

The supervisor role: supporting and assessing a staff member in the workplace

Guidance for employers and supervisors

Introduction

The aim of this document is to provide guidance on the role and requirements of the supervisor to support and assess a staff member in the workplace working towards a healthcare qualification or work-based module with The Open University.

Employers are asked to provide support to staff pursuing a work-based module, by identifying that the staff member is working in a healthcare environment which involves them in the direct delivery of care, and that they will have access to supervision. The supervisor must be able to confirm that there has been effective co-ordination and continuity of their supervision to ensure that their development has been appropriately supported, and that their performance has been effectively reviewed and continuously monitored.

Your Practice Assessment Document (PAD) is an important resource that is used to assess your current level of practice skills and development. You will have three formal opportunities in which your level of competence in practice will be reviewed and assessed, based on the evidence you provide and the observations of your practice supervisor. The practice supervisor is someone that you work with in your workplace who is also registered as a nurse. The proficiencies that you are required to achieve are those identified by the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) Standards for Pre-Registration Nursing Education (2019).

A requirement of K104 is that you complete 770 hours of practice. Your workplace supervisor must be able to confirm that there has been effective co-ordination and continuity of your supervision to ensure that your development has been appropriately supported and that your performance has been effectively reviewed and continuously monitored. This record provides the evidence of having completed the 770 hours to support your successful completion of

K104. If you do not complete the specified number of hours you will not meet the module's assessment requirements and so will fail the module.

Supervisors are asked to provide their student with regular supervision and support throughout a practice or work-based module. They are required to judge the day-to-day performance in the workplace of the student and to liaise with other qualified staff and the OU practice tutor about their performance. They work with the student to enable completion of the PAD, which will be submitted to the OU for inclusion in the assessment outcome for the module.

The role of the supervisor is essential and carries with it high levels of responsibility and accountability. Work-based modules require students to demonstrate that they have developed a range of skills and competencies, based on NMC education standards and are capable of performing these to a satisfactory level. This is done by the supervisor using levels of practice criteria identified within the student PAD.

Your role as a supervisor

Criteria that you must meet

- Be qualified in the same field of practice as the one in which their student is practising.
- Have completed a minimum of one year's post-qualifying experience in the same field of practice as the one in which their student is practising.
- Complete supervisor preparation as specified in accordance with statutory/ professional body standards where available. Comply with any statutory body/ professional standards related to continuing to act as a supervisor, where specified.
- Complete an induction to the Open University portfolio requirements (this will be provided by an OU practice tutor)

Key functions of the supervisor

The supervisor fulfils the following functions:

- facilitate the student's work-based learning
- provide supervision commensurate with the student's competence and confidence - this is assessed during the K104 module and the practice supervisor must be present at this assessment
- liaise with colleagues to access feedback on the student's performance in the workplace
- liaise with the practice tutor as required through agreed methods of communication
- participate in three review meetings with the student
- complete workplace assessment records
- be accountable for the assessment of the student's workplace performance
- alert the student's practice tutor to any concerns about the student's capacity/ability to meet the standards of conduct and health required of a student in healthcare practice.

The student may well be working towards a more advanced role in healthcare. This can represent a significant transition from their current role. All students will be making the transition to being a work-based learner and will be acquiring additional knowledge and understanding, alongside enhanced performance and decision-making. Assisting the student and others who may provide support in the workplace to appreciate what is required for successful role transition is also an important part of the supervisor role.

Support for supervisors

The significance of the role as a supervisor in assessing a student's performance in the workplace and being accountable for the assessment decisions is fully recognised by the Open University. Whilst the assessment decisions are theirs alone, if they have any queries about the principles of applying the levels of practice criteria, or any other aspects of completing the portfolio, the student's practice tutor is there to offer guidance and advice.

Practice tutors are appointed by the Open University and are available to support both the student and supervisor throughout the period of the module. Practice tutors are experienced in both healthcare and practice-oriented education and will use this experience to ensure students meet the workplace-related requirements of the module and that supervisors feel confident and competent in the delivery of their role. The practice tutor will provide you with details of how he or she can be contacted, and any query can also be referred to the local staff tutor for the students' area. This information is located with the student and can be obtained from them.

Supervisors are provided with a handbook to guide them through module requirements, an induction to the module and access to the student's practice tutor for a minimum of three face-to-face meetings with the student.

The OpenLearn course [Practice Supervision and Assessment in Nursing](#) is available for new supervisors or those looking to update their knowledge and skills. This free course allows you to complete the entire program or select from its five modules to focus on the most relevant sections.

We hope supervisors will feel a considerable degree of satisfaction in championing their staff member's development. Supervisors have a very important role to play, and the Open University is committed to ensuring that they receive the support they need.