Section 2 – NMC standards for mentors, practice teachers and teachers

2.1 NMC mentor standard

An NMC mentor is a registrant who, following successful completion of an NMC approved mentor preparation programme – or comparable preparation that has been accredited by an AEI as meeting the NMC mentor requirements – has achieved the knowledge, skills and competence required to meet the defined outcomes.

A mentor is a mandatory requirement for pre-registration nursing and midwifery students.

Mentors who are assessing competence must have met the NMC outcomes defined in stage 2 of this standard, or be supervised by a mentor who has met these outcomes. Those who sign off proficiency must have met the additional criteria to be a sign-off mentor (see section 2.1.3). All midwife mentors must have met the additional criteria to be a sign-off mentor.

Once mentors have been entered on the local register (normally held by placement providers) they are subject to triennial review (see Roles to support learning and assessment in practice in the introduction).

Mentors 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 (e.g. mentors, sign-off mentors, practice facilitators, practice teachers, personal tutors, programme leaders) to provide feedback, identify any concerns about the student’s performance and agree action as appropriate.
- Providing evidence for, or acting as, sign-off mentors with regard to making decisions about achievement of proficiency at the end of a programme.

2.1.1 Criteria for supporting learning and assessing in practice – mentors

Nurses and midwives who intend to take on the role of mentor must fulfil the following criteria:

- Be registered in the same part or sub-part of the register as the student they are to assess and for the nurses’ part of the register be in the same field of practice (adult, mental health, learning disability or children’s). See Circular 26/2007 for further information (Annexe 3).
- Have developed their own knowledge, skills and competence beyond registration i.e. been registered for at least one year.
- Have successfully completed an NMC approved mentor preparation programme (or a comparable programme which has been accredited by an AEI as meeting the NMC mentor requirements).
- Have the ability to select, support and assess a range of learning opportunities in their area of practice for students undertaking NMC approved programmes.
- Be able to support learning in an interprofessional environment – selecting and supporting a range of learning opportunities for students from other professions.
- Have the ability to contribute to the assessment of other professionals under the supervision of an experienced assessor from that profession.
- Be able to make judgements about competence/proficiency of NMC students on the same part of the register, and in the same field of practice, and be accountable for such decisions.
- Be able to support other nurses and midwives in meeting CPD needs in accordance with the Code: Standards for conduct, performance and ethics for nurses and midwives (NMC 2008).
2.1.2 Competence and outcomes for a mentor

Mentor competencies are achieved by successful completion of an NMC approved mentor preparation programme that achieves all of the outcomes of stage 2. These outcomes are as follows:

Establishing effective working relationships
• Demonstrate an understanding of factors that influence how students integrate into practice settings.
• Provide ongoing and constructive support to facilitate transition from one learning environment to another.
• Have effective professional and interprofessional working relationships to support learning for entry to the register.

Facilitation of learning
• Use knowledge of the student’s stage of learning to select appropriate learning opportunities to meet individual needs.
• Facilitate the selection of appropriate learning strategies to integrate learning from practice and academic experiences.
• Support students in critically reflecting upon their learning experiences in order to enhance future learning.

Assessment and accountability
• Foster professional growth, personal development and accountability through support of students in practice.
• Demonstrate a breadth of understanding of assessment strategies and the ability to contribute to the total assessment process as part of the teaching team.
• Provide constructive feedback to students and assist them in identifying future learning needs and actions. Manage failing students so that they may enhance their performance and capabilities for safe and effective practice or be able to understand their failure and the implications of this for their future.
• Be accountable for confirming that students have met, or not met, the NMC competencies in practice. As a sign-off mentor confirm that students have met, or not met, the NMC standards of proficiency in practice and are capable of safe and effective practice.

Evaluation of learning
• Contribute to evaluation of student learning and assessment experiences – proposing aspects for change resulting from such evaluation.
• Participate in self and peer evaluation to facilitate personal development, and contribute to the development of others.

Creating an environment for learning
• Support students to identify both learning needs and experiences that are appropriate to their level of learning.
• Use a range of learning experiences, involving patients, clients, carers and the professional team, to meet defined learning needs.
• Identify aspects of the learning environment which could be enhanced – negotiating with others to make appropriate changes.
• Act as a resource to facilitate personal and professional development of others.

Context of practice
• Contribute to the development of an environment in which effective practice is fostered, implemented, evaluated and disseminated.
• Set and maintain professional boundaries that are sufficiently flexible for providing interprofessional care.
Initiate and respond to practice developments to ensure safe and effective care is achieved and an effective learning environment is maintained.

Evidence-based practice

- Identify and apply research and evidence-based practice to their area of practice.
- Contribute to strategies to increase or review the evidence-base used to support practice.
- Support students in applying an evidence base to their own practice.

Leadership

- Plan a series of learning experiences that will meet students defined learning needs.
- Be an advocate for students to support them accessing learning opportunities that meet their individual needs – involving a range of other professionals, patients, clients and carers.
- Prioritise work to accommodate support of students within their practice roles.
- Provide feedback about the effectiveness of learning and assessment in practice.

2.1.3 Criteria for a sign-off mentor

Underpinned by principle A which states that:

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.

Placement providers must ensure that a nurse or midwife designated to sign-off proficiency for a particular student at the end of a programme is:

- Identified on the local register as a sign-off mentor or a practice teacher.
- Registered on the same part of the register.
- Working in the same field of practice as that in which the student intends to qualify.

And additionally to be a sign-off mentor they must have:

- Clinical currency and capability in the field in which the student is being assessed.
- 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 paragraph 5.2 in introduction).
- A working knowledge of current programme requirements, practice assessment strategies and relevant changes in education and practice for the student they are assessing.
- The achievement of these requirements.
- An understanding of the NMC registration requirements and the contribution they make to meeting these requirements.
- An in-depth understanding of their accountability to the NMC for the decision they make to pass or fail a student when assessing proficiency requirements at the end of a programme.

6. Placement providers will decide in the first instance who may be considered as a sign-off mentor and annotate these mentors accordingly. The NMC would expect that such mentors would meet all criteria except that of being supervised by an existing sign-off mentor. All midwife mentors will be sign-off mentors.