Statement of protected time for nursing, midwifery, operating department practice and paramedic students and their practice assessors/mentors

The role of the practice assessor/mentor in supporting students is valued by both the University and the placement providers. It is recognised good practice that those who support students in practice education are allocated protected time for practice assessment and mentorship activities.

Oxfordshire NHS Trusts have always recognised the importance of protected time for practice assessment and mentoring activities and since 2004 have supported 1 hour of protected time for all practice assessors/mentors per 5 student days as being good practice.

The NMC Standard to support learning and assessment in practice (2006)
The Nursing and Midwifery Council has set a minimum standard for mentoring and has made it mandatory that sign off mentors have ‘protected time’ to spend with their students, particularly to complete assessment related activities. Protected time will be the equivalent of an accumulated minimum of 1 hour for every 37.5 hours in practice placement. This can be achieved flexibly, not necessarily in a single block of time. It is anticipated that there will be opportunities on a daily basis in addition to more formal planned time to meet this requirement.

The Health Professions Council (2009):
The HPC do not make specific reference to ‘protected time’ for mentorship activities, but their Standards of Education and Training make general reference to the preparation and support for the practice placement component of the curricula including the need for providing effective preparation and support in achieving/assessing the practice learning outcomes for the student and the practice placement educators.

Examples of activities that contribute to the protected time requirements/good practice:
- Initial meeting to discuss pre-placement assessments/learning opportunities
- Midway placement meeting
- Final placement meeting
- Discussion of achievement of competencies (Specific or general)
- Assessment of completion of negotiated study (e.g. learning about a specific aspect of primary health care or other health issue)
- Discussion about a student’s intentions when planning a practice related activity
- Discussion about the knowledge/evidence base needed to achieve the practice learning outcomes
- Review of progress and goal setting using the students portfolio/practice education record
- Informal shared ‘Reflection’ on practice for example:
  - Patient care activities
  - Interactions with clients/families/other professionals
  - Case conference/ward round/handover etc.
  - Student’s documentation e.g. care plans/patient’s health care notes
  - Debriefing of significant incidents
- Discussion around student’s self-assessment
- Giving or receiving feedback following observation, discussion, issues relating to professional behaviour and attitudes

N.B. The above activities should be recorded as required in the student’s portfolio/practice education record

Helpful strategies to manage protected time

1 Wiltshire PCT - All students will receive protected time from their mentor which will equate to 1 hour over a 37.5 hours shift. This can be in sections of 5 minutes and will be within the contracted hours of the mentor.
Identifying time to support student learning is a way of investing in the future workforce and ensuring their competence. In order to find this time, mentors/practice assessors can discuss with their link lectures, line managers and other colleagues ideas for helpful strategies such as:

- Liaising with colleagues regarding client workload
- Negotiating time to set aside for discussions with students
- Planning time into the day
- Using travel time whilst travelling with mentors/practice assessors during working hours, or providing evidence of reflection to your practice assessor/mentor undertaken during travel
- Planning to meet at the start of the shift
- Planning to meet at a regular time each week

References


If you would like further information or advice please contact Your Learning Environment Lead/Clinical Placement Facilitator or equivalent or your Link Lecturer.

Please ensure all staff in practice areas have access to this document (it can be found on the following link: http://shsc.brookes.ac.uk/plu/resources-supporting-students

Approved by the following practice education provider partners:

Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre NHS Trust
Oxford Radcliffe Hospitals NHS Trust
Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Mental Health NHS Trust
Oxfordshire PCT
Ridgeway Partnership NHS Trust
South Central Ambulance Service NHS Trust
Swindon & Marlborough NHS Trust
Swindon PCT
Wiltshire PCT