

In this article...

- A look at practice supervisor training for final-year pre-registration nurses
- How training has been implemented at a higher education institution
- Students' experience of the training and what they found beneficial

Preparing pre-registration nurses for the role of practice supervisor

Key points

Opportunities for third-year students to develop skills in leadership and supervision should be considered

The inclusion of practice supervision training for students reflects revised Nursing and Midwifery Council standards

Higher education institutions and trusts collaborated on the roles of post-qualifying students

Students must attend three seminars spanning the academic year to be eligible for certification

Newly qualified nurses enter the register with practice supervisor training completed

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Abstract Bournemouth University responded to transformations in the Nursing and Midwifery Council standards by implementing practice supervisor preparation into the pre-registration nursing curriculum. It developed educational seminars for third-year undergraduate student nurses, with approximately 350 students participating in the seminars over the 2021-22 academic year. Evaluations suggest the adoption of this training into the pre-registration curriculum has been very useful in providing students with an understanding of how to effectively support a student post qualification.

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Practice supervisors are pivotal in the learning process – their main role in the placement setting is to support, supervise and facilitate learning for student nurses (Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), 2018).

The NMC's (2018) *Realising Professionalism: Standards for Education and Training – Part 2: Standards for Student Supervision and Assessment* recommends that learners have the opportunity to develop their supervision and leadership skills while on their pre-registration course. This is reinforced by Leigh and Roberts (2018), who suggested that all registrants should be able to undertake the practice supervisor role.

Davis (2020) foresaw that newly registered nurses were likely to be part of the team supporting nursing students and that to meet the demands of practice, students should have, therefore, the opportunity before qualifying to develop their knowledge and skills in supporting learners. She also suggested – in Davis (2020) – that newly registered nurses are more likely to be supervising students at an early stage of their career, and it is important that the newly acquired

experiences they can bring to the practice supervisor role are acknowledged. Jangland et al (2021) endorsed this and referred to the importance of strengthening professional identity, which practice supervisor training could do for recently qualified registrants.

Recognising the pressure that final-year students may be experiencing, and the potential impact the additional requirement of becoming a supervisor may have, is essential. As Dack and Ban (2021) highlighted, the transition to registrant can be both difficult and overwhelming. It is a critical time as there are many challenges that nurses face in the first year of qualifying (Jangland et al, 2021). When developing the content for the practice supervisor preparation, this was considered in conjunction with the NMC's revised standards.

In contrast with the rigidity of the NMC's (2008) standards to support learning and assessing in practice, the flexibility in the NMC (2018) standards enabled a creative and innovative approach to the seminar development. As Power and Wilson (2019) affirmed, the changes have

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given higher education institutions and trusts more flexibility and autonomy over the development and delivery of aspects of their programmes. This has also enabled parity, as the practice supervisor seminars for students were mapped against the current practice supervisor programme delivered to other registered nurses and allied health professionals at the university and local trusts.

Preparation and implementation

Initial discussions about the introduction of the role of the practice supervisor into pre-registration programmes took place months before the start of the 2021-22 academic year. This included consultation with higher education institution programme leads, year-three academic assessors (AAs), and year-three practice unit leads. Views were also sought from the local healthcare trusts and private, voluntary and independent placement providers, as the new student skillset would affect practice and the trusts' future training needs for supervisor and assessor training. The supervisor training was divided into three separate seminars spanning the academic year.

One of the key areas to consider was the most appropriate time for these seminars to be included in the student timetable. It was decided that the nursing practice unit, which focuses on clinical practice experience and development, would be the most relevant. This required careful planning with timetabling, due to practical logistics about room availability and the volume of students attending.

A clear requirement was for students to attend all three seminars to be eligible for certification. Those that were unable to fulfil this would need to complete the training after qualification.

The intended learning outcomes of the training seminars were to:

- Define the practice supervisor role;
- Reflect on strategies that support effective practice learning;
- Identify opportunities to develop knowledge of the student programmes relevant to the student's area of practice;
- Understand the importance of addressing concerns promptly;
- Use a framework for feedback to support reliable assessment.

The teaching comprised three sessions at timely intervals during the students' third year of their programme. The first two sessions were pre-recorded and facilitated by the students' AA. Students

“Throughout the seminars, students were encouraged to reflect and share their own experiences of supervision”

worked as a group to start exploring the fundamental aspects of supervision in the practice setting, the aim being for them to take a proactive role using peer learning, reflection on practice, team discussion and debate. The third session was facilitated by the university practice learning advisers, who devised the seminar teaching and learning resources.

The seminar content of the seminars is outlined in Box 1.

A wide range of learning resources and strategies were used, which included:

- A quiz;
- Mentimeter (an online tool to garner feedback via set questions);
- Small-group exercises;
- Facilitated group discussion;
- Case studies;
- Reflection on practice.

The value of interprofessional learning and supervision was also addressed. Throughout the seminars, students were encouraged to reflect and share their own experiences of supervision, which enabled them to understand the contextual framework and recognise the value of developing their skills for their roles after qualifying.

Delivering the seminars throughout the academic year provides the students with opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills while in placement. They are all completed before the final clinical consolidation placement, so students can practise their newly acquired skills while benefiting from supernumerary status. It is hoped there will be supervised opportunities to demonstrate these skills – for example, by supporting a junior student, gaining feedback and linking to their leadership, management and team-working competencies.

On completion of the three seminars, students receive a certificate for future employers. Completing this as part of the pre-registration curriculum course has been in consultation with, and supported by, local trusts and organisations as it allows the newly registered nurse to have the skillset to support learners without a need for training to be delivered at a later stage.

Initial findings

To review student learning from the first two seminars, in their final seminar, students were invited to participate in an

online exercise using Mentimeter to demonstrate their knowledge and learning of the role to date. Key words – such as ‘role model’, ‘teach’ and ‘support’ – were the most popular. Students’ understanding concurs with the key roles identified by Power and Wilson (2019), who described some of the skillset of supervisors as role models and coaches.

Student evaluations, informal feedback during the seminars and feedback from AAs has indicated that this training is beneficial and should continue to be delivered to all final-year student nurses to prepare them for the practice supervisor role.

Feedback from student attendees suggests the structure of the course and its content meets needs and expectations:

“The course is well run.”

“All content covered was relevant.”

“A good overview of the role.”

“All the content was relevant and further adds to skills to be a good supervisor.”

“Excellent seminar.”

Further feedback suggests students enjoyed how the material was delivered

Box 1. Seminar content

Seminar 1

- Reviewing the NMC standards
- Exploring the role and responsibilities of practice supervisor, practice assessor and academic assessor
- Reflecting on personal learning experiences
- The placement introduction process

Seminar 2

- The interview process
- Learning opportunities in the practice setting
- Placement models
- Learning styles for both the practice supervisor and student

Seminar 3

- Consolidating learning to this point
- Reviewing the learning environment
- Reasonable expectations
- SMART objectives
- Exploring coaching as a learning strategy
- Managing concerns in the practice setting
- The importance of feedback and feedforward
- Support networks for both the practice supervisor and student

SMART = specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely

and recognised the value of being able to share their ideas and experiences:

“Enjoyed discussing the scenarios in groups.”

“I like being involved in the learning and not just listening – there was a good mix.”

The AAs who facilitated the first two sessions were also asked for their feedback. They said:

“Presentations were engaging, students participated well with activities.”

“Well organised and had a great balance of information and reflective activity to encourage students to apply knowledge to practice.”

“Great feedback from students.”

“Activities really helped their [students’] insight with both personal and professional development of the role of practice assessor.”

Student evaluations indicating areas that could be improved for future training included:

“...explain the student online practice assessment documentation.”

“...include more tools in conflict resolution or motivation tactics.”

“Smaller group sizes would be beneficial.”

“Some content was a little repetitive.”

Next steps

Based on feedback and suggestions, some amendments will be made for the 2022-23 academic year by including a session on the students’ online practice assessment documentation in one of the seminars. The content will be reviewed to make sure there is no repetition of teaching materials; in addition, group sizes will be reduced to a maximum of 35 students. Current teaching includes a section on raising concerns, but this will be expanded for the next academic year (2022-23) to incorporate aspects of dealing with conflict.

Conclusion

This article has identified how one higher education institution has addressed the requirement for practice supervisor training in the nursing curriculum, so that newly registered nurses enter the register with this training completed.

The training package delivered to students has been explained, identifying how student nurses’ knowledge and experiences can be used effectively. Delivered in the final year of the nursing programme, the training has been beneficial and equipped the students with the skills they need to take on the role of the practice

supervisor. Subject to changes based on the student feedback, the training will continue as part of the nursing curriculum at Bournemouth University. **NT**

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