

Part 1:
**Standards framework
for nursing and midwifery
education**

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Original publication
17 May 2018

Newly published
25 April 2023

About our standards

Our standards for education and training include the Standards framework for nursing¹ and midwifery education, Standards for student supervision and assessment, and programme standards specific to each approved programme.

Our **standards** for education and training are set out in three parts:

Part 1: Standards framework for nursing and midwifery education

Part 2: Standards for student supervision and assessment

Part 3: Programme standards:

- **Standards for pre-registration nursing programmes**
- **Standards for pre-registration midwifery programmes**
- **Standards for pre-registration nursing associate programmes**
- **Standards for prescribing programmes**
- **Standards for post-registration programmes: programmes leading to specialist community public health nurse qualifications and programmes leading to community nursing specialist practice qualifications**
- **Standards for return to practice programmes**

Supporting information for our **Standards for student supervision and assessment** is on our **website**.

These standards help nursing and midwifery **students** achieve NMC proficiencies and programme outcomes. All nursing and midwifery professionals must practise in line with the requirements of **the Code**, the professional standards of practice, values and behaviours that nurses, midwives and nursing associates are expected to uphold.

¹ We have used the phrase 'nursing' in this document to apply to the work of nurses and nursing associates. Nursing associates are a distinct profession in England with their own part of our register, but they are part of the nursing team.

Introduction

Our Standards framework for nursing and midwifery education applies to all **Approved Education Institutions (AEIs)** and their **practice learning partners** that are running NMC approved programmes.

Article 15(1) of the **Nursing and Midwifery Order 2001** ('**the Order**')² requires the Council to establish standards for education and training which are necessary to achieve the standards of proficiency for admission to the register, as required by Article 5(2) of the Order. The **Standards framework for nursing and midwifery education** is established under the provision of Article 15(1) of the Order.

These standards aim to provide AEIs and practice learning partners with the flexibility to develop innovative approaches to all education for nurses, midwives and nursing associates, while being accountable for the local delivery and management of approved programmes in line with our standards. Pre-registration nursing and midwifery programmes and post-registration programmes may offer various academic and flexible routes to registration and annotation when seeking approval in line with our standards.

These standards should be read with the **Standards for student supervision and assessment**, and the programme standards which are specific for each pre-registration and post-registration educational programme. Together these are the NMC standards for education and training for the nursing and midwifery professions. Education institutions must be approved against these standards to run any NMC approved programmes.

AEIs are responsible for working with practice learning partners to manage the quality of their educational programmes. Overall responsibility for the day-to-day management of the quality of any educational programme lies with an AEI in partnership with practice learning partners who provide opportunities for practice experience to nursing and midwifery students.

Before a programme can be run, an approval process takes place through which we check that the proposed programme meets our standards.

Public safety is central to our standards. Students will be in contact with **people** throughout their education and it's important that they learn in a safe and effective way.

2 SI 2002/253

Through our **quality assurance** processes we check that education programmes meet our standards, and that education institutions and practice learning partners are managing risks effectively. Using internal and external intelligence we monitor risks to quality in education and training; this intelligence gathering includes analysis of system regulator reports.

Approved education providers are monitored and we have processes for collecting, analysing and responding to any risk intelligence we receive regarding educational programmes, including concerns raised with us directly by students. Approved education providers are also required to self-report any risks or concerns that could affect the quality of programme delivery and, therefore, public protection.

We strongly encourage people to take part in quality assurance events, where they will be asked to share experiences of nurse and midwifery education and suggest improvements.

AEIs must seek permission for approval for programme endorsement for programmes approved in the UK, to be delivered in a specified location outside the UK. This must be done in line with the NMC **quality assurance framework**.

Our Standards framework for nursing and midwifery education is set out under the following five headings:

1. Learning culture

We will only approve programmes where the learning culture is ethical, open and honest, is conducive to safe and effective learning that respects the principles of equality and diversity, and where innovation, inter-professional learning and team working are embedded

2. Educational governance and quality

We expect education providers to comply with all legal and regulatory requirements

3. Student empowerment

We want students to be empowered and provided with the learning opportunities they need to achieve the desired proficiencies and programme outcomes

4. Educators and assessors

We will seek assurance that those who support, supervise and assess students are suitably qualified, prepared and skilled, and receive the necessary support for their role

5. Curricula and assessment

We set standards for curricula and assessment that enable students to achieve the outcomes required to practise safely and effectively in their chosen area

We use these standards to assess the safety and effectiveness of all **learning environments**.

1 Learning culture

Standards

- 1.1 The learning culture prioritises the safety of people, including carers, students and **educators**, and enables the values of **the Code** to be upheld.
- 1.2 Education and training is valued in all learning environments.

Requirements

Approved education institutions, together with practice learning partners, must:

- 1.1 demonstrate that the safety of people is a primary consideration in all learning environments
- 1.2 prioritise the wellbeing of people promoting critical self-reflection and safe practice in accordance with **the Code**
- 1.3 ensure people have the opportunity to give and if required, withdraw, their informed consent to students being involved in their care
- 1.4 ensure educators and others involved in supervision, learning and assessment understand their role in preserving public safety
- 1.5 ensure students and educators understand how to raise concerns or complaints and are encouraged and supported to do so in line with local and national policies without fear of adverse consequences
- 1.6 ensure any concerns or complaints are investigated and dealt with effectively
- 1.7 ensure concerns or complaints affecting the wellbeing of people are addressed immediately and effectively
- 1.8 ensure mistakes and incidents are fully investigated and learning reflections and actions are recorded and disseminated

- 1.9** ensure students are supported and supervised in being open and honest with people in accordance with the **professional duty of candour**
- 1.10** ensure the learning culture is fair, impartial, transparent, fosters good relations between individuals and diverse groups, and is compliant with **equalities and human rights legislation**
- 1.11** promote programme improvement and advance equality of opportunity through effective use of information and data
- 1.12** ensure programmes are designed, developed, delivered, evaluated and co-produced with **people who use services** and other **stakeholders**
- 1.13** work with service providers to demonstrate and promote inter-professional learning and working, and
- 1.14** support opportunities for research collaboration and evidence-based improvement in education and service provision.

2 Educational governance and quality

Standards

- 2.1 There are effective governance systems that ensure compliance with all legal, regulatory, professional and educational requirements, differentiating where appropriate between the devolved legislatures of the United Kingdom, with clear lines of responsibility and accountability for meeting those requirements and responding when standards are not met, in all learning environments.
- 2.2 All learning environments optimise safety and quality, taking account of the diverse needs of, and working in partnership with, service users, students and all other stakeholders.

Requirements

Approved education institutions, together with practice learning partners, must:

- 2.1 comply with all relevant legal, regulatory, professional and educational requirements
- 2.2 ensure programmes are designed to meet proficiencies and outcomes relevant to the programme
- 2.3 comply with NMC programme standards specific to the programme being delivered
- 2.4 comply with NMC **Standards for student supervision and assessment**
- 2.5 adopt a partnership approach with shared responsibility for theory and practice supervision, learning and assessment, including clear lines of communication and accountability for the development, delivery, quality assurance and evaluation of their programmes
- 2.6 ensure that recruitment and selection of students is open, fair and transparent and includes measures to understand and address underrepresentation
- 2.7 ensure that people who use services and representatives from relevant stakeholder groups are engaged in partnership in student recruitment and selection
- 2.8 ensure that for students below the age of 18 on admission to their intended programme, appropriate safeguarding measures and any necessary programme adjustments are in place to support them and the people in their care

- 2.9** demonstrate a robust process for **recognition of prior learning** and how it has been mapped to the programme learning outcomes and proficiencies
- 2.10** provide students with the information and support they require in all learning environments to enable them to understand and comply with relevant local and national governance processes and policies
- 2.11** have robust, effective, fair, impartial and lawful fitness to practise procedures to swiftly address concerns about the conduct of students that might compromise public safety and protection
- 2.12** confirm that students meet the required proficiencies and programme outcomes in full, demonstrating their fitness for practice and eligibility for academic and professional award
- 2.13** provide all information and evidence required by regulators
- 2.14** regularly review all learning environments and provide assurance that they are safe and effective
- 2.15** have the capacity, facilities and resources in place to deliver safe and effective learning opportunities and practical experiences for students as required by their programme learning outcomes
- 2.16** be compliant with the NMC standards for education and training³ for all periods of learning undertaken outside the UK
- 2.17** improve quality, manage risk and disseminate effective practice through the proactive seeking and appropriate sharing of information and data
- 2.18** proactively identify and act on any areas for improvement, regularly measuring programme performance and outcomes against the NMC standards and requirements, and other recognised quality frameworks in education
- 2.19** appoint appropriately qualified and experienced people for programme delivery
- 2.20** identify programme leaders to confirm that all proficiencies have been met by each student by the end of their programme, and
- 2.21** ensure appropriately qualified and experienced external examiners consider and report on the quality of theory and practice learning.

3 NMC standards for education and training, standards established by NMC Council as necessary to achieve the standards of proficiency for admission to the register. Includes parts 1, 2 and relevant standards in part 3 and proficiencies.

3 Student empowerment

Standards

- 3.1 Students are provided with a variety of learning opportunities and appropriate resources which enable them to achieve proficiencies and programme outcomes and be capable of demonstrating the professional behaviours in **the Code**.
- 3.2 Students are empowered and supported to become resilient, caring, reflective and lifelong learners who are capable of working in inter-professional and inter-agency teams.

Requirements

Approved education institutions, together with practice learning partners, must ensure that all students:

- 3.1 have access to the resources they need to achieve the proficiencies and programme outcomes required for their professional role
- 3.2 are provided with timely and accurate information about curriculum, approaches to teaching, supervision, assessment, practice placements and other information relevant to their programme
- 3.3 have opportunities throughout their programme to work with and learn from a range of people in a variety of practice placements, preparing them to provide care to people with diverse needs
- 3.4 are enabled to learn and are assessed using a range of methods, including technology enhanced and **simulation** learning appropriate for their programme as necessary for safe and effective practice
- 3.5 are supervised and supported in practice learning in accordance with the NMC Standards for student supervision and assessment
- 3.6 are supervised according to their individual learning needs, proficiency and confidence
- 3.7 are allocated and can make use of **supported learning time** when in practice
- 3.8 are assigned and have access to a nominated practice assessor for a practice placement or a series of practice placements in addition to a nominated academic assessor for each part of the education programme, in accordance with the NMC **Standards for student supervision and assessment**

- 3.9** have the necessary support and information to manage any interruptions to the study of programmes for any reason
- 3.10** are provided with timely and accurate information regarding entry to NMC registration or annotation of their award
- 3.11** have their diverse needs respected and taken into account across all learning environments, with support and **adjustments** provided in accordance with equalities and human rights legislation and good practice
- 3.12** are protected from discrimination, harassment and other behaviour that undermines their performance or confidence
- 3.13** are provided with information and support which encourages them to take responsibility for their own mental and physical health and wellbeing
- 3.14** are provided with the learning and pastoral support necessary to empower them to prepare for independent, reflective professional practice
- 3.15** are well prepared for learning in theory and practice having received relevant inductions
- 3.16** have opportunities throughout their programme to collaborate and learn with and from other professionals, to learn with and from peers, and to develop supervision and leadership skills
- 3.17** receive constructive feedback throughout the programme from stakeholders with experience of the programme to promote and encourage reflective learning, and
- 3.18** have opportunities throughout their programme to give feedback on the quality of all aspects of their support and supervision in both theory and practice.

4 Educators and assessors

Standard

4.1 Theory and practice learning and assessment are facilitated effectively and objectively by appropriately qualified and experienced professionals with necessary expertise for their educational and assessor roles.

Requirements

Approved education institutions, together with practice learning partners, must ensure that all educators and assessors:

- 4.1** comply with all standards and requirements in the NMC standards for education and training
- 4.2** act as professional role models at all times
- 4.3** receive relevant induction, ongoing support and access to education and training which includes training in equality and diversity
- 4.4** have supported time and resources to enable them to fulfil their roles in addition to their other professional responsibilities
- 4.5** respond effectively to the learning needs of individuals
- 4.6** are supportive and objective in their approach to student supervision and assessment
- 4.7** liaise and collaborate with colleagues and partner organisations in their approach to supervision and assessment
- 4.8** are expected to respond effectively to concerns and complaints about public protection and student performance in learning environments and are supported in doing so
- 4.9** receive and act upon constructive feedback from students and the people they engage with to enhance the effectiveness of their teaching, supervision and assessment
- 4.10** share effective practice and learn from others, and
- 4.11** appropriately share and use evidence to make decisions on student assessment and progression.

5 Curricula and assessment

Standard

5.1 Curricula and assessments are designed, developed, delivered and evaluated to ensure that students achieve the proficiencies and outcomes for their approved programme.

Requirements

Approved education institutions, together with practice learning partners, must ensure:

- 5.1** curricula fulfil NMC programme standards, providing learning opportunities that equip students to meet the proficiencies and programme outcomes⁴
- 5.2** curricula remain relevant in respect of the contemporary health and social care agenda
- 5.3** curricula weigh theory and practice learning appropriately to the programme
- 5.4** curricula are developed and evaluated by suitably experienced and qualified educators and practitioners who are accountable for ensuring that the curriculum incorporates relevant programme outcomes
- 5.5** curricula are **co-produced** with stakeholders who have experience relevant to the programme
- 5.6** curricula provide appropriate structure and sequencing that integrates theory and practice at increasing levels of complexity
- 5.7** curricula are structured and sequenced to enable students to manage their theory and practice learning experience effectively
- 5.8** assessment is fair, reliable and valid to enable students to demonstrate they have achieved the proficiencies for their programme
- 5.9** adjustments are provided in accordance with relevant equalities and human rights legislation for assessments in theory and practice
- 5.10** students are assessed across practice settings and learning environments as required by their programme
- 5.11** assessment is mapped to the curriculum and occurs throughout the programme to determine student progression

⁴ Applies equally to all programmes whether delivered as full time or less than full time.

- 5.12** practice assessment is facilitated and evidenced by observations and other appropriate methods
- 5.13** students' self-reflections contribute to, and are evidenced in, assessments
- 5.14** a range of people including people who use services contribute to student assessment
- 5.15** assessment of practice and theory is weighted appropriately to the programme, and
- 5.16** there is no compensation in assessments across theory and practice.

Glossary

Approved Education Institutions (AEIs): the status awarded by the NMC to an institution, or part of an institution, or combination of institutions that works in partnership with practice placement and work placed learning providers. AEIs will have provided us with assurance that they are accountable and capable of delivering NMC approved education programmes.

Co-produced: when an individual influences the support and services received, or when groups of people get together to influence the way that services are designed, commissioned and delivered, acknowledging that people who use social care and health services (and their families) have knowledge and experience that can be used to help make services better. Co-production is one of the principles of the Care Act 2014.

Educators: in the context of the NMC standards for education and training educators are those who deliver, support, supervise and assess theory, practice and/or work placed learning.

Equalities and human rights legislation: prohibits unlawful discrimination on the basis of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and other characteristics. Anti-discrimination laws can be country specific and there are some legally binding international protections.

Learning environments: includes any environment in terms of physical location where learning takes place as well as the system of shared values, beliefs and behaviours within these places.

People: individuals or groups who receive services from nurses and midwives, healthy and sick people, parents, children, families, carers, representatives, also including educators and students and others within and outside the learning environment.

Practice learning partners: organisations that provide practice learning opportunities necessary for supporting pre-registration and post-registration students in meeting proficiencies and programme outcomes.

Quality assurance: NMC processes for making sure all AEs and their approved education programmes comply with our standards.

Reasonable adjustments: changes in the way services are offered to prevent students with disabilities from being placed at a substantial disadvantage, ensuring a fair and equal chance of accessing services as set out in equalities and human rights legislation.

Recognition of prior learning: a process that enables previous certificated or experiential learning to be recognised and accepted as meeting some programme outcomes and requirements; this means it includes both theory and practice achievement.

Simulation: an educational method which uses a variety of modalities to support students in developing their knowledge, behaviours and skills, with the opportunity for repetition, feedback, evaluation and reflection to achieve their programme outcomes and be confirmed as capable of safe and effective practice.

Stakeholders: any person, group or organisation that has an interest or concern in the situation in question, and may affect or be affected by its actions, objectives or policies. In the context of the NMC standards for education and training this includes students, educators, partner organisations, people who use services, carers, employers, other professionals, other regulators and education commissioners.

Student: any individual enrolled onto an NMC approved education programme whether full-time or less than full-time.

Supported learning time: time to facilitate learning. This may include supernumerary status⁵ that enables students to be supported in safely and effectively achieving proficiency.

Users of services: people accessing health or social care services, and anyone supporting the needs and circumstances of these people.

⁵ Supernumerary: see Standards for student supervision and assessment and specific programme standards.

What we do

Our vision is safe, effective and kind nursing and midwifery practice that improves everyone's health and wellbeing. As the independent regulator of more than 771,000 nursing and midwifery professionals, we have an important role to play in making this a reality.

Our core role is to **regulate**. First, we promote high education and professional standards for nurses and midwives across the UK, and nursing associates in England. Second, we maintain the register of professionals eligible to practise. Third, we investigate concerns about nurses, midwives and nursing associates – something that affects a tiny minority of professionals each year. We believe in giving professionals the chance to address concerns, but we'll always take action when needed.

To regulate well, we **support** our professions and the public. We create resources and guidance that are useful throughout people's careers, helping them to deliver our standards in practice and address new challenges. We also support people involved in our investigations, and we're increasing our visibility so people feel engaged and empowered to shape our work.

Regulating and supporting our professions allows us to **influence** health and social care. We share intelligence from our regulatory activities and work with our partners to support workforce planning and sector-wide decision making. We use our voice to speak up for a healthy and inclusive working environment for our professions.

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