What is a Mentor

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A mentor according to the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), is ‘a registrant who following successful completion of an NMC approved mentor preparation programme has achieved the knowledge, skills and competence required to meet the defined outcomes.’ (NMC, 2008)

The Health Care Professions Council (HCPC) Standards for Education and Training (HPC, 2009) outline what is required for the preparation of and expectations of the Practice Placement Educator (PPE) in facilitating learning and assessment of learners. Several individual allied health professional organisations have specified more detailed roles and responsibilities for their placement practice educators.

In general, mentors, practice educators and clinical tutors 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 to provide feedback, identify any concerns about the student’s performance and agreed action when appropriate
- Providing evidence for, or acting as ‘sign-off mentors’ (nursing) with regard to making decisions about achievement of proficiency at the end of the programme of study.

You will find NMC, HCPC information on the following web sites:

- www.nmc-uk.org
- www.hpc-uk.org

In addition, please go to your own professional web sites for standards and best practice guidelines including Guidance on Student Ethics and Conduct.

Sign Off Mentors in Nursing and Midwifery

All Undergraduate Students, Return to Practice must be supported by a mentor who has undergone preparation for the role.

Locally Sign off mentors are used to support Preceptees, and Novice Mentors.

A sign off mentor is one who:

- possesses a mentor qualification (preparation through an NMC approved course)
- has gained experience
- has undergone additional preparation for the role of sign off mentor
- has been assessed they need the NMC Standards in supporting and assessing a 3rd year final placement student.
Midwives become sign off mentors once they have completed the preparation course and been assessed summatively assessing a student.

‘Sign off Nurses and midwives who make judgements about whether a student has achieved the required standards of proficiency for safe and effective practice must be on the same part or sub-part of the register as that which the student is intending to enter’ ‘Only sign-off mentors and practice teachers that are on the same part of the register and in the same field of practice may confirm that students have met the relevant standards of proficiency for the particular programme leading to registration or a qualification that is recordable on the NMC register’ (NMC, 2008).

Sign off mentors:

Are annotated their organisations register as a sign-off mentor.

- Registered on the same part of the register as the student they are supporting.
- Working in the same field of practice as that in which the student intends to qualify.
- Possess Clinical currency and capability in the field in which the student is being assessed.
- Have a working knowledge of current programme requirements, practice assessment strategies and relevant changes in education and practice for the student they are assessing.
- An understanding of the NMC registration requirements and the contribution they make to the achievement of these requirements.
- An in-depth understanding of their accountability to the NMC for the decision they must make to pass or fail a student when assessing proficiency requirements at the end of a programme.
- Been supervised on at least three occasions for signing off proficiency by an existing sign-off mentor (see local Sign off Mentor Development Pathway: - contact Placement Development Team)

Reflecting on your Current Role

Take a moment to reflect on your experience of supporting learners.

- What do you think are the key responsibilities of your role?
- What are the qualities of a good mentor?

Mentor Qualities:

- Confident in their own ability
- Good role model
- Honest
- Approachable
- Organised
- Good communicator
- Friendly
- Professional
- Caring and empathetic

Do you recognise any of these qualities in yourselves or others you work with?
You cannot underestimate the impact of your behaviour in role modelling.