year period.
• Supervisors of midwives are required to mentor at least one student undertaking a supervisor of midwives programme during the three year period relating to triennial review as outlined in NMC Circular 01/2008.
• Participated in annual updating – to include an opportunity to meet and explore assessment and supervision issues with other mentors/practice teachers.
• Explored as a group activity the validity and reliability of judgements made when assessing practice in challenging circumstances.
• Mapped ongoing development in their role against the current NMC mentor/practice teacher standards.
• Been deemed to have met all requirements needed to be maintained on the local register as a mentor, sign-off mentor or practice teacher.

At the Countess of Chester NHS Foundation Trust, mentors must complete the trust’s Mentor Portfolio every three years to evidence their ongoing compliance with the NMC Standards. The document template can be located on the trust’s intranet site.

In 2015, the NMC evidence required within the Mentor Portfolio has been mapped against the new NMC Code, to also support mentors with revalidation evidence.

Roles to support learning and assessment in practice – please refer to the NMC Standards to support learning and assessment in practice (2008, Page 12) document for further guidance according to your part of the register.

For further guidance, please contact the Practice Educational Facilitators on 01244 365751