

Standards for Student Supervision and Assessment

Can a practice supervisor assess an individual proficiency?

This question was raised at the MYEPLG meeting on 24/11/21. It was clear there was variable practice across the regions and HEIs present. This response for the group, collated by Dr Jan Royal-Fearn, SSSA workstream lead, MYEPLG, was discussed at the meeting on 26/1/22. Overall, the question was agreed.

(All italics are quotes directly from the SSSA document or supporting information hub on the web)

The [NMC SSSA Standards](#) (2019) state roles and responsibilities of the supervisor including:

'3.2 support learning in line with their scope of practice to enable the student to meet their proficiencies and programme outcomes'

'3.3 support and supervise students, providing feedback on their progress towards, and achievement of, proficiencies and skills' (page 6)

'4.1 contribute to the student's record of achievement by periodically recording relevant observations on the conduct, proficiency, and achievement of the students they are supervising' (page 7)

The first role of the practice assessor is:

'7.1 practice assessors conduct assessments to confirm student achievement of proficiencies and programme outcomes for practice learning' (page 9)

The [NMC SSSA information hub](#) adds detail in the section 'What is current knowledge and experience':

'If a registered professional is competent in an area of practice, they should be able to supervise and support a nursing or midwifery student for that area, providing feedback on their progress towards, and achievement of, proficiencies and skills. The practice supervisor's knowledge and experience should enable the student to meet their learning needs and outcomes and enhance the student learning experience's.'

In the section 'What do practice supervisors do?' guidance says practice supervisors should be '*providing direct feedback to nursing and midwifery students on their conduct and achievement of proficiencies and skills, including where they don't think the achievement has been met, or could be improved on*' and then '*A key part of giving feedback is adding*

relevant observations on the student's conduct, proficiency and achievement to the student's record(s) of achievement'.

In the section on practice supervisors - contributing to recommendations for progression, it states '*Contributing to student assessments can take different forms depending on the role of the practice supervisor in student learning, the stage of learning, student competence, and other considerations. It can include:*

- *direct communication with practice and academic assessors to share their views on student achievement, underachievement or areas to continue to work on.*
- *inputting into student documentation with their views on student achievement.'*

It therefore seems clear that a practice supervisor can complete the student's assessment document for individual proficiencies, to provide feedback to the student and the practice assessor on the students' achievement as the placement or part of the programme progresses.

There may also be times when the practice supervisor is a registered professional with more expertise in the proficiency being assessed (for example a physiotherapist supporting a learner with chest auscultation) and their knowledge and experience surpasses that of the assessor. In this situation enabling the supervisor to document achievement of that proficiency will utilise that skill set appropriately.

In '[Assessment of practice](#)' on the information hub it is apparent that '*Each practice assessor is responsible for the assessment and confirmation of the achievement of proficiencies and programmes outcomes in practice learning for the student(s) they are assigned to, for the period they are assigned to them.'*

'Practice assessors must base their assessment decisions on a diverse evidence base and take responsibility for those decisions'.

In this way a practice assessor must be sure that the supervisors record of proficiency achievement in the assessment document is reliable, and the student has maintained that achievement to the point at which the practice assessor is making the overall assessment.

In light of the debate within the group we may be guided by:

'The Standards for Student Supervision and Assessment are outcome-focused and allow for local innovation in programme delivery; they are designed to work across all programmes and in all settings. Student supervision and assessment can be flexible, provided the education institutions and practice learning partners meet our standards'. (SSSA page 4)

The [NMC SSSA information hub](#) states that: *We set the standards for nursing, midwifery and nursing associate education and training, and standards for supervision and assessment that approved education institutions (AEIs) have to meet, as well as the standards for specific programmes. Responsibility for the day-to-day quality management lies with AEIs in partnership with practice learning partners.*

In conclusion it seems that a practice supervisor can record the achievement of individual proficiencies in the assessment document, however the practice assessor must be sure that level of achievement is maintained at the point of assessment. As the practice assessor is making the overall assessment decision, if they are not sure on this, they have the right to overrule the supervisors record of achievement in the assessment document for the individual proficiencies.

In considering the quality management role the HEI maintains, a consistent approach from the HEI's in the MYE PLG would enable this to be adopted across all areas using the collaborative assessment documents in the NMC programmes.

Reference:

Nursing and Midwifery Council (2019) Standards for Student Supervision and Assessment.
<https://www.nmc.org.uk/standards-for-education-and-training/standards-for-student-supervision-and-assessment/> (accessed 18/1/22)

Nursing and Midwifery Council (2022) Supporting Information Hub for SSSA
<https://www.nmc.org.uk/supporting-information-on-standards-for-student-supervision-and-assessment/> (accessed 18/1/22)

Discussed and agreed at MYE PLG Meeting 26/1/22.

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