



HEALTH AND SOCIAL WORK

ceppl

Centre for Excellence
in Professional Placement Learning



Top Tips For Students:

Your journey through
Practice Assessment

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“Mentors need to be on the ball before you get to them”

(Midwifery Student)

Forewarned is forearmed!

Dear Student

We hope that this resource will provide some food for thought as well as being an aide memoir to your experience of practice assessment. You are invited to use the student guidelines for your own purposes, and share the staff section (seen on the reverse of this resource) with the person assessing your practice.

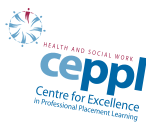
This multi-professional guide has been developed from research undertaken over a period of five years in the Centre for Excellence in Professional Placement Learning (Ceppi) at the University of Plymouth. It has been informed by students and staff from social work and a range of health professions as well as evidence from the literature. Direct quotes from participants have been used to reinforce some key points.

The generic term ‘practice assessor’ has been used for the person who is responsible for assessing your progress and achievement in a placement setting. Depending on the programme you are following, this person may work closely with you, monitor your progress more remotely or only assess a ‘snapshot’ of your practice.

It is recognised that professional/ programme requirements will vary, and not all the points may be relevant to your particular situation. However, it is likely that the majority of suggestions made will be applicable to most professions.

We wish you success in your journey!

The Ceppi ‘Assessment of Practice’ team



Further information may be found in:

Fisher M, Proctor-Childs T, Callaghan L, Stone A, Snell K and Craig L (2011) **Assessment of Professional Practice: Perceptions and Principles**. In: Wergers CE (ed) Nursing Students and their Concerns p1-36
 Open Access chapter at: https://www.novapublishers.com/catalog/product_info.php?products_id=22965 <https://www.novapublishers.com/catalog/product_info.php?products_id=22965

Fisher M, Proctor-Childs T and Callaghan L (2011) **Assessment in Practice – Development Summary**. Centre for Excellence in Professional Placement Learning Placement Gateway, University of Plymouth.
<http://uplace.org.uk:8080/dspace/handle/10293/905>

Guidelines	Comments
Make sure you understand your assessment documentation, the programme requirements and expectations – don't be afraid to ask questions if you are unsure	
Try to see examples of the assessment methods used/arrange for rehearsals as appropriate	
Review the feedback you have received in earlier placements and build on this in developing your learning objectives	
If you have a choice in your placement ensure it will meet your learning objectives and assessment requirements	
Check out your placement – location, expectations, available learning opportunities, people to contact, dress code, transport etc	
Try to talk to previous or current students in this placement	
Check that the placement is expecting you and that a designated practice assessor has been assigned to you as required by your programme	
Visit or telephone the placement and introduce yourself to your practice assessor if possible	
Check that the placement has the relevant current information about your programme and assessment	
Make sure you know who to contact for support if you have problems – both in the placement and University	
Try to plan around competing demands e.g.: practice and academic deadlines, personal commitments	

Early in your placement:

Develop some milestones!

At your assessment point:

Guidelines	Comments
Develop a learning contract in consultation with your practice assessor, based on your previous experience, the assessment requirements and the opportunities available in the placement	
Set meeting dates with your practice assessor for regular feedback including a midpoint check on your progress and any summative assessments required	

Throughout the placement:

Take ownership of your learning experience!

Guidelines	Comments
Look out for and make best use of wider learning opportunities	
Ask relevant questions and challenge practice appropriately to aid your learning	
Be aware that your practice assessor has other demands on their time, and be flexible in your requests - remember that service-user needs take priority	
Obtain regular verbal and written feedback from a variety of sources e.g.: service-users, other staff	
Find out how you are doing and how you can improve – asking individuals to be specific in their feedback	
Clarify any questions you may have about your assessment criteria and documentation	
Keep all your practice documentation up to date including portfolios, timesheets etc – don't leave it all until the last minute!	
Communicate any anxieties early and professionally to the appropriate person e.g.: practice assessor, supervisor, personal tutor or other academic	
Ask for support if you don't seem to be getting on with your practice assessor	

Don't panic!

"If you don't go through the barrier, then you don't get the benefit of knowing what the benefit is..."

(Emergency Care Student)

"A colleague of mine summed it up nicely when we started. He said, er, the thing about the degree isn't really arriving at the end with a tick in the box, it's the journey that's the most important thing and you do get out of it what you put in..."

That journey, it was great as far as I was concerned."

(Emergency Care Student)

Guidelines	Comments
Plan meetings , observations or other assessments in good time	
Ask if there is anything you are unsure about	
Make sure your documentation reflects the practice learning you have achieved	
Obtain written reports from others as appropriate to support your evidence	
Be open and honest in documentation and discussions	
Accept the feedback given to you and make sure you understand the reasons for the judgment, asking for further information/clarification as needed	
Consider how to use the feedback constructively in identifying your future learning	

Assessing the student:

(Midwifery Practitioner)

“The assessment process can be good to make them put things into focus.”

(Emergency Care Academic)

“It’s worth the investment because you really do see these people actually going through a journey, which does change them at the end of it”

Guidelines	Comments
Take your responsibility for assessment seriously	
Remember you need to maintain a professional boundary with your student to enable you to assess them objectively	
Plan protected time with your student to enable sufficient time for working with them and undertaking thorough assessment	
Provide regular, detailed and honest feedback to your student in a constructive manner throughout their placement as well as at assessment points	
Seek the opinions of others who have worked with your student to guide decisions/build up a more accurate profile of them	
Encourage students to divorce criticism of themselves as individuals from criticism of their professional practice and see this as a constructive developmental exercise	
Raise any concerns early with the student in the first instance – no surprises!	
Seek support if your student is not achieving, so that a plan of action can be put in place	
Be aware of other factors which may be causing stress to the student (e.g.: academic/personal commitments or financial/ travel concerns) and help them to deal appropriately with these while meeting their programme requirements	
Make sure any grades awarded are consistent with the evidence provided and the feedback given to the student	

Preparing your student:

(Social Work Academic)

“I think what also feeds into the accuracy is the feedback from a range of different sources”.

Guidelines	Comments
Try to speak to your new student before they start their placement/practice assessment experience with you – it is usually their responsibility to make first contact	
Find out about your student’s background to help plan their ‘journey’	
Provide opportunities for your student to talk to previous or current students in the placement if possible	
Assist your student to plan for the competing demands of practice, academic work and personal commitments – being realistic about the placement work pattern and requirements	
Check that your student understands their programme’s assessment methods and documentation	
Encourage your student to take ownership of their learning experience and help them devise a learning contract with appropriate objectives	
Encourage your student to gain holistic experiences and not solely focus on core skills	
Encourage your student to take advantage of any wider learning opportunities which may arise and help them to make contact with relevant individuals	
If you are in a position of teaching as well as assessing the student, be prepared to adapt your method to meet the student’s learning style	
Encourage your student to ask questions	
Provide a professional role-model	
Encourage your students to proactively seek specific feedback from a range of people including e.g.: other staff, service-users	

Preparing yourself as a practice assessor:

"It doesn't matter what the university does. If you haven't got a good system on the clinical side you're still not going to catch up"

(Midwifery Practitioner)

"The most pivotal parts of an assessment are the people making judgments"

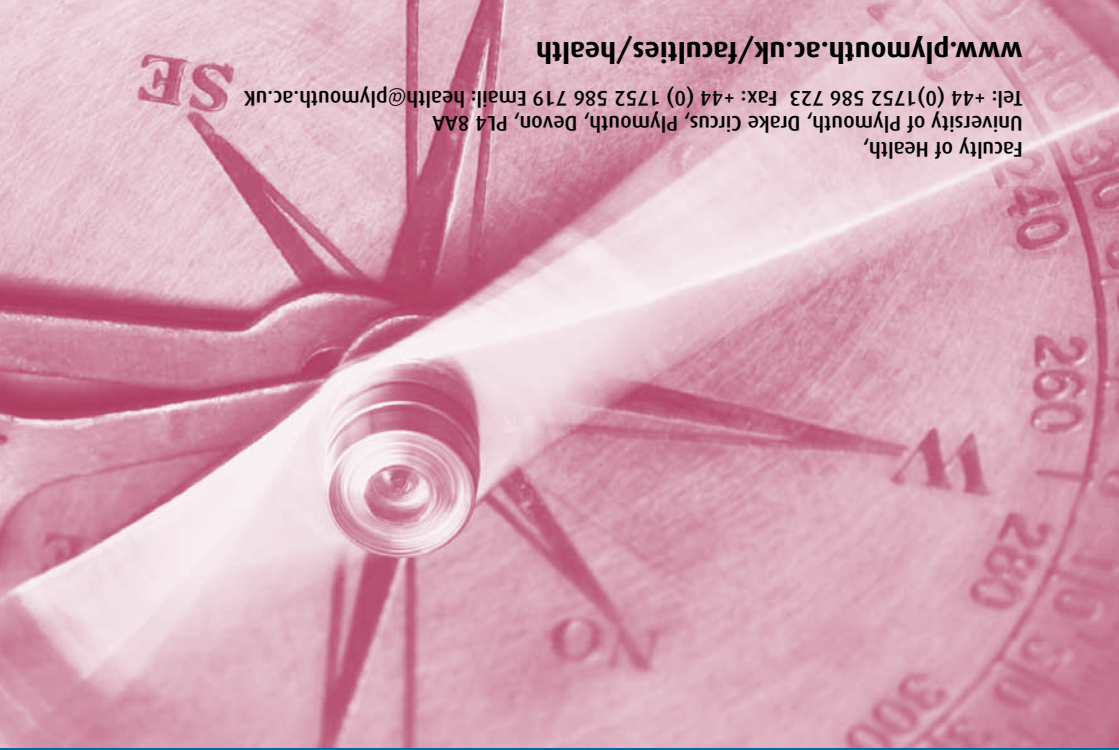
Guidelines	Comments
Actively seek out preparation for your role as practice assessor, ensuring you meet any specific requirements which may be identified by your professional body	
If you are new to practice assessment, ask for a visit from /discussion with someone on the programme team or a more experienced peer	
Ensure you are up to date with the current programme and practice assessment process and documentation relevant to the student you will be assessing	
Gain the support of your managers and the academic staff in enabling you to undertake your role – e.g.: accessing preparation/updates, clarifying queries, providing time for the role	
Ensure contact details for support are known e.g.: programme team, support in the placement area	
Inform the programme team or your manager if you identify any issues which might compromise your ability to perform your role as an assessor or if you think the placement may not be suitable for the student's learning needs at that time	

Introduction to the resource:



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