Good practice principles to support students in Placement: mentoring approaches

Team Mentorship

Background

These learning resources provide some helpful information about how to approach mentorship in practice. Suggested approaches are probably formalising something you are already doing for students in your areas e.g. students time with other members of the MDT, visiting departments linked to your area, working with other registrants to support students and identifying students to work together for particular patient care episodes. There are resources for three particular approaches that you may find helpful to consider in relation to what would work best in your area.

The purpose of considering different approaches is to improve the student experience in relation to the patient journey but also to improve the experience of mentorship even when your workload is particularly busy. The three mentorship approaches we are providing information for are:

- Hub and Spoke
- Team Mentoring
- Student Dyads

The key principles underpinning these approaches are:

Preparation and Sustainability

Step 1: Know about the university curriculum: e.g. philosophy and learning and teaching strategy. The specifics of the students practice assessment.
Step 2: Identify and understand the learning opportunities which are available within and connected to your area or work (e.g. clinics, labs, departments, other roles/people, private and voluntary sector groups) and how they relate to students of each year group (so that they are challenging). Think about learning opportunities related to:
  - Speciality specific knowledge and experience
  - Patient pathways- where do you patients come from, go to, what investigations do they have, what members of the MDT contribute to their health and wellbeing
  - Essential Care Need groups (Babies, Children, Young People, Pregnant and Postnatal Women, People with a learning disability, people with Mental Health needs)
  - Developing practice -Leadership, research and education

Step 3: Negotiate, plan and develop learning opportunities and resources: To reduce duplication of effort and ongoing workload, resources should be developed and shared that
identify; learning opportunities and communication strategies specific to your area. It is likely that you will already be providing students many opportunities as suggested in Step 2. You should capture these opportunities in a list with contact details and brief outline of the experience for students (see below). This information can be linked to the placement profile so that students can access the information prior to the placement commencing. You might want to identify some ‘Essential Must Do’s’ these can be used to support the student experience and be retained for subsequent students (this can be a shared file, resource box, notice boards etc.) Students can help with the on-going evaluation and development of resources, they can help you regularly monitor the effectiveness of the placement arrangements, communication strategies and resources and enhance as required.

**Organisation – Planning Ahead!**

**Step 1:** Students are part of the future for healthcare, you should always expect to have students within your practice (a yearlong capacity plan is managed by the Learning Environment Leads) therefore, developing resources ahead of time will save time overall.

**Step 2:** Placements will be confirmed in advance of the placement starting with placement areas the name and level of the student and include dates and any specific (target time is). Students can access information via the placement profile and additional resources may be provided by the placement area.

**Step 3:** Managing student numbers and overlaps.

- A nominated lead person (e.g. Manager/education link nurse) should have an overview in order to manage student capacity of all allocated students. They should make note of the student names and dates of the placement.
- A nominated person (e.g. Manager/education link nurse) should identify a relevant LEAD practice assessor (named mentor) for each student who will **co-ordinate and lead** the learning experience. This person should support the student for 40% of their placement (directly or indirectly). *Note that this can be job-shared by two named practice assessors who will make joint competency decisions.*
- In addition, the student should have a named and accountable registrant for each shift in the absence of the LEAD. The LEAD Practice assessor or accountable registrant may delegate shift supervision to another e.g. other professionals, care assistants or a more senior student nurse.
- To manage capacity and off duty effectively various models may be used flexibly for example; all students could experience Hub and Spoke and for part of their placement they may also experience Dyads and/or Team mentoring.
- Specify when and where students will be in practice (*this may be via a student notice board*) and in the off duty.
- Link lecturer contact details to be visible in the placement area with preferred method of contact indicated i.e. email/phone

**Induction to the placement**

When students first make contact with the placement area, it is best practice to make them feel welcomed and expected. *If the placement area is not aware, contact the University for confirmation/clarification and investigate why the placement area was not aware.*
Students should be able to meet with their LEAD Practice assessor to set objectives for the placement ideally within the first week. Opportunities to formally review progress throughout and complete the practice assessment document (PAD) should be identified by the LEAD. If a hub and spoke approach is being used (see definitions) then a plan should be negotiated regarding other learning opportunities and spoke placements, contacts and communication methods should be identified. Some student may have child care/dependants/commitments, so reasonable notice should be given of the placement pattern and hours. Practice assessors should be aware of the students simulation based education and what they have already undertaken in University.

**Feedback and communication**

Students should be encouraged to self-assess before feedback is given (to highlight self-awareness) Feedback should be frequent, specific and balanced and can be given to the student by anyone they are supervised by, verbally and in writing. If there are concerns regarding student performance then this should be documented and communicated to the LEAD mentor

The student PAD can be used for student feedback:
- Midway Review of Progress (with revised action plan)
- Record Of Additional Progress Review Meetings And Resulting Action Plans
- Mentor Final Assessment
- Feedback From Others Who Have Contributed To Assessment
- Short Placement/Clinical Visit

Practice assessors should ask students for frequent, specific and balanced feedback on their own performance.

Team and Spoke placement practice assessors should review the students PAD and so that the students experience is continued and the placements are seen as part of not additional to the placement. Good communication between placement areas and University to be maintained throughout the placement (both student and practice assessor should proactively ask for support/advice if needed and inform the Link Lecturer of any problems or concerns (i.e. regarding support, achievement of hours, professional behaviour or competency). The whole placement team should be aware of and supportive of the student placement experience and be motivated to ensure students engage in available learning opportunities.

**Competency achievement and sign-off (for pre registrant nursing and midwifery)**

On each named placement allocation, students need to achieve the minimum competencies (depending on what they have left to achieve and placement number). Mentors should carefully read the words of the competency statements and fully assess knowledge and skill by questioning, reflection and observation. Competencies can be achieved in different ways in different settings and they need to be continually demonstrated and built on, even if already achieved. Therefore it is important that all mentors and team members are monitoring continuing demonstration of competency as well as achieving new ones.

If a mentor has concerns about a student behaviour/competency they should contact the LEAD and ensure other mentors are aware of the concerns.

The professional values/behaviour competency should be signed by the final deadline (this relates to continually demonstrating competencies already achieved as well as professional behaviour and responding to feedback).

Students who are not at the expected level can still fail the overall placement if they have been given feedback in one placement area and do not improve their performance.
The lead mentor will decide if competency sign-off can be delegated to another qualified mentor and make the final competency decision based on feedback from other mentors and team members. The LEAD is the signatory and the final decision rests with the LEAD. Therefore the continual gathering of evidence of achievement is vital to the final decision.

**Team Mentorship: Model, Roles and Responsibilities**

Team mentorship models allow students to formally increase the breadth of their experience to meet the professional statutory regulatory standards for pre-registration for the appropriate profession. You may have already been informally supporting your students to have this style of placement. These models are not ‘fixed’ and need to be adapted to suit local context. Usually the main education link for the area or manager defines who the teams will be. These are usually those that work well together or are already established teams.

**Model 1:** This is where the named LEAD mentor/practice assessor and two other colleagues support the students. A LEAD (for NMC pre-registrants) is a qualified mentor live on the local register and has had their triennial or annual review for the year.

**Model 2:** This is where no defined ‘team’ except the named LEAD supports the student, so everyone contributes. The mentor will need to carefully consider how the placement is organised on a daily basis and work within the ethos of supporting the student experience. Students have evaluated that where the named co mentors and team are not defined they have a less than beneficial experience.
Key principles:

- The student needs to be aware from the start who is the team. Good practice would be to make the teams ‘visible’ in the area by putting up pictures and names in a suitable place.
- The named LEAD communicates the student objectives with the co mentors. Objectives are planned and SMART and related to every day/planned student contact, with co mentors and mentor.
- The off duty/ placement plan are key. The LEAD needs to carefully map with the co mentors the time allocated to the student so that the 40% rule is met. The 40% rule does not necessarily mean direct contact/observation but does mean being on duty at the same time. The student needs to be aware that swapping off duty significantly impacts on the arrangements and needs to be planned in advance.
- A coaching approach is taken to ‘teaching’. This is where you plan in advance the types of experiences the student needs and who best would facilitate that.
- Competencies are signed off by the LEAD mentor following communication with the co mentors and the student provides evidence of meeting their objectives. Evidence needs to be robust.
- A communication tool needs to be established between the team. This needs to be open and visible with the student. Examples could be a diary, email or/and recording in the students PAD. In all circumstances the student must be included in the communication.

Guidelines for mentors/ practice assessors

The team mentorship model will change your role. As a named LEAD mentor/practice assessor you will be responsible for:

- Rapid teaching / assessing episodes
  - Use SMART objectives to structure these sessions

- Liaise with co mentors and review PAD regularly
  - Co mentors will record their feedback in the PAD
  - Co mentors who are NMC registered nurses can complete the initial interview. Make sure you review this at the end of week one to ensure you understand what the students aims are for this placement and how you can support their learning plan.

- Spend more time assessing and feeding back to students
  - As LEAD mentor you are responsible for the midpoint and final interviews and for reviewing the learning plan. You are required to provide feedback to your student and to implement action plans if required. You should review the PAD regularly to ensure the students are progressing. It is suggested this should be weekly.

- Organising learning opportunities
  - Ensure your students are aware of what learning opportunities are available in your area. These should have been identified by the team and best practice would be that they are available and listed on the student board.

- Collate evidence for supporting the assessment of your student. All need to be recorded. The student can take on this responsibility and the co mentor can counter sign for the day. Suggestions are:
  - Record of additional learning opportunities
  - Skills completed / not achieved
- Service user feedback forms
- Episode of care if done on your placement
- Feedback from any other professional (Via email or written ideally so recorded)
- Records of meeting section in PAD – student and LEAD or co mentors and others should document this in the PAD

- Instigate and support action plans
  - If you or your colleagues are concerned about a student’s progress or actions you should write an action plan with the student and involve the Link Lecturer.
  - This should be communicated with the team but owned by the student. The action plan is the student’s responsibility to complete and they should be encouraged to demonstrate ways that they are improving every day.

- Develop the excellent student
  - If you or your colleagues identify that a student is doing excellent work, then together, make a plan for how to challenge and motivate them.
  - Challenge your student every time you work with them, give them projects to lead on if appropriate and involve them in leadership and audit activities.

- Write learning and development needs with the student
  - At the end of each placement the student should have a learning and development needs plan written.

**Guidance for co mentors/ practice assessors**

As a co mentor you are responsible for teaching and supporting the student on an everyday basis and feeding it back to the LEAD mentor. You are responsible for the below:

- Communicating with LEAD
  - You can use the PAD for this. Ensure you record your name in the 'List of mentors/Supervisors’ section.
  - Ensure you feedback regularly to the LEAD using the PAD feedback as evidence.

- Every day as appropriate for the student
  - At the beginning of each shift with the student, the allocated co mentor for the day should have a quick five minute meeting to understand what they need to learn on that shift and how you can support them with this. You should also have a five minute meeting at the end of the shift to write your feedback in the PAD and verbally let your student know how the day has gone. It is also good to get feedback from your student in this time on how their day has gone.

- If you are a NMC registered nurse you can complete the initial interview with your student. This involves
  - Completing the orientation section in the PAD. The student should then identify their learning needs and you should identify learning opportunities in your area to support them. You should then together write a learning plan.
  - The LEAD should review this at the end of week 1 and counter sign.

- Skills teaching and assessment
  - All co mentors should teach skills that they are competent in to their students.
If you are a NMC registered nurse you can assess the student on skills that you are competent to undertake but only if planned and agreed with the LEAD. The LEAD will counter sign the competency. It is advisable that skills are assessed on a continual basis not signed off after one event.

- Promote best practice
  - Show the students how to be the best.
  - Role model evidence based care to your student

- Being the identified point of contact for your student
  - Make sure your student knows how to get in touch with you. Share the contact details and your work email with them.
  - Be aware that you should not share personal emails, phone numbers or social networking details.

- Bringing the student into the team
  - Show the student how to be a part of the team by role modelling professional behaviour
  - Make sure they are introduced to people know who to go to for support

- Escalating concerns
  - Know how to escalate concerns about your student. You should take these concerns, to the student’s LEAD, your ward manager and to the link lecturer.
  - Know how to support your student in escalating concerns of their own. Both of you can access the escalating concerns policy.

- Highlighting the excellent student
  - If your student is really good feed this back to the LEAD and together make a plan for how to challenge and motivate them.
  - Challenge your student every time you work with them, give them projects to lead on if appropriate and involve them in leadership and audit activities.

*Students not achieving:* For students where there are concerns regarding their development towards the achievement of competence a decision is required by the LEAD mentor regarding the value of attending the placement.

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